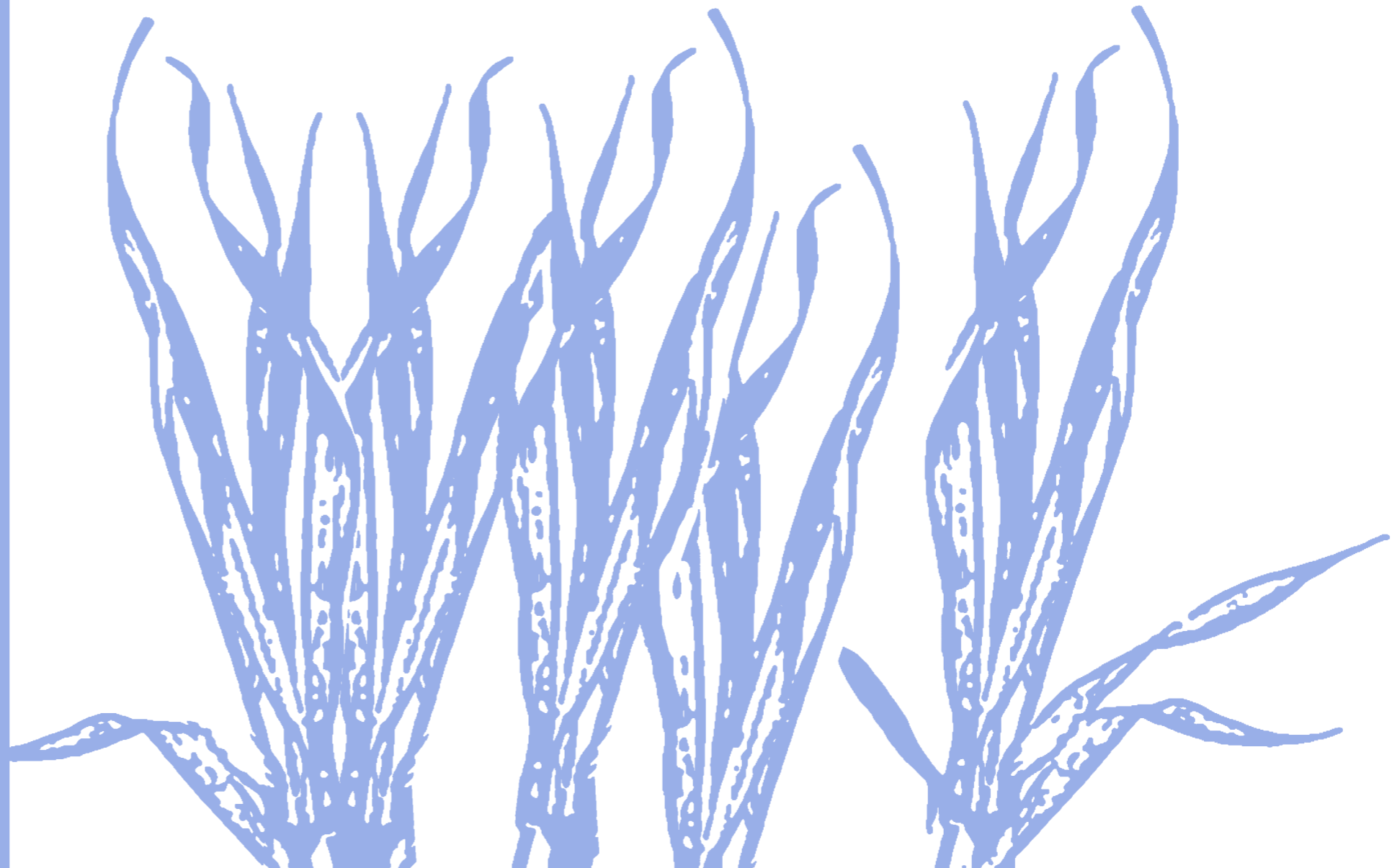


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GRASSROOTS WRITING RESEARCH JOURNAL

Issue 11.2 – Spring 2021
Department of English
Illinois State University



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From the Editors

Samantha Moe

With this issue, the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal* has wrapped up its eleventh year of publication. We feature a variety of articles from undergraduates, graduates, and other writing-research instructors whose articles provide an important and intriguing look into genres, literate activity, and more. The thirteen new articles, ranging from genre and translingualism to the ways in which cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) is at work within the many activity systems we use, continue our expansion of the scope of the journal. In the Writing Program at Illinois State University, we use a version of CHAT that is specifically aimed toward pedagogy. This is because the *GWRJ* informs and is informed by the first-year composition courses that make up its discourse community. Our pedagogical version of CHAT includes seven terms that provide a framework around which students can interrogate texts and genres as they exist in the world while accounting for the nuanced and dynamic nature of such texts.

These articles include genre research present in current events, the different multimodal discourse communities we take part in on a daily basis, and social media literacies we use in these communities. They take a closer look at what literate activity means as well as the different ways it shows up in our lives. What we find both so interesting and so important about these articles is their focus on community. Each article features a look at different Writing Program Learning Outcomes through research into the genres of protest posters, algorithms that influence our consumer markets, discourse communities and the multimodal genres they use on a daily basis. With this latest issue, we also had the opportunity to explore new writing research for our Spreading the Roots section, which in this issue includes research by Literate Activity scholar Kevin Roozen, as well as two students at Central Florida University who have worked with Kevin to create investigations of literate activity. Our goal for the Spreading the Roots project continues to be to reach out to writing researchers in a range of situations (college students, K-12) in order to offer more diverse perspectives on CHAT and genre studies to our readers. Certainly, the work of the contributors to this issue continues to expand our collective understanding of the multifaceted nature of genres and the work of writing and researching in the world. As such, we hope you enjoy this new issue as much as we do.

To start off issue 11.2, the first two articles delve into an analysis of the production and distribution of genres related to social and political settings and how they are historically situated in our cultural awareness. First, **Khadidja Belhadi** analyzes the genre of protest posters and signs as well as how they are utilized to foster change. Khadidja writes about the Arab Spring movement, utilizing her antecedent knowledge to inform a discussion on how protest posters both express important social views and engage in socialization with the world around them. Through a PCHAT lens, Khadidja unpacks and maps out this genre for us. Next, **Bailey Salyards** takes a look at translingualism and politics, focusing on the genre of campaign ads, as well as the ways in which we are communicating both successfully—and unsuccessfully—with people of different cultures. Bailey uses her article to express the importance in understanding and utilizing translingualism to communicate effectively.

Continuing to focus on cultural-historical activity theory, the next two articles use PCHAT to explore Digital Black Wall Street as well as a multimodal mapping of music albums and cover art. **Raven Preston** explains the different genres and activity systems both in the original Black Wall Street and with Black entrepreneurs. Through use of **rhetorical genre studies**, Raven delves into many Black-owned businesses, the ways in which the digital age has both affected and transformed these markets. **Faith Borland** explores album covers, looking specifically at Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*, exploring the ways in which meaning-making plays a role in cover art. Faith also uses PCHAT terms to map out the socialization and representation of these works of album art.

Following this, the next articles focus on the ways in which we communicate with each other within discourse communities related to film, Instagram, and our home spaces, as well as the affects these communities have on the environment. First, **Allison Mool** discusses the discourse group of the Marvel Fandom and explains to us what it means to be part of a discourse community that communicates through specific literacies and terms that others outside the community may not know or understand. Following, **Danielle Eldredge** writes about the literate activity of translating her grandmother's recipes from Spanish to English and adapting them to her own needs, using the concept of vernacular literacy to explain her process. Next, **Kendal "Alexis" Adams** gives us an examination of Instagram influencer posts, using PCHAT and genre to focus on the ways in which influencers use specific algorithms and authenticity to gain more followers, more promotions, and more opportunities through a social media platform. **Emily McCauley** then takes us into an exploration of how recycling texts are produced (such as plastic bottles, containers, and so forth) as well as how

they are polluting and harming our globe through the mass accumulation of plastic waste.

Next, **Kevin Roozen** explores the complexity of writing in our everyday lives, using the concept of *maverick literacies*. Kevin explores how a car repair manual can, over time, become a complex literate activity system. Following, **Allie Beam** discusses her opportunity, as a member of Deaf Redbirds Association on ISU's campus, to interpret sign language for a homecoming football game as well as how sign language interpretation is an example of translanguaging. Next, we feature an interview with **Jordan Ashley**, **Emily Capan**, and **Bryanna Tidmarsh** discussing the activity system involved in planning ISU's first-ever Pride Night for the ISU athletics department. Emily and Bryanna discuss the ways in which communication occurs with Jordan, the director of marketing.

The last article features **Lisa Hanimov's** exploration of creativity and tradition through the act of documenting her family's recipes. Lisa also discusses how this routine helped her cooking skills to improve, how this new family tradition will function as a way of tracking the evolution of family recipes and how this influences her creativity. Lastly, we're offering a new *Grassroots* genre, an interview with an author who has published in the *GWRJ*. In this interview, **Emily Capan** talks with **Leslie Hancock** about her recent article, "From Noob to Veteran in *League of Legends*: Activity Systems and Genre Analysis in Video Games," which was published in the 11.1 issue of the journal. Leslie's article focused on using genre research as a way to learn to play video games, and Emily uses the interview format to ask Leslie specific questions about her writing process as a way to offer our readers a glimpse into the practices involved in writing a *Grassroots* article.

The 11.2 issue concludes with a reprinting of "Publishing with the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal*," which seeks to encourage prospective writers to submit their rigorous investigations of how people, tools, and situations affect writing in complex ways. As we close our eleventh year of publication, we continue to receive record numbers of submissions from writing researchers interested in publishing their studies in the journal. In the coming year, we hope to receive even more submissions that reflect a diversity of perspectives, explore a variety of distinctive genres, and provide a richer understanding of the culturally and historically bound spaces in which these genres are embedded.

The Ecology of Change: The Algerian Protest Signs

Khadidja Belhadi

In this article, Khadidja Belhadi will analyze and examine protest posters and signs as a genre, and how they have been used historically to forge change. To illustrate, Khadidja will focus on the protest posters and signs used in the Algerian protests, 2019, known as the second wave of the Arab Spring movement. The planning, the production, the reception, and the distribution of the signs will be explored.

“We must not allow our creative protest to denigrate into physical violence”

—Martin Luther King Jr.

To express anger and disagreement and to show solidarity in a civilized and a peaceful way, people organize protests and hold signs, posters, banners, and placards. They may walk, chant, or just gather in vast public spaces. Protests have been one of the most influential mass human reactions to corruption, unfairness, and brutality practiced on people and civilians by governments and institutions. Protests are not only limited to political issues. People protest to support other social and environmental matters, such as the rights of women, people of color and queer people, and clean environments. Posters and signs are key elements in protests everywhere in the world. One can consider them the *language* of protests. In this article I examine protest signs as a **genre** of activism. **Genre** is a kind of text or artifact that can be produced to achieve a goal. According to Miller (1984), genre is defined as a typified response to a reoccurring situation. Accordingly, protest signs are texts and artifacts produced as a response to certain acts to communicate the message(s) of protesters. They are not isolated texts. Genres exist as part of

complex **activity systems**. The concept of activity systems refers to the interaction of people, tools, physical and conceptual spaces, and genre are produced as part of the interactions of these systems. As described by David Russell, this activity system is “historically developed within the culture in which they function.” It is social and dialogic and in conversation with the genre’s producers and their objectives and how best to achieve them. It is collectively produced and in a constant change” (Russell). Understanding the activity system helps us understand how a particular genre works to achieve its goal.

My goal in examining the Algerian protest signs is to understand their effect and **trajectory**. What I mean by trajectory here is the path a text takes in its production and distribution in relation to the people, contexts and histories that shape a genre or writing situation. Sounds boring? Hold on with me. You will be fascinated by the amazing stories of people making, planning, distributing posters and signs, carpooling and crossing dangerous police and military checkpoints to bring their signs to participate in the protests. By now, I guess you are wondering where in the world could all of this be happening? Definitely not in the U.S. Yes, you are correct! It is not an action movie either. This is happening in Algeria, my home country. A North African country located between Morocco and Tunisia. As I take you on this journey of the Algerian protest posters, be prepared to laugh and be surprised.



Figure 1: This photo shows the protesters in Algiers, June 8, 2019. (Image by Rihem jeon, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=79552691>)

To give my readers some context, the protests that are happening in Algeria are considered by many experts as the second wave of the Arab Spring movement that first began in 2011 in Tunisia, and then spread to several other countries including Libya, Egypt, Yemen, and Syria. In the Middle East and North Africa, people are out protesting against their corrupt governments and institutions. People are demanding decent lives for themselves and their children. Although these countries do have enormous natural and human resources, the majority of the people are living very close or below the poverty line. For example, the unemployment rate in Algeria increased to 11.70 percent in the third quarter of 2018 from 11.10 percent in the second quarter of 2018.

The unemployment rate in Algeria averaged 14.04 percent from 1999 until 2018, reaching an all time high of 29.50 percent in the third quarter of 2000 and a record low of 9.80 percent in the fourth quarter of 2013 (Trading Economics). The actual numbers are much higher.

Being Algerian, my **antecedent knowledge** will inform this discussion. What I have told you so far about my home country and the current situation is in fact my antecedent knowledge, or simply, my prior knowledge about the topic. However, to enrich this work, I informally interviewed and talked to friends who have been participating in the Algerian protests since it started on February 2019 (Wikipedia). As a genre, the Algerian protest posters represent a collective voice of the people to express their anger, frustration, hopes, and demands for real reform that would lead to a better future. The Algerian protests, known as the Hirak Movement, started out to protest the intention of former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to run for a fifth term. Bouteflika had been president since 1999. In 2013, Bouteflika suffered a debilitating stroke and, since then, his brother Saïd Bouteflika became the one who is running the country. When Abdelaziz Bouteflika's fourth term was ending, his entourage wanted to present his candidacy for a fifth term (Wikipedia). At that time, around March 2019, the president had not talked to the Algerian people for years. The Algerian people first wanted Abdelaziz Bouteflika to withdraw his candidacy for a fifth term. Moreover, demonstrators demanded massive radical change that would create more democracy and freedom under the rule of law. They wanted a change that would lead to the overthrow of the government of the ruling clans (Wikipedia; Hamouchene).

In order to understand how these “protest” genres work to create change, we can use Illinois State University's version of a well-known theory called CHAT, or **cultural-historical Activity Theory**. CHAT can be used to make sense and understand all kinds of literate activity, including the activity of protesting. Here at ISU, CHAT breaks down into seven terms that are helpful to better understand literate activities in our world. For example, when we look at protest signs, two key terms come to mind: **representation** and **socialization**. First, representation deals with how protesters think about, talk about, and plan the text that goes on the sign. What goes on protest signs are reflections of social issues and demands. Second, socialization deals with how texts are taken up by others and the kind of reaction(s), positive or negative, that are probably going to happen based on that text.

Unpacking the Complexity of the Protest Signs

Protest signs and posters are complex texts. Therefore, they require some genre research. Genre research means exploring the context in which this genre is being produced, used, and circulated. Moreover, learning about the protesters, their history and objectives is helpful. In this literacy experience, using ISU's version of cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) to study this complicated genre is fascinating in a way that will help us unpack its complexities.

Let's CHAT Map Some Signs

As I CHAT map some powerful Algerian protest signs, I will share some interesting facts and stories that I have collected from friends and relatives. I will also discuss factors that have played an important role in the representation, production, and distribution of selected posters.

“They All Should Go” / *Yetnahaw Gaal* (Figure 2) is a slogan in Arabic (Algerian dialect) which appeared during the first weeks of the protests. How has this text been taken up? The reception and the socialization of this slogan were really powerful as it changed the trajectory of the protest. This slogan summarized the demands of the people. It has become one of



Figure 2: “They all should go” / *Yetnahaw Gaal* /. A T-shirt slogan, 2019.
(Image by By Reda Kerbouche, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=81483978>)

the most influential and powerful slogans that expresses the real demands of the Algerian people. It originated from a video shared on social media showing a young Algerian man interrupting a local correspondent of the television channel Sky News Arabia. The journalist was reporting that people are out celebrating the success of their protests after the president announced his decision of not going for a fifth term (Wikipedia). This slogan was eye-opening because it helped the Algerians wake up and not fall for the dangerous tricks that the government was planning to suppress the protest. It helped them realize that the problem is not only about the president's intention of going for a fifth term, but it is also about the whole corrupt system that has to be replaced.

“Yes, We Can” and “We are making Algeria Great Again” are interesting and powerful slogans that appeared originally in English. These slogans were borrowed from the Obama campaign in 2008 and Trump campaign in 2016. These slogans resonated with the Algerian people as they carried hope that their dreams might also become true, as was the case in the United States of America.

Since the start of the Hirak, the signs and the texts displayed were very powerful. They express the real suffering of the people and the humiliating practices exercised against them. People demonstrating on the streets, holding all different signs that show the dirty work of the government to the whole world, gradually inclined the government to offer semisolutions just to stop the ongoing protests. One of the important factors about the Algerian protest is its organization and persistence. The protests were organized in a way that put pressure on the government all week long. Students protest on Tuesdays, lawyers protest on Wednesdays, and Fridays are for all segments of the society. Although I live here in the States, I am always following what is happening there. When I started working on this paper, I was regularly in conversations with an old friend of mine. I was



Figure 3: Demonstrator wrapped in the Algerian flag, March 2019. (Image by Bachounda, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=77008419>)

interested to know how students were engaged in the protests. I learned that students make their signs in their dorms collectively. On Tuesdays, they usually start their march at the University of Algiers in the heart of the capital. For students, social media (in particular, Facebook) “are the main platform for organizing, sharing, and exchanging information” (Personal interview). The reception of the students’ powerful marches translates the minister of higher education’s decision to move the beginning of the winter break earlier and extend it to three weeks just to make the students go back to their home towns and minimize their activities and involvement in the Hirak. It is clear that the students and their opinions are a real threat to the government.

For the production of the protest signs, examining the protest posters available online, people have used some photos of some current figures in the government and glued them on big posters and wrote next to the picture phrases showing anger and discontent about their performance. As an example, they would handwrite, “O Thieves! You Ate the Country.” Others used cardboard and markers, and others typed and printed large and small size signs. Most protesters have made their own signs. They make them at home or they may gather in safe places and work on them (Personal interview).

The Algerian flag shown in Figures 1, 3, and 4 was also one of the most popular protest signs. The presence of the flag, in all the figures above, means a lot to the Algerians. I went to Algerian schools for my elementary, secondary and high school, I still remember we were always taught that our



Figure 4: Protests in Blida, one of the Algerian cities, March 10, 2019. (Image by Fethi Hamlati, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=77231028>)

flag is the symbol of sacrifice, freedom, and independence. The colors red and green are symbols of the 1.5 million who paid their lives to free the land. Holding the flag is a reminder that our ancestors freed the land and now it's time to free the people. In Algeria, flags are sewed locally and bought in bulk to be distributed during the protests on Fridays. Distribution is another CHAT term that in this situation refers to how the protest signs, such as the flag, are distributed and circulated for the objective of making it one of the strongest messages of the protesters. The flag was strongly present during the Algerian protests in all cities. When strikes on the streets and main sights became a real threat, the government called police and gendarmerie forces and placed them on all main entrances to Algiers, the capital. Because the government blocks all entrances to Algiers each Thursday, people were not able to bring their signs with them. They were not even able to bring the Algerian flag. Anyone caught trying to enter Algiers with signs and/or flags could be arrested or, at best, sent back. Therefore, people started carpooling to minimize the number of cars entering the capital. A solution was to have locals give signs and flags to protesters coming to Algiers from neighboring cities to hold once they get to the main place of protest, which is *la grande post* (the main post office) located in the center of Algiers, a vast public area. The reason behind blocking the entrances to the capital is that the government claimed the size of the demonstrations was amplified only because of the many thousands of participants coming from outside Algiers. Blocking the main entrances of Algiers was an attempt to significantly reduce the size of the demonstrations. This was one way the government tried to weaken the weekly marches where millions of protesters (young, old, men and women) participate by chanting peacefully and holding powerful signs. This weekly phenomenon made the government lose any hope that it will easily put down the Hirak and ignore the legitimate demands of the people. The circulation of the protest posters played an important role in the socialization of all Algerians around the world. Despite being away from home, I was following all the news and events of the protest. I was fascinated by the people's awareness of what's happening around them and in the world. People shared live protests videos on Facebook and YouTube on a daily basis. Many were able to upload live videos of the interaction between the police and the people, which I find civilized and peaceful. The Algerian protest of 2019 was reported and aired on several world channels. The whole world witnessed and admired its peaceful character. According to many activists, people would gather in safe places to print and create banners and signs. After each protest, people were determined to clean up the public spaces where the protests took place. Because a lot of people were coming from neighboring towns and villages outside the capital, residents of the capital, especially those families who live close to the main post office where people

protest, cooked meals and fed the protesters. They also distributed cold water bottles during hot summer days (Wikipedia).

The protest slogans and signs aim to lift the spirits of people and help them understand their history and how politics in the past and are enacted towards stripping them of their freedom and rights as citizens. People realize now, decades after emancipation from direct colonial rule, the quest and the dream for real independence still figures highly on the Middle East and North Africa agenda. You also, as a writer researcher, can use CHAT to do your own genre research to learn more about this creative genre and other genres that matter to you. The narratives drawn from these slogans and signs have great and positive impact on the society. Such cultural texts explicitly point out the ill reality of political and social life today in Algeria and in the Middle East as a whole. Examining such themes and factors may uncover new foundations for social and political change. This is not an overreaching dream after all. In 2015 Tunisia became the first Arab country ever to be judged fully “free” by Freedom House, an American monitor of civil liberties, and it moved up a record thirty-two places among countries vetted by the Vienna-based Democracy ranking association (*The Economist*). Algeria is still at the early stages of peaceful protests since February 2019, and so far Algerians were able to make the former president Abdelaziz Bouteflika step down and force the military to give some minor concessions.

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Khadidja Belhadi is a PhD student at Illinois State University specializing in linguistics, rhetoric, and composition. Khadidja enjoys reading, cooking, and travelling.

Translingualism in Politics

Bailey Salyards

In this article, Salyards explores the connection between translingualism and US politics. Through the analysis of recent campaign advertisements, multicultural American politicians, and general history, the author demonstrates the necessity of cultural awareness in politics today.

Since before middle school most US students have been taught that the United States is a “melting pot” of ethnicity and culture. So why doesn’t our government represent that same kind of diversity? As of the 2018 midterm elections Congress is more racially and culturally diverse than ever, but white men still make up the majority of both the House of Representatives and the Senate (Zweigenhaft). Most Americans could probably agree that the United States, as a whole, is becoming (generally) more tolerant of different cultures, but after analyzing a few 2018 campaign ads, it’s become clear to me that this does not stand true for all aspects of politics. As a matter of fact, roughly a month before I began writing this, President Trump tweeted an anti-immigrant campaign ad which has been compared to former president George H.W. Bush’s widely criticized, arguably racist “Willie Horton ad” (Levitz). This leads me to ask the question: In a country that’s growing more culturally diverse every year, how important is it for our political leaders to have knowledge about cultures other than their own? In this article I’ll be examining the effect of cultural awareness on politics.

Specifically, I'm going to be focusing on **translingualism**. Essentially, translingualism concerns the ability to communicate with people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, acknowledging the connectivity and relationships between those cultures and languages. In bilingual/multilingual education, translingualism refers to the constant transfer of knowledge from one language to another, and vice versa; students use the knowledge they've gained from each of their languages simultaneously. Though this definition isn't exactly the same as translingualism in literacy (don't worry, you don't have to be bilingual to practice translingualism in literacy), it does serve the purpose of emphasizing the idea that translingualism is a fluid process, involving movement through different languages/cultures. After all, "translingualism" literally means "through language(s)." The ability to communicate throughout different cultures is a necessary aspect of successful American politics, and this can be proven through the analysis of and connection between campaign ads and translingualism, with references to **CHAT** terminology. CHAT stands for cultural-historical activity theory and includes seven terms which help us analyze and create text.

Campaign Ads as a Genre

Considering I'll be examining multiple campaign ads throughout this article, let's start by taking a look at some of the **genre conventions** of campaign advertisements. **Genre** is defined as a specific type of text (in this case, campaign ads); genre conventions, therefore, are the commonly recognized features specific to a certain genre, or, in our case, common features of campaign advertisements. Generally, these ads are long enough to get a point across but short enough not to frustrate the everyday Joe simply trying to watch a television program or YouTube video. So, let's say an average of around thirty seconds. In these thirty seconds, the candidate's goal is to either get you to vote for them or get you to not vote for their opponent. For instance, have you ever seen a commercial with that deep male voice telling you all of the terrible things so-and-so voted for or against? Then maybe they asked if you could trust someone like that to represent you in government? This is an example of a negative ad; the idea behind this is that the viewers would either vote for the candidate/party responsible for the ad because they feel there's no other choice, or perhaps not vote at all. A less controversial style of campaign ad is a positive ad, in which a candidate tells you why you should vote for them. Regardless of whether the advertisement is negative or positive, politicians typically express strong opinions on one side of the political spectrum. This is where hateful, and sometimes racist, campaign ads can come into play.

America has a history of discriminatory campaign ads, but I'll solely be focusing on advertisements from the 2018 midterm elections because, yes, it's still happening! I already implied that these hateful ads are a result of the "need" to express a strong political opinion in order to have a successful campaign. As you are probably aware, a huge issue in 2018 US politics was immigration, specifically from Mexico. On October 31st, 2018, Donald Trump tweeted a questionable campaign ad in support of Republican midterm candidates. This video features a criminal, who happens to be an undocumented immigrant from Mexico, stating his lack of regret for murdering police officers and threatening to kill more. The video includes the bolded words, "Democrats let him into our country," then a few seconds later, "Democrats let him stay" (Levitz). This advertisement definitely reinforces the preexisting criminal stereotype of Mexican immigrants, additionally blaming the crimes committed by this man on all Democrats. President Trump and the Republican party used an issue many Republicans feel strongly about (immigration) in order to encourage them to vote for candidates of their party. However, was attacking Mexican immigrants the best way to accomplish this goal?



Figure 1: QR code for President Trump's tweet, linking a 2018 Republican campaign ad.

Before we dive into that, let's examine another arguably racist campaign ad from the most recent midterm election. One of the most questionable campaign ads is that of congressman Duncan Hunter who attacked the supposed Muslim faith of his opponent Ammar Campa-Najjar accused him of being a terrorist, called him a "security risk" and accusing him of trying to "infiltrate Congress," family ties to terrorism and the Muslim faith with no actual evidence (Levitz). The ad describes Campa-Najjar as "a Palestinian-Mexican, millennial Democrat" in an insulting tone, which targets a few different groups of people in addition to the aforementioned Muslim stereotyping (Levitz). In creating this campaign ad, Hunter's team probably didn't consider how using his opponent's religion, ethnicity, and age against him would negatively affect the **reception** of the ad. As defined by Joyce Walker, "[r]eception deals with how a text is taken up and used by others," or, simply put, how the audience reacts to a text (75). By implying Campa-Najjar is a terrorist because of his ethnicity and assumed religion, this advertisement easily appears Islamophobic to viewers (this is the viewers' reception of the ad), therefore potentially hurting Hunter's voter turnout.



Figure 2: Screenshot of Hunter's ad targeting his opponent's religion, taken from Duncan Hunter's YouTube channel.

This Sounds Familiar

This whole ‘white men in power lacking respect for other cultures’ thing isn’t really a new concept. In fact, in my college English 101 course we read a story about a group of white scientists traveling to Mozambique, a country in Africa, in order to educate some of its inhabitants and study the environment. The author of the story, Mia Couto, spoke of his personal experiences with translanguaging as a translator between the people of Mozambique and the scientists. This story isn’t much different than stories of other white people going to Africa to “provide aid.” They go with good intentions, but they don’t really take into consideration the culture of the people they’re supposed to be “helping” or what their reception will be. For instance, these Swedish scientists went to Mozambique in the hopes of giving these “poor African people” some form of education. The only thing on their minds was the good they were going to be doing “helping” the people of Mozambique, so they didn’t think about taking any time to learn about their culture (Couto).

The author’s main focus in the story is the differences between the Swedish language and the Portuguese and Chidindinhe languages (the languages of the Mozambicans) combined with the differences between the two cultures. (Remember, translanguaging refers to communication between and through languages and cultures.) The language and culture barrier presented clear issues from the start. Couto mentioned that the Swedish men introduced themselves as “scientists,” but there is no word for “scientist” in the Chidindinhe language. The men were introduced by the translator rather as the language’s word for “witchdoctor,” so they were giving off the wrong impression from the very first meeting (Couto). This is an example of a difference between the actual languages/translations.

Couto goes on to describe a few other miscommunications between the scientists and the Mozambicans, mostly due to cultural differences rather than differences between the actual languages themselves. Arguably the most significant example of these miscommunications involves the entire reason the Swedish scientists went to Mozambique in the first place. The scientists explained that they were there “to work on the environment,” but, as Mia Couto writes, “in [the local Mozambican] culture, the idea of the environment has no autonomous meaning” (237). While this is also a translation issue, I’d argue to say this situation deals more with a difference in culture. The Swedish scientists were clearly very concerned with the environment, which seems to be a part of their culture. They probably didn’t think about the fact that the people they were visiting come from a different culture, where something that is so important to the Swedish men is nonexistent, or at least a very different concept.

Because there is no single word for “environment” in the Chidindinhe language, the translator chose the word *ntumbuluku*, which refers to what many of us would call “The Big Bang.” So basically, due to cultural and linguistic differences, the Mozambicans thought these scientists came to them to talk about the beginning of time, when in reality they were there to talk about problems with the environment. The entire situation ended up being one whole misunderstanding, which could have been avoided if the scientists worked on their **representation** before speaking to the people in Mozambique. The CHAT term, representation, can have a few different definitions, but for this instance, I’ll use part of Joyce Walker’s definition from “Just CHATting.” Representation includes “the ways we talk about the text or the plans we make in our heads” (75). In this case the text is the scientists’ presentation to the Mozambicans. The scientists didn’t think about researching and adapting to their audience, so they weren’t successful in Mozambique. If they would’ve considered their representation more deeply, perhaps the scientists would have not only created plans for their study and teachings but also for interacting with the community they were conducting their research in.

