GRASSROOTS WRITING
RESEARCH JOURNAL

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From the Editors

Sarah Warren-Riley

With each new issue of the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal,* contributors showcase an increasingly complex understanding of terms, concepts, and theories in their writing research projects. We are pleased that this issue is no exception. It is, once again, fascinating to see how contributors to the journal continue to find innovative ways of shaping their own writing research identities and sharing what they have learned. The fifteen new articles in the 7.2 issue—which range from studies into the genres used in the activity system of an animal shelter to interrogations of spam e-mail to considerations of uptake, and untranslatable concepts and phrases—continue this trend by showing yet again just how in-depth and complex writing research can be.

You might notice that this new issue is a little bit longer than previous versions. The increased length is due to something that we are truly excited about. We've included four new articles written by eighth grade students, a result of our K-12 outreach program "Spreading Roots." This outreach program was developed out of a desire to expand the possibilities for the impact that our writing research approach might have outside of the university. The "Spreading Roots" articles included in this issue were made possible by the hard work and dedication of Illinois State University PhD Candidate Deb Riggert-Kieffer as she applied our genre studies writing research pedagogical approach in her English Language Arts classrooms at Washington Middle School in Washington, Illinois. We hope that you'll enjoy the unique perspectives shared by these young authors in their articles as much as we have. Our desire with "Spreading Roots" is that we may continue to include articles such as these that not only continue to show how the work of citizen writing researchers is not limited to any one type of citizen, but also increase the value of the journal to our readers overall.

Issue 7.2 starts off with three articles that dig into the complexity of activity systems and the ways that genres circulate within them to make things happen. First, **Heidi Bowman** interrogates the various forms of writing that are used to help animals at a local shelter, considering how these texts work together to care for and ultimately (hopefully) find the animals homes. Next, **Bridget Langdon** shares her endeavor to navigate a new activity system, the arena of emoji speak. Then, **Annie Hackett** and **David Giovagnoli** interview Alex O'Brien, a Registered Nurse at Carle Foundation Hospital in Urbana, Illinois to learn more about the activity system (and specific genres) that he engages with in his career.

The next two articles consider writing research concepts more broadly through innovative approaches. In her article, **Brooke Evans** shares her thought process as she follows the trail of the evolution of various communication technologies before later interviewing her teacher (Deb Riggert-Kieffer) as she works to puzzle out how it is that certain genres might be related to one another. **Laura Skokan** then considers uptake, particularly in terms of when uptake fails, as she analyzes the failure of a celebrated comic writer to retell a joke along with her own failed uptake in a new employment situation.

The next three authors consider the overall effects of various forms of writing. **Amish Trivedi** considers the concepts of authority and credibility as he studies "best-of" lists through a writing research lens. **Tobey Klungseth** examines the history and evolution of book reviews before ultimately trying to figure out how book reviews are used (or not) by eighth graders when considering a book purchase. And, **Melanie Holden** investigates how the social media phenomenon "#goals" might impact social media users in negative ways.

The next group of authors interrogates a variety of genres in interesting ways. **Sydney Velez** considers how sidewalk chalking, her former childhood pastime, is used to communicate messaging for various organizations on a college campus. **Avery Fischer** researches llama memes, attempting to figure out what might make certain llama memes more popular than others. **Mijanur Rahman** then offers an investigation and analysis of spam e-mail, employing cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) to consider the ways that the competing goals of the spammers and the spam detectors collide. Finally, **Hailey Langstaff** looks into the genre of the recipe, researching the history of this genre before reviewing various modern recipes for what might be "taken for granted" in them.

The final three articles in this issue offer diverse inquiries into linguistic variation and transcultural communication practices. First, **Su Yin Khor** analyzes her own multi-lingual note-taking practices in an attempt to figure out why it is that she slips between languages when taking notes in graduate school courses. Then, **Sanam Shahmiri** considers "untranslatable" concepts and phrases, sharing how non-native speakers endeavor to make sense of these. Finally, **LaToya Carter** explores several African dances, sharing how these dances communicate through complicated body languages in order to share cultural information.

The 7.2 issue concludes with a reprinting of "Publishing with the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal*," which continues to invite prospective writers to submit their rigorous investigations of how people, tools, and situations affect writing in complex ways. We cannot thank our contributors enough for their hard work and creativity. We hope to continue to receive new submissions that explore a variety of unique genres and forms of literate activity from a diversity of perspectives. We look forward to sharing these investigations with you in future issues of the *GWRJ*.

Gone to the Dogs (and Cats, and Rabbits, and Various Other Small Animals): Writing for Animals at HSCI

Heidi Bowman

Heidi Bowman, an animal person who describes herself as "half-cat" and is only half-joking, looks at how human beings can use writing to help other animals. She focuses on the writing surrounding the animals at the Humane Society of Central Illinois (HSCI) in Normal, examining how writing has been used to try to find a forever home for a cat named Laynie and a dog named Clover.

The other night, as my husband Eric and I walked our dogs—Junie chugging ahead like a sled dog and Kit trotting like a show dog beside us—we chatted about their funny and diverse personalities. Eric wondered, not for the first time, "What do you think their lives were like before they lived with us?"

Animals are a huge part of our family's story, as we have quite a menagerie of rescued cats and dogs. We are continually curious about what their lives were like before they became "ours."🐾[1] How did our "girls" Junie and Kit ever wind up at the pound? How did Marvin become the little cat crying after the mailman? How did the tiny kitten Vera end up trembling on the edge of traffic? We will never know. The animals can't tell us, although they can tell us a lot of things through their barks, meows, purrs, tail movements, and head butts. It is my fervent belief that it is up to us, their human friends, to meet animals wherever they're at in their story and to do what we can to help them.🐾[2]

We humans can use words, specifically written words, to help tell animals' stories. I decided to research how the people at one local organization, the Humane Society of Central Illinois (HSCI), use writing every day to help homeless animals. What kind of writing is involved in the HSCI's work to connect stray and unwanted animals with new loving families? In order to

conduct this research, I visited the HSCI's pet adoption center several times. I talked to the manager and explained that I wanted to write an article; although I am a volunteer there, I didn't want the staff to wonder why I was hanging out talking to cats and dogs and scrawling notes in a notebook. I spent time with Clover the dog and Laynie the cat, observing them and also always looking at the writing surrounding them. My heart is always with the underdog (or undercat), and Clover and Laynie had been at the shelter for the longest amount of time. I specifically investigated the genre of the Personality Profile, the form that people who surrender their animals to HSCI fill out, and how the staff takes up this written information and combines it with their own experiences with the animal to help find him or her🐾[3] a new home. I also visited the HSCI website and Facebook page to look at how they share the animals' stories.

Figure 1: The logo of the Humane Society of Central Illinois.

My experiences in the writing program at ISU have taught me to look closer at the writing that is all around us. I immediately noticed the writing on the sign outside the HSCI building. My eye caught on the little heart at the top of the "I." It's just a little graphic, but it represents quite a bit (see Figure 1). This small heart represents the large amount of love the humans at HSCI have for animals, a love that motivates them to try to make the world a better place for them and, I would find, infuses its way into the writing surrounding the animals there. This love is further captured in the words of the HSCI's mission statement, which is painted on a sign below the front desk when you walk into the lobby: "Our mission: to find loving, forever homes for abused and unwanted pets."

Incorporating CHAT

Cultural-historical activity theory, or CHAT, is a way of looking deeper at any writing in the world; it "help[s] us look at the how/why/what of writing practices" (Walker 72). CHAT makes use of different categories (or what I like to call "chategories"): production, representation, distribution, reception, socialization, activity, and ecology. (For a more detailed explanation of these terms, please see Joyce Walker's "Just CHATting" article in the first-ever *Grassroots Writing Research Journal*.) I personally am just not good with boundaries (which is one of the reasons I have so many animals) and sometimes it's hard for me to distinguish whether I am looking at a text through the lens of, say, "representation" or "activity." There is definitely some overlap, as **representation** involves anything people do as they plan a text, including the *activity* they engage in. Let's be honest: CHAT can seem scary and confusing, especially if we're having a hard time understanding the differences between the various lenses through which we can look at any text. But even Walker says

we don't need to freak out over each "chategory" fitting neatly into its own box. She points out that we can consider writing "through *any one or a combination* of these perspectives" (76, emphasis added). And listen to this: "[t]here is no 'right' way to use these categories to consider literate activity" (79). There is no right way, guys. You say representation; I say activity. You say tomato; I say to-mah-to. The point is to look deeper at all the stuff surrounding the creation of a text and realize that any act of writing, no matter how simple it appears on the surface, is complex. CHAT is here to help us; it's a tool to help us "understand more fully the complicated nuances of writing in different situations" (80).

I used CHAT to enlarge my understanding of some of the writing HSCI uses to help animals. By the way, "chat" means "cat" in French, although it's pronounced differently than we pronounce the acronym.🐾[4] I suppose that's kind of irrelevant, but it's cool since I used CHAT to look at writing surrounding *chats et chiens* (translation: "cats and dogs"). The "chategories" that immediately came to mind as I conducted my writing research include production, representation, and distribution. I also came to realize how much my own reception affected my reading of these texts, and how the mission of the HSCI also colors how these texts are created.

Looking at the Personality Profile Form

CAT PERSONALITY PROFILE

Please CHECK all that apply and PRINT the information requested.

Cat's name: _____ _____   Age:_____ Owned for how long?_____

Where did you get your cat? (circle one)   Shelter   Private Party   Found   got as kitten

if a shelter, Name of Shelter_____

Why are you giving up this cat (be specific)? _____

Name of your cat's veterinarian _____

Please list the AGES of household members your cat has lived with:

Men_____   Women_____   Children_____

How did your cat react to the men in the household?
☐ Friendly ☐ Playful   ☐ Afraid   ☐ Ignores ☐Hisses/growls ☐Scratches ☐Bites ☐ No men in household

How did your cat react to the women in the household?
☐ Friendly ☐ Playful   ☐ Afraid   ☐ Ignores ☐Hisses/growls ☐Scratches ☐Bites ☐ No women in household

How did your cat react to the children in the household?
☐ Friendly ☐ Playful ☐ Afraid   ☐ Ignores ☐Hisses/growls ☐Scratches ☐Bites ☐ No children in household

What other animals did your cat live with? ☐ No other animals in household

☐ Dogs #____Breed_____   ☐ Cats #males_____ #females_____ ☐ Other_____

How did your cat get along with the cats in your household? ☐ Friendly ☐ Playful ☐ Tolerant ☐ Afraid ☐ Ignores
☐ Hisses ☐ Growls ☐Swats

How did your cat get along with the dogs in your household? ☐ Friendly ☐ Playful ☐ Tolerant ☐ Afraid ☐ Ignores
☐ Hisses ☐ Growls ☐Scratches

Figure 2: A peek at the Personality Profile form used by the HSCI.

The Personality Profile form asks many detailed questions so the HSCI staff can get a better understanding of an incoming animal's experiences and preferences. Both the Cat and Dog Personality Profile forms are two-page documents. I am first and foremost a cat lady, so I chose to study the Cat Personality Profile closely. As I did so, I thought about the "chategory" of

production, which looks at how a text is produced and structured. The form contains some questions with boxes of possible answers you can check and some questions with blank lines where you can write in your answers.

To better suit their needs, the HSCI has one set form where people provide answers to certain questions. They are looking to find out important information, and if they just gave everyone a blank sheet and said, "Tell us about your dog," they would not necessarily receive the information they need. Some people would jot down a few facts; others (like me) would write small novels. The structure of the form puts parameters on the kind of information people can provide.

Clearly, a person like me would have a hard time finding the right box to capture the quirks of my animals' personalities. As I read over the questions, I became aware of my own reception of them. For example, where would I put that our cat Vera likes to sleep above our heads on a pillow? How would I explain that when I pick up Dandy, he immediately tilts his head back for a kiss and nuzzle between his ears? How would I mark that we are pretty sure the sweet and spacey Kit has a constant stream of elevator music playing in her head? Maybe most people surrendering their pets are not thinking about all of these little details. But they could be, and this Personality Profile form is an example of how the way a text is produced places limits on what we can say, and on what parts of our stories get told.

For me, the most fascinating question is this one: "Why are you giving up this animal (be specific)?" The form provides a little over four inches of a blank line on which to write the answer. It strikes me, as it always does, how much is unwritten, or unsaid, on this line. Some of the reasons people often give include: "allergies," "new baby," "adjustment issues," "moving," "did not get along with dog," "too many animals," and "no time for." These few words have a big job, as they are supposed to sum up the rupture of what should have been, in my mind, a lifelong commitment. To bring it back to CHAT here, clearly my own strong feelings about animals are affecting how I *receive* the words. The judgmental side of me wants to add on to people's answers. I think unwritten reasons that people surrender their animals often include: "I didn't realize adorable kittens grow up into adult cats," "I care too much about furniture," "My girlfriend doesn't like dogs, and I am too infatuated to realize the dog would still love me long after the girlfriend's gone," and "The cat is pregnant again because I never took the time to get her spayed, and I don't want to deal with it." However, I recognize that even the reasons I would deem cruel or stupid are complicated—people's upbringings, living situations, and finances shape expectations and may not have prepared them for pet ownership. Many of the stories behind these animals' arrival at the HSCI are messy, for the people and the animals, and it's beyond the scope of the Personality Profile form to capture this complexity.

As I think about why the questions on the form are not presented in a way that would allow for emotional or long-winded disclosures, the mission

of the HSCI comes again to my mind. They want "to find loving, forever homes for abused and unwanted pets." That's the bottom line. In order to give these pets another chance, they need to provide a place where people can surrender their pets and not feel as if they are being judged harshly. For the HSCI, this form has a job to do—to collect the most pertinent information that they can then use to get the animals into a new, lifelong home. Looking at this form through the lens of representation made me realize how much careful thought was put into the writing of these questions.

This form provides an insider's "scoop" from the former owner's perspective and helps the HSCI tailor their care to the animal's likes and dislikes, even down to preferred toys. The information is funneled to future owners, where it is essential for their decision-making. For example, if a dog has a history of being terrified of men, it would clearly be important for potential adopters to be aware of this fact. The HSCI staff compare the information on the form with their own observations as they spend time with each cat and dog, providing food, water, and lots of affection.

Naming

As noted above, representation can include any of the activities or thought processes that go on behind the scenes of any actual writing. As I started to look at writing that the HSCI does to represent these animals to the public, to tell their stories on Facebook and on its website, the group's underlying philosophy that these animals are *individual* beings worthy of our love seems to be reflected in the writing. Each one has a unique personality and a unique story, and the people at HSCI utilize whatever tools they can to represent this individuality to the public. The animals at the shelter are not objects. First and foremost, they have a name.

Many of the animals are surrendered by their families, so sometimes they already have and know their names. But oftentimes when the animal is a stray or abandoned, staff members need to create a name, which is another kind of "writing" they do. Naming hundreds of cats and dogs each year can be quite a challenge, and last summer HSCI staff reached out to the public for help, posting a "Name the Litter of Kittens" contest on Facebook and taking suggestions for "linked" names for a litter of kittens. My kids and I participated, proud of our suggestions of "nut" names (Almond, Cashew, Pistachio, Peanut, Walnut, Pecan, and Macadamia) and US state names (Mama could be America and the kittens could be states such as Minnesota [Minnie], California [Cal], Alabama [Allie or BamBam], Texas, Virginia [Virg or Ginny], etc). We lost out to the "fashion" names suggestion (Ralph Lauren, Versace, Coco Chanel, Yves, Armani, and other names that I don't remember, as the main fashion concern at our house is how clearly pet fur shows up. We don't wear a lot of black). The staff works hard

to give the animals names that are original and unique—and also marketable. People with children, for example, would most likely be drawn more to a cat named "Pikachu" than, say, "Fluffy." This is another blurred boundary between representation and reception—what seems cool to the workers at HSCI might work with other adults, but it may not seem cool to the kids.

Website/Facebook Posts
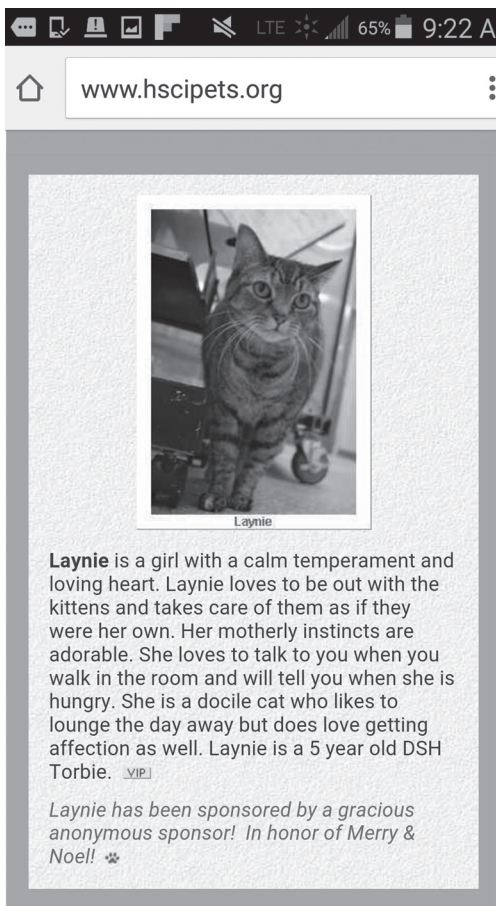
Figure 3: A screenshot of Laynie's description on the HSCI website in November 2015.

Writing used *within* the HSCI isn't the only type of writing that is used to help the animals find a home, which brings me back to CHAT. The "chategory" of **distribution** looks at how writing is spread. The HSCI uses the Internet to disperse written information about the animals in their care. HSCI posts pictures of adoptable cats and dogs on their website and on their Facebook page. The writing here again reflects the HSCI's attention and care for each individual animal. They don't say, "Come see our cats and dogs!" Rather, they introduce you, with a picture, to each individual animal. Potential adopters can scroll through the available animals. Sometimes people who are not in a position to adopt are still moved by the picture and story of an animal, and they can choose to "sponsor" the cat or dog's care. I have included screenshots of Laynie and Clover's online descriptions (see Figures 3 and 4). Clover was the "Featured Dog!" at this time, with her picture at the top of the Adoptable Dogs tab.

Talking to Laynie and Clover

I've focused this article on writing in the real world that has real life consequences for these animals. Now, I want to spend a little bit of time here introducing you more to the real cat Laynie and the real dog Clover.