So, Do We Need Translingualism?

The story of the Swedish scientists in Mozambique is the best way for me, personally, to understand translingualism, so hopefully when I break this down it’ll be the best way for you to understand it, too. Basically, translingualism isn’t the ability to speak every single language or anything like that; as I described earlier, it relates more to the ability to understand and communicate effectively with people of different cultures. You can

speak every single language in the world and still not be successful when it comes to translanguaging. I think a lot of this has to do with simply caring to understand someone else's culture or language, then doing the research and taking the actions to prove so.

Something else we talked about in my English class were the differences between asking a Spanish-speaking person and German-speaking person to describe a bridge. Someone who speaks Spanish would be more likely to describe a bridge as big and strong, while someone who speaks German would be more likely to describe a bridge as beautiful and elegant. This is because in Spanish the word for "bridge" is masculine, while the German word for "bridge" is feminine. This shows how language affects our culture and the way we think about things. Language goes way deeper than the actual words themselves, which is the main idea behind translanguaging.

So, what does this have to do with American politics? Well, pretty much everything. In the beginning of this article when I was discussing campaign ads I mentioned the lack of cultural acceptance in a couple of the ads from the last midterm election. This is comparable to the Swedish scientists' failure to accept the differences between their culture and the Mozambican culture of that area. Because the scientists chose to remain uneducated about this new culture, their mission failed. I believe politics works the same way, except we're electing people to help run our entire country instead of leading a small study.

The United States isn't made up solely of white men (strange, right?) therefore when politicians (often white men) are putting out campaign ads, their audience is filled with different cultures to appeal to. Not everyone in the US is going to have the same culture as whoever is running for office. Therefore, if candidates choose to ignore that fact and release borderline racist campaign ads, they're not communicating effectively with the people they're supposed to represent. In other words, the reception of the ad (how the audience reacts to it) doesn't align with the candidate's representation (how the candidate or their team thought about and planned the ad). The best way to avoid this issue is to acknowledge that we live in a country that allows us to experience so many different cultures. Politicians should celebrate this instead of targeting and stereotyping minorities. In order to do so, though, they need to be educated about cultures other than their own.

Cultural awareness isn't an attractive quality in a candidate only to minorities. For example, I'm white and a candidate can have a very similar culture to mine, but if they don't respect or care to learn about other cultures, they won't get my vote; I want representatives who will advocate for everyone they're representing, not solely those with the same culture or background as

them (even if that includes myself). Cultural awareness and translingualism are becoming more and more important to Americans today, regardless of someone's culture or background. The use of social media has helped with this, and I can only guess it will continue to do so. People are becoming more aware of the social injustices that are happening every day, and information about other cultures is literally at our fingertips now.

Making Progress

Along with this rise in cultural awareness comes a rise in politicians from non-dominant groups. As I said before, the 2018 midterm elections brought with them a more diverse Congress than ever before (in aspects of gender, race/ethnicity, and religion), and there were a lot of “firsts” that year in government. For example, the first two Muslim women were elected to Congress during these elections, Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar, as well as the first two Native American women, Deb Haaland and Sharice Davids. Connecticut and Massachusetts also, respectively, elected their first Black congresswomen, Jahana Hayes and Ayanna Pressley, and Texas actually elected its first two Latina congresswomen, Veronica Escobar and Sylvia Garcia (Reinstein).

The fact that a Congress, which at one point consisted of only upper-class men, can become so much more diverse in just a single election means that the United States is rapidly becoming not only more diverse but also more accepting. This also means tolerance for hateful and racist campaign ads is decreasing, so campaign ads like the ones mentioned in the beginning of this article will eventually no longer be the norm (hopefully, at least). However, racism is still very much alive in the political world, and though the reception is usually negative for the most part, it's definitely not impossible to get elected with a racist campaign ad. There is still a lot of work to be done in this area.

Uptake

Throughout the writing and research processes of putting together this article, I learned a few things. These things I learned and other aspects of my learning process can be described as my **uptake**. The first thing I hate to admit I didn't realize before (seeing as it's kind of the whole point of the article) is how many racist campaign ads were aired during this last midterm election. It's nice to think the United States is improving and becoming more accepting (which I still believe to be true), but you can't ignore the hate that

still exists and is getting worse in some forms. I think that awareness is most definitely a part of translanguaging. If you don't realize racism exists, you can't truly understand a culture that faces it.

More generally, I also learned the value of research. I've written a lot of papers with source requirements by just throwing in a few facts from random sources I found mid-essay, and it feels so much better to have actually conducted thorough research on a topic before writing about it as if I know what I'm talking about. This time I actually do know what I'm talking about, and it was a lot easier to organize my article this way, which is an area I struggled in before.

Overall, I now have a deeper understanding of translanguaging, which was my goal for readers of this article, so hopefully that means I accomplished it. Translanguaging was something I was very fascinated by when we learned about it in class, but it was hard for me to put it into words. I felt like I had a basic understanding of it, but now I'm a lot more comfortable explaining what translanguaging is and just how important it is to be translanguaging in America today.

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Invisible PCHAT Network and the Digital Black Wall Street: Remediating Black Wall Street in a Digital Age

Raven Preston

In “Invisible PCHAT Network and the Digital Black Wall Street: Remediating Black Wall Street in a Digital Age,” author Raven Preston uses Cultural-Historical Activity Theory and remediation to explain how Black entrepreneurship was assimilated to successfully engage consumers in the digital age. She gives insight into the historical and cultural significance of niche marketing in the 21st century and how new marketing techniques, like algorithms, influence the consumer market.

“Something FOR Black People BY Black People”

“Black Wall Street,” or Greenwood, was an affluent Black neighborhood in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Greenwood, founded in 1906, was home to wealthy Black entrepreneurs and their families, like O.W. Gurley. Gurley, a wealthy landowner, manufactured a banking system designed to loan money to Black families to start a new life post-slavery. Hannibal Johnson quotes Gurley’s vision as a desire to “create something for Black people by Black people,” in his book *Black Wall Street: From Riot to Renaissance in Tulsa’s Historic Greenwood District* (Johnson 2013). Educated Blacks and working-class Blacks flocked to Greenwood with the vision of a “self-contained and self-reliant Black economy,” giving birth to Black Wall Street. Money was said to exchange hands and businesses 19 times before it left the neighborhood as well as bringing in money externally. The amount of time money stays in a community is important because it means that money is supporting more salaries locally, increasing local economic activity, and building up the local tax base. This was, and still is, an important activity to measure the success of a community. Nearly fifteen years later, jealousy and shady



Figure 1: Richard Clark Preston.

reports of an assault on a white woman in Greenwood began to circulate around Tulsa, exploding the levee of racial tensions under Jim Crow. On May 31, 1921, white thugs ransacked their lives, setting fire and sending bullets through Black Wall Street, inciting a massacre from which they would never recover.

I first heard about the famous Black Wall Street from my grandfather, Richard Clark Preston (Figure 1). He always imagined the reestablishment of this nostalgic time he learned about in school. An investor and

entrepreneur himself, my Grandfather wanted to be the next O.W. Gurley, purchasing land to support wealth-building in the Black community. The community consisted of an array of Black professionals and business owners that operated within their own economy, allowing healing and wealth-building to a community that would otherwise struggle to recover. Growing up around my grandfather, I realized how systemic racism adversely affected his plight when it came to wealth-building and, at the time, equality. You see, my grandfather grew up in the rural south where he only witnessed a Black man close to owning something through sharecropping. He witnessed his grandfather being a sharecropper, a position that reduced him to, at most, an indentured servant. Unfortunately, Black sharecroppers were conned into extreme debt caused by store owners' and landowners' unfair pricing, deceitful reports on crop yields, and discrimination leaving them "under the tacit bondage of economic insecurity" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).

Black Wall Street was a necessary and profound concept birthed from a dark time in our nation's past but its resurfacing illuminates dark moments within our nation's present. The deficit of Black businesses does not reflect Black people's lack of desire to have one, it reflects the lack of resources and investment put into Black communities.

A Dream Deferred: Remixed and Remastered

This article uses **cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT)** as conceived by Illinois State University's writing program (PCHAT) to explore how the original Black Wall Street has been remediated to be a more accessible and affordable mode for promoting Black entrepreneurship. I use PCHAT concepts to understand the intended and unintended purposes and functions

behind producing and consuming in different genres and activity systems within communities. Black entrepreneurship can be understood as both a literate activity and a genre, a response to all the doors closed on aspiring Black Americans and the funnel of discriminatory tactics designed to keep Black success and talent impoverished.

From a rhetorical genre studies perspective, **genres** are, as Carolyn Miller first wrote, “a typified response to a recurring situation” (p. 159). For example, a course syllabus is a typified response to the situation of students entering classrooms and needing to know about classroom policies, assignments, and procedures because without this genre to refer to, they would forget the information, driving professors to insanity as they repeated classroom policies over and over again (The Word Bird). The original Black Wall Street can be understood as a genre, in that it was a response to the terrorizing white supremacy that eventually led to its demise. For Black people, creating a Black Wall Street meant they could be self-sufficient in a society that felt they were incapable and undeserving of doing so. The digital rebirth of this genre, a new kind of Black Wall Street, has more recently been built by a globalized e-market driven by consumers. However, the purposes of the original Black Wall Street is maintained in the idea of “for Black people by Black people” that still dominates the activity system of Black entrepreneurship. However, in its rebirth, Black entrepreneurship has also changed, shifting to a much more affordable and globalized economy characterizing the multiplicity of Blackness. In looking at the new (digital) Black Wall Street, I’ve found four specific PCHAT terms to be particularly interesting: **representation**, **distribution**, **socialization**, and **ecology**.

Recently, I began watching Grammy-winning artist, Killer Mike’s Netflix show *Trigger Warning*, where he not only explores sometimes controversial topics but devises social experiments that challenge the common rhetoric behind these issues. In the first episode, titled “Living Black,” Killer Mike goes three days only living within the Black economy in Atlanta and Athens, Georgia. With Atlanta being a city with a big Black community it should not be hard to “truly” live within the Black economy. But Killer Mike, a business owner himself, finds himself sleeping on park benches and hungry in Athens, Georgia (a Georgia town with a relatively small Black community). This episode begins by comparing money circulation in different racial communities. As I state previously in the introduction, money circulation in communities supports the wealth of local community by paying for local salaries and boosting the local economy. Killer Mike believes that “the Black community could do a better job of keeping the dollar in our ecosystem longer” (“Living Black”). What he means by this statement is that the Black community needs to become more conscious consumers and support their

own community when they can. He offers viewers alarming statistics about how long money stays within the Black community versus other communities. According to *Trigger Warning* and the chart (Figure 2) provided by PIX11 News Station:

The Asian community can keep a dollar 28 days before they release it out. They've shown that Jewish and white communities keep a dollar 21 and 23 days, and for the African-American community six . . . hours ("Living Black").

Although many newer Black businesses are lacking in the traditional storefront format, the globalization of a digital economy has caused a remediation that fits the needs of business owners and consumers. This remediation was in response to the growing demand for contactless shopping. Where shopping centers were once an entirely in-person experience, some have moved to curbside pickup. This trend has certainly been impacted by the response to COVID 19, which has forced retailers to offer more curbside pickup and online ordering options.

The term **remediation**, as I'm using it here, refers to the remixing of an activity or text. In this case, the digital age serves as a reactant in changing the compound of the consumer market. Black Entrepreneurship, like many activity systems labelled "Black," is a remediated response to Black people historically being excluded from "white" organizations. Activity systems allow us to understand what goes into achieving the goal of the activity; it examines the inherently historical, social, dialogic, communal, and assimilating nature of goal-oriented activities. Historically Black colleges and universities or Black fraternities and sororities were established because Black people weren't welcome in white institutions. Similarly, Black investors like my grandfather created their own close-knit investor group that successfully

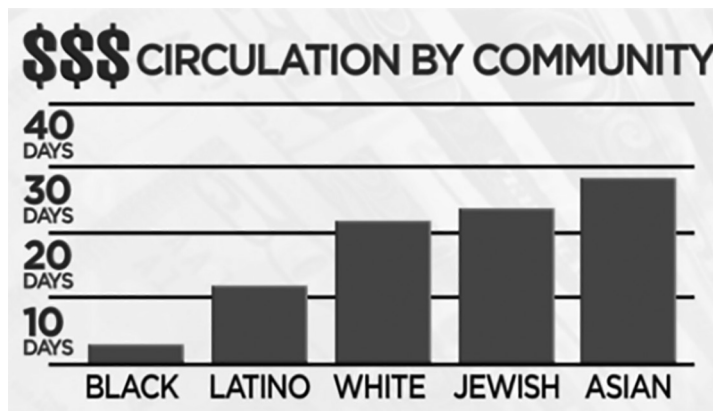


Figure 2: A bar graph comparing the money circulation span by community.

played in stocks and invested in land. To this day, Black entrepreneurs and small business owners receive less support from government bailouts than other small businesses, and this lack of resources results in higher prices, making it difficult to generate revenue from similar products also sold by large national or international companies. This is part of the producer's ecology, the involvement of elements which he cannot control and simply has to adapt to. These elements affect how the producer creates and markets their text. Because their products are sold at a higher price and receive less support, many Black entrepreneurs have to think very carefully about the way they talk about their products, so consumers can understand the reasons behind higher prices and why they should support Black-owned businesses. This conceptualization of how their businesses must be presented and understood by consumers fits in the PCHAT term representation, which considers how texts are envisioned and planned by the people who produce them.

Being a Black-owned business has recently given Black entrepreneurs more clout, with initiatives like Blackout days National Black Business Month happening each year in August. The demand for apparel and products that represent Black people and Black culture create a market that was virtually nonexistent in previous eras. This demand also affects the way business owners' represent their products, and the way they introduce their products to consumers. Another PCHAT term, distribution, is relevant to more than just how Black business owners reach out to potential consumers. It also involves complex tools like algorithms and databases for Black owned businesses that have helped to create a new Black Wall Street that reaches Black consumers all over the world.

The PCHAT term ecology is also useful to help me think about the resources available to the producer during the production of a text or genre. In the case of Black Wall Street and buying Black, the digital age has transformed consumer markets, causing the mass closing of malls and departments stores that refuse to adapt. Businesses offering online shopping and secure checkouts have adapted to the changing needs and demands of consumers, bringing stiff competition and as well as options that impact the greater economy.

With the shift to online shopping, it is only natural that Black entrepreneurs join the market. From Black clothing lines to Black battery brands, the internet is facilitating a revolution of Black businesses. Websites like *WeBuyBlack.com* serve as hubs for Black business owners and consumers to connect and support each other. The concept of Black Wall Street lives on in these brands, not only providing resources to their community but empowerment, news, and forums to rebuild a community assaulted by

systemic political and economic injustice. According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, 440,000 Black-owned businesses closed in the US, equating to 41% of the 1.1 million over 3 months in 2020, in comparison to 17% of white-owned businesses (Fairlie 5). In order to fully consider the **ecology** that impacts Black-owned businesses, it's important to consider how the majority of Black brands are relatively expensive compared to mainstream stores. For example, mainstream stores for clothing include H&M, Express, and other stores frequently seen in mainstream advertising and represented through physical stores across the country. I relate this issue to the PCHAT term ecology because small businesses that are just starting out have limited resources compared to big corporations: resources such as clothing materials, advertisement budgets, and people power. Most Black-owned businesses are designed, managed, distributed, and advertised by one person, while corporations have many people at their disposal and multiple departments to divvy up workloads. This lack of resources results in less time dedicated to creating. These are all examples of elements of an activity system that are not in the control of the producer, but which the producer has to navigate in order to be successful.

In an interview with Summit21, designer and creator of Legendary Rootz, Raven Nichole Gibson describes what inspired her to create her clothing and home décor line:

During this time, racially motivated events were happening around the country, and it struck something in me. The mistreatment of the black community and preparing to attend a PWI [Predominately White Institution] inspired me a lot. . . . I didn't see many Black women who looked like me in media and wanted to change the narrative on how black women are portrayed (Stephens).

Racial tension and misrepresentation in the media have plagued the Black community since the box office hit, *Birth of a Nation*. Racial tensions in the United States operate outside of the control of one single person and can serve as a motivation to uplift the Black community. Pro-Black brands like Gibson's attempt to change the story we tell about Black people in the media.

Represent Yo' Niche

In the interview, Raven Nichole Gibson not only speaks about her brand as a way to empower Black people, specifically Black Women but it is also the main way she markets her brand online. This screenshot (Figure 3) is taken from Gibson's website, *legendaryrootz.com*, in the "our rootz" tab. The images feature primarily Black women with natural hairstyles and headwraps. The

top right image within the screenshot uses imagery inspired by the Black Power movement. Figure 3 also includes text to identify her company’s values. Gibson’s interview and website are a typical example of how Black businesses market their brand.

The term representation, in reference to Black entrepreneurship, connects to my understanding of how Black businesses market their brands and focuses my attention on how these niche market entrepreneurs consider and talk about their products. According to Illinois State University’s writing program website, representation “highlights issues related to the way that the

people who produce a text conceptualize and plan it; how they think about it and how they talk about it, as well as all the activities and materials that help shape how people do this.” Black business owners know what sets them apart from other brands. Similar to the concept of “The Green Book”—a green booklet used to help road-tripping Black people navigate through the Jim Crow South with safe and friendly businesses, usually Black owned—it was described as a way for Black people to be self-sufficient. Websites like *WeBuyBlack.com* continue this idea of connecting reputable, safe, and friendly businesses to Black people except this time through web.

WeBuyBlack.com also has a blog. The blog shares stories about new Black entrepreneurs and their business ventures, top news stories affecting consumers and owners, as well as ways to support education in the Black community. The blog post in Figure 4 announces a partnership of two Black-owned companies, Slutty Vegan and Rap Snacks. Black-owned companies have built their brand on creating and supporting a community that has otherwise been lacking representation. Gibson does a great job describing this phenomenon when she explains that, “Unlike these fast fashion brands, we provide quality items that are described as unique and not cliché,” (Stephens). Gibson



Figure 3: Screenshot from Legendary Rootz Website.



Figure 4: Blog Headline from *WeBuyBlack.com*

also states that it felt necessary to represent herself in a prideful way on her campus. What Gibson hints at in her interview is how Black people, specifically Black women, are portrayed in the media. Historically, we have been portrayed as the docile “mammy” figure, the hypersexualized jezebel, or the welfare queen, and Gibson wanted to change the way we not only talk about Black businesses but how we talk about and portray Black women.

The terms associated with PCHAT are often intertwined and dependent on one another and their relevance for a researcher can vary based on the genre and production. In my exploration of the evolution of Black entrepreneurship, **representation** and **socialization** are concepts that are closely linked. Socialization is a concept that helps me to look at how consumers and companies interact when they engage in representing and changing social and cultural practices. For example, Raven Gibson is consciously attempting to transform two cultural and social practices. First, she wants to provide quality apparel that is authentic to Black experiences. Many Legendary Rootz include pro-Black phrases like “Black Girls Are the Purest Form of Art,” challenges the toxic images of Black women in popular media. Another common phrase used on Gibson’s website is “Pretty Brown Ting.” *Ting* is another word for *thing* that is used in Islander countries that speak other forms of English, like Pidgin or Creole. This phrasing captures the multiplicity of the Black identity that extends past American or even African experiences.

Consumers also unconsciously engage in representing and changing social and cultural practices. Because of social media, consumers have become an extension of the brand. Did you ever think about how every time you make a post picturing people wearing clothing, you’re advertising everything in that photo? How many times have you posted a picture and either in a DM or the comments someone says, “So cute, where did you get this?” All of us are basically social media influencers, which has transformed the way companies market and allocate money to marketing initiatives (Johansson). How companies represent their business and their products need to be aligned with how consumer interact with them. There is a symbiotic relationship, and more often than not, representation and socialization are dependent on one another.

Let’s Talk About Algorithms

Before I give you a glimpse into the consumer perspective and our third PCHAT term **distribution**, let’s talk about **algorithms**. Algorithms are used by social media companies to make money. Yes, social media does

yield profit and believe it or not, they are selling digital billboard space to invade your news feeds, timelines, and cat videos all in the name of “free viewership.” Algorithms factor in information such as your followers and who you follow; liked images, posts, and pages; and sometimes even keywords picked up from your favorite assistants (Alexa, Siri, or Google Assistant). It’s pretty easy to understand billboards and their purposes—how they work to help promote sales or shape people’s thinking—but algorithms control much more complex systems that consider information like pages previously visited and other information found in your digital history, all in order to sell digital billboard ad space to companies of past pages you have visited. What do algorithms have to do with buying Black? Well, let me ask you a question: Do you regularly see advertisements for Black-owned businesses when you are browsing online? Algorithms can work to further embed us in our own communities, which a great marketing technique, but which also acts as a way to keep communities segregated on a digital platform. Although the way algorithms work to target the goods and services you are most interested in may be positive for consumers, algorithms limit exposure of niche companies and companies with less capital. So Black-owned businesses have another area in which they have to compete with large companies who have larger marketing budgets.

The concept of Distribution considers where texts go and who a text may end up with as well as the methods used to distribute a text to potential readers or users. This focuses on the producer’s interaction with the audience. Consider the demographic you follow and the pages you like on social media. If you haven’t seen an advertisement for a Black-owned business, it’s most likely because your algorithm is not weighted towards Black-owned businesses. Black-owned businesses are almost solely marketed through social media, and often fall victim to fake accounts and merchandise that profit from their ambiguous marketing. Some businesses only appear on social media and do not have their own website like *WeBuyBlack.com* or *Legendaryrootz.com*. Because these businesses can somehow exist in an invisible realm, they are often the most vulnerable.

These issues related to distribution, ecology, representation, and socialization illustrate both ways that Black owned business can use their unique relationships to reach potential consumers, also how some of these same features can be an Achilles heel, separating them from potential consumers.

. . . And That's All She Wrote

The promise of wealth and economic equality is still on the horizon, but the evolution of a new, digital Black Wall street has the potential to remediate historic understandings of the concept of entrepreneurs attempting to adhere to the “For Black People By Black People” sentiments that shaped the original Black Wall Street, while at the same time allowing Black entrepreneurs to gain access to larger markets. Or, to think about it another way, we might say that the genre of Black entrepreneurship is evolving to meet new situations and encounter new audiences as it continues to serve its original goal of supporting Black communities. Using PCHAT terms, I've tried to identify some of the moving parts that play a role in advancing and supporting Black economies as well as impacting larger economies across the US Black business consumption is not limited to Black consumers but it does empower them. The original Black Wall Street was also not confined to its thirty-five blocks. People of all races bought and sold in the town of Greenwood. Just like Jewish, Latino, Asian, and white businesses, their consumers were not limited to their own communities. Overall, having more Black businesses represented in the economy will reflect a more responsible and ethical portrayal of the multiplicity that is the Black experience.

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Listen to the Music: A Multimodal View of Albums and Their Covers

Faith Borland

Have you ever thought about the relationship between an album and its cover? In this article, Borland dives deep into the many ways that different modalities convey meaning including how album art can add to a listener's deeper understanding of the album in its entirety. Specifically looking at Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*, Borland addresses the meaning derived through multimodality and how representation and socialization both play large roles in the life of this iconic album.

Heartbeat

—Pink Floyd, “Speak to Me”

Think of your favorite album. What comes to mind? A song? Guitar solo? Bass drop? Maybe you think of the track list or a featured artist. Maybe you think about the first time you heard the album or how it makes you feel to listen to it. But how high up on your list is the album cover? Do you associate it with the music, or have you forgotten what the cover looks like? For many people, whether they realize it or not, the cover is intimately tied to the music of the album. Whether you see the image in your mind's eye when you listen to it or you own a T-shirt with the cover or logo on it, the cover is part of the experience of the album.

Does anyone even look at albums covers anymore? They might be a foreign concept to many people because it seems that album covers have gotten less attention in recent years. The music industry is such a quick and saturated market that often, an album has fallen off the charts before audiences have the chance to even see what they look like. The number of people walking through record stores or looking at physical copies of the

music is nothing compared to the number that are exposed to digital music. Today's generation can just download music on their phones and search songs by name instead of finding the album and going through it until they find the one song they wanted to hear.

What, then, is the purpose of an album cover and why even bother talking about it? For those who take the time to look at an album cover, their value is obvious. Boring, easy, and obvious covers aside, an album cover functions not just as a recognizable sign of the music, but as part of the album as a whole. Whether you realize it or not, an album cover is working to influence the way that you understand the music from the first moment you see it. In this article, I hope to remind you and impress upon you the value of album covers, not just as the recognizable sign of an album, but as a part of the entire work of art of the album that adds to the meaning. Of course, talking about "meaning" can get messy because music can mean so many different things to every person who hears it. When I talk about meaning here, I'm not referring to a secret, "right" meaning of a work, I'm talking about *meaning making*, how each person understands the music and how the cover adds to that meaning for each person. Meaning making doesn't imply that there's a correct answer that everyone should understand; it refers to the fact that music means so many different things to everyone and the album cover adds to everyone's meaning making process.

How Does Album Art Work?

To say that an album cover is just a marketing tool to sell music would be to grossly underestimate the power, influence, and draw of the visual medium. But with millions of albums in existence in the world, it's fair to say that many of them are formulaic, boring, or bland. Often, artists (or their management) choose to go with the most profitable and/or unproblematic option—a portrait of the artist or band. It's simple, leaves no room for confusion on whose album it is, and is often quick and easy to produce. These covers are just the middle ground, though, which means that there is a large list of covers that are worse. Whether they are confusing, done in poor taste, artistic to the point of conveying no actual meaning, or some other failed attempt, there is a legitimate reason for playing it safe with just a portrait as the cover. If bad, forgettable, or boring album covers make up most of what you encounter in the world, then why take the time to design covers at all? The answer is simple: because when an album cover deviates from the norm in a way that is meaningful or artistically unique, the results are not only more visually interesting but allow for new meaning making and layers to the album.

In their book *The 100 Best Album Covers: The Stories Behind the Sleeves*, professional designers Storm Thorgerson and Aubrey Powell assemble the best album covers while providing context and “behind the scenes” information on the creation of each. Both Thorgerson and Powell founded design company Hipgnosis in 1968 and have extensive resumes of designing album covers for famous artists. In fact, some of the artwork in the book is of their own creation which, “other designers (kindly), and other sources, like *Rolling Stone*, (unknowingly) suggested including” (Thorgerson 15). In their introduction, they describe the importance of album artwork and how it becomes closely associated with the music it represents. Often, the best album covers are the visual representation of what the music means. They can add a new layer, a filter, a window through which to see what is going on in the music within their sleeve. They are often the first impression that you get when you discover an album for the first time, and they prepare you for the journey you’re about to take with the music. They are the logo, the welcome mat, the grand entrance into the world that the artist has created.

All of this gets a little messy when you consider how much pressure this puts on the twelve-inch by twelve-inch album cover to accurately represent the music within. Trying to represent such a complex, changing, emotional, and beloved art form on such a small, flat surface is nearly impossible. That’s why great album covers strive to “depict what the product means, not what it physically is. Cover designs attempt to represent the imagination, the passion, and the artistry of the music” (Thorgerson 10). An album cover is a hint of what is to come, a visual partner to the music that provides context, outside meaning or references for the story within. They work with the music to help tell a complete story or convey meaning.

An album in its entirety is a **multimodal** form of composing. It makes meaning through a combination of visual art, aural music, and alphabetic lyrics. All these modes work separately to make meaning, but the full scope of the work can only be understood by combining them all together. Here though, I am chiefly concerned with the **visual** (what you see) and the **aural** (what you hear) modes as they live in and move through the world differently than written texts. Lyrics on their own tend to be the focus of most studies because working with written text is much more comfortable and easily accessible. The aural mode provides greater artistic depth through a combination of sung words and performed music. The use of these two modes together to convey the artist’s thoughts and feelings allow the listener to walk away with a larger and clearer understanding of what the song and/or album means. The visual mode is a rich source of information as well (like they say, a picture is worth a thousand words). The combination of the visual stimulant with the aural meanings showcase something that can’t be

conveyed through just words. If you've ever tried to explain a song without singing it or playing the music, you understand what I mean.

Grasping the concept of multimodality becomes much easier when you look at it through the lens of music. Music is universal. You don't have to understand the language that is being spoken to find meaning in a song. Music can express joy, grief, the feeling of falling in love for the first time, all without the use of words. I know that for myself there are certain familiar pieces of music that spark emotion without the use of lyrics (for example, the guitar solo in The 1975's song "The Sound" creates a sense of happiness and warmth in me that the lyrics just don't). Music is a huge influence in our lives and yet we seldom consider the album covers that go right alongside the albums. Why study the use and meaning of album covers? Well, it's like Thorgerson and Powell say: "People like music. People like album covers. People sometimes remember album covers even when they don't like the music" (9).

Representation and *The Dark Side of The Moon*

Representation focuses on the ways in which the creator(s) of a work conceptualize and plan it. It functions as part of the **cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT)** model that the ISU Writing Program uses (called PCHAT) to explore the aspects of the writing, creation, distribution, and reading of a text. Often, not even a small piece of an album is arbitrary, and each portion works both independently and as a part of the collective to convey meaning. Space-wise, albums are small creations—they are (typically) twelve-inch records encased in a twelve-inch square sleeve, they can only hold about twenty-two minutes of music per side, and each song itself is another small creation. Songs only have so much room for lyrics, so much time to convey meaning or messages before the track changes and the listener finds themselves starting over at the beginning of a new song. With such a small margin for error, representation plays an important role in an album. What concept has the artist created and how do they plan to make it in such a way that their message is heard, that the audience reaches the end of the record and has even a small inkling of what the artist was trying to say? Each small part of the album must be utilized and carefully planned in order to fully represent the substance of the work. Sometimes meaning making is much deeper and more complex than other times but still each aspect of the album works together to create a cohesive whole.