Figure 4: A screenshot of Clover's description on the HSCI website in November 2015.

Laynie lives with a couple of feline roommates in one of the prime "showrooms" right by the entrance of the adoption center. This room is called the "Cat Flats" and the cats inside are all free to stroll around. The big window lets in plenty of sun and Laynie and the others can sit on the structure made for them out of PVC pipes and buckets and watch the birds outside. She was lounging on a cat bed when I entered her room, and she looked up at me as if to say, "Oh, you're here for our interview?" I told her yes, I was. I plopped down a few feet away from her with my notebook and pen.

"So you've been here a while, huh, Laynie?" I made a clicking sound to her and held out my hand in her direction.

Laynie came over to me and brushed against my fingers. As I made a note of this, she rubbed her face on my pen. The sun lit up her fur, and she was happy—until one of her roommates jumped off the room's play structure and came over to investigate. Tucker is a young light orange and white male, with a long nose and big, innocent eyes. He sat a few feet away from me while Laynie squinted her eyes at him and quietly growled her displeasure.

"Tucker, I am here to interview Laynie. Maybe some other time, OK?"

Tucker looked at me, his eyes wide.

Laynie, her tail switching slightly, walked away, and I stood up and followed her. As I flipped through the forms in her folder and tried to make sense of her story, she came over and brushed against my knee. There are clear

plastic folders hanging on the wall for each animal in the room. The folder contains the animal's records, including the Personality Profile. It appeared Laynie had originally been brought there by someone who had adopted her from another shelter. Her Personality Profile revealed she had recently been adopted from HSCI only to be quickly returned after her adopter and landlord had a misunderstanding. I shook my head, overwhelmed, as I wish all cats' and dogs' stories went more like: "Born, adopted by loving humans, and lived with them until death."

"You've been in and out of shelters your whole life, huh?" I asked.

Laynie gave a short mew, as if she was curtly nodding her head.

Her folder contained a laminated card with the words "Very Important Pet" and an image of a cat on it. Her VIP status is also flagged on her website description. The VIP designation slashes Laynie's adoption fee from $100 to $30.

"You are a very important pet, Laynie," I told her. She was looking out the window, but I could tell she was listening. "People should appreciate great older cats who have personality and intelligence."

She offered another mew of assent. She knows I realize $30 is a heck of a bargain for a fully vetted, quirky, lifelong friend. She knows I realize that underneath the positive spin of the words "Very Important Pet" is a sad truth: potential adopters overlook Laynie in favor of younger, friskier cats such as Tucker, who had indeed been adopted the next time I visited. By giving Laynie that title, HSCI is using representation to highlight her. They further use the tools at their disposal (their production) to even the playing field by lowering Laynie's adoption fee. I'd encountered all sorts of writing the HSCI had done to help Laynie—the carefully crafted questions on the Personality Profile, her feature on their website, and now the "marketing" of her as a VIP. It's clear to me that writing is a critical component in their efforts to find this cat a forever home. If I didn't already have so many awesome cats in my life, I would adopt her in a heartbeat.

I also would adopt Clover. OK, I am cat-centric and always will be, but I love dogs too. The same day I talked to Laynie, I visited Clover, who was lying on a dog bed at the back of her cage, radiating sweetness, her tail wagging slowly. Cecil, a little rat terrier in the next cage over, was much more energetic, jumping up and down repeatedly the entire time I talked to Clover. He was so excited he reminded me, somewhat ridiculously, of Donkey in *Shrek*, hopping up and down, saying, "Pick me! Pick me!" (Someone did pick him; the next time I visited, Cecil had been adopted.)

Clover was first transferred to HSCI from another shelter. Her Personality Profile showed that, like Laynie, she too had recently been adopted out and returned. The reason? "Owner's health." (Again, my own reception of these words is tinged with skeptical curiosity. What *kind* of health problems? Is that just an excuse?) I have taken Clover on walks on previous visits and she wiggles with enthusiasm as she smells all the wonderful smells all over the ground, but it was the end of the day, and she was tired.

"Somebody should have realized by now that you're a good luck charm, Miss Clover," I told her. "Someday, some family is going to be very lucky to have you." (I was thinking again of my own reception—I see the name "Clover" written on the cage of a sweet dog, and it brings to mind happy images of fields full of four-leafed fortune. I can only hope that other potential adopters (ones who don't already have two dogs and more cats than you can respectably claim in polite society) feel the same positive pull toward this dog named Clover who needs a home.)

Clover lifted her head off her paws and looked at me. She wagged her tail. She seemed to appreciate me stopping by. I think she would also appreciate how the HSCI is using writing to help animals like Laynie and Clover have their best shot at getting what they deserve: a happy ending.

Update: Writing is an ongoing, continual process. At the time of my third revision, I was thrilled to report in an update that Laynie and Clover had both been adopted into loving homes. Laynie had been adopted by a woman who came into the shelter and asked, "OK, what cat has been here the longest?" Unfortunately, that home did not work out and Laynie is back at the Cat Flats. Her adopter had adored her, but Laynie was just too crabby with the other elderly cat in the home. Laynie's description on the HSCI website now reads, "This girl has been bounced around a lot, and is just looking for a soft place to land." I am happy to report that Clover is still living it up with her new family and enjoying all the belly rubs.

🐾[1] I call them "ours" because they live with us and they are domesticated, but I wholeheartedly agree with these words of Alice Walker: "The animals of the world exist for their own reasons."

🐾[2] It is because of this belief that the little kitten Nell is curled up, purring on my lap, while I write these words. Recently, when Eric and I were walking the dogs, she busted out from underneath a pine tree, cried out at us in what I can *only* call recognition, and ran across the road to us, her tail high in the air. I swear, she knew us, and she knew we would help her. None of the nearby humans knew anything about her, and they weren't particularly interested. She is super-smart and can even say her own name. "Say Nell," I'll say. "Nell," she'll meow back.

Figure 5: Nellie, our newest little punk, helped with the writing of this article by purring her encouragement.

🐾[3] I always try not to refer to an animal as an "it." I could write another article about how language often objectifies the animals with whom we are so fortunate to share this world.

🐾[4] I even named a cat Chat once. He started showing up in our yard to eat a year or so ago. A neighborhood boy then told me that the cat's name was actually Cheeto and that he used to be his family's outside cat. Cheeto, for whatever reason, had decided he needed to move on with his life. The separation was amicable, and Cheeto, at the time of this writing, is eating his breakfast in our garage.

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Heidi Bowman has a Master's degree in English from Illinois State University and is an adjunct professor of English at ISU and Lincoln College. In her free time she enjoys snuggling with her cats and dogs. Junie is the dog across from Dandy, the toddler-sized cat. Kit is going to town on a bone while listening to the elevator music playing in her head.

Why is Everyone So Emojinal?

Bridget Langdon

Bridget Langdon was born in a strange time during the transition into the technological era. During this transition, a new genre of emoji speak emerged and integrated itself into a modern form of text communication. Through cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), Langdon researches Generation X and millennials to try to understand emoji speak as a genre and how it functions within an activity system.

I was born in 1983. This time period, give or take a few years, was when generation labeling became unclear. Recently, I have deemed the period between 1975 and 1995 as "Generation Cusp." Until around the year 2000, I was told that I was part of Generation X. Perhaps I'm not privy to change, or I was comfortable in my sociologically assigned generation, but I was unwilling to be part of this new technology era. I didn't feel as though I knew enough about it to succeed. I was eleven when the Internet became a public commodity. There were horror/suspense movies written about what this kind of technology would do to the human race. There were cautionary tales. Everyone prepared for the Y2K computer apocalypse. And, most of all, there was complete and utter awe.

I was seventeen years old when 9/11 happened, which seemed to have changed the world forever. My childhood was pretty much over by then, so the entire life that I knew was already behind me. I had grown up outside of the Internet. The extent of our technological belongings was an old computer (pre-Windows), a printer that made a lot of noise and took a very long time to print, a couple of gaming systems with top-quality, heavily pixelated graphics, a

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couple of tiny TVs (one that was attached to a clock and was only in black and white), a VCR, and a LaserDisc player. (Sidenote: The LaserDisc player was very advanced for its time; the LaserDiscs were record-sized DVDs that came out before DVDs. You had to flip the disk over in the middle of the movie. It was fun.). We also had a video camera that was a workout in its own right (it fit full-size VHS tapes). And, alas, communication was much more difficult.

During my childhood, I lived in Germany for two-and-a-half years. We typed our letters on our computer and then mailed them. We knew it would take around two to three weeks before it was received in the States. Our families would save up money to make that very rare, international, long-distance phone call from a landline (calls like that were outrageously expensive at the time). This is the time that I remember. This is a time when the Internet wasn't at our fingertips. This is what I feel separates those around my age from the millennials.

That being said, I can also identify with the millennials. When I think Gen X, I picture people who are still pissed off about the Vietnam War. I'm still not even sure what the Vietnam War was about. I think about John Hughes movies and the Brat Pack. Those kids seemed so old to me, a generation away from me. My high school experiences were never like their high school experiences (granted my high school experience was at the post-grunge apex of goth). But if there is anything that connects me to millennials, it was the birth of texting, e-mailing, and instant messaging. I was elated to find out that I could communicate through well-thought-out words (I'm super socially awkward IRL). And text-based communication that arrived immediately completely shaped the way I interacted with others. I learned the abbreviated texts (though I still rebel against LOL), I learned the emoticons (the text-based version of emojis), but then the emojis came. I was OK with the smiley faces, but then all kinds of new little pictures came, and I had no idea what to do with them.