It's fair to assume that many bands aren't too hands-on in the production of the album artwork. They hire a reputable designer, give them a synopsis

of the album, and then smile and nod when the designer brings back something that seems representative of the band’s vibe. Some bands however, take great pains to work with the designers to craft something special and complementary to their creation. Pink Floyd is one such band, and their album covers are considered among some of the best of all time. It’s no wonder that the visual representation was important to the band who was known for their light show in their live performances. Many of their album covers are so detailed and thought out that it is hard to conceive how they would stand alone without the music and how the music could stand without them (ah-hem, *Wish You Were Here*) (Figure 1). Pink Floyd’s psychedelic rock pushed boundaries and the band made it a point to always work with the best and most up-to-date sound equipment. With such care put into every single aspect of their music, it follows that their album covers would be no different. They were strange, provocative, and sometimes intriguing in their simplicity. The pinnacle of this is of course *The Dark Side of the Moon* which they released in 1973 (Figure 2).



Figure 1: *Wish You Were Here* album.



Figure 2: *The Dark Side of the Moon* album.

Pink Floyd knew they wanted to get away from the pictorial imagery of their past album covers and requested a “cool graphic” from Hipgnosis (remember them from before?!), the design company that they worked with for this album (Thorgerson 46). What resulted was the now iconic prism design. Simple enough, the design is a textbook example of what happens to white light when it passes through a prism—it forms a spectrum. Some artistic liberty was taken of course, with the usual white background changed to black, a decision the designers made because “black is cool” (Thorgerson, 46). The prism was enhanced for depth and the colors of the spectrum heightened to what they saw fit (they eliminated indigo from the spectrum to heighten the contrast between blue and purple). When shown the final product, the band “thought that the prism design managed to powerfully represent both the conceptual power of the lyrics and the clean and seamless sound quality of the music” (Thorgerson 46). When presented with a handful of rough ideas for the potential cover, it took the band less than five minutes to grab on to the prism. Pink Floyd had a clear idea for the representation, the conceptual meaning, of their work—it was a conceptual album and the cover had to do just as much work towards their themes and meaning as the music itself did.

Look and Ye Shall Find (Meaning)

Most often, when you think about an album you first think about the music itself. If you are more than just a casual listener, you may even start thinking about the ways in which the songs on the album are organized to tell a story or you may start picking up on recurring themes throughout the album. If you become familiar with an album, you can probably start telling your friends, coworkers, classmates, and anyone who will listen what you think it *means* through an analysis of lyrics, composition, and mood. But do you ever consider the ways in which the album cover plays a part in this meaning making? Better yet, the question might be *Do you realize that the album cover is subconsciously playing a role in the ways that you make meaning from an album?* Whether you realize it or not, the visual medium that comes plastered on the front of an album goes a long way in shaping your opinion of the music even before you hear it. Before this world of digital media, an album cover was one of the first aspects of music that you would encounter.

Sure, you'd hear a song on the radio and have absolutely no idea what the album looked like. But if you liked that song enough that you wanted to listen to it on your own time, you would have to go out and buy the physical album. This is important because unless you are the kind of person who buys an album and exclusively listens to one song and makes sure to skip straight to that track every time, the image that you see when you pick up the physical album becomes inextricably linked to the entire product. You make assumptions and judgements of the album before you even hear the opening track. This is why representation is so important and why many artists chose portraits for their album cover—it is hard to mess up meaning when the cover only serves to remind the listener of who is making the music. Pink Floyd understood this importance and chose an album cover that was not only attention grabbing but alluded to the themes and sound quality of the music within. The designers of *Hipgnosis* were very deliberate in their design and carefully crafted an image that was symbolic of the themes of the music in multiple ways. This is how album covers are windows to their music—they provide context, hint at meaning that only becomes clearer the further into the record that you listen, or they provoke thought. All this primes the listener for aural meaning making of the album.

Since the album cover is usually the listener's first impression of the album, it is obvious why design is so important, especially for a conceptual album like *The Dark Side of the Moon*. Pink Floyd explore themes of conflict, greed, death and insanity in this album. With the album cover and a poster which was included in the sleeve of the record,

the designers included images of the pyramids—symbols of vaulting ambition, greed, and megalomania. These were themes touched upon in the lyrics. The triangular outline of the pyramid also linked it to the shape of the prism on the front cover. (Thorgerson 46)

The triangular shape becomes important for this album, and with the combination of the prism and the picture of the pyramids, the audience starts thinking about the relationships between science, ancient architecture, and symbolism. This also draws in the **spatial** (the layout and positioning) mode. Not only is meaning making happening through the visual and aural modes, but the actual layout of the album cover makes meaning too. The use of the pyramid draws parallels to science, architecture, and symbolism and this begins to prime the listener to start making connections with these ideas and what they will hear in the music. Some of the difficult musical concepts are conveyed more easily in the visual medium of the cover graphic.

“Yeah, I Like Good Music, I have *Dark Side of the Moon* on Vinyl”

The album received critical acclaim when it was released in 1973 and has since been considered one of the best albums of all time. If you ask anyone who claims to like good music how they feel about *The Dark Side of the Moon*, you’ll probably hear nothing but positive remarks. Honestly if you ask anyone at all about the album, you’re sure to find more who know it than those who don’t. It has left quite a lasting impression on our culture since it came out almost half a century ago.

Here though, the question is whether the album itself is what is famous today or if it’s the album cover that lives on. Unquestioningly, the music is still alive and well (on Spotify Pink Floyd has 11.6 million monthly listeners). But in what ways is this pop culture icon operating in our world of nostalgia? Similar to the vinyl it was released on and the record players it was spun on, the album cover of *The Dark Side of the Moon* has become an aesthetic. The iconic prism has become something in its own right, something separate from the music of the album. Much like a lot of very popular albums, it has gone far beyond the original representation of what Pink Floyd and the designers of Hipgnosis intended. The ways in which culture picked up the imagery and molded it into something new has changed its meaning forever.

Within PCHAT, the process of **socialization** is when listeners pick up the album, interact with it, and interact with others who are also interacting with the album. The ways they talk about what they liked, what they didn’t

like, and what they think it means, all come together to create a cultural understanding of the album that can be a far cry from the artist's original concept. It's both a conscious and an unconscious rewriting and transforming of meaning. Pink Floyd wanted the design of the album cover to represent the clean sound quality of the album but what they unintentionally got was a simple enough design that allowed it to be recreated, to be spread throughout culture, and to be taken up as a symbol for psychedelic rock in general. Whereas the music of the album was conceptual and provoked deep thought, the album cover was so straightforward that it burned through 1970s rock and roll culture like wildfire. As time went on, the famous prism was no longer only associated with the ten tracks of *The Dark Side of the Moon*. It has taken on a life of its own and become one of the most easily recognizable graphics in our culture.

Nowadays, the music scene has moved away from rock and roll, and new genres have emerged that make the style of Pink Floyd's psychedelic composition a thing of the past. Why then, is the prism graphic still so recognizable? While styles of music have changed, the aesthetically pleasing nature of the graphic has not. The ways in which listeners are socializing with the album cover are a far cry from 1973. The visual of the album cover has become a sort of symbol for classic rock. You don't have to have heard the album to appreciate what the prism and spectrum on a black background means. It has become a part of most record collections and any store that sells albums is sure to have multiple copies in stock. For those who claim to like "good" or "classic" music (whatever on earth that means), having *The Dark Side of the Moon* as part of their collection is a given. And it's not just *The Dark Side of the Moon* that has undergone this transformation of cultural meaning—most people in today's culture will also recognize the Rolling Stones' logo (Figure 3), the famous cover for the Beatles' *Abbey Road* (Figure 4), and Nirvana's bright yellow smiley face (Figure 5). All these symbols of music from the past have become a part of pop culture in ways that are independent of the music they were designed to represent.



Figure 3: Rolling Stones T-shirt.



Figure 4: *Abbey Road* album.



Figure 5: Nirvana's bright yellow smiley face.

From Conceptual to Commercial

We are living in a time that is immersed in nostalgia—fashion is currently calling back to that of the 1990s, some of the most successful television and movies are heavily relying on 1980s nostalgia to sell (looking at you, *Stranger Things*), and any bar frequented by college students can be heard blaring 2000s “throwbacks.” Point being: nostalgia sells. And our iconic prism is no exception.

A quick Amazon search for “Pink Floyd Dark Side of the Moon” pulls up the digital album, four T-shirts, a rubber keychain, and a sticker all on the first page of results. A Google Shopping search of the album name provides links to Kohl’s (Figure 6) and Target (Figure 7) to purchase T-shirts and links to Etsy where you can purchase canvas art, stained glass, engraved lighters, clocks, prints, buttons, phone cases, earrings, and underwear all with the famous prism design on them (Figure 8). This is one example of the way that socialization can change a work into something that the original creator(s) could never have dreamed of. This conceptual album that utilized a “cool graphic” to visually represent the music’s themes has become a symbol for classic rock that has unlimited commercial potential.

Our nostalgia culture has all of a sudden made these albums, bands, TV shows, and movies of the past relevant again today. Can you assume that the person you see across the Quad wearing their *The Dark Side of the Moon* grunge T-shirt likes the album or has even listened to it before? No, you can’t. But that’s not what matters today, that’s not why that person is wearing the T-shirt. What matters is what embracing 1970s classic rock nostalgia says about you. Sure, it could mean that you like the album but it could also mean that you like the music genre or that you like the style and vibe of the decade or that you like the idea of groundbreaking and conceptual music or that you just think the design is neat and the shirt looks cute cropped and worn with your boyfriend jeans and black Converse sneakers. Whatever it may mean for you, it doesn’t mean the same thing that it did in 1973.



Figure 6: Pink Floyd *Dark Side of the Moon* T-shirt.



Figure 7: Pink Floyd *Dark Side of the Moon* onesie.



Figure 8: *Dark Side of the Moon* Earrings.

Reprise

Album covers and the music that they represent are inextricably tied to one another. Pink Floyd commissioned a graphic that could encapsulate the style of music and convey the conceptual aspect of what they were making. No one could have predicted the ways in which the art takes on a life of its own and means so many different things, most of which have absolutely nothing to do with the music that the graphic represents. Although the band put so much hard work and effort into the making of this album, meaning is ultimately up to each individual person who interacts with the work. Understanding representation is important to know why a work was created in the way it was, but it is through socialization that a piece takes on life in popular culture. Both the meaning that the band intended and the meanings that the listeners conceive are true and right. Music, while universal, is really a unique and individualistic experience. Pink Floyd chose the prism design for their groundbreaking album because they interpreted it as symbolizing their themes and styles. But for others, the prism means an infinite amount of possibilities. Modes in and of themselves allow individual interpretation and when you combine multiple modes, like with the visual/aural/alphabetical modes present on an album, the potential for interpretation multiplies exponentially. Regardless of what meaning you may make of Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon*, the multimodal aspects are all working together to point you toward something more.

“There is no dark side of the moon really
Matter of fact it's all dark”
Heartbeat
—Pink Floyd, “Eclipse”

Appendix A

Figure 1. Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here* album cover

Hipgnosis, 1075. *Wish You Were Here*, Harvest and Columbia Records, 1975, album cover. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wish_You_Were_Here_\(Pink_Floyd_album\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wish_You_Were_Here_(Pink_Floyd_album)).

Figure 2. Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* album cover

Hipgnosis, 1973. *Dark Side of the Moon*, Harvest Records, 1973, album cover. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Dark_Side_of_the_Moon.

Figure 3. Rolling Stones t-shirt

The Rolling Stones Neon Tongue Logo T-Shirt, <https://www.hottopic.com/product/the-rolling-stones-neon-tongue-logo-t-shirt/12222736.html?cgid=band-merch-shop-by-artist-rolling-stones#start=2>

Figure 4. The Beatles' *Abbey Road* album cover

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbey_Road

Figure 5. Nirvana's Logo

Nirvana Logo Smile Smiley Face Music Rock Band Embroidered Patch Iron On (3.5" x 3.8"), <https://www.amazon.com/Nirvana-Smile-Smiley-Music-Embroidered/dp/B07Q2DJQDS>.

Figure 6. Pink Floyd T-shirt from Kohl's

Men's Pink Floyd "The Dark Side Of The Moon" Band Tee, <https://www.kohls.com/product/prd-2097966/pink-floyd-the-dark-side-of-the-moon-tee-men.jsp?prdPV=3>

Figure 7. Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* baby clothing

Baby Boys' Pink Floyd Short Sleeve Bodysuit-Navy, https://www.pinterest.com/pin/AWV13JO_OlkaY0qUiM1DxPuAndb-hHmcFfQQoomb4K3qExUCco_SApiW8ya6tazNy5C_A8UyCbPpiY1QxCTUipk/?nic_v2=1a4BsjMYg

Figure 8. Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* earrings

Pink Floyd Earrings (*Dark side of the moon*), https://www.etsy.com/listing/264073360/pink-floyd-earrings-dark-side-of-the?ga_order=most_relevant&ga_search_type=all&ga_view_type=gallery&ga_search_query=pink+floyd+dark+side+of+the+moon&ref=sr_gallery-1-32&organic_search_click=1&frs=1.

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We Love Discourse Groups 3000: Exploring the Literacies and Discourse Group of the Marvel Fandom

Allison Mool

In this article, Mool explores how people interact with the Marvel genre of movies, and how this creates an important discourse group. WARNING: SPOILERS AHEAD!

Welcome to the Fandom!

Imagine your friend walks up to you and says, “I thought it was so interesting when we found out that Nick Fury was actually a Skrull in *Far from Home*, but I have so many questions. What is he doing in space? Is he interacting with Captain Marvel? Was he there during the blip? Did he just ignore *Endgame* happening? Will he be in *The Eternals*?” Would you understand what they are saying? If you do understand these questions, chances are you were one of the paying moviegoers that, according to *boxofficemojo.com*, contributed to the \$2,797,800,564 brought in by *Avengers: Endgame*, the highest grossing movie of all time (“Top Lifetime Grosses”). If you don’t understand this, then you may not be a part of this fandom, and you probably have more time on your hands than the rest of us who are watching the movies.

A fandom is the people that *really* like movies, shows, or books. They are dedicated fans. Usually they form communities online and talk about their common interest with each other. Now if you are familiar with some of the terms that the writing program works with, you probably think this sounds a little bit like a **discourse group**! And you’re right. A discourse group is a

group of people who share certain **literacies** or understand terms, topics, and conversations that others might not understand. So if, for example, I am talking to someone inside my discourse group who has also seen each movie three times, I will speak differently than if I am trying to speak to someone who has only seen one movie. The discourse groups we are involved in effect the ways we communicate and act in situations. They are very influential in our lives. In this article we will take a look at how the Marvel discourse group interacts with itself and the rest of the world.

The Fan Experience

The discourse group of Marvel is an interesting occurrence. This isn't just a common language; it is something that people are very passionate about. These movies teach people lessons and give them hope. They can unite people. In my experience, watching a Marvel movie premiere at a theatre is something very special. There's an electricity in the air because every person in the theatre is excited. They all bought their tickets months ago and were counting down the days until they could be there. You can feel a community with these complete strangers who are as invested in these characters as you are. If you don't believe me, let me give you a few examples.

Whenever I have been in a theatre with Marvel fans, we never sat in silence for the movie. It is more . . . interactive. For example, whenever the Stan Lee cameo that is in every movie arrives on screen, the audience will cheer. Now, to someone not in the discourse group, this would not make sense. Yes, it may be a fun one-liner, but that person doesn't understand the significance of that man. They don't know that he devoted his life to bringing others joy and telling stories. They don't know how ridiculous those moments always are, and how it's always a surprise where he will pop up.

Watching *Infinity War* on opening night was also a very memorable experience. Everyone was captivated by the story and invested in the characters. When people started dusting, I could hear people around the theatre crying. Then, when the movie ended with Thanos succeeding and walking through the garden, we were all confused. Aren't the heroes supposed to win? As the credits started playing, someone on the opposite side of the room exclaimed, "WHAT?" We all started laughing through the tears because he was saying exactly what we were thinking. Also, during *Avengers: Endgame* when the portal appeared, there was a gasp in the theatre. Then when Black Panther walked out and the other portals started to open, the theatre broke out into applause. It was an epic moment on the screen, and the fans shared in that together.

As a part of the discourse group, you can see who is also a part of the discourse group by their actions. At the end of each movie there are postcredit scenes. There is one after the actor credits and usually one after the long credits. People that get up and leave after the movie or even after the first one, don't know that there is one at the end. Well, they either don't care or don't know about this convention of the movies. Members of the discourse group find this information important. It is exciting to get a little sneak peek at what is coming next.

Bringing People Together

The build-up to *Endgame* was very exciting for many fans, myself included. But what was even more interesting than the movie itself, was what it did to complete strangers. In my classes it became socially acceptable to overhear a name and turn around to ask if they were talking about *Endgame*. Then they would include you in talking about theories, opinions of previous movies, and favorite characters. Immediately you found a common interest with these strangers and through the conversation, you could get more excited about the movie and the characters you love. These movies can actually create discourse because we could have been scrolling through Instagram while waiting for class to start, instead we met new people and had a stimulating conversation.

Those conversations were interesting, though. We weren't talking about the weather, politics, or our lives. We were talking about fictional characters as if they really mattered, because to us they do. It's not like they are real people, but they mean something to each of us. They take them with us on their journey. They brought us closer together to the ones we love when we share our love of Marvel with them. We can discuss things like whether or not Ant-Man would go into Thanos's butt was a valid theory. (I really wish I was making that up, but it was a very common discussion) To the outsider, these conversations don't make sense. In fact, they would probably find them really weird. But in a discourse group, these things are understood. It creates connection for so many people.

Coping with all the Feelings, aka the Internet

The online presence of Marvel is huge. From opinions to memes to edits to announcement to advertisements, Marvel takes many, many forms on social media.

One form that Marvel takes online is in YouTube videos. These can be very different too. There are videos about theories that use the past events and information from the comics to predict the future movies. There are trailer breakdowns, so people stop trailers and explain what is happening in more detail, which could be helpful if you are new to Marvel and want to understand it. There are movie reviews. There are compilations of funny moments from the movies. You can find almost anything that you want, honestly. This is all fan-produced content. They are people who want to participate in the conversation of Marvel. They do this to feel like they are a part of the movies. And sometimes what the fans do actually influences what Marvel does. When the first Avengers movie came out and the character Philip Coulson died, the fans started a Twitter campaign to bring him back. Eventually, *Agents of Shield* premiered revealing that Coulson was saved.

Another aspect of the fan presence is fan accounts. There are many people out there who run an account dedicated to Marvel in addition to their personal accounts. They may post clips, drawings, or memes. Through these posts, they often start conversations in the comments. They may take polls on which movies are best or favorite villains. It varies by account, but it would take time to keep up with these. These fans must be very dedicated.

A large portion of Marvel themed posts are memes. Memes are entertaining visuals and words that are spread on social media. In order to understand the world of Marvel memes, I decided to start by googling “Marvel Memes.” I had millions of examples to look at. So, now we dive into an official meme review:

One of the first memes that I came across in my google search was this one (Babyninjawolf, Figure 1). I found it funny, not only because of the face that Captain America is making, but because I have experienced this before. I have gone with people who didn’t care to see the postcredit scenes and I had to convince them to stay the extra five minutes. In the discourse group, people will understand similar things. They all know about the postcredit scenes, so therefore this meme would make sense to them.



Figure 1: Babyninjawolf meme of Captain America.

This meme stuck out to me because, firstly, I was scared of *Endgame* spoilers, and secondly, the content isn't just Marvel themed (Hauntedbreezy, Figure 2). This meme brings in knowledge of *Bird Box*, which was a very popular movie on Netflix. They weren't allowed to look at the entity that was terrorizing them, so they walked around in blindfolds, as you can see. It is interesting how the Marvel discourse can incorporate other ideas and parts of culture. The fandoms are intersecting. This is cool because two completely different ideas can exist together and make something great. (It could even teach us something about unity in our society.)

Me trying to avoid
Endgame spoilers while navigating
social media this morning.



Figure 2: *Bird Box* meme about *Endgame* spoilers.

This meme takes the knowledge of what these characters personalities and experiences were and applied them to their lives (Clearwood, Figure 3). It's funny and relatable. This meme applies Marvel to the real world. It is also simpler. You don't need to know much about the characters when there are context clues in the picture. Steve Rogers looks confused while Tony Stark is handling scientific-looking technology. Will you enjoy it more if you do know the characters? Yes. But is it still made for everybody? Yes!



Figure 3: Marvel meme featuring Tony Stark and Steve Rogers.



Figure 4: Marvel meme that is also about nursing.

The interesting thing about this meme is that the content is nursing and Marvel (Strom, Figure 4). They took Marvel's words and visuals and made them their own. Now, I am not a nurse. But I can still use context clues to figure it out. For example, if you look at the bottom right corner of this meme, you will see the word "Nursing." There are probably some nurses in the world that aren't Marvel fans but have enjoyed this meme. The two discourses are combined nicely to entertain two groups of people. This shows us that discourse groups aren't completely separate. We all have unique combinations of discourse groups in our toolbox that make us who we are and inform how we communicate.

The Endgame

At this point you might be thinking, "cool, great . . . why do I care?" Firstly, according to *nbc.com*, Marvel movies in total have made over \$22,000,000,000 in the box office (Whitten). That doesn't count DVD sales and merchandise. If it has had this big of an impact, we should be paying attention to what we are consuming. Secondly, we need to be aware that discourse groups are a huge part of our lives. We are each involved in so many. If we don't realize this, communication can get confusing. We have to be thinking about who will understand what stories and what terms to use when talking to people. If I tried to talk to my Dad about music (who has never played an instrument) the way I would my future-music-teacher sister, we wouldn't get very far. But if I talked to him about politics, we could have

a good conversation. Thinking about our discourse groups can help us really connect with other people.

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A Recipe for Literacy: An Analysis of Translating as a Vernacular Literacy

Danielle Eldredge

When discussing literacies, David Barton and Mary Hamilton specifically outline two: vernacular literacies and dominant literacies. Vernacular literacies are usually personal, rooted in everyday life, self-generated, and/or learned informally. On the contrary, dominant literacies are typically taught and used in more “formal” settings, such as school and work. In this essay, Eldredge will argue how translating her grandmother’s recipes is a vernacular literacy because of the way these recipes have personal value to her, are a part of her everyday life, are self-generated, include a network of exchange, and are informally learned.

Introduction

Every day we are faced with a vast variety of texts, of which we interact with differently. Some we use in the moment when they are needed and immediately discard them after they have fulfilled their purpose. Others we refer to every now and then and store them somewhere accessible for future reference. Some are made for formal organizations, while others are made for personal convenience. In any case, each text is produced and used differently, depending on the function and environment of the text.

One example of an everyday text being produced is a recipe, like the ones my grandmother made for our family. My grandmother is hands down the best cook on my dad’s side of the family. Whenever she makes anything, it is always from scratch and absolutely delicious. She cooks everything with lots of love and puts so much effort into everything she makes. I remember watching her when I was a kid and seeing her manage so many different side dishes, preparations, and the main dish itself with awe. Quite a few times she would make up a random meal using only ingredients that she had and without the help of the Internet. My favorite side dish would be her avocado

salad, or what I referred to as the “yummy stuff” when I was nine. It has corn, jalapeños, avocado, and beans, all topped with lime juice. I couldn’t even tell you what my favorite main dish is because everything is so wonderful, delicious, and unique in its own way. Asking me to make such a choice is about as easy as being asked to pick the best-looking blade of grass out of an entire field. When I became older, my grandmother would explain to me what she was doing and give some bits of advice. At some point in time, she decided to type out her most beloved recipes—everything from soups to empanadas to meats to seafood—into Word documents so that she could send them to her children and anyone else who may want them. Because her first language is Spanish, and it is the language she’s most comfortable with, she typed all of her recipes in Spanish. That’s not to say she’s incapable of speaking English, because quite frankly her English isn’t bad at all. In fact, my family often likes to speak a combination of English and Spanish—a language called Spanglish. However, if my grandmother is able to communicate in her native language, then more often than not she will. Writing the recipes in Spanish was not a problem for her children because they all know Spanish, too, but it was a problem for me because I am not quite fluent yet.

Let’s take a look at my grandmother’s cooking recipes. I might argue that they’re a **vernacular literacy** because of the personal, informal, and

Vernacular Literacies

Using Barton and Hamilton’s definition, vernacular literacies are literate practices that are rooted in everyday lives, self-generated by people in response to situations, and learned informally through emotional and material interactions in the world (251–255).

self-generated nature of her typing the recipes herself in Spanish and then handing them down to me, which I must translate to English also via personal, informal, and self-generated means. However, by observing the function and environment (namely, the vernacular nature) of my grandmother’s cooking recipes, we can also analyze the work I’ve done to translate them as another kind of vernacular literacy, according to David Barton and Mary Hamilton’s definition.

Defining Vernacular Literacies

Before I begin my analysis of vernacular literacies, it’s important to establish Barton and Hamilton’s definition of this concept. According to their analysis, vernacular literacies can be summarized into three main points:

- Vernacular literacies are rooted in everyday lives
- They are self-generated
- They are learned informally

First, they identify vernacular literacies as being “rooted in everyday experience and serve everyday purposes” (251). By this, they mean that vernacular literacies are not usually made by big institutions that serve a formal purpose but rather are more personal to the creator and are made to suit the creator’s everyday needs. With this personal aspect in mind, a deeper definition unfolds for Barton and Hamilton “[vernacular literacies] are entwined in people’s emotional lives” (255). Thus, what this indicates is that the particularly personal nature of vernacular texts is what makes them vulnerable to attaching themselves closely to people’s emotions. This is especially the case with my grandmother’s recipes, for they have a profoundly personal value to me.

Second, Barton and Hamilton make a key point that “Because of their relative freedom from formal institutional control, vernacular practices are more likely to be voluntary and self-generated, rather than being imposed externally” (253). Essentially, what the authors are saying here is that vernacular practices are not explicitly taught but rather are self-generated. For example, no one had to teach a young girl how to write in her diary, and no one had to teach an adult how to write reminders on sticky notes; both individuals self-generated their own vernacular texts. However, just because a text is self-generated does not necessarily imply that the maker had absolutely no help at all when creating it. In fact, Barton and Hamilton include in their analysis that, “Much of people’s reading and writing involved other people and was located in reciprocal networks of exchange” (254). They later clarify that these networks were typically people who are close to the maker of text, such as friends, neighbors, and family. For me, family definitely plays a role as a network when it comes to receiving and translating the texts.

Lastly, Barton and Hamilton regard vernacular activities as being “learned informally” (252). This draws particular attention to the fact that vernacular literacies are, more often than not, learned from an individual’s home and upbringing. In other words, the individual was not specifically taught how to do a particular activity and what to write; instead, they learned from observing others or by testing out their creative ideas. In addition to vernacular literacies being learned informally, they also don’t have a set role between the “student” and the “teacher.” Barton and Hamilton bring up this point when they state, “The roles of novice and learner are not fixed, but shift from context to context” (252). In other words, vernacular literacies do not require a strict learning setting where one person is the teacher and holder of knowledge, while a student is there solely to obtain the knowledge from the teacher; this is oftentimes the case for literacies in school or workplace settings. Rather, vernacular literacies not only lack the strict roles of teacher or student but also have an interchangeable nature of the

roles. To illustrate, imagine two friends, each with a different game on their phones. They both taught themselves how to play their respective game. When they come together and show each other how to play their games, one person is the “teacher” while the other is the “student.” But, right after that, the friend that was previously the “student” is now the “teacher” and the friend that was previously the “teacher” is now the “student.” This example demonstrates the interchangeable roles of “novice to learner” in which they “shift from context to context to context,” as mentioned by Barton and Hamilton.

Translating as Being Rooted in My Everyday Life

Now that I’ve established a clear definition, I can make a coherent argument about my recipe translations, as both a **translingual writing** activity and as a kind of vernacular literacy. Let’s begin with the first premise of

Translingual Writing

According to linguistics scholar Suresh Canagarajah, “While the term *multilingual* perceives the relationship between languages in an additive manner (i.e., combination of separate languages), *translingual* addresses the synergy, treating languages as always in contact and mutually influencing each other, with emergent meanings and grammars” (41).

the definition of vernacular literacies being rooted in everyday lives. Whether it be an official work document, a love letter, or a written conversation, translating texts is an everyday experience that most people are familiar with. And translingual writing doesn’t necessarily mean only moving between established languages, such as from Spanish to English. People also move from formal to informal modes within a language, or blend languages together, like my family’s use of Spanglish. Therefore, it’s a given to

say that translating a recipe is a kind of translingual writing that passes the first aspect of vernacular literacies. However, the production of the translated text and how that text is used may not be vernacular. Examine Figure 1 and Figure 2. Figure 1 shows the original recipe, while Figure 2 shows my altered version of the recipe. As you can see, not only has the text been translated, but the way that I produced the text also reflects my everyday life. In other words, I changed the aesthetic appeal of the recipe to mimic those that I see written in published cookbooks or online. For instance, the big center-aligned name of the recipe, the subheadings, the neatly justified list, etc. I made these changes because I wanted to be able to use it more easily. In essence, because it is produced to look like the way that I am typically accustomed to looking at recipes, I am able to use it more comfortably.

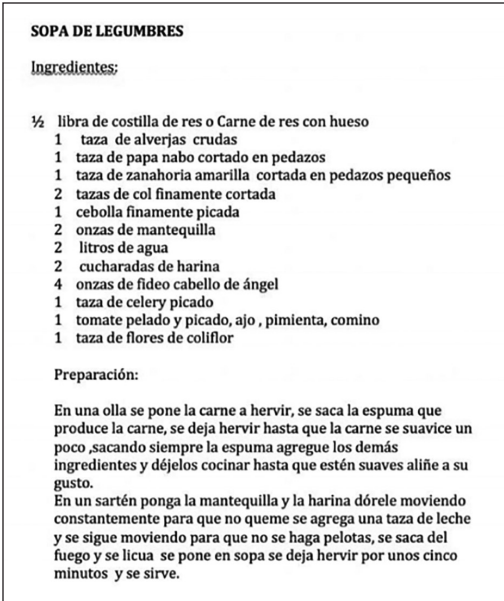


Figure 1: Image of my grandmother's original recipe.