So at thirty-one years of age, I felt distanced from both generations that I was previously and currently associated with. This distinction prompted me to look closely at a new genre of emoji speak within an **activity system**. An activity system is actually part of the larger concept of cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) that is used to study and understand new genres such as emoji speak. The activity system is the way that people engage in the genres and the types of tools, rules, and texts that are produced in the process.

New Genre

Through my research, I found the following quote, and it resonated with me on a deep level: "Some people are very adept at writing certain genres

because they have participated a great deal in the activity system that uses them, whereas they may be much less adept (or even incompetent, from the point of view of an adept) at writing a genre from an activity system in which they have not participated" (Russell). This is me. I am adept at writing many genres, but emoji speak is not one of them.

As I said, I do not relate to millennials because I remember a time before the Internet, or at least before the Internet became widely used. I remember computers before Microsoft Windows, writing letters to pen pals, writing notes in class, writing postcards, phoning a friend, or finding the correct letter of the encyclopedia to find information. I remember landlines, pay phones, long-distance calls, and 1-800-COLLECT.

However, I also remember transitioning to electronic communication such as e-mail, instant messenger (ICQ), and chatrooms. Those who lived within this transitional period are who I categorize as Generation Cusp because, during these few years, we fell right between pre-digital and digital eras. My generation created social media. We were not born into it. Although people who were born prior to the beginning of the '80s do use social media and rely on the Internet as much as the younger generations, they lived at least twenty years before the wide use of the Internet. So naturally, as new modes of communication (both medium and in text) began to emerge, I experienced this unprecedented learning curve that has been both successful and unsuccessful in various ways. For social media, I did learn to use Facebook, Twitter (kind of), and Reddit. All of these act as platforms in which I can communicate with others. Facebook and Twitter consist of posting and responding, generally. I experienced almost all of the Facebook changes over the years, and I complained about every one of them like elders complain about "kids these days." I shook my fist and everything. Reddit is a little different because submissions can be anonymous. This allows for uncensored, unfiltered correspondence. On the other hand, there are Tumblr, Snapchat, Pinterest, and other social media sites that I haven't even tried to dabble in, lest I become too overwhelmed or reveal my ineptitude and ignorance.

As for the text, for years I had used the text-based emoticons to express emotion. I remember seeing these images in mid-90s magazines when they began to popularize, though Wikipedia says that they've been around since 1986. Emoticons were not pictures of smiley faces. Emoticons were made by using punctuation like the colon and the end parenthesis. The coolest thing you could do with those was make the Marge Simpson: 88888:-) These I could understand. Oftentimes my humor is not successfully understood through my writing. Sometimes I come off as crass or mean when I'm only trying to make a joke. Emoticons opened up a whole new world for my textual humor, especially in e-mail or on social media sites.

However, emojis have progressed into images that not only convey emotions, but are also used to carry on full conversations. When the pictures were just various forms of smiley faces, I could completely understand and use smiley faces to convey emotion in my posts. It was fun and innovative, and I was young enough to fit right in with my peers who were using the same mode, this new genre, to communicate. Then, sometime when I apparently wasn't looking, one hundred-million (not really) new pictures surfaced, and I realized that I had no idea what they meant. The digital natives (the younger generation who was born after the explosion of the Internet) had created this entirely new pidgin language to communicate, and I had found myself lost in translation. I saw posts like, "This is my day today - 😊🤍❄️🎩🐱🍸" Without fail, the post would receive several "likes" and comments like, "I know, right?!" while I'm over here trying to figure out this puzzle, "smileheartsnowhatcatdrink . . . that's not a word." And for the very first time in my life, in my early 30s, I was one of those "old people" who just didn't understand. Others of my generation, and prior generations, have been able to hold conversations using emojis, whether it was just to display emotion or to use emojis as replacement for words. However, because of this revelation, I decided to do whatever I had to do to conquer the rules of the emoji genre so that I could communicate too.

Attempting to Fit in

At first, I tried to engage in conversations with friends to see if I was the only person who was having trouble understanding this newfound encoded text. As it turns out, I was not alone in this. My significant other asked how I planned on going about my research. I said, "Well, first I'm going to go to one of those sites that has a list of emojis and their definitions." He immediately replied, "No! You can't do that! That's what they want you to do. It's all part of the conspiracy, you see. *They* create those charts to throw us off so that we never figure out their language." He was joking, but, upon thinking about it, I realized that many of us feel that way. We are so far removed from the new digital language that it almost does feel like a conspiracy. It's important to learn the language in order to feel comfortable within an environment. My younger sister, who is still within the Generation Cusp asked, "What is it you don't understand?" As an example, I said, "Like the 💯. I see it everywhere, but I don't *know* what it *means*." She pondered on this for a moment and said, "I don't know. I always thought of it as a percent. Like 100%. Like if you think about the highest score you can get, it would be 100. Like percent. I don't know, I just keep wanting to make it percent. I guess I don't really know." According to *emojibase.com*, it actually does mean 100 points, as in a score or percent. She ventured a guess, but she wasn't actually able to

articulate it because she is not entirely familiar with the genre either, though she is close enough to guess correctly. Subsequently, a slang term of "Keep it 100" surfaced, which is another way of saying "keep it real." I guess by getting a score of 100, one is able to take pride in themselves or their work, which is a way to be real. Generally, emojis are pictures based on words, but as emoji speak as a genre becomes increasingly popular, we can see how emoji meanings work themselves into new slang and non-text conversations as seen with the 100. This is another indication of emoji speak as an activity system because of more tools and rules that have come out of this genre.

So my significant other and I tried to start communicating via emojis. This did not go well. Figures 1 and 2 exemplify our failed attempts:
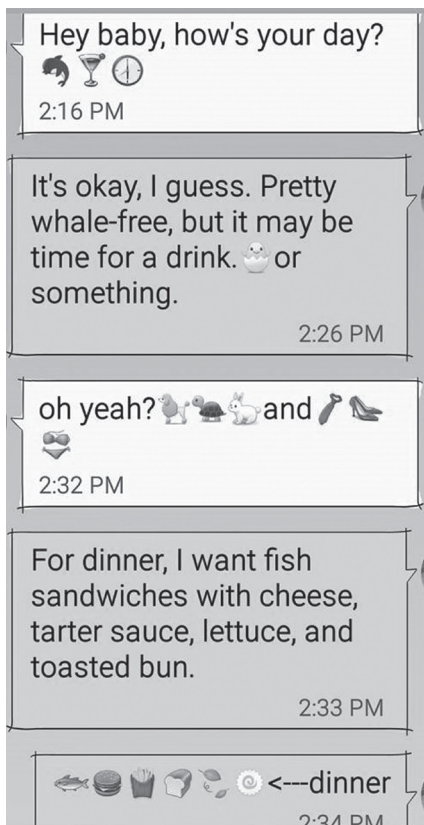
Figure 1: Number one Attempt to have a Conversation with Emojis.
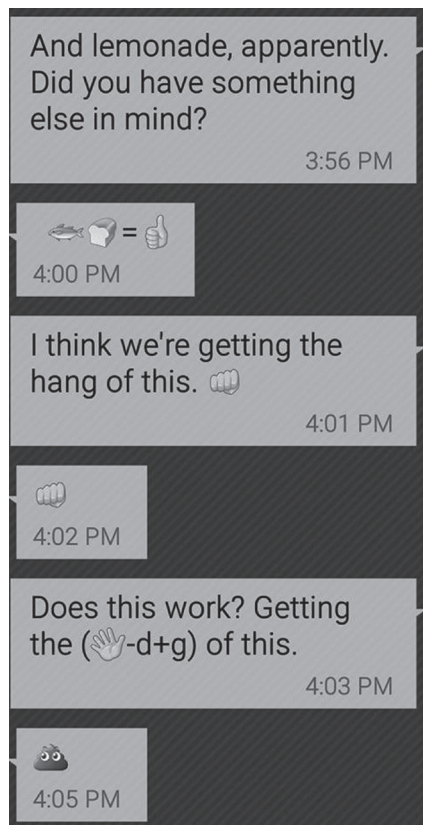
Figure 2: Failed Attempt at Emoji Speak.

As you can see, we tried several different things that apparently made no sense at all. I tried to apply logic that I was taught in school when we'd get those worksheets full of picture-based brain teasers (see Figure 3 for an example). The brain teasers were pictures that could be put together to figure out a word or popular phrase.

Figure 3: Brain Teaser Example of "Big Man
on Campus"

So I tried to use hand-d+g=hang. Apparently this idea was poop, so I began to research the Internet for anything I could find that would help me to understand the genre of emoji speak.