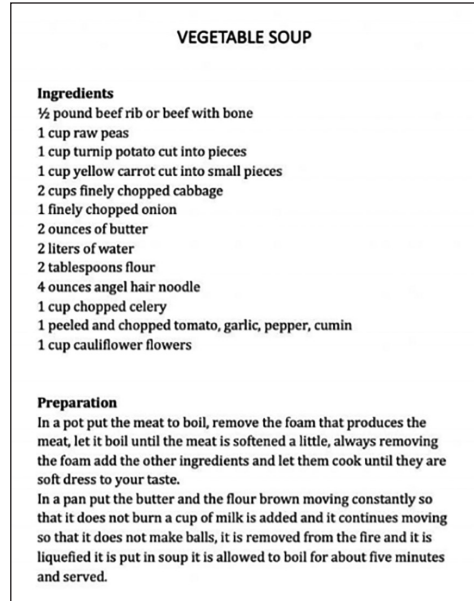


Figure 2: Image of my translated and altered version of the recipe from Figure 1.

Next comes the aspect of vernacular literacies as being part of my emotional life. This is definitely deemed true for a variety of reasons. First, these recipes were all handmade by my grandmother. She is an extremely good cook, for she not only knows how to make food taste delicious, but she can also feed any number of people who show up to eat it. This very fact alone already has a high emotional value to me because of the personal and loving nature of a home-cooked meal from my family. Second, it's something that will keep my grandmother's memory alive, even after she passes away. This is a unique characteristic of a vernacular literacy, as opposed to other literacies, for the intrinsic personal meaning that is attached to vernacular texts is nearly impossible to replicate in legal or professional texts. Lastly, one recipe in particular, called *fanesca*, is made at a particular time of the year as part of a religious practice since my family is Catholic. This meal is a soup that contains fish, vegetables, and lots of beans. It is traditional for Ecuadorians to eat this on Good Friday (the Friday before Easter Sunday), which is a Christian holiday that commemorates Jesus' death by not eating any meat; hence, the fish and vegetables. This recipe is particularly significant to me because my grandmother is the one that makes it every year. Nevertheless, the religious and emotional aspect that is tied to this recipe fits in perfectly with common examples of vernacular texts because they are personal to everyone.

My Self-Generated Recipes

The second premise to Barton and Hamilton's definition of vernacular literacies refers to being self-generated. This is especially applicable in my case because, quite frankly, no one instructed me to do this. This was done entirely out of self-interest, rather than being imposed upon me by an outside institution. Simply put, translating these recipes was ultimately my decision so that they can be used for my personal benefit, rather than being a mandatory task required for an institution. Additionally, these vernacular texts reflect my own originality in terms of how I chose to set them up. Simple choices behind this process of production include bold or underline, center or left aligned, numbered or not numbered. As mundane as it sounds, these texts were created carefully, in terms of how I want my altered documents to look. Although I had the freedom to do a lot more with it, I also had the freedom to leave it how my grandmother originally typed it. For example, I deliberately didn't number the "Preparation" section (as seen in Figure 2) because I wanted to keep some of the original structure that my grandmother made, in case it becomes handy when the texts are used. In other words, it appeared that my grandmother chunked certain sequences of steps together, so in order to maintain those sequences while cooking, I left it this way.

Although I am creating these texts myself, that doesn't mean I don't have any help. I do have some networks that are available to me. These networks, as previously mentioned, can be friends, neighbors or family; but in my case it is primarily family. Whenever I get stuck on something that isn't translating nicely, I would ask my dad to help me since he is fluent in Spanish. Aside from that, I could also reach out to my aunts, if need be, because they are also fluent in Spanish and have the original recipes from my grandmother. All of this points to two things about my vernacular literacy: (1) I have a whole web of family members available to me who can help me with the task of translating, and (2) this particular translingual vernacular literacy is travelling across three generations! From my grandmother, to my dad and aunts, to me, these recipes are being handed down. This, again, is a very unique quality of vernacular literacies that isn't the same with other literacies. For instance, how often do you see something that was made under more formal circumstances, like an essay written for school, being passed down from generation to generation? Probably not often, if even at all, which is what makes the personal aspect behind vernacular literacies so admirable.

Translating as Being Informally Learned

The last premise of vernacular literacies refers to being learned informally. No one taught me how to organize a recipe to my liking, and no one informed me of a strict guideline as to how this text “should” look when I have finished producing it. Rather, I informally learned over the years what I find to be aesthetically pleasing when it comes to recipe layouts, and I have informally taught myself how to utilize Microsoft Word. I also know how to do other things such as upload the files onto my Google Drive, flash drive, or any other means to ensure that these precious files don’t get lost. Likewise, when it comes to actually translating the recipes, I taught myself how to use translating websites to help me. An important takeaway here is that learning something informally doesn’t mean a person doesn’t have any resources, for people don’t necessarily learn in isolation. We’re all influenced by so many things when we’re learning something new, and we use tools for our learning. But informal *can* mean that a person picks and chooses freely among the resources they have available to them, without explicit guidelines from others.

Another aspect of informal learning includes the aforementioned networks, such as my dad. Whenever I have a question, I can just simply ask him. This doesn’t mean that he is a professor in the subject in Spanish, like many formal institutions have, nor does it mean that he is teaching me everything about it. Rather, he can just help answer a quick question and help me informally learn a little bit more about Spanish. Although he is helpful, it is ultimately up to me how I decide to translate into English. For example, I could ask him what a phrase means, and he could provide me with a directly-translated, choppy-sounding English phrase, but how I warp it to flow smoothly into my own writing is what makes translating these recipes my own personal literacy.

In regard to having family members teach me, there is another aspect to consider. Recall that my grandmother would teach me a little bit of how she would make her recipes. She would show me what she’s doing and how it might help something cook better or have more flavor. So, in this context, she is the “teacher” and I am the “student.” However, when the time came for her to email them to me, she had a bit of trouble. Therefore, I switched into the “teacher” role and she switched into the “student” role when I showed

Re-Thinking Genre Research

The ISU Writing Program tends to describe the concept of doing **genre research** as something a writer does when they need to produce a genre that already exists. But genre research also includes using knowledge about genres (such as recipes) that exist in the world to produce something personally meaningful, which might not match the genre conventions.

her how to upload Word documents into Gmail, so that she sends them. With reference to Barton and Hamilton saying that the roles of novice and expert are not set in place, but rather shift from context to context, we can further argue that these recipes are a vernacular literacy in terms of how they are used.

Conclusion

All in all, it's clear to see how translating my grandmother's recipes can be seen as a strictly vernacular literacy. The aspects that translating entails, including the personal value, the networks, and the self-generated aspect of it, would definitely qualify this translanguing literacy activity as a vernacular one. This contrasts greatly from Barton and Hamilton's view of recipes, for they argue that they are "part vernacular and part institutional" (257). Their view is that they are written at home or self-generated (vernacular) but are published in cookbooks or demonstrated on public television (dominant/institutional). I would like to counter their argument because through my analysis, we saw that my recipes involve unique features that their view does not include, such as the variety of networks I used and the interchangeable roles of teacher and student that occurred. In addition, my grandmother's recipes are not publicly advertised, for they are personal to the family. Therefore, according to my view of recipes, I argue that they are strictly vernacular as opposed to being both vernacular and dominant.

Nonetheless, the big question still remains: What do we gain by examining people's use of vernacular literacies? To answer this, I would argue that we gain a whole new perspective of the things that are seemingly mundane or less valuable. For example, in the rebuttal above, we see that two different perspectives of the same literate activity (in this case, writing recipes) can offer different views on whether they are vernacular or institutional. If we were to only acknowledge Barton and Hamilton's view of recipes as being self-generated and publicly advertised, then we would completely miss out on the personal and complex view that I hold for my recipes that others may not be aware about. In other words, by examining my use of recipes as a vernacular activity, others may gain a new perspective of recipes that they may not have even thought about before. Thus, they gain more of an open mind towards different activities as being unique in their own ways.

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#UndertheInfluence: Analyzing Instagram Influencer Posts with CHAT

Kendal "Alexis" Adams

In this article, Adams examines how and why Instagram influencer posts are a genre and how everyday Instagram users can be impacted by this genre when they encounter it. Using ISU's version of cultural-historical activity theory (PCHAT) to analyze a sample of Instagram posts created by influencers who are currently active on the social media app, Adams argues that Instagram influencers plan, create, and promote their posts in a specific way in order to successfully advertise brands, products, and services to their followers.

I used to be the type of person who hated keeping up with social media, but that all changed the day I was introduced to the glamorous world of Instagram influencers. Seeing pictures of regular people just like me lounging on gorgeous, sandy beaches with cocktails in hand, or grinning for the camera as they showed off their latest twenty-four karat gold face masks was enough to leave me with a serious case of social media FOMO. I wondered how these people, who should've been living average lives like mine, had managed to find themselves whisked away to a land of fun and luxury. I must admit that following the lives of Instagram influencers made me a little jealous (okay, maybe more than a little), but I was also incredibly intrigued. Surely being a social media influencer couldn't involve that much effort; you post a few photos of yourself online, reach out to some companies and beg them to send you free stuff, and the rest just takes care of itself . . . right?

Well, actually, it's not that simple. The work of an Instagram influencer may not seem like much work at first glance, but it can, in fact, be a full-time job. Unlike the typical Instagram user who likely just sees the app as a place

to connect with friends, post their best selfies for clout, and perhaps slide into the occasional DM (Direct Message), Instagram influencers create their posts with the specific intent of marketing brands, services, and products to their followers, in hopes of making a profit. Not only that, but by promoting these brands through Instagram's platform, these influencers are providing companies with valuable exposure to their target audience: millennials and Gen Z. By looking at Instagram influencer posts using a framework based on cultural-historical activity theory that is used by the ISU Writing program, PCHAT for short, we can start to see how the work of Instagram influencers is actually a form of carefully-crafted marketing that isn't nearly as easy to execute as it may look.

CHATting About IG

The Illinois State University (ISU) Writing Program website defines PCHAT as something “to help us think about and study the complex genres that we encounter in the world.” We can view Instagram influencer posts as a type of text that exists within the **genre** of Instagram posts. A genre is “a kind of production that is possible to identify by understanding the conventions or features that make that production recognizable” (ISU Writing Program). In other words, every Instagram post in existence has features and characteristics, sometimes referred to as **conventions**, that help us to recognize it as an Instagram post. For example, some conventions of the Instagram post genre include hashtags, photos or video clips, text captions, and a number indicating many users have “liked” the post underneath it.

Instagram influencer posts are a subgenre of Instagram posts. Along with adhering to the conventions of the standard Instagram post genre, influencer posts on Instagram come with their own unique set of conventions as well. For example, because Instagram influencer posts are used to promote products and services, influencers always include the name of the brand, product, and/or the company they are marketing in their post tags and captions. Instagram may seem like a platform that exists solely for pleasure and not for business, but that is not the case for the community of influencers using the app. An Instagram influencer must be able to successfully convince their followers of their credibility, reliability, emotional authenticity, and knowledge of the products they promote if they want their followers to buy the things they advertise so they can make a profit and maintain strong relationships with their sponsorship partners. Every influencer post we see is planned out and created in a specific way for a specific purpose—to effectively market a service or product. Influencers are acting as expert

resources with valuable opinions on the brands, services, and products they promote every time they make a new post, which means that casual Instagram users are being subconsciously swayed and influenced by these social media professionals whenever they scroll through their Instagram feeds—and they may not even realize it!

This makes us active participants in the complex **activity system** that is Instagram. According to the ISU Writing Program website, activity systems are “cooperative interactions aimed at achieving a goal. As a lens, the activity system helps us to analyze the psychological and social processes of achieving that goal.” As I mentioned earlier, the primary goal of social media influencers is to convince their followers to buy the things they’re marketing online, which means their followers aren’t just being impacted by influencers from a social perspective, but from a financial one as well. In this article, I’ll be using the PCHAT terms representation, activity, and socialization to analyze posts from a sample of influencers currently active on Instagram and break down how and why Instagram influencers plan, create, and promote their posts the way they do. I’ll then discuss what PCHAT has helped me learn as a user of social media.

On Instagram Straight Reppin’

In her article *Just CHATing*, Joyce Walker uses the CHAT term **representation** to refer to how “the people who produce a text conceptualize and plan it (how they think about it, how they talk about it), as well as all the activities and materials that shape how people do this” (75). Representation plays a large role in how Instagram influencers plan their posts; as professional brand ambassadors, they have to think carefully about how each individual element of an Instagram post will help them to successfully sell something. Even things that may seem insignificant in the planning of an Instagram post can end up having a big impact on how the advertisement will be received and how many people will see it. For example, Instagram captions can be up to 2,200 characters long, but many influencers choose to make their captions shorter so that people who see their posts won’t get distracted, bored, or intimidated by the posts’ lengths and scroll past them.

Hashtags are another genre convention of the Instagram caption that is strategically planned out by an influencer. Instagram users can include up to thirty different hashtags in the caption of their post, and also have the option to include another thirty hashtags in the first comment of their post. Hashtags can make or break whether influencers will get high levels of user

engagement on their posts. All of the content on Instagram is categorized and made discoverable to Instagram users using hashtags. Because of this, hashtag use is one of the main ways Instagram influencers get new followers. If an influencer uses a popular, frequently used hashtag (like #fashion, for example, which currently has roughly 734 million Instagram posts listed under it), then there will be more opportunities for their post to be viewed by more people.

On the flip side, the hashtags an influencer chooses could also be so popular that those who use them in their post captions may find themselves lost in the shuffle of the other millions of Instagrammers also using the hashtag. Some influencers even purposefully choose to use hashtags with lower amounts of online traffic so that they have a higher chance of getting their posts featured to a niche audience.

In Figure 1, Instagram influencer @iamceciliafoss includes only four hashtags in her post caption. Two of the hashtags are popular ones: #stronger has been used on Instagram 5.4 million times, and #ad has been used a whopping 10.3 million times. However, her other two hashtag choices are not as frequently used as the other two. The hashtag #Strongersweden has been used on Instagram roughly 46,300 times and #strongerlabel has been used a little over 1,500 times. Cecilia's post is currently listed on Instagram as one of the top posts categorized under the hashtag #strongerlabel, which means that when Instagram users look up that specific hashtag, her Instagram post is one of the first five that appears in the search results (Figure 2). Because



Figure 1: A screenshot of an Instagram post from influencer @iamceciliafoss advertising athleticwear for the fitness clothing brand Stronger.

Found at <http://www.instagram.com/p/B24gnWivBOMT/>.

of this, Instagram users who are not currently following Cecilia, but do follow the #strongerlabel hashtag, will be much more likely to see her post and potentially follow her.

Since hashtags are usually included in the caption of an Instagram post, using too many of them in a caption can sometimes be off-putting to Instagram users viewing content. To remedy this issue, some Instagrammers have taken up a practice, commonly referred to as “hashtag hiding,” in which they strategically place a row of dots, emojis, and/or other symbols in line breaks above their hashtags so that their followers will have to click the “more” button in order to see them (Figures 3 and 4).

The time when an influencer chooses to upload their Instagram post to the app can also impact how many people will end up seeing it. Instagram is more frequently used at certain times of day, so it isn’t uncommon for influencers to schedule their posts for optimized times in hopes of getting higher

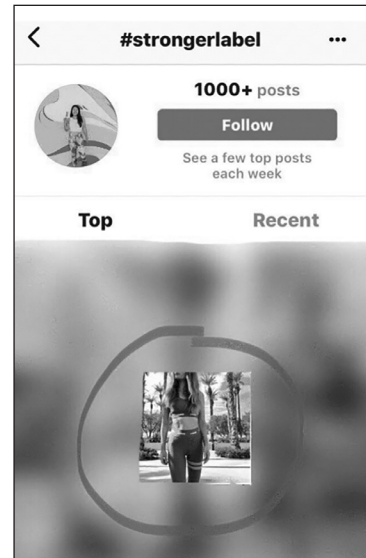


Figure 2: A screenshot of the Instagram explore page for the #strongerlabel hashtag featuring Cecilia’s post. Found at <http://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/strongerlabel>.



Figure 3: A screenshot of an Instagram caption that incorporates hashtag hiding. This image shows what the visible portion of the Instagram caption looks like when it first appears on an Instagram user’s feed. Found at <https://www.instagram.com/p/BmD8BBInlNY/>.

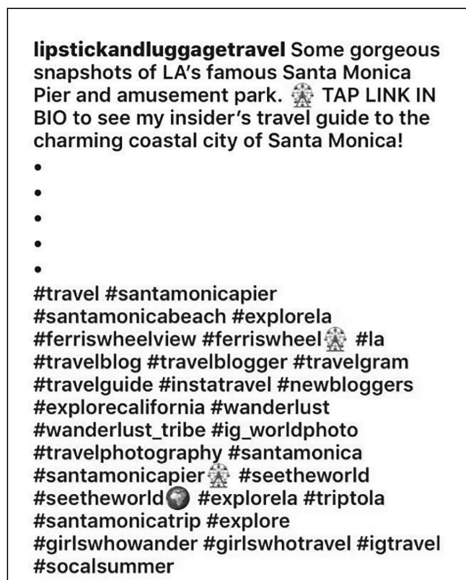


Figure 4: A screenshot of the same Instagram caption pictured in Figure 3, but this image shows what the expanded caption looks like once you click “more.” Found at <https://www.instagram.com/p/BmD8BBInlNY/>.

amounts of engagement on their advertisements and growing their follower count. Some influencers even invest in apps or software to track the amount of engagement they get on each post based on the time of day they upload to Instagram and which hashtags they use. This helps influencers determine the best times to use Instagram and which hashtags they should include in their posts in order to get the most likes and comments.

Now that I've taken some time to talk about some elements of representation that influencers commonly use in their work, I'd like to take a look at a post from an influencer currently active in the Instagram community and analyze what kinds of representation could have impacted her planning process. This post comes to us from @emmawlker, an influencer, video creator, and fashion writer.

By analyzing the genre conventions featured in Emma's Instagram post, we can start to identify all the different elements of the post that she conceptualized and planned through the process of representation to help determine what the final product of her advertisement for HelloFresh, a meal kit delivery company, would look like. Right off the bat, I noticed that the photo included in Emma's post is a compilation of four separate images collaged together. In the first photo, she's holding up the recipe card for the meal kit; in the second, she's holding the recipe card in one hand and a



Figure 5: @emmawlker's sponsored Instagram post for the meal kit delivery company HelloFresh. Found at https://www.instagram.com/p/B0_sD2nncYz/.

spatula in the other, giving her followers insight into what types of cooking tools are used to make the recipe. In the third photo, she's begun the meal creation process, and appears to be sautéing some of the ingredients in a pan, and in the final photo, she's holding the finished recipe in a bowl and has a forkful of noodles in her line of sight, presumably getting ready to take a bite of her fully-prepared meal! It's possible that she planned to use four different photos in her post to highlight the entire process of using the HelloFresh meal kit from start to finish so that her followers would have a clearer idea of what to expect if they ordered the kit for themselves. Since Emma decided to make a photo collage for this specific Instagram post, she also had to plan out what tools she would need to create the photo collage. Because four images are framed by a digital border, this shows she also made the conscious decision to use some kind of graphic design tool or digital editing software to create the finished image for her post.

Another instance of representation impacting Emma's Instagram-post-planning process can be found by looking at her caption for the picture. She states in the caption that she has partnered up with HelloFresh to give her followers an exclusive code to get \$80 off their first monthly meal kit purchase; this means that she had to communicate with HelloFresh's company to secure this brand deal in the first place, and likely participated in some sort of meeting with members of the company to discuss and agree to the terms of the sponsorship and plan out exactly what information HelloFresh needed her post to include to best market the meal kit to her followers.

Getting Your Act(ivity) Together

The next PCHAT term I'd like to discuss is **activity**. Walker says, "Activity is a term that encompasses the actual practices that people engage in as they create text (writing, drawing, walking across the hall to ask someone else what they think, getting peer review, etc.)" (76). The Instagram app functions as an activity system "aimed at achieving a goal" (ISU Writing Program). The goal, or goals, of activity systems are "achieved through the work of people and the tools they use," and different genres can function as some of those tools. In the case of the activity system that is the Instagram app, Instagram posts are a genre that was created to help achieve the goals of the app and its creators. One of those goals is to help the app's owners and investors make as much money as possible through the Instagram platform. Even though the app is free for members of Instagram to use, it is currently worth over \$100 billion dollars; according to Instagram co-founder Kevin Systrom, one of the other goals the founders of Instagram hope to achieve

is making Instagram “not just a photo-sharing app,” but “the way you share your life when you’re on the go” (Simon; Lagorio-Chafkin).

So, what exactly does the CHAT term “activity” have to do with the goals of Instagram? Because the Instagram post genre is a tool “that the participant(s) [of Instagram] use to achieve” the goals of the app/activity system, these goals cannot be reached without Instagram users actively engaging in the practices necessary to help reach them. Since many Instagram influencers use the app and their promotional posts as a tool to earn income, the activities they choose to engage (or not engage) in—and the ways they execute these forms of activity—can have a tremendous impact on the overall quality of their Instagram posts.

Using this next Instagram post from @kevinwathey, a yoga company owner and brand ambassador for a mindfulness and wellness-inspired jewelry company, we can take a closer look at the vital role activity plays in the work of professional Instagram influencers.

Looking at Kevin’s post, the first thing my eye is drawn to is the photo. He’s pictured sitting cross-legged on a yoga mat with a backdrop of plants, palm trees, and a colorful sky behind him. This leads me to think about what types of activity Kevin had to engage in to create this post. The text included with the image states that the photo was taken in Poipu, a beach on the southern side of the island of Kaua’i, Hawaii. To get to Poipu, Kevin likely



Figure 6: @kevinwathey’s Instagram post promoting a yoga resort trip offered through his company, Synchronicity Yoga. Found at <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bu4LLT7FMsc/>.

had to engage in all sorts of activities—buying a plane ticket, booking a flight to the island of Kauaʻi, and transporting himself to Poipu beach to take this photo. Not only that, but Kevin also made the decision to feature a photo of himself in the lotus position, a yoga pose, so we can consider the physical action of him doing yoga to be yet another form of activity that had to occur for this post to be created.

Because cultural-historical activity theory situates the study of genres as something complex, fluid, and inherently social, activity is a component of PCHAT that often involves more than one person. In the caption of his Instagram post, Kevin credits another Instagram user for taking his photo. Kevin's decision to collaborate with a photographer in order to get his picture taken for this post is an example of another form of activity that had to take place for this post to be made. Choosing his photographer for the photo and coordinating a time to take the picture for his post can be regarded as more of the many types of activity Kevin engaged in as part of the Instagram-post creation process.

It is also important to note that activity doesn't just impact the way an Instagram user takes a photo for a post, but can affect how they create the content featured in the post itself as well. For instance, Kevin took part in the action of brainstorming what he wanted to write in his post caption, then engaged in the action of physically writing out the caption on a touchscreen or keyboard. Brainstorming and writing are two more kinds of activity Kevin participated in to aid in achieving the goal of successfully marketing his company's yoga resort trip to other Instagram users.

Putting the "Social" in Social Media

The last PCHAT term I'd like to focus on is **socialization**. Walker says, "socialization describes the interactions of people and institutions as they produce, distribute and use texts. When people engage with texts, they are also (consciously and unconsciously) engaged in the practice of representing and transforming different kinds of social and cultural practices" (76). As a form of social media, it's likely no surprise that socialization is frequently taking place within the activity system of Instagram. I'll be using this next Instagram post from @whittyjaz, a skincare, fitness, and wellness blogger, to discuss how socialization specifically impacts influencers and their followers on Instagram.

When looking at the text caption of Jazmine's Instagram post, you'll notice that she ends her caption with some open-ended questions for her



Figure 7: A screenshot of an Instagram post from influencer @whittyjaz posing with a brand of packing cubes. Found at <https://www.instagram.com/p/B1b99QsnEQO/>.

followers: “What outside-of-the-box ways do you use packing cubes, or what do you think you could use them for?” Posing these questions not only encourages Jazmine’s followers to respond to her in the comments, which would in turn raise the amount of follower engagement she receives on the post, but also asks her followers to think about how the product she is promoting could be useful to them in their everyday lives. If someone responds to Jazmine’s questions by sharing what they would like to use the packing cubes for, they could become that much more invested in purchasing the product for themselves. Jazmine’s interactions show how the genre of the Instagram post has the potential to be transformed through socialization; as her followers respond to her questions in the comments with answers about how they might use the packing cubes, in turn, other Instagram users will see those comments and be inspired to think about it as well. Every time an Instagram user responds to Jazmine’s questions in the comments, they are essentially helping to market the product alongside her.

For some influencers, engaging with their followers on Instagram is another way socialization affects their work. Many Instagram users want to know if the influencers they follow are trustworthy, credible, and emotionally authentic. Some influencers on Instagram have gotten a bad rap from the public for promoting products that they don’t like, or that don’t work as

well as they claim they do, just to get free products from companies and make money off the advertisements, which is sometimes negatively referred to on social media as a practice called “shilling.”

On the other hand, influencers like Jazmine take a more straightforward approach to promoting the things they advertise. Figure 8 shows an interaction in the comment section of Jazmine’s post between her and a follower. The follower says in their comment that they thought about purchasing the packing cubes, but typically roll their clothes as a packing technique instead. In her response to the comment, Jazmine admits that while she doesn’t know how good the cubes are for saving space, she enjoys using them because they help her stay organized when packing. She then goes on to share another way she uses the cubes, as a way to pack dirty clothes at the end of a trip, and says that she has “honestly been surprised by them.” Jazmine’s comment provides her followers with evidence of her authenticity and reliability as an influencer, which in turn could help convince her followers that she is trustworthy and that the opinions she shares about the packing cubes are honest ones.



Figure 8: A screenshot of a portion of the comment section from @whittyjaz’s Instagram post. Found at <https://www.instagram.com/p/B1b99QynEQ0/>.

Exercising My Insta-Agency

By taking time to analyze the genre of Instagram influencer posts more closely than I ever have before using PCHAT, I’ve learned a lot about my role as a consumer, both through the content on my Instagram feed and the products and services I purchase being promoted by influencers on social media. As an active participant in the complex activity system that is Instagram, I believe that it’s my responsibility to be smart about the influencers I choose to support and the things I see being advertised that I choose to purchase, and one of the best ways for me to do that is by thinking more deeply about the choices influencers make in their Instagram-post creation process and considering how those choices affect me as a viewer of that content.

After being introduced to the framework of PCHAT and learning just how complex of a genre Instagram influencer posts can be, I now have a

handy list of go-to questions I ask myself before buying something I see an influencer promote:

- Is this influencer someone I view as reliable, credible, trustworthy, and emotionally authentic?
- Has this influencer provided me with any visible proof or testimony that this product is as good as they claim it is?
- Does this influencer exclusively post sponsored content, or do they make personal posts too?
- Is this influencer interacting regularly with their followers, and if so, do I believe these interactions are positive and authentic ones?

Using these questions helps me feel confident that the influencers I support fiscally are ones I can also stand behind as people, and without learning about the framework of PCHAT, I never would have realized just how much thought, planning, and effort goes into the creation of a single Instagram influencer post, or just how much agency regular users of Instagram, like myself, have in shaping how the activity system of Instagram functions and transforms as we engage with the posts, products, and people that exist within it.

Analyzing Instagram posts, a genre that I encounter frequently in my personal life, has also allowed me to see the benefits of using cultural-historical activity theory to better analyze, understand, and create the genres I encounter as a student. Although research papers and academic articles aren't always the easiest genres for me to understand, before I began analyzing Instagram influencer posts using PCHAT, that was a genre I didn't understand very well either. Now, I see PCHAT as a tool that I can use to analyze all kinds of genres, whether that genre is a daunting history textbook or an ad for the world's comfiest pair of leggings from my favorite influencer.

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Cecilia: @iamceciliafoss

Emma: @emmawalker

Kevin: @kevinwathey

Jazmine: @whittyjaz

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Writing in a Plastic World

Emily McCauley

In this article, McCauley utilizes the PCHAT terms production, reception, socialization, and ecology to examine the trajectory of plastic pollution in our environment.

I had wrongly assumed that by the time I reached college age, everyone would be properly educated on the topic of recycling or would at least have a basic understanding of the process. What I have discovered since my first semester at Illinois State University is that many people do not fully understand—or care to learn—about the importance of reducing the amount of pollution we create. To be fair, the concept of recycling is more complex than just choosing to throw your water bottle in one bin rather than the other. This complexity may be one reason why people are so hesitant to learn more about the process.

One way that we can try to understand this topic is by using CHAT, which is an acronym for cultural-historical activity theory. Specially, I'm going to be using a structure developed by the ISU Writing Program called PCHAT. Writers can use PCHAT tools to organize their thoughts into concise, relevant, and engaging information for their audiences to interact with and learn from. Like recycling, PCHAT breaks down the writing process into more manageable parts by using genre research and conceptual tools. These tools include terms such as reception, distribution, ecology,

production, activity, and socialization. The tools I will focus on in this article will be **production**, **reception**, **socialization**, and **ecology**. Of course, there are countless ways to apply these tools outside of my examples in this article. Keep this in mind as you consider your own applications of PCHAT to different literate practices. By looking at the topic of plastic pollution and recycling through the lenses of these tools, it will hopefully be easier to see the changes we need to make to our lifestyles and the ways that we can go about making those changes.

More than Just a Bottle . . .

Before I get into too much detail about how these specific tools are related to plastic pollution, it may be helpful to introduce a few other terms. Let's start with the basics. A **text** can be anything that conveys a message to its audience and is not just limited to letters or characters on a page. Concerning plastic pollution, the texts that are being produced are things like plastic bottles, containers, toys, tools, spare parts, etc. Since the demand for these products is still there, the production and pollution will not be halted. Therefore, it's important to consider each of the dollars you spend as votes for the reproduction of the item you purchased. If you want to see an end to plastic bottles—stop buying them! We know now that there are better alternatives.

You see, historically, plastic was not always considered to be an issue. Though the first synthetic plastic was created in 1907, the demand for plastic items increased dramatically due to commercial use throughout the 1950s. At this time, families were not concerned as to what happened to their plastic items once they were thrown away. The phrase, “out of sight, out of mind” rang true for people around the world when it came to recyclable items—especially plastic. It wasn't until the environmental movement of the 1960s and 70s that we began to consider recycling to be an important process. How a text changes throughout its existence is called **trajectory**. Environmental scientists can also use trajectory as a tool to find out where pollution is coming from by tracing the path of washed-up plastic on shorelines back to their original production location. As writers, it is important to understand how your texts can change over time and to keep in mind how new audiences may receive the message differently.

Now, you must know that the information that I collected for this article was not all stuff I had already learned or knew about. Instead, I had to conduct **genre research**, which is the investigation of a specific genre or text and can include things such as videos watched, websites visited, books read, experts consulted, and podcasts listened to. Conversely, if I

had known an extensive amount about this topic already, we would have called it **antecedent knowledge**, or the knowledge of a type of text *before* researching it further. Antecedent knowledge can be a helpful starting point for writers to build during the research process. For example, I had a basic understanding of how plastic bottles were recycled, but I was still curious about what types of machines they used in the process, so I chose to look up a YouTube video that helped me to fill in this missing information.

An Introduction to Recycling

To some people, the process of recycling may appear to be simple. The things that we buy and use are made of specific materials that can be later turned into something new if it is placed in the local recycling bin. However, when you break the process down and think about how and why it works, it becomes complex. For example, there are four major types of recycling programs: curbside pickup, drop-off centers, buy-back centers, and deposit/refund programs. In each of these smaller systems, there are unique processes that help them to run smoothly.

For curbside pickup to be successful, trucks need to consistently drive around and collect the materials that people put outside on their specific pickup day. All these parts of the process require action from people who are involved in it. The drivers of the trucks may need to go online to check their schedules, homeowners need to make the act of collecting the materials and drag their recycling bins outside. You may not have known it yet, but thinking about these things in this way uses the PCHAT tool, **activity**. Activity is the action we take to create a text throughout the production process. An example of this would be the factory running its machines to produce plastic bottles.

The other three types of recycling programs require the activity of people taking their materials further than the ends of their driveways. Therefore, these programs have the potential to frustrate people who do not want to go out of their way to dispose of their materials correctly. This brings us to our next CHAT term, reception. In the case of plastics, you could also think of it as the attitude a consumer has toward a product. If the representation of plastic recyclables is negative—for example, if people feel frustrated with an extensive recycling process—it will affect the number of people who participate in the programs. One of the obvious goals is to



Figure 1: The recycling symbol.

increase participation in recycling programs. In more than a few ways, the attitude towards recycling is the root of the issue. For instance, Norway has implemented a deposit-based system nationwide that gives consumers .07–.35 cents per bottle depending on the size and type of bottle. The deposit centers are required anywhere that sells plastic bottles. The money that consumers receive can also be given as store credit, which becomes a win-win situation for both the customers and the stores. In Norway, people get their plastic from stores but choose to repurpose it by returning it and getting money in return. Their attitude towards plastic is simply that it is a borrowed material. Because of this, less than one percent of Norway’s plastic ends up in the natural environment. Most of the plastic pollution found along its coasts are not even produced in Norway but are coming from other countries that do not have deposit-based systems nor the attitudes of Norwegians. This path of plastic pollution can also be explained with the term trajectory, as I have mentioned previously.

Now, sometimes I wonder how it feels to be a CEO of a big plastic producing company such as Coca-Cola. What do they think about their environmental impacts? Do they care at all, or are they simply concerned with the revenue they will bring in? These types of questions help to discover the company’s **representation**, or how the creator of the text thinks about their product. For example, since the news got out that plastic is harmful to the planet, some water bottle companies attempted to reduce the amount of plastic used to make each bottle. However, these companies have no intention of halting plastic production altogether. I could argue that the representation of these companies is careless, stubborn, and money hungry.



Figure 2: Plastic marine waste accumulated on a beach in Troms, Northern Norway.

Recycling in the News

The attitudes we have towards the products we buy are important. We should try our best to be intentional about our purchases. Think about what you will do with the product or container after you are finished with it. Where will it end up? Could it become harmful to another species living on our planet? Depending on the product, its endpoint could determine another living creature's life or death.

Indeed, plastic straws have become the headline of many news channels over the past five years. Plastic straws have been known to cause issues with nature as well as the animals that live in it. There are a plethora of sad and disturbing photos of sea life struggling to escape the plastic prisons . . . and many of them do not. So far, these news stories have done a good job of creating awareness for these types of dangers we create for the planet. Since the stories began appearing on the news, new laws have been put in place that reduce the number of plastic straws we use and throw away. Additionally, more and more people are discussing the ways that they can make a positive change to the environment, and many people even take online pledges (I did!) vowing to never use a plastic straw again. This process can be defined as **socialization**. As the ISU writing program defines it, socialization is the interaction of people and institutions as they produce, distribute, and use texts. In other words, any social interaction that occurs because of a text. Socialization is important in the recycling process because each time people discuss the necessity of it, it spreads the word and creates awareness for it. This awareness helps to slow people down each time they have something to dispose of. It makes people think about where their plastic is going after they throw it away.

So . . . Where Does My Plastic End Up?

One of the most crucial things for our population to realize is that almost every piece of plastic that has ever been made still exists on the earth's surface. The chemical properties of plastic make it nearly impossible to completely decompose naturally. Instead, natural processes such as erosion and UV ray exposure breakdown the plastic into smaller pieces called microplastics. Microplastics are bits of plastic that are less than .2 inches long, and they are an increasing issue. The CHAT term **ecology** includes all aspects of the environment that a text exists in. In this context, the ecology of the text is literally the physical environment we live in. When talking about microplastics, the ecology of the text is anywhere that they can be found. Unfortunately, this now includes practically every part of the earth. If the

thought of trillions of tiny bits of plastic in our oceans and on our continents doesn't scare you enough on its own, consider the results of a recent study that has confirmed the presence of microplastics in human stools. Yes, you read that right. The plastic that people carelessly throw out the windows of cars is now being eaten and found within our digestive systems. This means that the ecology of microplastics includes the world around us, but also animal and human bodies. Consider how ecology and trajectory are related in this instance. The trajectory of a plastic bottle may be extensive and travel great distances before the end of its life cycle. Since plastic takes at least 450 years to degrade in the natural environment, we must begin to consider the consequences of our ecosystems becoming clogged with our past mistakes.

Now, I do not intend to discourage readers from recycling, but I believe it is important to mention that even if you do dispose of recyclables properly, it is still possible for the end products to end up in the natural environment. This is because recycling centers can be classified as either an open-loop or closed-loop system. If a center is an open-loop system, it means that the items being recycled can be turned into completely new items such as polyester. This type of recycling can sometimes still be bad for the environment because many of the new items made from recycled materials end up in landfills. A closed-loop system means that the items that go through the center are remade into new plastic bottles and containers. This can also be called bottle-to-bottle recycling and is the better option when it comes to recycling. Furthermore, the best option when it comes to recycling would be to **REDUCE** the number of plastic products you purchase altogether. Before buying plastic, at least take a moment to consider alternatives or whether you need the product in the first place.



Figure 3: An example of a sculpture made of plastic bottles.

A question that comes to my mind when thinking about the difference between these two systems is *who decides what happens with our recyclable materials?* This question can be thought about by using the PCHAT term **distribution** and **reception**. Distribution and reception are both concepts that involve looking at where a text goes and what types of things it can be turned into. In particular, reception involves the ways that a text can be taken up and used (or reused) in different ways, even going beyond the original intent of the author or creator. The difference between distribution and reception can be shown by artists who create bottle art since plastic bottles were not created to become materials for sculptures. Can you think of a time you used a product for something other than its intended use?

A Look Inside: The Recycling Process

The final PCHAT tool to discuss is **production**. Production has to do with how the text is produced. This includes the tools and practices that go into the making of a text. Let's apply this new term to our topic of recycling. First, the plastic is collected by trucks that are part of the curbside pick-up program. The plastic items are compacted into bales then delivered to the recycling center where they are then dumped into a sorting machine. This machine removes the labels of products and sorts the plastics by resin type. This type can be determined by the number in the middle of the triangle on recyclable materials. Next, the plastics are sent through several machines to be chopped, washed, and formed into pellets. Once the plastics are in this pellet form, they can be used to make new products, whether it be a brand-new water bottle or the polyester that is used to make a new T-shirt. The machines used throughout the process are tools and every time a truck driver goes out to collect recyclables they are engaged in a practice. These things come together to complete the process and to reach the end result of small plastic pellets.

Our Impact: Why Should We Help?

With an estimated 8.3 billion tons of plastic in the world today, it is impossible to completely erase the damage we have done to our environment. At the very least, now you know how important it is to be aware of plastic pollution. However, it is not enough to only be aware of the issue. We can still do our part to protect our planet from further destruction. Additionally, with the proper change in attitude and systems in place, we can make it easier than ever to help our world. For example, I mentioned earlier how Norway's deposit-

based systems are effective for both buyers and sellers. The view that you are buying the product inside the plastic container and are simply borrowing the material that holds it is a mindset that all consumers should consider.

Moreover, there are more than just environmental benefits of recycling. It was estimated that recycling in the city of St. Louis made over 16,000 jobs and made over \$4 billion in annual revenue. These numbers are based on the participation that they receive in their programs, which means that in larger urban areas where there are fewer people who go out of their way to recycle the numbers are not as impressive. What this tells us, however, is that with good participation, recycling centers have the potential to be extremely profitable.

You may be thinking, “Wow. This seems like a pretty big deal! But there’s so much garbage everywhere, and most things in stores aren’t made to be environmentally friendly. Why bother?” Well, you’re partially right. There *is* a lot of garbage on the planet, and it can be difficult to reduce the amount of plastic waste when nearly every product in stores is either packaged in plastic or is made of plastic. **BUT**, if anything, this gives us a reason to bother with it. We **CAN** make a difference. Recognizing the problem and caring about finding the solution is the first step to making a change. Like many other things in life, it takes time to learn but is worth the trouble.

The Difference is YOU

So, what things can a single person do to help the environment? For starters, try reducing the amount of plastic that you are using and throwing away. A great example of this would be making the change from plastic bags to reusable ones. When you go to throw something away, stop for a moment and consider whether it can be recycled or not. An important thing to keep in mind is that it is possible to recycle things wrong. For instance, most yogurt cups and dirty take-out containers are not recyclable. If these items are thrown in recycling with everything else, there is a possibility that the entire batch of items must be thrown out due to contamination. If you are unsure, take the time to look it up online. The planet will thank you later.

As I have gone through each of the PCHAT tools and applied them to the recycling process, I was able to learn more about how and why it works. Now that you have a basic understanding of how PCHAT works, you can go out into the world and use it on your own! I urge you to continue learning about how you can make a difference in the environment. After all, we only get one!

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Unraveling “Writing”: Interweaving Maverick Literacies Throughout a Literate Life

Kevin Roozen

In this article, writing researcher Kevin Roozen argues that the notion of “literate activity” can substantially broaden and enrich our understanding of writing and what it entails. He offers some glimpses into the literate activity of one man’s involvement with automotive repair to illustrate what it looks like when we work to unravel the rich complexity of writing and its functions in people’s lives.

I think that writing, as an activity that people do for a variety of purposes, is fascinating. Truly fascinating. As someone who both researches and teaches writing, over the past twenty-five years I’ve had the chance to talk with many people about the wealth of different texts they produce and use across the expansive literate landscape of their lives. Based on what I’ve learned from those conversations, I’ve grown increasingly curious about, and come to greatly appreciate, the many forms writing can take, the many ways it comes to be entwined in people’s lives, and the complex pathways along which people develop their abilities to use it.

I’ve also come to realize that seeing writing, really seeing it, in terms of all that it entails and all that it does, is quite challenging. In part, this is because our typical ideas about writing invite us to picture it as a fairly straightforward process of transcribing ideas onto a screen or page rather than as a complex and far-reaching network built from interactions too numerous to count. In this sense, it can be difficult, and perhaps a bit intimidating, for us to wrestle with all that we don’t know about writing. It’s also a challenge to really see writing because we’ve looked at it from the same

Unraveling Writing

Looking at writing with an eye toward understanding its complexity threatens to disrupt the tidy notions we have about what writing is, what it entails, the work it accomplishes, and how it develops throughout our lives.

keep us from paying close attention to its complexity and fascinating features. Seeing writing, really seeing it, demands a way of looking that can illuminate its complexity and the work it does across our lives.

In this article, I outline a way of looking at writing that allows us to unravel what it is and what it does so that we can examine it more closely

Semiotic Signs

“Semiotic signs” are anything that stands for something else. The letters “d-o-g,” for example, are a semiotic sign that stands for a specific kind of animal. But semiotic signs can also be various kinds of images (like drawings, pictures, photographs, icons) and numbers, maps, and shapes and symbols, and they can be inscribed on all kinds of media. Think, for example, of a hop-scotch grid drawn on the concrete, or graffiti on the side of a bus.

Literate Activity

Developed by Paul Prior (1998, p. 138), the term “literate activity” is meant to address all of the many ways that texts are part of people’s lived experiences in the world. It extends beyond our typical ideas about “reading” and “writing” to include the broad range of practices and processes we employ in the creation and use of a wide array of texts.

perspective for so long that we can’t imagine that there are other ways of seeing it. It’s also challenging to really pay attention to writing because the writing we do tends to be invisible to us. It often fades into the background of whatever we are doing, and at least as long as it accomplishes what it needs to accomplish, we tend to forget all about it and the work it is doing. These orientations toward writing

and carefully, and, ultimately, understand it in ways we’ve not previously considered. The perspective I describe is grounded in the notion that we need to view writing in terms of what scholars like Paul Prior (1998, 2015; see also Prior & Shipka, 2003; Prior, Walker, & Riggert-Keiffer, 2019) and Jody Shipka (2011) refer to as **literate activity**, activity that involves people producing or using some type of text, broadly conceived. Their use of the term “literate” helps illuminate that human action involves not only words written on a screen or page, but also a wealth of other kinds of semiotic signs inscribed on a variety of other media and the processes and practices involved in making and using those signs. The term “activity” helps to foreground that people make and use texts to act in the world, not merely for the sake of creating the texts themselves. The term “literate activity,” then, helps us to broaden our typical ideas about “writing” to encompass what Paul Prior (1998) describes as “cultural forms of life saturated with textuality, that [are] strongly motivated and mediated by texts” (p. 138).

In this article, I briefly explain some of the key features of literate activity and try to share with you some of the ways that I use this concept in my work as a writing researcher. I’ll also be using some glimpses into the literate life of a gentleman I will refer to as Dan to illustrate what it looks like to unravel the complex ways that different literate activities can overlap and impact each other. Dan’s literate practices surrounding the work he does repairing and restoring automobiles are also evidence of how activities that we don’t typically consider writing can be important to understanding literate activity.

Taking an Interest in People’s Literate Lives

The glimpses into Dan’s literate life I offer below emerged from multiple interviews with Dan over the past few years and from looking through the various texts he has shared with me. My deep interest in people’s writing is what fuels my work as a **writing researcher** at a large university. To do this kind of inquiry, I undergo a good deal of training for how to interact with people and the information they share. I also ask for permission from my university to reach out to people who might want to talk about the activities they are involved in, and then get people’s permission to record our conversations and to publicly share what emerges from them. Over the course of multiple interviews, which often extend over multiple years, we work together as **co-researchers** (Ivanic, 1998, p. 14) inquiring into whichever of their activities they wish to explore and whichever texts they wish to discuss. We use the term “co-researchers” to signal that both of us are involved in shaping where the inquiry goes and what it considers.

Dan’s lifelong passion involves working on cars. He has been “turning wrenches” since he got his very first vehicle, a used Chevrolet Spectrum, at seventeen. “I had it about a week,” he told me,

and I decided, I need a stereo. Gotta have some music. You know, you’re a teenager, seventeen. You gotta have some music. So, the first thing I did with one of my pay checks was I went to Western Auto and I got a Spark-o-Matic stereo and I installed it in the dash. And I’ve been working on cars since then.

Notes On My Research Practices

Dan’s Real Name: Often in my research I use pseudonyms (an invented name) to help protect the privacy of the people I interview.

Writing Researcher: I work in a Department of Writing and Rhetoric, but *writing researcher* is how I think of what I do as a scholar.

Co-Researchers: Rather than thinking of Dan and others as research *subjects*, I like to think that we’re collaborating to uncover what is interesting about the writing in their lives.

Throughout his life, Dan's abiding interest in automobiles as a hobby has also guided him toward a number of part- and full-time jobs, including working as automotive service technician at several automobile dealerships, an assistant wholesale automobile buyer, a sales clerk in an automobile parts store, and even managing his own mobile auto repair business.

In each of the three sections below, I briefly explain some key facets of literate activity: people acting with cultural tools, the histories of people and tools that flow into activity, and the histories of people using tools that extend from activity. In each section, I offer glimpses of Dan's life to show what attending to those aspects reveals about the rich textuality saturating his experiences with automobile repair.

Literate Activity as People Acting with Cultural Tools

One of the central ideas to keep in mind is that activity is always accomplished by people acting with **cultural tools** (Scollon, 2001; Wertsch, 1998). When it comes to thinking about the kinds of cultural tools being used in literate activity, the ones people act with often take the form of some kind of **text**. It is common to think about texts comprised of written language. And, indeed, those are important, but they are certainly not the only ones to consider. In addition to alphabetic prose, scholars have offered examples of a wealth of other kinds of cultural tools. For example, here is a list offered by Lev Vygotsky (1981, p. 137):

- systems of counting
- mnemonic techniques
- algebraic symbol systems
- works of art
- schemes, diagrams, [and] maps
- mechanical drawings

As a way of extending our thinking about the various texts used in literate activity, researchers often use the term **inscription** (Latour, 1987, 1990; Latour & Woolgar, 1986) to reference these kinds of tools. When it comes to thinking about literate activity, then, it helps to direct our attention to people and particular cultural tools they are using. Paul Prior (2006) uses the term **act-with** as a way of keeping the focus on the pairing of people and tools (p. 55). It is also important to realize that people's use of particular cultural tools is oriented toward **multiple purposes** (Scollon, 2001; Wertsch, 1998).

Some of those purposes might be fairly obvious, but others might be less easy to recognize, so it is important to be on the lookout for the multiple purposes that tools allow people to accomplish. In short, in thinking about writing, being alert to people acting with cultural tools and their purposes for using them invites us to look beyond the text that people are producing to inquire about the multiple cultural tools employed in people’s actions and the multiple functions those tools might be serving.

During our talks about his work on the Maverick, Dan mentioned numerous tools he used, from inscribed marks on metal to notes and hastily drawn diagrams to posts on car forums to forms for purchasing parts online. One particular comment that piqued my interest was Dan’s mention of a text he referred to as “the book,” and in particular a comment about “taking pictures for ‘the book.’” When I asked if he could tell me more, Dan described a two-inch, three-ring binder that consists of more than 200 pages documenting the work he and other members of his family had done on the car. The book includes more than 13,000 words and 265 color photographs, taken by various members of the family (see Figure 1). The book also

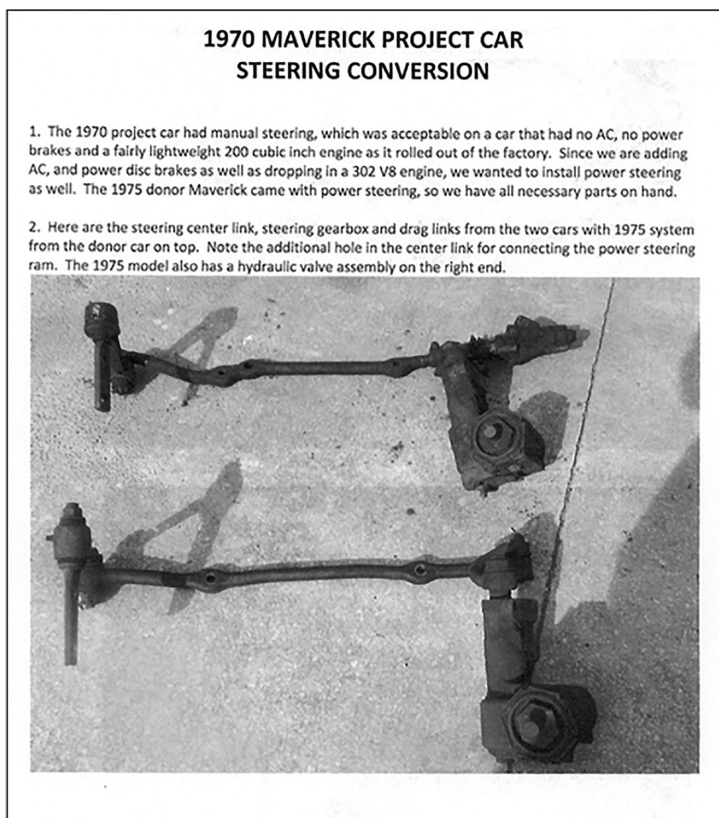


Figure 1: A representative page from Dan’s “Maverick book” showing how he combines written language and images.

contains seventy pages of receipts, records of parts and work completed, directions, and specifications and diagrams.

I was struck by the *Maverick* book itself, especially with Dan's extensive use of images. When I asked Dan to estimate how many pictures he and other members of his family had taken while working on the *Maverick*, he stated "Oh, thousands. Thousands of pictures easily." As we talked further about the book, Dan described the practices he and his dad used to incorporate the pictures into it. For example, Dan stated,

We keep it [the book] in the house, by the computer and the printer, and we add to it after each session [of working on the *Maverick*]. [Our additions to the book] usually come from ideas we think of or pictures we take. We'll put them in the computer and pull up the pictures and we're looking through the pictures and you go "Oh, what I was thinking when I took that picture was that I wanted to explain why this was blah, blah, blah." . . . More often than not, I'll take a picture, I'll take twenty or thirty pictures during three or four hours of working over there, and then get home and stick the card in the computer and look at those pictures and go "Oh yeah, when I was doing this, I was blah, blah, blah blah," and then type out the whole context to go with it [the picture].

For Dan and his father, the pictures play a prominent role in determining what kinds of information gets included in the *Maverick* book. I initially anticipated that Dan and his father would first generate a prose description of what they did and then just select which of their pictures might best illustrate that description. But, according to Dan, the pictures serve a vital role in the book's invention and production.

Key Functions of Dan's Use of Pictures in the *Maverick* Book

In the opening portion of this section, I noted that people's use of cultural tools is aimed toward multiple purposes. Below, I discuss three key functions that Dan's use of pictures allow the *Maverick* book to serve:

- as a customized how-to manual
- as a means of making hidden repairs visible
- as a "reference" document for specific information associated with the work

A Custom Manual

Using images allows the book to function as a kind of repair manual, a guide for showing how to do certain kinds of work similar to the generic manuals

available for factory versions of automobiles. During our interviews, though, Dan indicated how incorporating pictures of his work into the book allowed it to become much more than a “factory manual.” Those manuals, Dave mentioned, are “not sufficient for custom work.” Because Dan provides pictures of the work done on his particular Maverick, pictures of which parts were replaced or modified and of how that work was done, he saw his book more as a “custom manual” that offered readers insights on how to repair this specific car. Elaborating, Dan stated,

If you’re going to put it back together the way the factory had it, then the factory manual is fine. But if you’re not going to do it the way the factory did it, then some other mechanic who comes behind you isn’t going to know what they’ve got. “Well, wait, what is this? This isn’t what the factory did. This is a Ford Explorer motor. This motor doesn’t go in a Maverick. What is going on here?” You know. So that’s kind of, I guess I’m thinking ahead to after me. I want this [book] to survive way past me, and someone’s got to be able to know how to deal with it.

I find it so interesting how Dan uses pictures in the book as a way of providing potential future owners of the car with the detailed information they will need to understand how the work was done and the specific kinds of parts that were used.

Making Work Visible

Another function Dan saw the book’s pictures serving was providing a way for his work on the Maverick to be seen by car enthusiasts or potential buyers, especially work that would not be readily visible, like the work he and his father did inside the engine, for example, or on other portions of the car that cannot be seen. For Dan, making sure that people could see all of his work was important. “Especially,” he noted, “if you’re going to sell something and some of the custom work is hidden from view. You’d have to remove the seats and the carpet, for example, to find out that I replaced the floor.” As he elaborated,

Nobody is going to see ninety-nine percent of what I’ve done to it. So, this [pointing to the Maverick book], anybody that ever gets to see this will go “Oh wow. Look what you did. Look what you did!”

Providing plenty of pictures and detailed descriptions of the work they had done to the car was one way that Dan could attain the level of visibility he wanted.

A Reference Text

Dan also commented that using the pictures allowed the book to function like “kind of a reference book. I don’t really sit and read it, but if something comes up, we’ll refer to it.” Including pictures of the part numbers for parts they used, the information on warranty cards, and the specialized tools they had purchased just for the Maverick offered Dan a way of keeping track of the cascade of information involved in the project. To Dan, having this kind of information in the book was particularly important because it allowed him to carefully chart his expenses, and, often, to save some money. As he stated,

Part of [the role of the book] is to keep track of the cost, and part of it, um, is you need some receipts for warranty. You buy a starter, it has a lifetime warranty, and you don’t think about it. Then four years go by, your starter goes out, and you look in the book, and “Man, this thing’s got a lifetime warranty. I’m on it. I’m going back to the store and I’m not going to pay anything.” So, that’s always a cool part.

The pictures also helped make visible the complicated and extended processes he and his father came up with for repairing parts that could not easily be replaced, processes which they might easily forget with the passage of time and which other car enthusiasts would be impressed with. In this sense, Dan saw the images as serving a documentary function, a way of accessing what he referred to as “the history and the detail” of the work. Elaborating, he stated that it was important to be able to save

every bit of documentation you put together and have. People come and look at this and go “He’s got everything, every nut and bolt listed.” And it gives people an idea of the level of attention to detail we have. “Okay, he replaced this, this, and this. I’m not going to worry about that because he addressed it. Look at the work he does!” It’s a reflection on the work. So it’s a combination of motivating factors.

For Dan, working on his Maverick is clearly a literate activity. Although automotive work is not readily associated with writing, examining Dan’s experiences with working on cars from a literate activity perspective illuminates the wealth and variety of texts and tools he and others use. Unraveling Dan’s creation and use of the Maverick book also reveals the rich complexity of writing and the multiple functions it plays in his life, many of which might go unnoticed unless we look closely and carefully.

Identifying the Histories that Flow into Literate Activity

It is also important to keep in mind that the cultural tools people use, just like people themselves, have histories (Roozen, 2010; Roozen & Erickson, 2017; Shipka, 2011; Wertsch, 1998). They don’t just drop into a particular activity out of nowhere. Researcher Ron Scollon (2001) states that each cultural tool has two histories, “a history in the world, . . . and a history in the life of the person who appropriated it” (p. 120). In other words, the tools we use have existed long before we appeared on the scene and have been produced through their use for particular purposes for specific social worlds. Still, each person encounters those tools in their life through using them for particular purposes. Further, people’s histories of using tools extend back through their near and distant pasts into other kinds of activities, and those histories flow into people’s present action. Paul Prior (1998) uses the term **laminated** to describe how people’s use of a tool is entangled with traces from its multiple uses throughout their lives (p. 24). Paying attention to the histories of people’s use of particular tools invites us to view the literate activity people are involved in at present as a part of lengthier historical pathways, and thus to consider how activity is being shaped by those histories. Attending to histories also pushes us to inquire about how people and their tools have developed, how they have come to be, and to be on the lookout for the historical pathways of their emergent **becoming** (Prior, 2018).

Laminated

The term “laminated” foregrounds the ways that the cultural tools we use, and our reasons for using them, come to be entangled with multiple purposes, practices, and motivations through our concrete actions with them throughout our lives. In this sense, the term “laminated” signals the complex ways that our use of a particular tool in the present here-and-now is entwined with and informed by our uses of that tool in other times and places.

As Dan and I talked about his use of pictures for the Maverick project, and about his history of other experiences that also involved acting with images, I began to see complex connections between what seemed at first to be quite unrelated activities. Below, I discuss some of these experiences from oldest to most recent throughout Dan’s life, focusing on:

- Creating family photo albums
- Reading car magazines
- Using automobile repair manuals
- Encountering his father’s “boat book”
- Participating with online car forums

Creating Family Photo Albums

Dan's use of images in *Maverick* book is informed by his family's long-standing practice of taking lots of pictures and assembling them into photo albums. At one point, while talking about the many pictures he took of his automobile projects and later used in the *Maverick* book, Dan mentioned that taking pictures was "just something that my family does." When I asked if he could tell me more, he stated,

My mom has always had photo albums, and we've always taken lots and lots of pictures. . . . I remember being eight or nine years old, and him letting me take pictures occasionally with his camera. It wasn't like the little Kodak 110s, where it was like "Oh yeah, here, you can take a picture. Whatever." Like a little piece of plastic and you couldn't hurt it. But this [his dad's camera] was like, a Minolta camera was a really expensive camera. But, I remember him letting me, even when I was eight years old, you know, hold the camera and take pictures. We've always just taken lots and lots of pictures.

In addition to taking a wealth of pictures, his family was also invested in arranging them into photo albums as a record of their travels. Describing one particularly memorable instance where he helped his mother organize some of their family pictures into a series of bound albums, Dan recalled,

I was just nine. She had all these boxes, shoeboxes, boxes and boxes of pictures, that were developed, and they were still in the little envelope you got back from the film lab with the pictures in the back and the negatives in the front in the little pocket. . . . And she was like, "I have to do something with all these pictures." And she went to the PX and she got these photo albums and started putting them together by year and by where we lived, and kind of in a chronological order.

Looking at Car Magazines

Dan's history of acting with images for the *Maverick* book also includes his experiences with car magazines starting in his adolescence. Dan indicated that his family has had a subscription to some of the major automobile magazines—*Car and Driver*, *Road and Track*—reaching back to the mid-1970s. They were always in reach around his house. In talking about his experiences with these publications, Dan mentioned a number of specific encounters with images. He described, for example, an image he saw in a *Car and Driver* article when he was eleven or twelve, stating,

I came into the house one day from riding my bike around the neighborhood, and my dad was sitting on the couch and he was laughing really hard. And I was like "What's so funny?" And he

was like, “This article in *Car and Driver* magazine.” . . . The first page of the article had this little cartoon image of a Rubiks Cube with [the writer’s] face sticking out of it with a motorcycle helmet, and the title of the article was “A 700 horsepower Rubiks Cube.” . . . It stuck in my head. It grabbed me, and I’ve been reading car magazines ever since, even if they are not funny, and then I got more into cars.

Other encounters involved his use of magazine images to decorate the walls of his room and his school lockers. Recalling one particular image he pasted in his high school locker, Dan stated, “When all the other kids had pictures of movie stars or people from TV shows taped up in their locker, mine had pictures of the cars in *Road and Track*.”