The Dreaded Internet Research

First, I tried to just look on some informational websites, like I originally said I would do. I found a *Time* magazine article ("Here Are Rules of Using Emoji You Didn't Know You Were Following"), where the author, Katy Steinmetz, discusses the work of computational linguist Tyler Schnoebelen (who wrote his dissertation on emoji conversations), and how his research explains many of the emoji conversation rules. Interestingly, in his research, Schnoebelen found that older generations tend to still use emoticons with noses, while people of the younger generation use emojis to describe feelings. Though it's not specifically stated, I feel that emoticons with noses were specific to the older generation because without it, the smiley face just looks kind of weird. :) Obviously the older generation mimicked the emoticons that were already in existence, but it's noteworthy to say that emojis do not generally have noses. Perhaps it's an idea that was not thought of by the creators; therefore, it was not transferred into the current genre. As aforementioned, emojis are attributed more to feelings than emoticons. When emoticons started to popularize in the mid-'90s, it seemed to be more experimental and fun (like Marge Simpson). It was maybe ten years later when I started to use text-based smiley faces to indicate that I was kidding. With the smiley face emojis now, it's easy to convey laughter, anger, sadness, confusion, indifference, etc. It's like an extension to a sentence that doesn't spell out the emotion someone is trying to emanate.

Anyways, in the article Steinmetz shares how Schnoebelen explains that in conversations or posts that contain more than one emoji, the order of the emoji completely dictates the story that is told. For instance, this:

😢😢💔

Is different than this:

Scnoebelen explains that "The face comes first. Consider 'stance' the attitude or emotion you have about something, represented by a happy, sad, or flirty yellow face" (Steinmetz). So by putting the sad faces before the broken heart, the emotion is more apparent and/or stronger. To help clarify the overall purpose of emojis, he points out that "one of the main problems with text communication is that it's just different from how we've talked to each other for most of the existence of language" and notes that in text communication we are "dry in terms of the cues we get to use to signal exactly what we mean, to give nuance to the meaning." Basically, he says that "emoticons and emoji provide this nice shorthand" to fill in those missing cues (Steinmetz).

OK, this makes complete sense to me. However, when conversations are written almost exclusively with emoji, that's when things get complicated. For example, Katy Perry released some lyrics to her song that were written in near complete emoji (Figure 4):
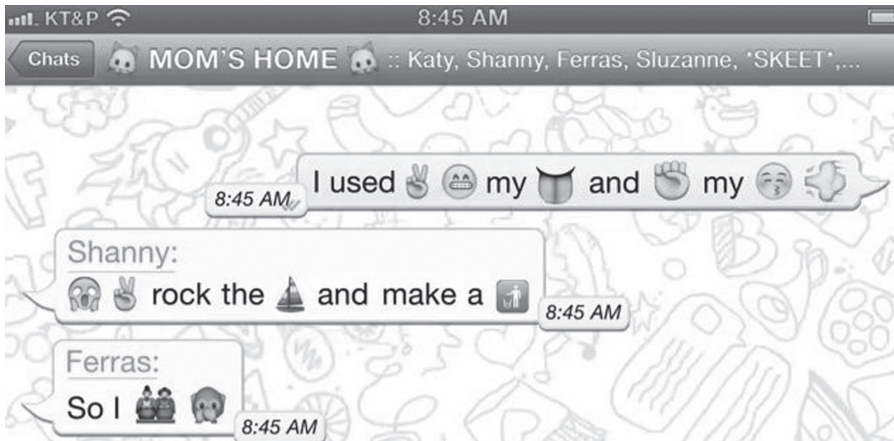
Figure 4: Katy Perry's Emoji Song

Apparently this translates to "I used to bite my tongue and hold my breath/ Scared to rock the boat and make a mess/ So I sit quietly" (Moss). I would have never gotten this message. However, as I researched further, I realized that perhaps technology has created a generation where it is just easier to use pictures instead of words. Perhaps the younger generation is so exposed to encoded text that they possess some sort of **antecedent knowledge** (basically all of the things that a person already knows about a genre of writing, though they may not be aware that they use it without consciously thinking about it) that I don't (another reason I consider myself on the Cusp).

Upon further research, I found it noteworthy that sometime in the '90s and on into the popularization of text messages, people began to use a more shorthand version of words to communicate more quickly. LOL, which stands for Laugh Out Loud, replaced such phrases as "I found that very humorous." People started using letters to represent words such as "u," "r," "k," "c," etc. Typing text, which has become the most popular form of communications, can't happen as quickly as talking face-to-face. In order to carry on conversations with the quickest means possible, people have been finding shortcuts. Emojis have only aided in producing the most time-efficient mode of conversation. Entire sentence fragments can be depicted in one picture. Again, all of this made sense to me, but there was still no way that I could write in this new genre. At least not without making a fool out of myself, as I've already illustrated.

Maybe it *is* a Conspiracy

To carry on my research—because I still wasn't satisfied—I decided to visit a huge website/forum where I was sure most of the digital natives hung out. I went to Reddit (that place where one can post anonymously in order to not look stupid for being way behind the times). Reddit is known for its population of teenagers (though people of all ages visit the site regularly). I tried posting questions like: "Why are emojis popular?," "What do emojis mean?," and "What's the draw of emojis for teens and young adults?" At first I got very vague answers. Some people would just answer in a series of emojis. One of them said, "I'm just trying to get laid." (OK, that's less than helpful.) One tried to give a reasonable explanation, "In lieu of body language or gestures. And tone of voice. Basically, there are too many nonverbal cues for small amounts of text to be sufficient to convey a person's entire meaning all of the time. Thus, emojis and emoticons." *But what about the other pictures, man? What about the others?!* Of course, I received no further explanation. I wondered to myself why I couldn't get a straight answer. I am now theorizing that perhaps neither generation can exactly pinpoint it. For older generations, it just kind of happened, and they went along with it like I'm trying to do. For the younger generations, it's just always been that way. It doesn't seem that anyone knows exactly why. Or so I thought.

But then something weird happened. I had posted questions in five different subreddits, and shortly after posting and conversing, I was notified that my posts were removed. *All* of them. I was given various reasons, but none of them seemed to apply. One of them said that I "apparently don't understand how to use Reddit." *What? Why not?* I firmly wanted to believe that this was some large conspiracy against me and my generation. They were

pushing us out. They were laughing at us, I was sure of it. But in the end, I think I've just failed to keep up with the writing genres of the next generation.

Generation Gap

It's no secret that the older generations have a difficult time picking up on the new technologies as they present themselves (Figure 5). Apparently I have reached an age where I am no longer keen on the new writing genres of the young kids (are whipper-snappers still a thing?).

Figure 5: User Issues by an Older Generation.

This is where I am now. I have peaked in my technological life span. After extensive research, and trial and error, I have found that this is simply a genre where I will never be adept. But I've also learned that I'm OK with that.

My Failed Attempt at Emoji Speak

Despite my best efforts, I never did completely grasp the genre of emoji speak. I tried research, discussions, and experimentation. The fact of the matter is, this activity system is completely outside of my basic understanding of writing. Perhaps I'm too old. Perhaps I was too late to the game. It seems as though people younger than me had no problem using emojis as a writing genre. It's that antecedent knowledge that is so basic to them, they aren't even able to articulate it, like my sister for example.

I went into this project with the intent to come out of it with this new understanding of emojis. That didn't happen at all. If anything, I came out a little more confused. But I did come out of it with something much more

important. I learned more about the culture I live within. I was able to find my place within it (that does not involve emojis beyond the faces). I am Generation Cusp. I live within the generation that made millennials who they are, and even if I can't completely conform, I at least understand it a little better.

I found the rules for the activity system, but even with many forms of research and the various attempts to use them, I was never able to implement them quite right. For the first time, I interacted with a genre that I ultimately failed to understand, which I consider to be a very important lesson when trying to explore new genres of writing.

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Bridget Langdon is currently working towards her Master's in Creative Writing-Creative Nonfiction. She is also employed by the Admissions Office at ISU which means she needs to understand both professional and creative forms of writing. Bridget also recently downloaded Snapchat and is starting to understand a little more about the younger generation.

Coordinating Care: The Literate Activity Systems of Hospital Nursing

Annie Hackett and
David Giovagnoli

Nurses serve a very important role in any hospital, providing much of the day-to-day patient care and coordinating between other service providers. With lives on the line, thorough documentation is critical. In this interview, Annie Hackett and David Giovagnoli discuss the complex literate activity system within the field of nursing with Alex O'Brien, a Registered Nurse at Carle Foundation Hospital in Urbana, IL.

ANNIE: Can you please start by introducing yourself and explaining what you do?

ALEX: I'm Alex O'Brien and I'm a Registered Nurse (RN) on a Neurology Unit with Carle Foundation Hospital in Champaign-Urbana.

ANNIE: Cool, and you're alum from Illinois State, right?

ALEX: Yeah, I got my BSN from Mennonite College of Nursing.

ANNIE: Oh, awesome. When was that, how recent?

ALEX: I graduated in August 2015.

ANNIE: Oh, wow.

ALEX: I've only been a nurse for about eight or nine months now. The unit I'm on is actually a brand new unit at Carle, too. So I'm a new nurse, on a new unit, and I'm new to the hospital.

ANNIE: Wow, that's really cool.

ALEX: Yeah, it's been an exciting transition.

ANNIE: Yeah, it seems like it. We'll just start by asking you about any kinds of writing you might do as part of your work as an RN. This doesn't just have to be writing that you physically do on a piece of paper, but it could be any visual or written ways that you communicate with patients, other people on your staff, anything like that.