Using Automobile Repair Manuals

Dan’s history of acting with images also includes his use of automobile manuals to fix his own cars, which he always purchased used and often needed significant work. The first thing he did after every purchase was buy a repair manual for the vehicle, which provided him with prose descriptions and accompanying images for how to do typical repairs. Recounting his experiences with the images offered in those manuals, Dan stated,

I remember back in the eighties, when I first started working on cars, you know, the pictures and the drawings in the Chilton manuals and the Haynes manuals weren’t that good. Even though the Haynes’ [pictures and drawings] were better than the Chilton, there was just so much information missing. “Well, I need to see what’s over here. What does this thing do? Where does this go to?” And it just doesn’t show up in the drawing, or the picture they have isn’t the angle you need. And, as I’m taking pictures of different [automobile] projects I’m doing, with [Dan’s son’s name] or, you know, with the Maverick, it doesn’t matter, I’m thinking “Alright, if I was looking at this later, what would I really want to see?”

Encountering the Boat Book

Dan’s history of acting with images for the Maverick book also includes watching his father create and use a book of prose and pictures that documented the extensive work he did on a thirty-six-foot boat the family owned when Dan was in his late teens. His dad’s “boat book,” as he referred to it, “was a three-inch binder, and it was full. [The Maverick book] would be a footnote in his binder [for the boat].” Explaining his sense of what prompted his father to start keeping a book to document the boat work, Dan stated,

I think the big thing, the main reason for it was that just making little notes on loose-leaf paper just wasn’t sufficient for the degree

of work he did. I mean, he replaced the headliner [the material covering the inside of the boat's cabin], motors, the V-drive, a lot of stuff in the interior, the wiring, the air conditioning. All by himself. It [the boat book] was the absolute, ultimate owner's manual, and you really don't have anything like a Chilton or Haynes manual for boats. It went with the boat when my Dad sold it.

Using Car Forums

Dan's history of acting with images also includes his participation on a number of online automobile forums. These forums offered Dan a space where he could ask specific questions about what he was fixing, which often required posting pictures of his truck. Those responding to his questions would often include pictures in their posts as well. While Dan and I were talking, he mentioned that he saw his use of pictures while working on the Maverick as being informed by what he saw on the car forums he frequented, stating,

When I am taking the pictures [while working on the Maverick], I'm thinking of myself reading a post [on a forum] and going through it and going "Well, I've got to do the same job. I need to know about this part. So I want a picture of that." So when I am doing the job, I'll go, "Okay, here's my picture" and then it fits in and it's like, almost like I am working backwards through it from the audience standpoint of reading my post. "What is the audience going to want to see a picture of, along with this text that I am typing about putting heavy-duty shocks on?"

I find it fascinating how all of these different uses of images from Dan's near and distant past pour into his use of pictures for the Maverick project. While Dan's use of pictures for the work on the Maverick might seem at first glance to be specific to that activity, paying attention to Dan's history of acting with images illuminates how many of his other experiences throughout his life have involved using that particular tool. Every time I listen back through my conversations with Dan, I'm struck by how much of Dan's literate life is at play as he and his father take pictures of their work and incorporate them into the book, and how Dan's ability to use pictures has been developing across many different activities reaching all the way back to his early childhood.

Attending to the Histories that Extend from Literate Activity

In the same way that histories of people's previous uses of specific tools flow into a particular activity, those **histories also extend from it into later**

activities further downstream, typically in unpredictable directions. After all, the pathways of people and their tools do not simply end with their use in a present activity. Rather, those pathways continue as tools are put to use in other activities, often for quite different purposes. My colleagues Paul Prior, Julie Hengst, Jody Shipka, and I (2006) refer to the re-use of tools as “**semiotic remediation**” a term for “the diverse ways that humans’ and nonhumans’ semiotic performances (historical or imagined) are re-represented and reused across modes, media, and chains of activity” (p. 734). Our use of the term “semiotic performances” is meant to signal people’s use of all kinds of semiotic tools, and the term “remediation” foregrounds how people’s re-use of such tools into new activities routinely involves re-working them across different media. Paying attention to the histories that extend from literate activity invites us to notice that people and tools are never finalized. Instead, they are continually being re-fashioned as people put them to use for new activities. And, in the process of re-working their tools for new purposes, people are continually re-fashioning new identities for themselves. It also alerts us to be on the lookout for how people are always actively transforming the tools they act with, that we are never simply using tools that we have inherited in exactly the same way and for exactly the same functions.

Semiotic Remediation

“Semiotic remediation” is a term that captures how people’s use of a particular cultural tool is never limited to any single setting, but rather is continuously repurposed across multiple activities. In the process of repurposing tools, people transform them across semiotic media. The spoken language used in one setting, for example, might be semiotically remediated as written text in another, as a gesture in another, and as a visual image in yet another.

From talking with Dan, one thing that emerged was the many ways that his use of pictures for the Maverick book extended into a number of other engagements. In this section below, I partially trace the history of Dan’s use of pictures into a number of more recent activities, including

- his participation in an online car forum
- an online car magazine Dan created
- writing assignments for his college coursework
- his recent job as a technical support associate

Using Car Forums

Dan’s acting with images for the Maverick project also shapes his experiences with posting on car forums devoted specifically to that vehicle. In crafting

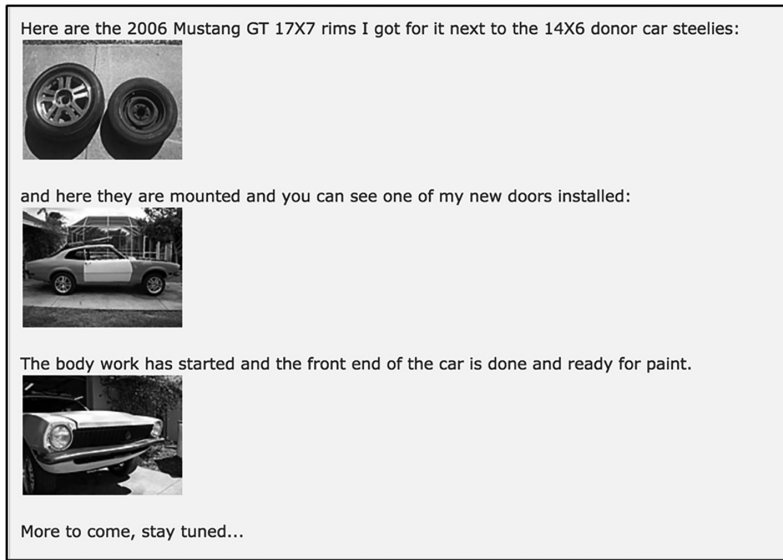


Figure 2: An excerpt from one of Dan's posts to one of the online car forums he uses, showing Dan's use of images related to his work on his 1970 Maverick.

his frequent posts (see Figure 2) to the Maverick forum, for example, Dan indicated that he consciously incorporates a wealth of images. As he stated,

Some people will post, you know, start an entire thread, and go through responses and they'll be four or five pages of posts and there won't be a single picture. And I'll have three or four pictures for every post, every response. It seems like someone will ask a question, and my response will have a picture in it because I've got so many pictures [of the work on the Maverick].

According to Dan, his practice of using a wealth of images in his forum posts stems from his ready store of pictures of his work on the Maverick. As he stated,

Any of the forums, the moderators and regular users encourage people to post a lot of pictures. And I do myself a lot because I take so many. And I get lots of compliments on "Hey, great pictures," "I'm glad you posted so many pictures." It's really easy for me because of my set-up, my digital camera and an SD card and my computer has a slot, and all I have to do is open it up, and it's right there. It's really easy that way, to transfer things over and insert them.

Creating an Online Car Magazine

Dan's acting with images for the Maverick project also informs his work on the online car magazine he started. According to Dan, soon after he started

his work on the Maverick, he was attending an introductory course at a state college near his home. He found himself talking with the professor about cars before and after class and often showing him pictures of how his work on the Maverick was progressing. In response to Dan’s enthusiasm for cars, and his knowledge and experience working on them, the professor suggested that Dan start his own blog about cars. That comment urged Dan toward creating an online car magazine. Recounting how he got started, Dan stated,

When [the professor] said “You should start a blog,” I had already been a member of a car forum for the little white Chevy [Chevrolet] S-10 I had. . . . I was like, okay, I can take this and all these decades I’ve been reading *MotorTrend*, *Road and Track*, *Hot Rod*, and all these different car magazines. You know, I can do that. I can go out and do a project on a car, take a bunch of pictures, write up a really cool story, and then put it together in an article that would look just like what’s in the magazines.

The image in Figure 3 is an excerpt from one of the articles Dan wrote for what he refers to as the “car mag,” a piece which describes a road trip to Illinois that Dan and his father took to purchase and pick up some replacement doors.

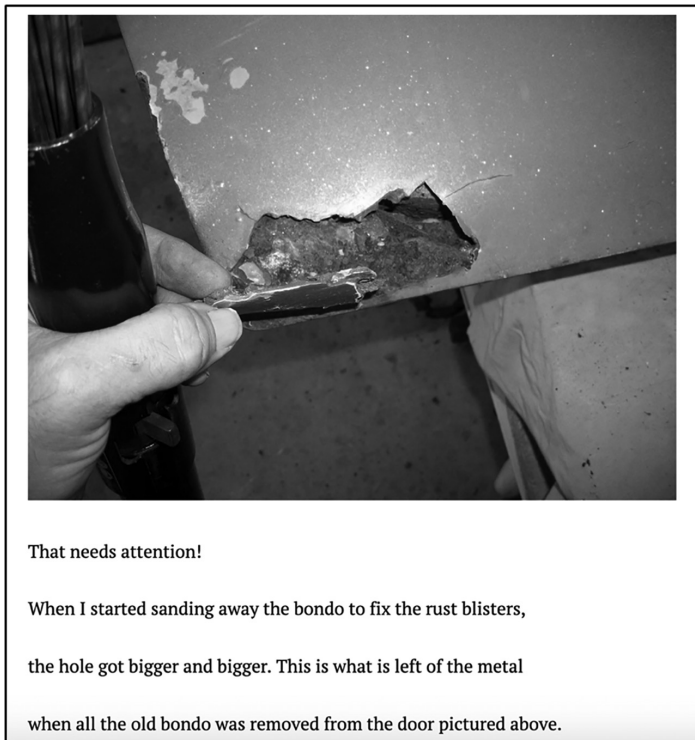


Figure 3: An excerpt from an article Dan wrote for his online car magazine describing a lengthy road trip to obtain some replacement doors for his 1970 Maverick.

Doing College Writing


Dan's acting with images for the Maverick project also informed his college coursework. During the timespan of our conversations, Dan was enrolled in a number of upper-division courses for his double major in history and writing and rhetoric, and we frequently talked about and looked at the papers he was working on. For many of those assignments, Dan addressed topics directly related to vehicles (typically cars, but also boats). It was fairly common for Dan to incorporate pictures into his papers, whether the assignments asked for them or not. Figure 4 (below) is an excerpt from one of Dan's papers for a rhetoric course in which he analyzed his strategies for finding information on online car forums.

Providing Technical Support

Dan's acting with images for the Maverick project also informs the literate activities related to his current job with a large automobile parts distributor. During his final year of college, Dan applied for a part-time position as a parts clerk at an automobile parts distributor near his home. According to Dan, during the interview the parts manager was so impressed with Dan's extensive knowledge and experience working on cars that he called the

What is the best way to understand how this literacy practice helps people learn? Get yourself a classic car that needs some work, join the forum for that car, get yourself a service manual, get out your tools, camera and laptop, and start posting. You will understand this unique learning process best by living it.

Every time I work on a car, or go on a road trip, I want to write about it and every time I'm writing about cars, I want to work on them and drive them, and then I'll have to write about



it some more. This is my Maverick now, with a 99 Explorer V8, power disc brakes, new doors, and 2006 Mustang GT wheels, waiting for Doctor Frankenstein to wrap up the experiment...evil laugh, lightning, thunder....IT'S ALIVE!

Figure 4: An excerpt from a page of Dan's essay for an upper-division course in his major. The picture in the excerpt above (just one of seven pictures of his automobile work that he included in the paper) is one Dan took after he had installed one of the replacement doors on his Maverick, the same door featured in the pictures he posted to the car forum devoted to Ford Mavericks (see Figure 2) and the same doors that he discussed on his article for his online car magazine (see Figure 3).

online technical support manager into the interview to meet Dan. Based on a quick conversation, the company offered Dan a full-time job as an online technical support associate, a position that involved providing information for online sales associates working to provide customers with the correct parts. Much of his work entails emailing sales associates the information they need, and he routinely includes images in his emails, typically screenshots from the company’s many online catalogs that indicate specific parts and the accompanying part number, cost and availability (see Figure 5 below).

Talking with me about what he does on a typical shift, Dan stated,

I feel like a big brother looking out for my sales people. Sometimes it is a three-way call and I talk directly to the customer. “Tech support this is Dan.” . . . And then I listen to the problem. Then I do some crazy twenty-first century college student digging at turbo-speed on our website, on competitor websites, on *Autozone.com*, on *Rockauto*, *Google*, and I even find info or pictures on *Automobile Catalog* or *Ebay* that solves problems sometimes, and I come up with a part number from our catalogs that the sales person can put in a form and make the customer happy.

Even though I have read and listened to the interviews with Dan a number of times, I am still struck by how Dan’s use of pictures for his work on his *Maverick* comes to be entangled with these activities and how its history stretches across personal, academic, and professional worlds. I’m also fascinated with how deeply laminated all of these activities are. They are so



Figure 5: An image Dan provided me as an example of the kinds of visuals he routinely includes in his emails as a technical support associate.

interwoven that it's impossible to tell where one use of pictures ends and the others begin.

Pretty Cool, huh?

As a writing researcher, I find it fascinating how much a perspective oriented toward literate activity reveals about Dan's automotive work. From my own experiences trying to keep cars and household appliances running, I knew that those kinds of physical activities tend to involve using some texts, but I am just thrilled by how viewing Dan's work through the lens of literate activity allows me to see the rich textuality that saturates what he does and how he does it. Approaching his restoration of his Maverick as an activity accomplished through his use of cultural tools helped me see the host of texts Dan uses, particularly the Maverick book, the central role that acting

A Note from the *GWRJ* Editors

The staff of the *GWRJ* often says that "anyone who writes can be a writing researcher, if they're willing to look carefully at literate activities and be flexible and research-oriented in their approach to new writing situations." In some ways, we think that, while the kind of writing research work that Dr. Roozen does involves differences (in expertise, research methods, professionalization, and career focus, for example), there are perhaps more similarities than differences between Dr. Roozen's work and "everyday writing research."

with pictures plays in its production and use, and the multiple functions those images allow that text to serve. Attending to Dan's history of acting with images allowed me to see connections to activities in Dan's near and distant past that I never would have imagined: his family's practice of taking pictures and assembling them into photo albums, his father's production and use of his "boat book," and Dan's own engagements with car manuals and online car forums. And attending to the continual emergence of Dan's history of acting with pictures allowed me to see linkages to activities that I could never have predicted: his online car magazine, his undergraduate courses, and his job as a technical support associate.

And as a writing researcher, I continually find myself asking many more questions about Dan's tools and literate practices. I've focused here on Dan's acting with pictures, but I also want to know more about his use of other cultural tools: technical discourses in spoken and written discussions of automotive work; technologies including WordPress and social media platforms; and inscriptions including markings scribed on car parts, diagrams, drawings, readouts from the digital devices he used, and maps (a tool Dan used frequently in the articles for his online magazine). I am also interested in how Dan's engagement with automobiles contributes to transnational and

translingual flows of language and literacy. At one point during our talks, Dan mentioned that one of his FB friends who lives in Argentina is creating an online catalog in Spanish for hard-to-find Maverick parts. I’m also deeply curious about how Dan actually uses cultural tools in the moment-to-moment flow of activity. It would be fascinating, I think, to be able to examine Dan and his family members in action as they use texts and tools in action as they plan for and accomplish their work on the Maverick, to explore how texts and tools shape their embodied activity, and, in turn, how their bodies interact with texts and tools. I also want to know more about Dan’s family members’ histories as well. At one point, Dan mentioned that his father’s military service included a number of years working in a legal department, and I’ve been wondering how the textual practices valued there might shape his father’s use of texts for working on boats and cars. Dan also mentioned that one of his sons is an automotive technician at a local car dealership, and that makes me curious about how his choice of vocation has been shaped by his family’s long history of automotive work across multiple generations.

Most writers might not necessarily enjoy getting into this kind of detail when they think about their literate practices, but it can be worthwhile to do, especially when we’re trying to understand how our own literate practices are impacting the texts we create and use and ourselves as literate persons in the world. Unraveling writing stands to reveal a great deal about the wealth of texts and tools that we inherit from others, and from the other times and places of our lives, and how we creatively and continually reshape them for our own purposes, passing them along to others as we do. Tracing the multiple threads that are entwined in our literate lives can help us understand the many different purposes that texts and tools accomplish for us as we use them, from the obvious to those we might not even be consciously aware of, and can help us recognize the rich histories of acting with texts and tools that each of us is continually building, and building from. Perhaps more importantly, unraveling writing can help us to be more consciously aware of the emergent identities as literate persons in the world that we are continually making and remaking for ourselves and making possible for others.

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Talk with your Hands: An Exploration of Communication through Sign Language

Allie Beam

The *GWRJ* has published many articles about translanguaging, but all of these are in reference to verbal languages. However, sign language interpretation is, in fact, a translanguaging experience. I am a member of Deaf Redbirds Association here on campus, and I was privileged to get to interpret in sign language with the association at the homecoming football game this year. The topic of translanguaging and genre with sign language interpretation is extremely important because when discussing these communication topics, sign language is typically overlooked. In this article, I relate this topic to terms such as multimodality, translanguaging writing, and CHAT. Though I am not proficient in ASL or any other type of sign language, I am engaging in this experience daily through the learning process. I hope that this article is informative to others and adds to the corpus of the Journal due to its unique take on a traditional topic.

Research and Analysis

Communication, as a whole, is something I have always been passionate about. As a high school student, I was a member of a competitive speech and debate team where I was able to compete at the national tournament twice. I was also privileged enough to give a TEDx talk in October of 2018. I love public speaking. Because of this, I am now a coach for my high school's speech and debate team, and I have recently changed my college plans in order to pursue a degree in communication sciences and disorders so that I can better understand language and communication as a whole.

When many people think about the word *communication*, public speaking and conversation are often things that come to mind. What is interesting

about communication, however, is that it takes many forms. In fact, the word *communication* is defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary as, “information communicated : information transmitted or conveyed” (“Communication”). This shows us that the sharing of information is the key factor when determining what we deem to be communication. It absolutely does not have to be verbal to be considered communication.

Learning sign language has been incredibly impactful in my life. As a member of Deaf Redbirds Association, I practice my skills once or twice a week. I hope to continue growing in these skills throughout my life. Sign language is a clear example of a transfer of information that does not take place by verbal means.

The connection may seem obvious, but I was surprised at how much an understanding of language and communication helped me in my efforts to learn American Sign Language (ASL). Upon entering college, cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) helped me think about sign language in a completely different way. The Illinois State Writing Program explains the purpose of cultural-historical activity theory by saying, “In our program, we use CHAT to help us think about and study the complex genres that we encounter in the world.” Through the terms associated with ISU’s CHAT, we can think more critically about the genre of sign language as well as communication as a whole. The Illinois State Writing Program describes a **genre** as “a kind of production that it is possible to identify by understanding the conventions or features that make that production recognizable.” Applying this definition, it becomes apparent that sign language is a genre and thus can be analyzed under CHAT. As we explore this form of nonverbal communication, we can better understand the communication events that take place in our everyday interactions.

This article is dedicated to members of the d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing communities as well as sign language interpreters and educators who engage in these communication activities every day. It is extremely important to write about sign language and sign language interpretation because these forms of communication are essential within our world and within our communities. This article is intended to shed light on these valuable methods of communication that are so often overlooked when communication is discussed within hearing communities. This article is also intended to inform and inspire hearing members of our society to learn more about the genres of sign language and sign language interpretation in order to further understand the role communication plays in their everyday lives.

Exploring Sign Language

The summer after I graduated high school, I set out to do something I had always wanted to do: learn sign language. I wasn't sure how to start this process, so I reached out to a teacher from my high school who taught an ASL independent study during the school year. She was kind enough to let me use the textbook that she uses during the year. She told me I could borrow it for the whole summer as long as I gave it back by the start of the semester. I got to work right away. I tried to do a lesson per day, but that didn't end up working out long-term because each lesson took about an hour and a half. The lessons would consist of about twenty vocab terms to learn, some tricks to remember them, and then finally sentences made up of all the words I had learned.

Throughout the above, I demonstrated both the processes of **content research** and **primary research**. According to the Illinois State Writing Program, “*Content Research* is any kind of research a person (or group) might do to gain knowledge they plan to use in some kind of production.” My content research came primarily from watching videos on YouTube, reading articles online about the various forms of sign language, and reading the lessons in my textbook. Through these research techniques we can begin to understand communication on a more wholistic level.

While learning, the sentences in the book were the hardest part because in American Sign Language, the sentence syntax is different than that of spoken English. This was something about sign language that I had not known upon starting. As a result of this difference, the book would first “gloss” the sentences, prior to asking you to sign them. *Gloss* is defined in the journal *American Annals for the Deaf* as “written equivalents of ASL sentences” (Buisson 331). When analyzing this within the realm of CHAT, it becomes clear that glossing is a form of **translingual writing** or writing across languages.

When interpreting a song in American Sign Language, for example, it is important to gloss the song before attempting to sign it so you are aware of the correct order of signs and word translations. ASL is created for understanding and, as a result, eliminates many synonyms that are frequented in spoken English. Individuals with a lot of experience may be able to skip glossing as an intermediate step or gloss in their heads, but someone like me, who has not been signing for very long, should definitely engage in this translingual writing activity to ensure that their translation is as correct as possible. Likewise, for an individual who learned ASL as their first language, all writing with English syntax is, by definition, a translingual

activity. Because the syntax is different in ASL, reading or speaking in English would require an individual who learned ASL to get used to a different grammatical structure. This would be a translingual activity, because the individual is going between the grammar structures of the two languages.

I was struggling to fully grasp this new sentence syntax, so I decided to do some more research by reaching out to my good friend's mother, who is a sign language interpreter. In the article "The ESL Language Barrier: The Written Word vs. the Spoken Word" it states that primary research is "research you conduct on your own" (Abdelnour 56). The author goes on to demonstrate that this research is often interpersonal. By reaching out to my friend's mom, I was conducting primary research.

When doing this research, my friend's mom recommended a YouTuber to me. This YouTuber posts ASL lessons and has specific videos about sentence structure. I was also informed about another type of sign language called Pidgin Signed English or just Signed English. This dialect of sign language is also used in the United States. Signed English is not a distinct language like American Sign Language; it is a combination of English and ASL. The main distinguishing factor is that PSE uses a similar sentence structure to spoken English. My friend's mom told me that if I was just seeking to communicate, PSE might be an easier place to start. I decided, upon reflection, to continue working on learning the ASL sentence structure with the videos, but I was excited to learn more about both dialects.

I planned to attend Illinois State University in the fall but was disappointed to learn that I would not be able to take a formal ASL class because I am not a special education major. I was looking for ways to continue growing in my skills when I found an article online about a student at Illinois State who was advocating for the integration of ASL in the classroom. I reached out to him, and he was excited to talk to me about my quest to learn ASL. He recommended that I attend sign language practices that take place twice a week through Deaf Redbirds Association. This is an example of how **socialization** can pave the way for greater learning and understanding within research or when exploring a genre. The Illinois State Writing Program explains that, "socialization describes the interactions of people and institutions as they produce, distribute, and use texts. When people engage with texts, they are also (consciously and unconsciously) engaged in the practice of representing and transforming different kinds of social and cultural practices." Through socialization in the Deaf Redbirds Association, I was able to have the activities necessary to shape my knowledge of sign language.

When the school year started, I began going to Deaf Redbirds Association (DRA) practices in order to learn more. They asked all of us at the first meeting if we wanted to interpret for the homecoming football game. I was apprehensive because I didn't feel like I knew enough to interpret anything. This is an example of how **reception** depends heavily on the individual who is taking in the knowledge. The Illinois State Writing Program states that, "Reception deals with how a text is taken up and used by others." For me, when I received the knowledge that I could interpret, my reaction was nervousness, but others might be conflicted or excited.

My apprehension ended quickly, as they assured me that we would practice a lot and that I would be ready for the game. With that assurance, I signed up. Every week we would practice learning and signing the Illinois State Alma Mater, the fight song, the national anthem, and "God Bless America." All of these songs are played by the band during their pregame performance.

During the practices with Deaf Redbirds Association, we learned from a PowerPoint with the words to all of our songs written in both English and ASL Gloss. We practiced slowly at first, but eventually we were able to get to the point where we could practice with a recording of the marching band playing the songs. One of the hardest parts for me was remembering the gloss instead of the words that I had become so used to singing throughout my lifetime. In this struggle, I was experiencing the concept of a **low-road transfer**. D.N. Perkins and Gavriel Salomon explain this term in their article "Teaching for Transfer." They say that low-road transfer "reflects the automatic triggering of well-practiced routines in circumstances where there is considerable perceptual similarity to the original learning context" (5). In this experience, the spoken English grammar was triggered because it is a well-practiced routine. Because of this, it was difficult to retrain myself to think in terms of the gloss as opposed to the grammar structure I had become used to.

During the same timeframe, I continued doing a ton of primary research. Whenever I was unsure of a sign or the correct order of signs I would either ask a friend of mine or I would ask a member of the DRA board. Through my participation in Deaf Redbirds Association, I learned that there is even more to sign language than I had ever thought. I learned a lot of new signs from the songs we were interpreting. Additionally, I learned about SEE and cued speech, which are other forms of sign language that are used in the United States. I learned about these from members of the group who were learning about them in their sign language classes. Because I wanted to learn more, I decided to further my knowledge by doing some content research on

the topics. I found out a lot from this. I learned, in short, that SEE or Signed Exact English, is a system where every English word is given a sign and the structure can be directly taken from a spoken English sentence. This was interesting to me, but I was more intrigued by the research I did regarding cued speech. This is something that I was specifically fascinated with because I had heard through my primary research that cued speech is one of the ways d/Deaf individuals can learn how to speak verbally. As a future speech-language pathologist, this was something I really wanted to learn about. Through further content research, I learned that cued speech is based on phonetics and helps to supplement lip reading.

The Multimodality of Sign Language

Over the next few months, I attempted to learn some cued speech from a chart I found online. I found it easier than learning American Sign Language because the signs and placements for cued speech represent the eleven sounds that are used to construct the English language. It doesn't take nearly as long to learn cued speech as it does to learn American Sign Language. Each sign in cued speech represents a sound. It is a completely phonetic form of sign language, so once you have memorized the signs and placements that represent each sound, it is all about speeding it up. This experience and form of speech is an example of **multimodality**. This is explained by the Illinois State Writing Program as, "ALL of the modes that humans can use to communicate." They include that this can include communication that is symbolic, oral, aural, visual, or alphabetic. Clearly, cued speech is a form of multimodal composing as it combines oral communication with visual communication. It, like other multimodal communication methods, allows for a more whole and complete understanding of the texts. Whether or not communication is related to sign language, an exploration of multimodality can help form deeper understanding of communication, as all text is communicated across a multitude of modes.

I was beyond excited to sign at the homecoming football game. We had two practices the week leading up to the performance. These practices were scheduled to make sure we knew the signs and were prepared for the game. On Friday night, we rehearsed again, but this time it was with Big Red Marching Machine, the marching band on campus. For this rehearsal, we stood on our yard lines and practiced the whole pregame along with the band, color guard, and dance team. It was really fun to see everything come together. We were able to truly appreciate what we had been working toward.

The next day was homecoming. It was a very cold and rainy day, but we were determined to make the best of it. The day started early with the homecoming parade which we were marching in. As we marched, we passed out candy and signed the fight song. After that, we went to the Department of Education's tailgate tent, where we had been invited. Then, we were invited to the President's tent to interpret the fight song for the people invited to that tailgate. It had already been a full day, but we still had one more thing to do: interpret at the football game.

Walking into the stadium, I was very nervous. This deals with my reception of this event. I didn't want to mess up and do a disservice to those who were counting on my interpretation to be correct, so my reception of this caused me to approach it very nervously. I knew, however, that because I was not the only interpreter, I would be okay. I was excited to go for it. Because of the rain, there were not very many people in the stands. This was upsetting, but as Big Red Marching Machine took the field, I was excited to sign on the field and have a good time. It ended up being a really fun experience. I successfully interpreted the pregame performance and had a great time doing it.

Afterward, I was soaking wet from the rain but happy that I had gotten the privilege of interpreting at the game. Within CHAT, **ecology** plays a large role in the context of the text as well as the shaping of the text itself. On this day, the actual weather played an important part in the outcome of the day. The rain caused there to be fewer people in the stands but allowed for an exciting day that no one was expecting and a day I will likely never forget.

I continue to learn and grow in my sign language skills every day, and I hope to continue growing my knowledge through the rest of my life. This is something that matters so much in our everyday world. I strongly believe that ASL ought to be integrated into public schools. It is something that everyone should have some knowledge of, even if that just means conversationally. Learning sign language opens us up to a greater understanding of communication in every aspect of our lives.

As I have demonstrated, this concept extends far beyond the English 101 classroom. Through becoming educated on sign language, we can learn so much about not only the English language but also about communication as a whole. Exploring sign language through PCHAT can help us to really understand the context through which we communicate, no matter the mode of communication. All language and texts are a part of a culture and have a very rich history. The exploration of this helps us to grow in our understanding of communication, no matter the uptake of the language.

In addition to this, my exploration of language allowed for the opportunity to conduct important content and primary research. The knowledge gained through these processes was essential in my quest to learn more about sign language as a whole. I was able to continue my learning process because of the knowledge I gained from conducting research. This, then, gave me a fuller and more complete understanding of communication, which will serve me well throughout my time in college and within my future career.