ALEX: I think the bulk of my writing comes with assessments and care plans. Documentation with health care is really important, so you have to be thorough. We do what are called "head-to-toe" assessments, which involves assessing and documenting everything subjective and objective observed with your patient and making sure it is reflected accurately in the patient's chart. In addition to medication documentation, the nurse is also responsible for developing nursing care plans and providing patient education. Care plans establish nursing diagnoses and are useful when it comes to deciding the interventions that will help patients meet their health goals. We update them as we go so everyone is on the same page. We also document all the education we provide, which can be about any health topic, such as fall prevention, medications, and specific medical diagnoses. With these tools, we can help patients engage with their plan of care and understand the rationales for why the care team does what they do.

There are a lot of other communication avenues we use to keep everyone updated. Many people are involved with any given patient, and it's a whole multidisciplinary team that's working to help them get better. We have message boards in the rooms, all sorts of signage on walls, the patients' wrists, on medications, and on medical devices. We have a hospital-wide paging system, so we can text whoever we need. There is endless paperwork, such as consents, discharge orders, and transport forms. And there are just as many verbal avenues used for communication—it's pretty involved. And each discipline, whether it's nursing, doctors, speech therapy, physical therapy, etc., will add their own notes as they go, so the completed picture is well-rounded.

ANNIE: So there's multiple people that all contribute to one document, for lack of a better term?

ALEX: Exactly. It's a patient summary. There are tons and tons of notes you have to know how to navigate. Everyone can contribute, and each discipline is very specialized. It's nice being the nurse because I get to be a coordinator amongst them. I'm the one who's there with the patient all day. If a therapy service has a question or they want to see my patient, they call me, and I give them updates. You have to be concise, and you have to know how to convey what you're seeing and what the patient is going through. That way, everyone will understand and adjust the plan of care appropriately.

ANNIE: Interesting. So you were talking a little bit about being able to navigate that. Did you learn that while you were in school or is it more that you've just been learning as you're going?

ALEX: It's a little bit of both. School is a different kind of formal setting. It's also a generalized approach, whereas the unit I'm on is specialized. My instructors at the Mennonite College of Nursing wanted students to know how to put all the aspects of patient care into a chart. It's important not to leave out any pieces to the puzzle. In nursing school you learn assessment tools to help you remember what to look for. For example there's "OLD CART," which means onset, location, duration, characteristics, aggravating factors, relieving factors, and treatment. It's a goofy mnemonic used to produce a complete pain assessment and plan of care. However, in the hospital setting, we have a chart that will prompt all these questions and more. So the real world has systems in place that make every assessment standardized and reproducible. The system Carle uses is called Epic, but different hospitals use many different kinds of software to accomplish the same goal. Nursing school teaches you how to survive if you have nothing to tell you what to look for or what to do. So it's nice when you get out in the real world, because you have more communication resources available to you. Nursing school teaches the basics and the rules, and then you adapt that to the structure of whatever organization you end up working for. Every hospital will do things differently, so the beauty of nursing school is that it helps you understand what's going on regardless of the subtle differences between care facilities.

ANNIE: How much of that training did you have to go through?

ALEX: Well, a lot. I graduated in August, and I started as a health care tech before I passed my NCLEX. I spent two or three months doing that while I prepared. After I passed my boards, then I went into a three or so month period of on-the-job training. That involved working with nurse preceptors who show you the ropes. They help you hone your skills, perfect your charting, and help you organize your mind so that you are less likely to leave anything out. It's an intense process because you essentially make decisions that may or may not harm somebody else, so you have to know what you're doing. And the truth is, we are all still learning. Even seasoned nurses learn something new every day.

ANNIE: Did you have any moments when you had a big realization about why you were writing a certain way for a patient, to another nurse, to a doctor, or anything?

ALEX: I would say I've had many. I can't think of, "on this day, at this time," but I have had moments like that especially when shift reporting, which is a transfer of care where a nurse hands off a patient to me or I'm handing one

off to someone else. During reporting you get a thorough and quick rundown of everything that patient is going through: their diagnoses, their history, their allergies, if they have an IV, their diet, and their activity. It's a whole patient picture. Reporting can be strenuous. I feel like when I started, I was writing as fast as I could, my hand was cramping, my writing just turned to chicken scratch, and I couldn't even read what I wrote. But eventually I got to a place where I can remember feeling like, "I've got this." When I started it was so stressful and crazy, and now I'm sitting there like, "Uh-huh, go faster" because I can keep up. You learn your own shorthand, and everything that you're hearing about your patient makes sense, especially with diagnoses and treatments, you're like, "Yes, I know exactly what to look for now." So I think new nurses don't really see themselves being on their own, doing it. They're like, "How am I ever going to get to that place where I'm comfortable?" and then eight or so months later when you're doing it on your own, you're just like, "I'm still not entirely comfortable, but I can do it." So there's a sense of self pride. Another thing that was kind of an epiphany for me was that no matter what I'm looking at, whether it is discharge information, or a doctor's note, or my own report sheet, each one is written differently and uses different vernacular, and each one can be interpreted in different ways. If I know a patient is going to see what I'm working on, I need to put it in a way that they will understand. So you just have to adapt to your audience all the time, whereas sometimes I'll read what a doctor has written, and it'll be totally over my head. It's interesting, I think, to see how I change depending on what I'm working on and who I'm working for.

DAVID: It seems like you're under a lot more pressure to be comprehensible more than people above you in the hierarchy are.

ALEX: Well, sometimes I do feel that way. I guess I won't speak for doctors because I know that they are extremely stressed and go through a lot, but I've had it happen many times where a doctor will come in and explain something and then walk out and then the patient will say something, and I can tell that they just don't get it. They don't understand what they were just told. So I have to either get the doctor to come back and redo the situation or do my best, if I understand the situation enough, to put it down. They teach us in school that everything we teach others needs to be at around a fifth-grade reading level.

ANNIE: Translating to normal-people speak?

ALEX: Yeah, you have to translate it. I work on a neurology unit so I deal with a lot of strokes and central and peripheral neurovascular issues, but sometimes, even with my understanding of basic anatomy, if you cut open a brain in front of me and told me to point to a certain area, I wouldn't

necessarily know where to go. But I have a general idea mostly of what they're talking about. So I understand both sides of it.

ANNIE: What kinds of tools do you use to communicate?

ALEX: Well, everything is technology driven. That's the way things are, and it helps with speed. I can put something in the Epic system, and then everyone can see it. It organizes things well for the care team, so that system is the primary mode of communication. Each nurse gets their own phone, we receive and send a lot of e-mails, there are tons of different message boards throughout patient rooms, and throughout the unit, so information is always readily available. If I need to call somebody, if there's an emergency, I can look up pretty much anywhere and see what number I need, and I can call it right there. Physical therapy or something will come in and work with my patient, and as the day goes on, they will update the board. They use different colored markers. I know purple is physical therapy, and they've been in here, this is what they did. Same with speech. There's all types of notices that they post like: swallow precautions over patients' beds—everything from fall risk signs to do-not-resuscitate wristbands. Hospital identifiers are some of the biggest things. Always double-checking to make sure that what you're doing is being done to the right person in the right way at the right time; it's all about safety. There are tons of alerts and it's overwhelming at first, but you get an eye for it. It's constant communication, I would say. Whether it's written or verbal, it seems like a lot but you get used to the information overload, and you learn to appreciate the resources.

DAVID: So you mentioned the shift change reports when you're talking with another nurse about what these patients' deals are and you mentioned shorthand. Can you talk a little bit about your system? Do you have a notebook that you keep these things in?

ALEX: Well, it's really nice because Carle has made up a ton of different report sheets that are all formatted differently, so each nurse, depending on how they operate, can choose whatever works for them, or you can even make your own. In terms of shorthand, it comes from my experience, not just with nursing school, but from my academic process of learning shorthand when you take notes in a class—that's what I've used for years, that's just what I use. If I was going to write a note or something in a patient's chart, I have to cut out all of that and use only what I know is accepted by the American Medical Association (AMA) or whatever people will understand across the board, no matter what institution they go to. I will say that there are times where doctors will use shorthand and I won't know what it means, so sometimes things can get blurred. A lot of speed and accuracy depends on being able to be quick. You have to keep going, so you can't get hung up on getting everything spelled

out. Shorthand is big in the hospital, and everyone makes it their own and follows the rules as much as they can. Nursing school helped with this because it teaches the rules so you can then break them responsibly.

ANNIE: Are there any terms or phrases that are uniform within your hospital that you use with each other that everyone knows what it means?

ALEX: Oh, yeah. I could read a line that says, "VSS, NPO, DNR" and know that it's "vital signs stable, nothing by mouth, do not resuscitate." Those are just a handful of examples that really everyone in every facility should know.

ANNIE: Besides the AMA, are there any other outside influences that control the way you write while you're at work?

ALEX: Yeah, there are a lot of regulatory bodies within the health care profession. I mean there's the American Nurses Association, American Medical Association, regulatory bodies that deal with health research and quality assurance. There's the Joint Commission, the DNV—they actually just came and visited us—and they're all accrediting bodies that make sure we are doing what we need to be doing. Carle is what's called a Magnet hospital, which means that there are certain qualities Carle has that makes it act like a "magnet" so that it attracts workers and patients. Reimbursement for insurance also depends on the reports of many of these accrediting bodies. Carle is working to become a Comprehensive Stroke Center. Right now we're a Primary Stroke Center, and there is an accrediting body we're working with to show that we have all the capabilities to do what we say we can do. If we can't show our ability to provide that level of care each year or so, we will lose that accreditation. Quality in what we do for our patients is really the driving force behind that. There are many other organizations that govern what we do. There's OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration), the CDC (Center for Disease Control), Medicare, Medicaid—all of that deals with everything from public health to personal health. It's a very complex network, and it requires a lot of communication to keep everyone up to date.

ANNIE: The organizations you were just talking about seem more like umbrella "this applies to everyone all the time" type situations. Are there certain things that are specific to your facility, or is it mostly just that?

ALEX: Well, a lot of them are umbrella organizations, and they kind of have to be because, ideally, someone should be able to go to a hospital anywhere in our country or another country even and receive the same quality of care. Now that's not a reality; that just doesn't happen. Not every facility can do for you what my facility can, and my facility maybe can't do for you what RUSH or Wash U. can do for you. There is a standardization that everything is working towards depending on your accreditation and what you've been

identified as being able to give to your patient, so different places have different certifications depending on how they match up with the established standards. In that way, every hospital is unique.

DAVID: Will the charts you make at Carle travel with a patient to another hospital? Or when you get a patient, do they come with charts?

ALEX: Yeah. For example, I do discharges a lot since I'm on day shift so I'll admit patients and I'll discharge patients as they come and go, and not every patient is discharged home. Some patients go to what we call an ECF, or an extended care facility, and I have to go over with the patient everything not only about their care, what's to come, therapy services that they can expect, medications, but I also have to call and give a hand-off report to the nurse who's going to be taking care of them at that facility. So I do a whole report with them and then I print a summary of care so that they can take it to that facility and take it to their doctor or their primary care provider. Everyone from large hospitals to small clinic settings should be able to get the same documents, read the same thing, and understand what's going on and what's been done for that patient.

ANNIE: Can you explain where you fit into the hierarchy of your facility? Just some things to get you thinking: Who do you report to? Who, if anybody, reports to you, on the other hand. You talked about patients and having to translate for them, but what other people are affected by what you write? Whose writing do you have to deal with while you're at work?

ALEX: There's definitely a hierarchy. Not just among doctors and nurses, but also health care techs, and every discipline, as well as within each discipline. If I need help with something, I'm going to talk to what I call my charge nurse, or UNL (Unit Nurse Leader), and then there's going to be a unit manager that I would talk to, and then there's going to be the house officer. They deal with patient transfers and patient issues—troubleshooting any patient problems. There's a hierarchy in terms of going up the chain of command. With doctors for example, you start at the lower rung with medical students, then you have interns, then residents, and then you get to the attending provider. I have paged an attending provider prior to paging an intern before and was promptly informed that I had done the wrong thing. It's not that anyone is mean about it or anything, it's just that there is a protocol that you're supposed to follow, and it does feed into that hierarchy. In terms of education and responsibility with the patient's care and safety, you have all your services: speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, respiratory therapy; and then you get into health care techs, and all of them will ask me how things are for the patient before they see my patient. They need to know if my patient is OK to be seen or if I've noticed any changes.

So a lot of my job is collaboration and working to coordinate the day's events as they progress. It's an ongoing thing. I don't really feel hierarchically above them, though. It's more responsibility driven at that point. Even though there are so many services working with each patient, they're not the ones who are at the bedside; they're not the ones keeping a continuous eye on the situation. The job is rewarding in that respect because I feel my opinions and judgments are heard and valued.

ANNIE: Can you talk a little bit more about things you learned here at the Mennonite College of Nursing that have transferred to the work you do now, in terms of writing?

ALEX: Like I was saying, they build you from the ground up with your education. You take a health assessment class and so the whole class is about assessing somebody from head to toe and then writing down your assessments. Some people are really fluffy writers, some people don't put down enough, so it's training you how to write appropriately so that you don't leave anything out. Because when you leave something out, even if it's something really small, down the road that could become something potentially life-threatening. In school you don't have the programs that prompt you like, "Hey, did you assess this?" which is nice when you actually get into the workplace. Here at Mennonite College it was good because they put so much emphasis on muscle memory with your brain, learning to put everything down and to know to stay focused so you can cover all your bases. So I would say clear, concise, and complete communication was the most important thing, in terms of writing, that I learned here at ISU.

ANNIE: Is there anything, in terms of writing, that you wished you would have learned while you were here?

ALEX: Not to sound like I'm plugging something, but I would say that Mennonite College of Nursing is an extremely good school. They do a really good job and we have phenomenal professors. I've never really felt like I didn't get my money's worth out of any educational experience after coming here, and I don't feel like on the job I've ever had a moment where I was like, "Man, I wish they would have covered this a little more in school because now I'm really struggling." You'll always learn, there are always improvements that can be made. I tend to be kind of a fluffy writer anyways, and so I know that there's always room for improvement.

ANNIE: Finally, if you were talking to new nursing students, or students at the Mennonite College right now, what kind of writing would you want them to learn to do or really pay attention to? Any advice or tips that you could give?

ALEX: We do something called SBAR which stands for Situation, Background, Assessment, and Recommendation. When you page a doctor, you're supposed to stick to the SBAR format. I will admit that I have paged before saying, "Hey, Doctor So-and-so, how are you?" and they'll respond, "Tell me what's wrong with your patient." They usually don't have time for pleasantries.

I would say that new nurses should first and foremost work toward learning how to be OK with where you are. The job is stressful, you will always be a student, and some days will be harder than other days. And I've talked about this a lot, but new nurses should focus on being straightforward, clear, and concise. I would say focus on those because it's really what's going to matter when you actually get out into the workforce. All the time I'm filling out a careplan and I'm like "How do I say this?" about something I've seen, and my charge will say, "Just write down what you saw, that's it. Just give the facts. Learn how to tell it how it is because that's really important."

ANNIE: Well, thank you so much for meeting with us!

Annie Hackett is a recent graduate from Illinois State University's Department of English. While attending ISU, she was an intern with the Writing Program, worked at the Bone Student Center, held various positions in the all-female a cappella group, Secondary Dominance, and was captain of two ISU Relay for Life teams. She enjoys editing and digital media and seeks a job in online content management.

David Giovagnoli is a third-year doctoral student in English Studies at Illinois State University. He is the English 101 Coordinator and teaches courses in the Writing Program and Department of English.

CHATting 'Bout Chats

Brooke Evans

In this article, Evans researches the connections between the ways we have communicated throughout history, attempting to figure out how these different genres might be related. She theorizes that the telegram and text messages might be part of the same genre family (maybe even genre siblings) then interviews her teacher, Mrs. Kieffer, to get her take on this.

Ughhh, I just started eighth grade, it's the second day, and I'm sitting in Advanced ELA class, which I don't really feel like I belong in. I mean I can read really well . . . but writing? Yesterday, Mrs. Kieffer asked us to describe ourselves as writing researchers. What is THAT? And now she is talking about this weird thing called CHAT and Twitter being a genre. I mean, I'm not sure what exactly Twitter is . . . and now I have to write this thing called a tweet. Either she has a few screws loose, or I do. Next she is talking about texting being a genre. Great, I'm the worst at texting. OK, so this "CHAT" thing can be broken up into seven to eight parts. Why do they call it cultural-historical activity theory? I mean where does the culture and history part come from? And isn't ecology the study . . . of plants? WHAT THE HECK? Everybody else looks like they got it . . . there has to be something I'm missing. Wait. Think Brooke. Is there something similar I can compare it to . . . Hmmmm . . . It's gonna be a long year.

"With the new day comes new strength and new thoughts," (BrainyQuote). These were my thoughts the first time I ever experienced CHAT, and I have to say I just kinda sat there dumbfounded as Mrs. Kieffer began introducing us to CHAT. I remember sitting in class, and not having a clue as to what she was saying. I'm the type of person who takes everything literally. (This can make things awkward when you try to explain to your friends that screwing

your head on so you can't lose it would, at the very least, paralyze you from the neck down). Plus, when people began to nod their heads saying yeah they got it (all kids at school do this whether they've got it or not), I felt like I was missing something.

The first thing Mrs. Kieffer had to squeeze into my naive world, was that EVERYTHING is a genre. My brain sorta blew up. Our main lesson was on the conventions of texting and Twitter, only we used the word "rule" because our brains were still in the tropics tanning on a beach in the Bahamas. I should mention another thing about my style in life (and writing because everybody has a style of writing). Along with being very literal, I have a great memory and can sometimes connect dots in really weird ways. I'll be sitting in class, and the next thing you know I'll ask a crazy question. For example, in Science we were doing an experiment, and, well, one thing led to another and I asked a question: "If hydrochloric acid can burn through aluminum, then why don't we just use it to get rid of all the garbage in the world?" *(Before you go and petition at your town hall to use hydrochloric acid on garbage, turns out it's bad for the environment. It can cause acid rain, smog, and can eat through limestone.)* Sometimes I just say things out of left field, *OK* a lot of the time.