As human beings, we rely on communication on a daily basis. This is a concept that holds great significance regardless of time period, culture, or identity. It is something that connects us all. No matter how we communicate, we are bonded through our shared emphasis on communication. Because of the significance of this seemingly simple concept in our world, it is extremely important to explore the methods by which we communicate, so we can learn more about ourselves and the world around us. Through exploration of sign language, I sincerely hope that you have been impacted by the significance of the information presented and inspired to learn more about human communication as a whole. Learning and exploring sign language is a translingual activity. This movement between languages is essential for humans to communicate with each other. Communicating with other people is often taken for granted, but the exploration of translingual activity can help us to connect further. The process of communication is something that we must all continue to explore in order to connect with more of those around us every day.

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Allie Beam is a nineteen-year-old student who is working to inspire change within her community. Throughout her life, public speaking has always been of extreme importance. As a communication sciences and disorders major, she is preparing to work as a speech-language pathologist with the hopes of helping others find their voice. Beam's highest priority is working towards change within her community. Beam was one of four students asked to speak on behalf of University High School at the March for Our Lives. She used this opportunity to express the opinions of many students feeling unsafe in their schools after the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Beam has since cofounded a group called BN Youth Activists and gave a TEDx talk in October of 2018 on the topic of youth activism. Through these actions, Beam aspires to speak out through her writing with the hopes of positively impacting the future.



The Activity System of ISU Women’s Basketball Pride Night: An Interview with Jordan Ashley

Emily Capan and Bryanna Tidmarsh

Emily Capan and Bryanna Tidmarsh interview Redbird Athletics’ marketing director Jordan Ashley about the activity system of planning Pride Night: what texts were produced, who was involved, what the reception was, and more. The authors aim to highlight an event that promoted diversity and inclusion in our local community.

It sounds like a bar joke: two English graduate students walk into the Redbird Arena. They don’t know whether they are allowed to park in the lot outside, so seldom do they go there, and they aren’t sure whether to head left or right once inside the arena. The first one says to the other one, “Left or right?” The second one says, “It’s a circle. No matter what, if we head right, we’ll be headed the *right* way.”

We met Jordan Ashley, Director of Marketing for Redbird Athletics, on an overhang overlooking a basketball practice—pop music blaring. Ashley, who holds an MBA from ISU, spearheaded the Women’s Basketball Pride Night, which took place on January 24, 2020. Emily had seen billboards and social media posts about it, and Bryanna had attended the game, noticing the texts that were produced for the event: trivia questions on the Redbirds app, rainbow koozies, and Pride shirts at the Alamo.

We wondered how this event came to be: what kinds of groups or individuals were involved in making this event happen, what kinds of tools were used to produce the variety of texts for this event, and what the audience’s reception was. Was this event constructed ethically, and for the

right reasons? As this was the first-ever Pride Night for the ISU athletics department, we found that it was important to highlight this event and its role in promoting diversity and inclusion in our local community.



Figure 1: Jordan Ashley, director of marketing in the ISU Athletics Department.

Capan: What is your name, and what is your role here in the ISU Athletics Department?

Ashley: My name is Jordan Ashley. I'm the director of marketing here. I primarily coordinate efforts for football marketing, which is kind of a big deal because there are not a lot of women at the Division level that get to oversee football. So, I'm super proud of that. I oversee baseball and women's basketball marketing, and then I do all of our student marketing, which has a hand in revenue generation. I'm a liaison for our revenue generation committee. So, that's kind of an overview, I guess.

Tidmarsh: A lot of hats.

Ashley: Yes, a lot of hats. Email marketing, all sorts of stuff.

Capan: Yeah! With that, there must be a lot of writing—

Ashley: Yes.

Capan: —that you do during the production of those texts. So, what are the different types of texts that you produce?

Ashley: I'm in charge of our Instagram account, and I oversee all of our student Red Alert social media. So, that's a different type of writing. But I also produce all of our pacmails, which is our version of email marketing. I do all the texts for that and for email marketing campaigns. I also produce scripts—such as PA (Public Address) scripts for our football games, which is actually interesting. It's a different type of writing. I have to say the most intriguing thing I possibly can in the shortest amount of words that can get a point across really quickly. It's been a process to learn that over the last three years.

Capan: That's a great technical writing example.

Ashley: It is. I pride myself on transitions. I'm the transition queen in my office! I like to find creative ways to go from one PA to the next PA to make

it fun and kind of “punny,” as I like to say. I like to try to make people laugh, and I think it’s a good way to mix it up a little bit at games. I like doing that.

Capan: Are there any other ways that you communicate with other people?

Ashley: In the department, or just in general?

Capan: In general; the communication you do here at your job. Like on Instagram, you’re producing visuals and text. Are there any other ways that you communicate?

Ashley: So, we do a lot of video. I do not produce the video. I am one of the concept people. I come up with concepts for videos and then pitch it to our video department, who step in and help make it a reality.

Tidmarsh: Is that at UMC [University Marketing and Communications], or do you have your own video department?

Ashley: No, we have our own video production team. We are very lucky to have them. We actually have a director, two assistant directors, a graduate assistant, and a producer.

We produce two types of video—at least, that I’m involved with. There’s the video that goes on during the game, which is like a fan-interaction piece. So, that’s like your dance cams and bird cams and funny videos with the players—which could also be used on social media, but their primary focus is fan engagement in the venue.

And then we produce, like, fun marketing videos that are used to promote a specific game. For example, I was giving away a floppy baseball cap at a baseball game—two years ago, I went to one of our producers, and I was like, “Hey, I have this idea for a fun, corny, ’80s sales video for this dad hat.” We ended up making this really funny video.

Capan: Lots of graphics . . .

Ashley: Yea! Lots of like . . . I got Lance, who is actually a professor in the communications department, to be the voiceover for it. He’s just got a very strong voice and it really fit the theme.

And I did another one. We were going to unofficially try to break a world record for the most handshakes ever given by a mascot at a soccer game, so we did a fun video where Reggie was preparing for the world record attempt. It had the Rocky song in the background. It was really funny.

It’s just a different type of communication. Get it out there but in a fun, engaging way.

Tidmarsh: Where do those videos get shared?

Ashley: They get shared on multiple social media platforms. We have a Twitter, an Instagram, and a Facebook, of course.

Reggie has his own Twitter, though. And he's verified, which is a very big deal for our level. There are not a lot of mascots that are verified, but Reggie is. So that's really fun. And then they are also shared on our sports accounts. Sometimes I work with Tyler Emken with University Marketing and Communications to send some videos, and he'll put them out on the university page for us, which is super nice of him.

Capan: It seems like you do a lot of collaborative writing and creating with people.

Ashley: The more impressions I can get on those videos, the better return on investment it is for our video staff—because they're stretched a lot. They have to produce all in-game stuff and commercials for all our games. Then we have sponsored elements that have to be done because they're contracted. So, when marketing comes in with a video idea, I really have to be strategic about how I pitch it because their time is valuable. Everyone's time is valuable—but I want them to make time for me, so I have to be a little politically savvy.

Capan: You have to work within those power structures to get what you want.

Ashley: Yes, exactly. But in a strategic way, not a pushy way. Gotta be careful with that.

Tidmarsh: Related to that, how did the inception of the Pride Night come about? I know that was sort of your baby, right?

Ashley: It was actually my baby and also Danny Bug's, who was a former graduate assistant here in digital marketing. He actually just left us for an assistant director role at Drake University. Pride night was his last hurrah with us—our last collaboration together.

The way Pride Night came about . . . I had seen a Pride Night done right before. There were a lot of minor and major league baseball teams that took on Pride Night, and they would do a really cool T-shirt with it. I had seen a Pride night at a WNBA game as well.

The way we do our marketing plans is, we sit down in the off-season and look at the sports schedule. "Okay, we definitely need a promotion here."

“We need promotion here and here and here.” We look at it from a big scope. And then we come up with our ideas: “So, what fits well here?”

Some reoccurring ones we have for women’s basketball are Education Day, which happens in the non-conference season. We get to invite all local elementary school students to come to a game. It’s usually right before winter break in December. It fits really well with our schedule. It’s kind of a win-win. It’s free for them, but it really validates our female student athletes because they get to play in front of such a large crowd: over 3,000 people, which is a really big deal.

We have a Play for Kay game, which is another reoccurring one. It’s for breast cancer awareness. It was started by an NC State legendary head coach who had breast cancer. Her name was Kay Yow. Our head coach actually played for Kay, which is kind of a neat tie. She has since passed away. So, that’s a big one. We actually just raised \$25,000 for that. That game always happens in February.

The other one we have is a Pack-the-Arena type of night, which is also a free event. It’s where we can invite the whole community to come in just to witness a women’s basketball game, and we try to create an experience that brings in new fans.

When we were thinking of other ideas, Pride Night came up. I’m a member of the LGBTQ community, and so is Danny Bug, and we were like, “Let’s try it.” I actually have a fabulous marketing assistant. Her name is Marineth Sierra. And she was all for it; she actually really hyped us up about it. We brought it up and were like, “Do we think we could pull this off, ya know? Are we sure we want to test these waters?” And she was like, “Yes! Go for it. Let’s do it!”

Tidmarsh: That’s so important because the two of you are in particular vulnerable positions, right? So, it’s good to have an ally champion—

Ashley: Oh my gosh. We needed it. I really pride myself on my leadership style being that everyone’s voice is able to be heard. I don’t care if an idea comes from an intern or the assistant AD [athletics director]. If it’s a good idea, it’s a good idea. So, I really love that she felt like she could speak up and say, “Hey, this is a great idea. I think you should go for it.”

We were like, “Okay let’s do it!” My assistant AD—my boss—was out on paternity leave when we put this down. So, he came back and we were like, “We want to do Pride Night for women’s basketball.” And he was a total ally and backed us going for it. He actually corded me at the Lavender

Graduation when I graduated with my MBA. He spoke and put my cord on me. It was so cool.

Tidmarsh: Weren't you already working here at the time?

Ashley: I was! I was a GA, and then he promoted me a year in to assistant director. I didn't finish my MBA for another year. I was working full time and doing the MBA.

Capan: Congratulations!

Ashley: Thanks. It was a lot. When I found out about that Lavender Graduation, I really wanted to do it. I was like, "I want to do this. I think it will be so cool." I asked him to be the person to cord me. And he said yes. It was such a special moment for me.

He was super supportive of Pride Night. He helped us come up with ideas for it and all sorts of stuff. When we pitched it to our head coach, she was receptive of it, and at the time it was the off-season, so I don't think that she fully took it in. Then it started getting closer, and we started doing stuff. We met with the Diversity and Inclusion Office to make sure they were on board with us hosting this. Could they co-host with us? Could they look over all our verbiage? All our text? We wanted to make sure we were very inclusive. We didn't want to offend anyone or for it to be taken the wrong way. Really, the last thing I really wanted for this event was for the Pride community to think that we were trying to use them. That was not what I wanted for . . .

Capan: Yeah, like it's trendy . . .

Ashley: Yeah! Because rainbow stuff is cool now. Which is awesome, if you think about it. But it is also, like . . . I don't want them to think we just want them to come to this game and that this really doesn't mean anything.

Tidmarsh: You're not co-opting a movement.

Ashley: I wanted to make a statement. I wanted this to be a way for us to say, "Hey, you're included in our community. We care about what you think. Come out! This is an inclusive environment for you to hang out and have fun with your friends." I wanted that to be heard in the community, but I also wanted that to be heard by our student athletes. I felt it was really important for the student athletes to know that they're in an inclusive athletic department. Be who you want to be, and we'll support you for it. I felt this game, the way we approached it—we did just that, which I really liked.

Danny and I were going to use this as an education tool for the community—to educate everybody about what’s already happening on our campus for the LGBTQ+ community. We found out about the Student Support Fund and how they give scholarships to students and provide emergency financial assistance to students who lose financial support from their family due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. If I’m being completely honest, I did not know this fund existed.

Tidmarsh: I didn’t know that until I saw it on the screen at the game.

Capan: I didn’t know that.

Ashley: On a personal note, I came out and was scared to go home. My parents and I did not speak for six months. I was cut off financially. My car was taken away. And this was all in my junior year of college. I was very lucky to have an uncle and grandparents that supported me through that time. So, I was OK financially.

I was also lucky that I was a student athlete. I was on scholarship, so I could still afford school. But if a fund like this would have been at my undergraduate institution, I could have really benefited from it. I know there were others who could have benefited from it, too.

When we found out about the fund, we really shifted and were like, “We need everyone to know about this. I want to raise some money.” Danny was very, “We’re going to raise money for this.” We had to get that approved by our athletic director, and usually we cannot raise money for outside things. That was a hurdle that we had to jump. Because it was on our campus, he was all for it. We actually had a sit-down meeting with Larry Lyons. I honestly cannot speak highly enough of him. He was so receptive to the cause and being open minded.

That’s really all I ask: Be open-minded. You don’t have to believe what I believe; I don’t have to believe what you believe. But if you could be open-minded to this idea, that would be great. And he was. He told us to go for it. I really appreciated that. He could have shut us down.

Tidmarsh: That’s your boss?

Ashley: Oh, no. Larry Lyons is the AD. The athletic director of our department. So, he’s like the big man. If I can get him on board, I can do what I want to. I was very excited about that.

Capan: So, I know that you produced a lot of texts for the event. Driving around Normal, I even saw a billboard advertising the game. I was very

impressed by that. What other kinds of texts did you produce for the Pride Night event?

Ashley: We did flyers that we got approved by the Diversity and Inclusion office. Everything that we did, we pushed through them first. We wanted an ally in the text realm just because it can be touchy. You want to make sure you do it right. You don't want anybody to think that we were taking advantage or anything and not being inclusive. We sent drafts to the Diversity and Inclusion office, who sent us back some points, and we made changes. We did that for all of our "Did You Know?" questions. We did that for the trivia. Our billboard—it had the rainbow on there, and we originally did not have the brown and black colors included in the rainbow. The Diversity and Inclusion office are actually the ones who were like, "You should actually add these two colors."

Tidmarsh: Did you have anything to do with the shirts changing at the Alamo? Because they had their original rainbow ones, and then they had the rainbow shirts with the brown and black added.

Ashley: I don't know if you know Larry, one of the owners of the Alamo II but he is a huge ally of LGBTQ+ community, and when I took the flyer to him, he was like, "Have you seen our new shirts? They have the brown and black color on them!" And I was like, "I'm so proud, Larry! Good job!"

Tidmarsh: When I went to buy my shirt for the game, the clerk was like, "Did you know there's a different one?" And I was like, "Girl, thank you."

Ashley: I was so happy when that got added, ya know? I didn't actually know that each color individually meant something. Did you know that?

Tidmarsh: Yeah. I'm queer, but I always forget exactly what they are.

Ashley: That was a trivia question. I thought that was neat. We did flyers; we did the billboard. We did a Facebook event that had text in it. We did multiple tweets and an Instagram post. For in-house, we did a PA script. Obviously, that had all of our trivia on it and "Did You Know?" questions, which included the Student Support Fund, Lavender Graduation, and several others on there. I thought it was a really good night. It was really cool to see new faces in Redbird Arena having so much fun.

Tidmarsh: It was the first game I had been to, and I only went because it was Pride Night.

Ashley: Really?

Tidmarsh: I went with my family. Looking around and seeing other people in Pride shirts—it felt good. This community can sometimes feel so isolating.

Ashley: For sure. For sure. And to say I wasn't . . . I was definitely nervous. I was nervous for the game. We had some pushback on Facebook and Twitter. Some comments. Mostly Facebook to be honest.

Capan: What did those look like?

Ashley: They were very much . . . “If you’re going to do this, why isn’t there a Christian night?” is kind of what it was. Or, “I don’t support this. If you don’t support this, you need to call your dean on duty. Tell them your concerns.” That sort of deal. Some people said, “I won’t be attending. I’ve been a season ticket holder for X amount of years, but I won’t be at this game.”

Leading up to the game . . . I’m a super positive person. I’m known for being positively resilient. I really try to pride myself on that. But there were a couple of days where I was like, “Oh no. What if this goes horribly wrong? What if this goes really bad?” Danny and I had a heart-to-heart one night and we were like, “If we raise any money at all for that Student Support Fund, this was worth it. If we could impact one undergrad student who is struggling with this support fund, then it was worth it.” And we did! We raised over a thousand dollars.

Capan: That’s amazing. So, that negative reception from some audiences didn’t seem to necessarily affect the turnout at the game?

Ashley: I think it more affected me. It affected me more personally. We got some emails that were from the community that were not in support of this game. They didn’t like the stance that athletics had taken by producing this game, so my boss shared those with me and really used it as a teaching tool, like, “Hey when you choose to do something like this, you’re going to get some pushback, but that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t go for it.” It was a lot. Like I said, Larry, our AD, was so supportive. I really thought I would have some different champions, if I’m being honest, in the athletic department, but I didn’t. I did not get those.

Tidmarsh: It reveals people’s true colors.

Ashley: It does. That was a hard pill for me to swallow, to be honest. I really thought I was gonna get this support from some key people in the athletic department because I was making a stance. We were making a stance together. This is important. We want everyone to feel included. And I did not. I got support from two straight white men. Yes. Two straight white men.

Married. But two allies. I'm very proud to say that I work for an ally, and that our athletic director is an ally. That makes me happy.

Capan: That's awesome. What were some of the positive responses that you saw from the public on social media?

Ashley: The support fund—we shared that on social media. That got shared several times. Awareness about that came out of it. We got a lot of positive comments as well. Like, "I'll be there!" and "My alma mater is doing this, I'm so proud!" The koozies. I got a lot of like, "These are so cool" type of deal. I thought the koozies were a good touch.

Tidmarsh: I was like, "I better get my koozie."

Ashley: Right? I had so many people calling saying, "Hey, how do I get the koozie?" And I said, "They are just going to be out and about. You just gotta come." That was one of the largest general fan giveaways we've ever done for women's basketball. We had 600 koozies. And all of them were taken. All of them.

So, you could have fifty positive comments, and then you have this one negative one. And that negative one really sticks with you because words matter. What you say matters. *How* you say it matters more.

Tidmarsh: The stakeholders, trustees, donors, people with money—was that a concern?

Ashley: Yes. It was a concern, but it was not a concern until after the game was already planned. Because it didn't dawn on me that I would get pushback.

Capan: So, it was after the negative reception—

Ashley: —that started coming up. Oh my gosh. This is the twenty-first century.

Tidmarsh: I know. It seems like the most basic thing.

Ashley: I mean like, you're kidding me, right? We just want people to understand that people are just people. They just want to feel included. And you're gonna be negative about it. I didn't even think of the stakeholders until we were already in it. The athletic department got asked to do a couple of radio interviews. And usually those are done by the head coach or our SWA, which is our senior women's administrator. They both actually reached out to me and they're like, "Would you like to do these interviews? Would you like to be the person that does this?" and I'm like, "Yes. Yes, I would. I will put my name on this all day long."

I got to do two radio interviews, which is really a lot more media exposure than I thought we were going to get. And usually we don't get those extra interviews for a women's basketball game.

Capan: What did they ask you in those interviews?

Ashley: They asked me, "Why? Why this game?" I did get asked, "Why women's basketball?" which I thought was a fair question, and to that I said, "I have my hand in women's basketball so I knew I could impact it." But I could definitely see this at a male sport. I *want* to see it at a male sport.

Tidmarsh: I want to see it at football. When you said this was the first Pride Night, I thought, "Oh, it's the first for women's basketball."

Ashley: No. It was the first Pride Night ever for Illinois State Athletics.

Capan: Wow, that's wild.

Ashley: Right?

Tidmarsh: Isn't this supposed to be the oldest institution, or second oldest, in the state . . .

Ashley: In the state! Yes. And isn't one of our core pillars diversity and inclusion?

I kept reverting back to that because I thought it was so important. "Why are we doing this?" Well, we are celebrating one of our core values, which is diversity and inclusion. And I know that the LGBTQ+ community is just one dimension of diversity and inclusion, but it's one that has been historically left out. And they don't feel included.

This game was all about inclusion. I just wanted everyone to feel included. I want them to feel they can come to a game and they can come with their friends and they can be themselves and have fun. We made a whole Pride playlist for the game.

Capan: How did you choose what songs to include, and what tools did you use to make that?

Ashley: Spotify was my best friend in that. And Danny Bug championed that playlist. He killed it for me.

Tidmarsh: What other ways does the marketing department or the athletic department work towards diversity and inclusion?

Ashley: Not gonna lie, I feel like we need to work on it. And that's another reason for this game. I wanted to make strides. We actually just started a

program with our student athletes. Joe, the head of our academic and life skills unit, is starting a thing with the Diversity and Inclusion office, I believe, where student athletes can come in and talk to diverse people and ask questions. They just had the first one of those, I wanna say, a couple of weeks ago. He's championing that cause. I thought that was really cool. But every team is different, every coach is different—everyone has their own way of doing it. I think we could do more, though. I think the university could do more. That's just me.

Capan: As someone who is not an avid sports fan, I feel like I saw more advertising for the Pride Night game than any other ISU women's basketball game. I was happy to see it come across my social media news feeds.

Ashley: I worked with our graphic designer. I told her that I don't want this to be in your face; I want it to be very subtle. I don't want it to be flashy-flashy. I want it to be taken seriously.

Tidmarsh: It also normalizes it. It says, "This is just another game."

Ashley: It is. It's just another group of people. People are just people.

I actually used a quote I loved in one of my radio interviews. It is from Abe Lincoln. He says, "I don't like that man. I should get to know him better." I just loved that quote so much because there are so many stereotypes of LGBTQ+ people. My parents even had these stereotypes. When I came out, one of my dad's first words were, "But you're so pretty. You're so pretty. How could you be attracted to women? You're so pretty." And I'm like, because women are pretty!

Tidmarsh: We sure are.

Capan, Ashley, Tidmarsh: (Laughs)

Jordan Ashley, MBA, is the Director of Marketing and Fan Experience for Redbird Athletics at Illinois State University, where she serves as the marketing head for football, Red Alert sales, and student-gear marketing efforts. Originally from South Carolina, she earned her Master's in business administration at Illinois State in 2019.



Emily Capan is a PhD student at Illinois State University studying rhetoric and composition. Her research interests include multimodality, writing program administration and pedagogy, and writing assessment. She loves all things fantastical, including *Lord of the Rings*, *Dungeons and Dragons*, comics, and witchcraft. You can usually find her walking her dog, Clover, while listening to dance music or Machine Gun Kelly.



Bryanna Tidmarsh is a writer, editor, and educator currently pursuing her PhD in English studies at Illinois State University. Her current research centers on representations of activism in children's and young adult literature.



An Everlasting Meal

Lisa Hanimov

In this article, Lisa explores the definition of what it means to be creative. You do not have to be a producer of elite art or cultural products to be deemed creative; instead, mundane everyday activities hold just as much value. Lisa was able to put this act into practice by forming a new family tradition by utilizing her mother's first recipe book.

Ever since early man discovered fire and cheered the ending of raw meat, celebrations have united human communities in honoring momentous events, rites of passage, religious observances, and more. Celebrating as a group gives a sense of belonging, something crucial to human fulfillment. As these celebrations were enjoyed, it became a habit to repeat, constructing traditions throughout many individual lives. Traditions represent a critical piece of our cultures. They help form the structures and foundations of our families and our societies. They remind us that we are part of a history that defines our past and shapes who we are today and who we are likely to become tomorrow. There is no one way that a person becomes part of a tradition; it can be passed down to you, created on its own out of pure interest, or done unconsciously. Some of the most creative traditions are not original; they are simply the ones that are passed down and revised. What makes a tradition hold its value is the purpose and meaning attached to it. Through the definition provided by Karin Tusting and Uta Papen in their article "Creativity in Everyday Literacy Practices: The Contribution of an Ethnographic Approach," they explain creativity as being "inherent and essential in people's lives," consisting of "the human capacity to make

Everyday Creativity

According to Tusting and Papen, “Creative intellectual and semiotic work is part and parcel of people’s everyday activities of communication and sense-making” even when the texts they produce don’t include the kind of “poetic” features that are commonly associated with creative work (20).

meaning” (6–7). In this article, I’ll share with you how I saw the lack of traditions kept in my family household. Not having a foundation with an embedded culture made me feel detached and distressed, which then led me to realize it is never too late to ingrain new habits. After coming across my Mother’s handcrafted recipe book, I decided this would be the first new tradition that I would learn more about and pass on.

As humans, we grow up with our familiar set of traditions, celebrating them with close relatives and friends or sharing them with anyone who is visiting. We often forget that when we link ourselves to people’s lives, the process includes adapting to a set of customs they are already used to. Usually, the new set of habits intertwine with the previous procedures that were followed, causing a mishmash of multiple traditions. This is what happened to my mother. Coming from an Ashkenazi Jewish household with other ingrained general family customs, she married into a family with different practices. My father is part of a large Sephardic Jewish family, with a very overpowering aura and a particular way of cooking. With the mindset of proving that she too can cook Sephardic meals authentically, my Mother took this mission very passionately. With a blank recipe book endowed to her as a wedding gift, she found the task of taking notes became easier and

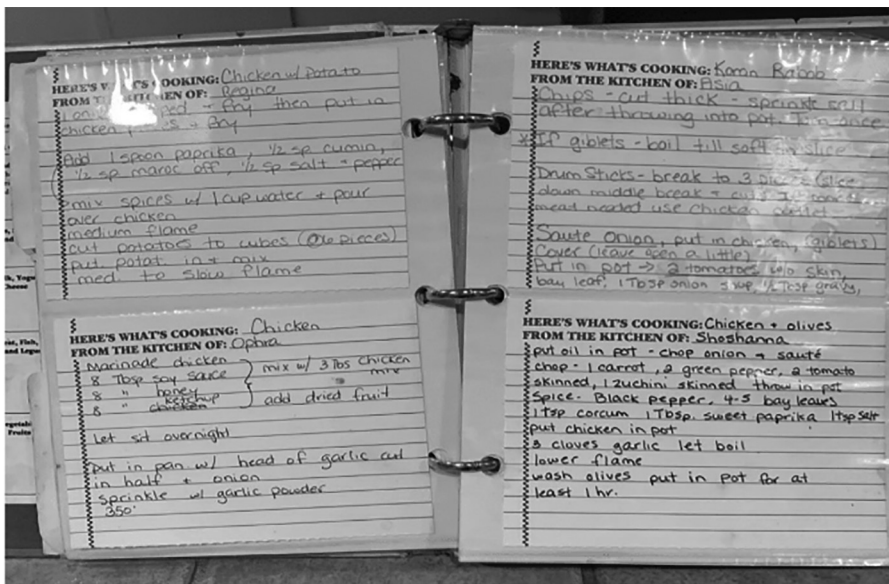


Figure 1: Lisa’s Mother’s original notes from her recipe book.

more organized. Each of my father's six sisters altered the meals to their own personalities, so when watching them cook, my Mom specified which sister she was watching.

In order to memorize all six alterations to every meal that can be made, my mother wrote it down as she saw it. These dishes that she was observing did not come with exact measurements, guidelines, or oven cooking length times. My mother prioritized the instructions she knew were most essential to successfully carry out each dish. For example, in Figure 2, she wrote “put onions sliced (not diced).” This is an important cooking note because how the onions are chopped can alter the meal, whereas how much oil needed to fry the onions is not as crucial and should be self-explanatory. Since these recipes are based off observation instead of an attempt to offer specific instructions, my Mother was not concerned about describing each step. Knowing what size pots, pans, bowls, and cups to use were all performed out of memory and by using the eyeballing method.

For a beginner, this is usually not the ideal approach when learning a completely new skill; however, that was the only option there was for my Mother. For this exact reason, I was told I would have a difficult time understanding the recipes unless I was shown and taught how to make them. My Mother can picture what the shape and size of the cups and bowls are, but as someone who is an outsider to these recipes, I found the sizing instructions were too vague. The only way to fully understand how to

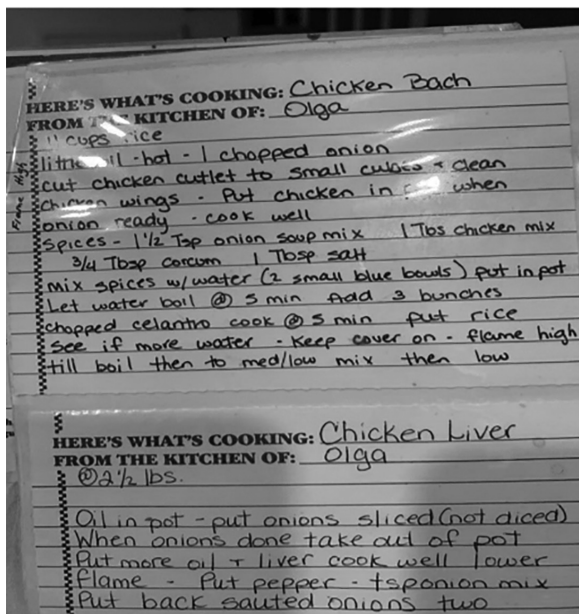


Figure 2: Lisa's Mother's original notes from her recipe book.

masterfully prepare the meals is be properly shown. After watching and, in time, perfecting the different styled plates, it became possible for my Mom to attach her own American twist to them. The influence of American culture caused a few modifications to my own recipe book after mimicking my mom.

Documenting family recipes keeps part of the legacy of our relatives and loved ones alive. For me, I want these family recipe collections to be more powerful than unearthing an old photo album or a cherished piece of clothing with the lingering scent of perfume. It lets anyone peek into my ancestor's everyday lives and to participate in writing the history of our family. If nothing were to be copied, then there would be nothing to pass down. This concept is what Tusting and Papen elaborate on in their article "Creativity in Everyday Literacy Practices: The Contribution of an Ethnographic Approach." Tusting and Papen discuss misconceptions that people have about creativity. They explain that most individuals are taught to believe that in order to be ingenious, they must be a "Creative Genius" (6), producing elite art and cultural products. However, texts that use witty word placement or embody a completely new outlook that are deemed to be creative, couldn't be appreciated if it wasn't for the mundane texts most assume to not be innovative. Tusting and Papen argue that people are trained to see creativity as something special, but in fact it is around us every day. All actions that involve innovative literacies, from writing novels to jotting down notes on napkins, are authentic since creativity is about people's individuality. Everyone has their own format of expressing themselves and that in itself makes it original and creative. Even if the text is copied down, originality can be found since the meaning behind the ideas differs. In developing their concept of everyday creativity, Tusting and Papen examine texts as part of a broader process of researching the everyday literacy practices through which people in a range of different settings produce and interact with texts. How people interpret and choose to connect with the content being observed are always different. We can all claim to be creative writers because we are.

I realized how important forming and then keeping alive a new tradition was only four months before moving away from home to attend college. Knowing that I would be soon moving away for college, I immediately asked my Mom if I could watch her cook and then proceed to write down the recipes in a small portable notebook. My Mother was delighted by my interest in her recipe book and took this opportunity to enrich my knowledge on cooking. I wrote down the recipes based off what we were preparing and eating for dinner, which is why my recipe book is not ordered in any specific format.

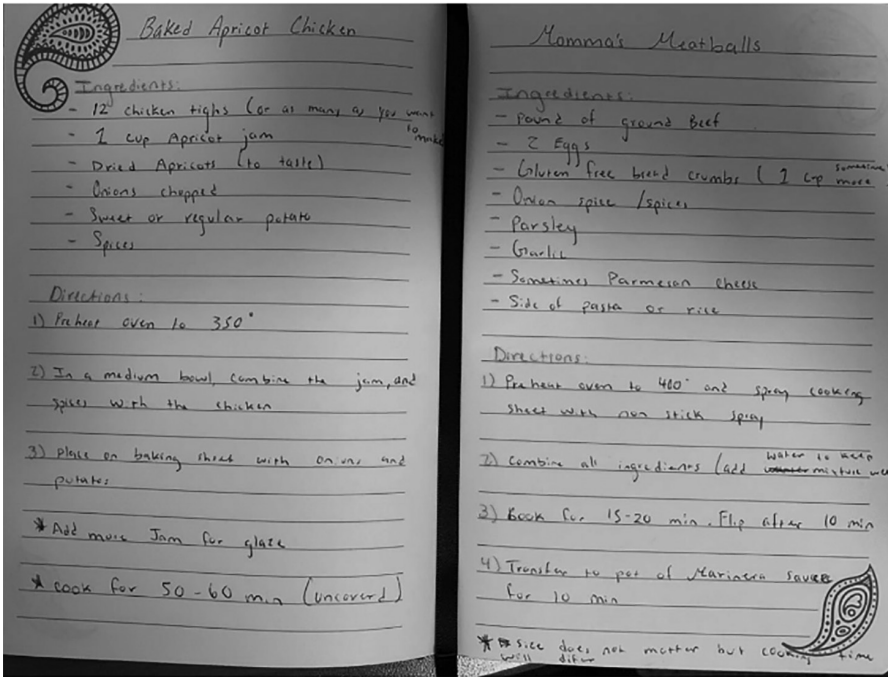


Figure 3: Lisa's portable handcrafted recipe book.

Before my transition to college, I was equipped to compose basic everyday meals (egg salad, meatballs with spaghetti, avocado toast) along with the more cultured meals my Mother worked hard to perfect. Copying down each meal with precise directions compelled me to continue remaking the dishes since I had a basic formula to follow. This routine of cooking allowed my cooking skills to improve exceptionally, which allowed me to gain critical cooking techniques that will last a lifetime. My approach to making my version of a recipe book was unlike my Mother's. Mine was made quickly, unorganized, and was neither labeled nor color coded. The version I use right now is a rough draft of what will come.

Within time, I will acquire a binder to hold my recipes that will be divided up into four sections: Ancestor's Original Recipe, Recipes I Grew Up Eating, Basic Everyday Recipes, and an open area to add anything that does not fit into one of the categories. Since I have design controls over my recipe book, with each meal I want to include the amount of carbohydrates per serving. Being a Type One Diabetic does not mix well with having to guess how many carbs I am consuming and, when not kept in check, causes my blood sugars to be unstable. The accessibility of knowing how many carbs per serving will save me time and insulin when I'm eating. I also want to make my cooking

instructions clear and logical to ensure assumptions are avoided and the meal is made properly. I hope to accomplish this by distinguishing important words or phrases in each recipe and then underlining, circling, or changing their color. Using my mother's original recipe book as a basic outline gave me ideas of how to assemble my recipe book. No other method will be identical to how I chose to format it. Everyone projects their personalities differently through their writing, drawing, and design, which is why Tusting and Papen argue that all texts are creative.

This new tradition that I integrated into my family's life is going to serve as a constant tracker. We will all be able to sit around the packed recipe binder reminiscing on our favorite childhood dinners that will inspire us to start cooking again. This book will effortlessly bring my family closer along with my future family members who are bound to arise in later generations. As someone who is still learning how to prepare and cook food properly, I will continue to be motivated since I have a text to constantly keep up with. I will continue to monitor the new recipes that have become relevant in my life, along with adding modern trendy dishes.

Tusting and Papen's enhanced definition of creativity means that the identity of being a writer can be claimed by anyone. Shifting our ideas of creativity causes us to grow an appreciation for mundane everyday activities that hold value. Many of us have—and can invent—creative traditions that become part of who are as individuals. In my case, writing and re-writing recipes allows me to create meals that are a meaningful experience, and inspires me to create my own versions of dishes, adding in my own flavor and style. As I record the thoughts, ideas, and processes of our traditional family meals, I can create a gift that will be handed down to my children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. I think this is true for many different kinds of creative traditions we might invent and share. They can help us share with loved ones' information about who we are, even after we are gone from this world.

Work Cited

Tusting, Karin, and Uta Papen. "Creativity in Everyday Literacy Practices: The Contribution of an Ethnographic Approach." *Literacy and Numeracy Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2008, pp. 5–23.

Lisa Hanimov is a second-year student majoring in Health Science at the University of Central Florida. When she's not attempting to become a professional jump roper, hanging with friends, or watching the latest TV shows on Netflix, you can find her studying chemistry and human anatomy or snuggled up next to Chrissy (Lisa's cat).



A Conversation with a *Grassroots* Author

Emily Capan and Leslie Hancock

Hello! And welcome to “A Conversation with a *Grassroots* Author.” Today, we’re talking with Leslie Hancock about her article, “From Noob to Veteran in *League of Legends*: Activity Systems and Genre Analysis in Video Games.” How do we learn to play video games? In this article, Leslie Hancock explores the process of learning how to play her favorite competitive game, *League of Legends*, using antecedent knowledge and genre analyses while participating in the game’s discourse community. After researching across a variety of genres within *League*’s activity system, Hancock learns how to improve at the game and become a fan of the game’s competitive e-sports scene.

Emily Capan: How did you come up with the idea for your article?

Leslie Hancock: The first thing that I actually did before I even imagined the idea for my article, I actually did content research to look at the previous *Grassroots* journals. I just went through the most recent couple journals that had come out and looked at the archive online at some of the articles. I was trying to figure out what people tended to write about and what kinds of topics were interesting and were getting published in the journal. I saw that a lot of the topics were things that were familiar to people, things that they were already doing or were already interested in. And that they would often take these topics, even if they were specialized things like we had recently had an article about, Thelma talking about chisme and articles about K-pop was another one that I actually used with one of my classes this semester. So even though they were topics that were maybe very specific to that person, they also turned the topic into something more relatable for other readers to look at. So, I thought that would be an interesting idea to think about something that I am already doing, something that I am already familiar with or have interest in and then how can I take that topic and turn it into something relatable using a lot of the concepts from the writing program. I knew that I wanted to talk about discourse communities and activity systems, for some reason I was just really drawn to those terms at that time that I was writing this. And so, I was trying to think of things that I was involved in and communities and activity systems that I could flush out into a whole

article. I've been playing *League of Legends* for years now, so I was like, "That's the one! This is the thing that I really care about, that I'm really passionate about." And a lot of people play video games, so I thought talking about how I learned to play a video game made sense to me as a really good topic idea that I could do and that I could talk about discourse communities and activity systems. I think that's basically the process that I went through for how I came up with that idea.

Capan: What was the rest of your writing process like? You've got your idea and now you have to actually write the article itself.

Hancock: The very first thing that I had to do was create sort of a timeline. I kind of spoke through it with my husband because he also plays the game with me. And we were trying to remember, how did we really start getting into the game and how did we start learning how to get better at the game? Because we were bad at it for a good solid year or two. So, we were trying to remember, "What happened? When did we start getting better?" I had to come up with an actual timeline of events, and I had to go back all the way to when I started playing at the end of 2013, I think it was. Unless I'm getting that wrong, it could have been the end of 2012. It all kind of blurs together because that was a million years ago now. Going back that far, that many years, it being 2020 now, it was a little tough because I was trying to remember all that. Because the game was so different at that time when we first started playing. It's almost a completely different beast at this point because there have been so many changes and so many additions and so many things added to and taken away. It's just absurd how many different changes there have been. And trying to go through and remember those changes was way too much. So I was going, "Okay. I'm not going to try and talk about every change in the game, that would be nuts." So, what can I talk about that are the things that I did that helped me improve at the game and things that I can talk about that are not so specific and specialized for understanding the game and how I improved at it, like getting really nitty-gritty with things that other people can relate to it. Part of my process, outside from making the timeline, was thinking about terms that are used in the game, you know one of the sections of my article is me giving some examples of terms, trying to loosely define them so that people who read the article can sort of feel that they are maybe more familiar with the video game or with trying to understand some of the words that I'm saying throughout the article. And how those terms have changed over time was also part of something that I had to think about for my process of writing this. One thing that really helped me with my process was using the internet archive Wayback Machine. Because again, it was like seven years ago that I got into this so trying to find things that were from that time period that

exist now is extremely difficult. A lot of those websites don't exist anymore or that content is gone now. And that was extremely important to me in my writing process for this article so that I could find examples and images and screenshots and things like that, that I could point to and say, "Here is, for example, the client interface." I had no idea what most of the buttons on that meant and I talk about that in the article. Finding screenshots of that and being able to point to these things and say, "Look, I don't get what any of these things mean." And that was part of my uptake process for learning the game. So that was actually a very important part of my writing process, reaching out to the *League* community, on the Discord community, to have people send me screenshots from forever ago that they had happened to save on their computer. So, I had some help from the community itself, I had help from the Wayback Machine, to see what kinds of access and resources I had that I could include in this. As much as the writing was important to my article, just finding images and resources and just talking to other people, that was also very much a part of my writing process.

Capan: That's so cool that they were able to help you out like that and they had those screenshots on their computers. You talked about your content research, but what about your genre research, as far as how to figure out how to write a *Grassroots* article?

Hancock: That was also me just coming up with an idea, and I had kind of mentioned this earlier, I did look at a lot of *Grassroots* articles in the most recent journal, and I also looked back a little bit through the previous journals from the past three or four years or so. I noticed that when I looked at the very first couple of journals that are in the archive on the ISU Writing website, they actually used different formatting. The vocabulary words that we were trying to emphasize would be underlined and the most recent ones are bolded. So, as I was writing my article, I deferred to what the most recent conventions were. I would bold my terms, I had interesting section headers because I saw that a lot of the current ones do that. It was interesting comparing how it has changed over time and then looking more closely at the most recent journals to see what the conventions are that are being used now. I saw that there was an abstract, so I kind of tucked away in the back of my mind that once I'm done, I've got to get my abstract written. I saw that there were things like an author's picture and an author's biography, and then the works cited list. That was maybe one of the trickiest parts for me when looking at the genre conventions of *Grassroots* articles because I was using so many images in my article so that I could show examples of the things that I was talking about. So, trying to figure out how to cite those, and should they be listed as images and figures. A lot of that was me deferring to how other *Grassroots* articles already do those things, so they were my examples for creating the

works cited list and the kind of author's bio and whatnot that you see in my article. A lot of the genre research that I did for the article specifically and the writing process of that was looking at what they already do in the most recent *Grassroots* journals.

Capan: I think that's a good point. You're looking at the trajectory of the genre conventions of the journal. Once you wrote your *Grassroots* article, you submitted it, what was that review process like? How did you take the feedback and revise your work to resubmit?

Hancock: My first round of reviews was having, I think, two editors that looked at my article, and they both gave me excellent feedback. One of the comments that I really appreciated in the review process was that there was some confusion around some of the game specific terms that I was using. Not even *League of Legends* specific terms, but things that were more gaming-related terms that I hadn't considered would not be accessible to everyone. Because for me, they are just so old hat. Everybody that is in any kind of gaming circle would know the terms. I was a little taken aback when, for example, hit points was something that I had put in my article. And I was like, "Oh, you're right! This is probably something that I should say that this is 'health'" It's the health of a character and hit points is how we measure that. There were little comments here and there that the editors pointed out, where I needed to expand on what these things meant to make them more accessible for readers who may not already be familiar with those terms. That was really helpful for me because I'm so deep into this community and knowing these terms that it was hard for me writing the article to completely step back from all of that and say, "Okay, what might a reader who doesn't know these terms need to know?" That was some of the most constructive feedback I had. I also really liked the feedback from the first round of review about adding certain terms. I don't believe that I talked much about genre analysis and content research in the first draft. Which are now things that have been added. I think that it was really helpful to think about what writing program terms I could use in the article that I had not considered. Because as I said earlier, I was really focused on writing about discourse communities and activity systems, so it kind of almost didn't occur to me, some of the uptake, and antecedent knowledge, and things that I was tapping into, or like genre research, genre analysis, that I was doing and I was writing about in the article, but I wasn't thinking about it in that way. It was super helpful to have another set of eyes to say, "Hey, this is actually something that you're doing, you should consider including that." As the review process has continued, it's been interesting to see formatting changes, and those have been super useful in the last round of reviews that I've gone through. And just further suggestions about, "Let's really work out these

terms for someone that doesn't know." I believe that I'm in my second round of reviews now and it's been super helpful getting the feedback from them.

Capan: I think that you make a good point that sometimes when you are so deep in a discourse community that it's hard to know what other people might not even recognize as something that is unfamiliar. Is there anything you would like to add that we haven't made space for in these questions or is there any advice that you would like to give to someone that is going to write their own *Grassroots* article?

Hancock: If I gave advice for somebody writing a *Grassroots* article, I think that the thing that I would say is most helpful, especially when coming up with an idea, is to try to write about things that you are already familiar with or already interested in. Because we are already always participating in activity systems and working with genres or producing genres or considering our writing processes all the time. We're always doing that; we're always interacting with different genres and performing genre analysis and content research. If we just take a moment to pause in our day and think, what are all the things that we are already doing? What are all the things that, even hobbies or for classes or just around me, in the environment around me, what are the things that I'm interacting with or seeing? What are the things that I care about, that I'm passionate about, the things that I want to do with my future? What are some possible genres or texts that I might work with as part of my career? Could I investigate that? Thinking about what is familiar to you is a very helpful way to start pondering what you might be interested in doing for a *Grassroots* article topic. The writing program terms are just things that will flow naturally alongside and in your article. It's going to happen. I think that if I gave any advice, it would be to think about what you already know and that's a good place to start.

Capan: Well, thank you so much Leslie for your time today!



Emily Capan is a PhD student at Illinois State University studying rhetoric and composition. Her research interests include multimodality, writing program administration and pedagogy, and writing assessment. She loves all things fantastical, including *Lord of the Rings*, *Dungeons and Dragons*, comics, and witchcraft. You can usually find her walking her dog, Clover, while listening to dance music or Machine Gun Kelly.



Leslie Hancock is an instructor and English Studies Master's student at Illinois State University. Her research interests focus on sociocultural pedagogies in the teaching of writing for nontraditional students in alternative learning environments. When she's not working, you can find her playing video or board games, watching KDramas, posting to her recipe blog, or trying to catch a Sizzlipede to complete her Pokédex . . . someday . . .

Publishing with the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal*

GWRJ Editors

Our Mission Statement

The *GWRJ* is dedicated to publishing articles **and other compositions** by writers and scholars whose work investigates the practices of people writing (and acting) in different writing situations using a variety of different genres. **As we enter our second decade of publication, we expect to develop and put out calls for new genres for the journal that are multimodal in nature or shorter than an average article. If you have a genre or project you'd like to propose, please email us with your suggestion.** We encourage both individuals and groups to submit work that studies and explores the different ways that writers learn how to write in different genres and settings—not just within the boundaries of academia, but in all kinds of settings in which writing happens.

We identify “writing research” as any type of composition that endeavors to uncover new information about how people work with writing or how writing works, which means a wide range of techniques and styles of writing might be applicable. For example, a first-person narrative, an informal conversation about writing, a formal study of writing, or even an artistic production could all be useful techniques for developing a *GWRJ* article. Accepted articles will be informed by either primary research into writing behaviors and activities and/or scholarship in the field of writing studies that addresses theories of how people learn to compose in different situations.

General Information

Submissions

Articles can be submitted to the *GWRJ* at any time. However, it may take time and a couple of rounds of revision before an article is ready to be published. Please contact the Managing Editor at grassrootswriting@gmail.com with queries about possible submissions.

Queries and Drafts

The *GWRJ* has a strong commitment to working with interested authors to help them prepare for publication, so if you think you have a good idea but are not sure how to proceed, please contact us. One of our editorial staff will be happy to work with you one-on-one to develop your idea and/or article.

Honoraria

The *GWRJ* offers an honorarium of \$50.00 for each article published in a print issue of the *GWRJ*.

Style and Tone

Because we encourage so many different kinds of textual production and research in the *GWRJ*, issues of appropriate style and tone can be complicated. However, we can offer the following basic style criteria for authors to consider:

1. The readership of the *GWRJ* is writers. It is not “students,” even though the journal is used by writing instructors and students. (The *GWRJ* remains the primary text for Writing Program courses at Illinois State University, and it’s also used by teachers and students in other programs as well.) *GWRJ* articles should attempt to provide valuable content to writers who are engaged in the activity of “learning how to learn about” genres.
2. “Teacher narratives” are not acceptable as *GWRJ* articles. We are interested in material that looks at literate activities from the position of a “writer” or a “researcher,” but articles that discuss ways to “teach” people about writing are not appropriate for this journal.
3. Language and style that is overly formal or “academic” may be unappealing to our readers.
4. A tone that situates the author as a “master” writer is often problematic. (We call these “success narratives,” which are often how-to type articles in which the focus is on the author’s learned expertise.) Authors should remember that no one “learns” a genre completely or in a completely simple way. While writers (especially of first-person narratives) may write about successes, they need to complicate the genres with which they are working.
5. Tone or content that situates the reader as a certain kind of writer (whether as a master or novice) with shared experiences can be

problematic because the readership of the journal constitutes a wide variety of writers with different writing abilities and experiences.

6. Whenever possible, articles should make use of published research about writing practices, but the research should be incorporated into the text in a relevant and accessible way so that readers who are not used to reading scholarly research can still benefit from the references.
7. Articles should be as specific as possible about the genre or set of writing activities they are studying. Generalized studies or discussions of “writing” are not encouraged. Additionally, examples of “writing-in-progress” are always encouraged and are often necessary for articles to be useful to our readers.

Media, Mode, and Copyright Issues

The *GWRJ* can publish both visual and digital texts. We encourage multimodal texts, including still images, audio, video, and hypertexts. However, authors working with these technologies need to be careful about copyright issues as we cannot publish any kinds of materials that may result in copyright infringement. We can sometimes seek copyright permissions, but in the case of materials such as works of art or graphics/images owned by large companies, this is often not possible. This is true for print-based articles that use images as well. We can, however, include materials that are covered by fair use; see <http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html> for fair use guidelines.

Also, video/audio of research subjects can require special kinds of permission processes, so you should contact the *GWRJ* editors before beginning this kind of work. Research using subjects who are considered “protected” populations (people under eighteen and medical patients covered by HIPPA, among others) are not acceptable for *GWRJ* articles unless the author has received approval from Illinois State University or another institution to conduct research with human subjects.

Researching for *Grassroots*

What does it mean to “do writing research?” For the *GWRJ*, it means people observing, investigating, critiquing, and even participating in the activities that humans engage in that involve literate practice.

But what does it really mean? In more practical language, it means finding some situation where humans are doing things that involve language (which

can mean composing in genres that are oral, aural, visual, etc., not just writing on paper) and thinking, “Hey, that looks interesting,” then taking the time to investigate that practice in some detail.

But this kind of research isn’t just about people. It’s really about what we call “activity systems,” which just means that we want to learn about all kinds of complicated interactions, not just what a particular kind of text looks like or what a particular person does when they produce a text (although we’re interested in those things too). We also want to know about the interactions between people as they produce texts, as well as the interactions between humans and their tools, practices, and different kinds of textual productions. And we’re interested in how certain kinds of texts work to shape our interactions; for example, the ways the genre of resumes might shape how people interact when they engage in the activities of finding and offering work.

To help researchers who might be thinking about or engaging in literate practices that they’d like to investigate, we’ve created this list of research projects that might be interesting or appropriate for the *GWRJ*:

Investigating Genres

These kinds of research projects usually investigate the nuances of particular genres: how they are made and who makes them, the distinctive features they have, who uses them, how and where they are used, and how they do particular kinds of communicative work in the world. This research is often straightforward, and—as some of the articles in our early issues reveal—this kind of genre investigation might have a “how-to” feel because many of the authors creating these pieces are also trying to learn how to produce that genre. However, genre investigations can move far beyond these “how-to” pieces. There are countless ways that genres can be examined in relation to how they do work in the world, such as by investigating technological and social implications that our readers would be interested in. Following genres to see where they go and the kinds of work they are made to do can take an author well beyond simply describing the features of a particular kind of text. One issue of concern to the *GWRJ* editors is that genre investigations can problematically “fix” genres—that is, situate them as stable productions that are always the same. So we encourage researchers to consider the ways in which genres constantly move and shift over time and in different situations.

Personal Explorations of Literate Practice

This kind of research is often closely connected to genre investigations. Authors examine their own practices in order to discover how they have

learned to produce certain kinds of writing in certain situations, or they investigate particular kinds of composing practices, such as different practices for engaging in research or revision. Like genre investigations, these kinds of projects sometimes have a “how-to” focus as authors learn to think about—and explain to others—the things they know (or are coming to know) about different literate practices.

Composing Practices

This kind of research looks at particular composing practices, including invention (coming up with ideas), research, revision, etc. It often overlaps with personal exploration research because authors are often investigating their own practices. However, this research could certainly involve interviews or observations of how other individuals or groups engage in these practices. One issue that concerns the *GWRJ* editors is that this kind of research can lead to assumptions that these composing practices are “universal”; that is, people might assume that composing practices work in similar ways across all kinds of genres and writing situations. While it is possible to trace similar kinds of literate activities or composing practices across different situations (and, in fact, it can be really interesting—see, for example, Kevin Roozen’s writing research, “Tracing Trajectories of Practice: Repurposing in One Student’s Developing Disciplinary Writing Processes”), it is important to remember that we really can’t talk about an activity like “revising,” for example, as if it’s something that a person does the same way in every kind of situation.

Literate Activity in the Wild

While writing in classrooms or for school settings can often seem very cut-and-dried, these practices are more complicated than they seem. Part of the reason we don’t see the complications of many kinds of literate practices is that once we become “embedded” in the activity, it no longer seems complicated to us! We know how to do it, but we don’t really remember how we learned to do it. Another reason that we sometimes miss the complications of writing is that there are “tropes”—or particular ways of defining/understanding these practices—that make them look simple and straightforward. An example of this is the activity of “writing a paper,” which can bring up very stylized and simplistic images of how a person just sits down, does some research, and then writes a paper for a particular class. But in fact, not only are the acts of researching and composing much more complicated than this limited view might offer, but also, this kind of literate practice is actually much more interactive than we might generally think. The *GWRJ* is interested in investigations that look at specific situations/locations

where all kinds of literate acts are happening. We want to see researchers “unpacking” what is actually happening when people try to compose particular kinds of texts in particular situations. We are also interested in research that looks at the ways that textual production is interactive—how it involves all kinds of interactions between different people and different objects, tools, and other entities over time. This kind of research can involve the interactions of people and genres as well as different cultural norms and practices.

Case Studies of Individual Literate Practices

This type of research focuses very closely on particular individuals and the kinds of literate practices they engage in in their daily lives. Some of our previously published articles that take this approach include research into the ways an individual learns to interact with a particular genre or particular literate situation. But we are also very interested in research that looks at literate practice more broadly and deeply. So, for example, how does an individual take composing practices from one situation and apply them to another? How does an individual learn to interact within a particular setting in which different types of genres are being produced (so, say, a new kind of work environment)? This kind of research can be constructed as a collaborative process in which one researcher acts as an observer while the other engages in an exploration of his/her personal practices.

Linguistics Writing Research

Previous work that exists in the journal in this area tended to focus specifically on grammar conventions or on the usage of particular kinds of stylistic or punctuation devices. However, we have noted our desire to encourage linguistic writing research that is more robust and complicated, including projects that explore corpus linguistics (using a collection of data to look at particular kinds of textual practice) or sociolinguistics (investigating the particular ways that humans use language within social systems). In earlier issues we have seen authors take up this call in interesting ways. Issues 7.1 and 7.2, for example, include articles featuring research into the role of language variation and its effects on both meaning-making and composing practices. See Agathe Lancrenon’s article “Everything You Need to Know About Transferring Metaphorical Ducks” and Cristina Sánchez-Martín’s article “Language Variation Across Genres: Translingualism Here and There” in issue 7.1. And, in issue 7.2, see Su Yin Khor’s article “Multilingual Notes as a Tool to Understand Super Dense Readings.” We look forward to continuing to publish additional studies that investigate these concepts in innovative ways.

Global or Intercultural Literate Practices

It is only within a few issues of the journal that the *GWRJ* has been able to publish research on literate practices as they move across cultural and/or geographical spaces. For examples, see Adriana Gradea's article in issue 3.2 ("The Little Genre that Could: CHAT Mapping the Slogan of the Big Communist Propaganda"), Summer Qabazard's article in issue 3.2 ("From Religion to Chicken Cannibalism: American Fast Food Ads in Kuwait"), Wesley Jacques' article in issue 7.1 ("The E-Cat's Meow: Exploring Activity in Translingual Mobile Gaming") or Sanam Shahmiri's article in issue 7.2 ("Translating the Untranslatable: Making Meaning of Idiomatic Expressions Across Languages"). We would like to encourage more of this kind of research in future issues as we are highly interested in research that studies the ways that people and textual practices move across these kinds of boundaries.

The Researcher's Process

According to one of our *GWRJ* authors, Lisa Phillips, it can be useful for authors to investigate and articulate a personal process that will be meaningful for them when developing ideas for research projects. She offered us her notes on the process that she followed to create her article for issue 3.1 of the journal, "Writing with Tattoo Ink: Composing that Gets Under the Skin." Her process is presented below in ten "steps" that *GWRJ* authors might find useful:

Step One

Come up with a general "topic" description. So the first question to answer is: "What is it about writing in the world that interests me?"

Step Two

As the process continues, think more specifically about the genre, setting, and/or specific practices under investigation. (Using the types of research we've listed above can be useful for focusing a topic.) So the second question an author might want to answer is: "How will I go about finding what I want to know?"

Step Three

Next, think about both the research practices that will be needed to gather data as well as the style of article that will be most appropriate. One excellent

way to do this is to read existing articles and examine the different ways that authors have approached different topics and different kinds of research.

Step Four

Because *Grassroots* articles are a fairly unique kind of writing, authors may find it useful to consider past writing experiences that they might be able to draw on as they write. We call these “antecedent genres,” and they can be important to think about because these prior experiences always shape how an author writes, especially when he or she is writing in a new and unfamiliar genre. While these antecedent genres will certainly be useful, they can also cause problems because aspects of an author’s past writing may not exactly fit with the style, tone, or content that is appropriate for *GWRJ* articles. Some questions to ask here are: “What kinds of writing do I already know how to do that I can use to help me? How are they similar and how are they different?”

Step Five

It can also be important to think about “target genres,” or types of writing that might be used as examples during the research and writing process. Obviously previously published *GWRJ* articles can be useful in this way, but it can also be interesting to think of other kinds of writing that might serve as examples. Writing research in the field of rhetoric and composition can be useful (for example, books and articles found on the WAC Clearinghouse website at <http://wac.colostate.edu>), but other kinds of research into social practices or even different kinds of journalism can be used as interesting models.

Step Six

Consider what kinds of visuals a text might need. Visual examples of different kinds of writing can add interest and information to a text, but copyright issues will need to be considered. Charts, graphs, and other illustrations that highlight important aspects of the data you’ve collected can also be important.

Step Seven

Thinking carefully about what information (data) is needed to make the article credible and useful for readers is a critical step. Thus, once an author has made decisions about the type of research he or she wants to do, it will also be important for them to make a plan for how to do that research. Will it be necessary to visit sites where writing is happening? Interview people about

how they produce or use different kinds of writing? Find historical examples of types of writing?

Step Eight

If the article is going to include observations of people's writing activities, interviews, or surveys, you'll need to obtain the proper permission. The interview/image consent form for *GWRJ* articles can be found on our website: <http://isuwriting.com/>.

Step Nine

Although the *GWRJ* doesn't require any particular style of citation, we do require that authors cite all of their information. The editors will help authors think about what needs to be cited and how it can be done, but authors will want to think about the best way to cite. This includes considering the different ways that citation works in different kinds of writing; for example, scholarly journal articles cite very differently than newspaper or magazine articles or blog posts. Sometimes the style of citation can really affect how a reader thinks about the information in an article, so it's important to think not only about what to cite but also how to cite it.

Step Ten

As the text is being produced, it is critical to keep in mind the needs and interests of *GWRJ* readers. They are interested in reading about a wide range of topics, and they enjoy articles written in a wide range of styles. Because our readers have such a wide range of interests, it is important not to take them for granted. Writing that is interesting, lively, and accessible is important, but perhaps the most important thing to remember is that your research, no matter how it's presented, represents your knowledge and thinking about a topic related to writing that is important to you. And since we're all writers and all of us are learning all the time about how to "do writing" in the world, sharing your knowledge is, ultimately, an act of community.

Questions?

If you have any questions about the journal or any of the articles, you can send queries to grassrootswriting@gmail.com. Part of our mission is to welcome and encourage all kinds of writing research, so if you have an idea that you want to develop, please don't hesitate to share it with us.

Works Cited

ISU Writing Program. "Key Terms and Concepts." *Grassroots Writing Research*, 22 September 2015, <http://isuwriting.com/key-terms/>.

Roozen, Kevin. "Tracing Trajectories of Practice: Repurposing in One Student's Developing Disciplinary Writing Processes." *Written Communication*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2010, pp. 318–54.