When we started talking about the "rules" of genres, I connected some pretty weird dots. A map of my thoughts led to my conclusion. I thought about texting and how sometimes people don't use a period. Then, I thought about what came before the text, which led to a Boxcar children's book *(awesome kids' books)*. In one of the books, the characters are on a canoe trip to find a hermit *(weird, I know, but authors have to sell books to make money somehow)*. They sent their grandfather a telegram to let him know they were coming home. To end the telegram the word "STOP" was used instead of a period. *"That's it!"* my brain screamed at me, telegrams were like texts *(I said it was a weird connection)*. I raised my hand for the first time in Mrs. Kieffer's class *(I usually raise my hand every five minutes)* and asked, "So is a telegram like a text?" I expected a nice *"wrong"* and then a fairly long explanation of why. Instead, Mrs. Kieffer thought my idea was really cool, and threw a whole new term, antecedent genre knowledge, in my face and told me Dr. Walker would be proud.

OoooK. What does antecedent even mean? How in the world do you spell that anyway? Ummm it starts with "ant," like the cute little insects, unless they are fire ants. There seems to be just a lowercase "a" sound as well. Then it sounds like it has "seed" like succeed, and an "ent"—antaseedent. I feel like I'm spelling that wrong. Oh, come on, I spell everything wrong. OK, so if ecology is the study of plants and antaseedant has "seed" in it, well maybe it's a plant term? Or it could be about ants. But what in the world does writing have to do with plants? Or ants for that matter. I'm fairly sure there is no form of text in or on plants, or ants. And who is Dr. Walker?

So all that happened in August, and some time passed. We flew through the year fast. A memoir, memo, grant, a book project or two, grant projects, and then we reached March. Mrs. Kieffer had been teaching us all year, and I felt like I could do this. I was ready, more or less, to write this article. Problem was I had no idea what to write about.

It's March and I think I have a good hold on CHAT, but I have to choose a topic for my Grassroots article, but what? What topic could I focus in on? History might be good because I won't have as hard a time writing on that topic. But what to write about? Come on, Brooke, do you know how big history is? 2000 words? I could write 2000 PAGES. I could write on so many things like Nazis, concentration camps, civil wars, Stalin. But wait, this is supposed to be about writing. OK, narrow it down, maybe something that I have already thought of? Hmmmmmmmm . . . THE TELEGRAM!!!! It's basically a really old text message. I could compare like I did in August. But is there a solid evolutionary link between them? The telephone!!! Telephones and texting are very similar; they practically evolved from one another. Right? Hmmmmm . . . I think WAY too much.

I think the best way to sum up why knowing the history of something is important comes from George Santayana, "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it" *(Wikiquote)*. So began my secondary research. I didn't want to use just the Internet, but I went to a public school. It's not like I had tons of books about telegraphs at the ready. But I did have Mrs. Kieffer. She showed me a book or two that I might consider using, which really helped. As a quick clarification, before I began my research, I used the terms telegraph and telegram interchangeably. Turns out they aren't just two interchangeable words that mean the same thing. The telegraph refers to the device that sends and receives telegrams—the actual message being sent and received.

Before the telegraph, it was like there were very little ways to communicate. Unless you felt like running to and fro or riding horses. Or used the famous carrier pigeons that we drove to extinction. Ancient civilizations sometimes used smoke symbols and drumbeats to communicate (Morse Code and the Telegraph). Unfortunately, due to sight affecting weather, these tools were limited. *(I was surprised by how creative ancient civilizations could be. You learn a little every day. Honestly, why do we always talk about ancient China, Greece, Rome, and Egypt when talking about ancient civilization? Why not talk about ancient Mongols? . . . OK, I googled them; I'm beginning to see why we stick to those few.)* But these tactics weren't the most reliable. Often, if there was disruptive weather these tools would be useless. (Which would be bad if you were stupid and brought a Trojan horse into your base, and you had no way to tell anyone else.) Then Samuel Finley Breese Morse *(why do people need two middle names?)* strode down to Capitol Hill with an

idea that is revolutionary, the telegraph. The telegraph, according to the article "Morse Code and the Telegraph," was a messaging system that used Morse code to transmit messages to long-distance places. Morse code is a system of dashes and dots that represent different letters. I then had a thought, *wasn't SOS a telegraph thing*, I mean it would fit the time frame in history. Turns out, SOS, the international distress symbol, doesn't actually stand for anything. *(What would it stand for? Save Other Ships? Ummm . . . I believe you are the one wanting saving?)* It was chosen because of how easy it is to send by Morse code (S is three dots, and O is three dashes—"...///…"). Eventually after what scientifically can be thought of as waiting at the DMV for a long time, Samuel Morse was successful. Finally, on May 24, 1844, Samuel Morse sent the world's first telegram from Washington DC to Baltimore, Maryland, where his partner, Vail, received it (Morse Code and the Telegraph). The words that changed the world (Figure 1) are very fitting, "What hath God wrought!" (Morse 1). *(Sounds kinda like Shakespeare).*

Figure 1: Image of the first telegraph message, "What hath God wrought."

But those two fine inventors didn't invent the telegraph all by themselves! Many others knowingly and unknowingly helped with the creation. The first few websites I checked out didn't even mention them; I had to dig deeper into the web of information. One honorable mention that I discovered was: "Italian physicist Alessandro Volta (1745–1827) [who] invented the battery" (Morse Code and the Telegraph). Without this person, it would have never happened. *(There is some trajectory for you)*. But after the telegraph was invented, others also helped with improving this revolutionary machine. Ezra Cornell (1807–1874) invented insulated wires, (which is probably good if you want wires to cross the Atlantic). After some time, and the hype had worn off; the telegraph began to be overshadowed by new inventions (Morse Code and the Telegraph).

OK, you're just waiting for me to start talking about the telephone, something that existed when you were, you know, alive. (This depends on how old you are, so the baby boomers, Generation X, millennials [Generation Y], Generation Z, or, as [I have chosen to call my age group] the emojiers, have probably never seen a telegraph, besides in museums). But allow me to correct you and explain that, the telegraph is still used today, though it is fastly fading into the sunset. While doing research on the telegraph, I came across an article online done by the History Channel. I love their web page, and I'm kinda biased because they are one of the first places I go for historical information.

According to the article on the History Channel website by Sarah Pruitt titled, "The End of an Era," in July 2013 India shut down its telegraph services. According to this source, the "Taar" as the telegraph is called in India, began to decline in the 1960s with the rise of the modern technological era. India had been using the telegraph for almost 110 years since it first came to the country in 1850 (Pruitt). I was kinda surprised that India had continued to use the telegraph so long. I know there are rural areas in the country, but they are pretty advanced, and it's the second biggest country by population. Anyways, the company that runs the telegraph services has been struggling to turn a profit for some time and decided to stop sending and receiving telegrams. *(I suppose that would be a bad investment these days)*. This is a problem for people in rural India, though, because Internet and phone service is expensive, and poorer areas can't afford these modern conveniences. These places are poor and often don't have clean drinking water (Pruitt). *(Also they have crocodiles and child labor)*.

But India isn't just "not with the times," as I said earlier, they are pretty advanced. Many countries still use the telegraph, "India is only the latest country to bid goodbye to the telegram. Western Union, [was] the dominant telegraph company in the United States since its founding in 1856 . . . In 2006, the company shut down its telegraph services for good" (Pruitt). *(So I could have sent telegrams in preschool.)* So the telegraph is dying, but it is still used is many places today.

Another thing worth mentioning is, it took time for the invention of the telephone to spread, especially in a war-torn Europe. Even the most surprising of people, Adolf Hitler, used the telegram. *(Though I guess he had to communicate somehow)*. I learned this while reading this historical book Mrs. Kieffer gave me. The book said that: "Late in 1942 Adolf Hitler sent Denmark's king, Christian X, a warm, personal telegram congratulating the king on his seventy-second birthday. The king replied with a mere, 'My utmost thanks, [signed] Christopher Rex' (Hoose 126). Let's just say Hitler was kinda upset, even though he was considered one of the most evil people in the world.

According to Hoose, "Enraged, the fürher immediately recalled his ambassador from Copenhagen and expelled the Danish ambassador from Germany. Hitler moved Werner Best, a dedicated Nazi and Gestapo member, to Copenhagen as the high commander of Denmark" (Hoose 126). *(Yeah, Hitler was a little upset with Denmark and the king. I think there was a slight reception error there. Or not, maybe the king just really didn't like Hitler? [Werner Best actually was in my opinion, the "Best" Nazi because he basically let 6,500 of 7,000 Jews who were meant to be sent to death camps escape to Sweden, a neutral country].)* But, anyways, telegrams didn't die out immediately—it took some time before they began to decline.

Onward to our next link in the chain, the telephone. Its origin, and solo creator is fairly famous. According to *History.com*, "Alexander Graham Bell (1847–1922), the Scottish-born American scientist best known as the inventor of the telephone, worked at a school for the deaf while attempting to invent a machine that would transmit sound by electricity" ("Alexander Graham Bell"). In March 1876, Bell was granted the first telephone patent ("Alexander Graham Bell"). While Bell might have invented the telephone, he, if anything, wanted to be remembered as a simple teacher of the deaf. *(I think reception changes how you see him. I didn't know he invented the telephone until later. I knew him from the story of Helen Keller, though he wasn't that simple).* Bell revolutionized the way people who are deaf are taught and treated. But he was also was definitely a zeg-style scientist. Zeg is the Georgian (the country, wedged between Russia and Turkey) word for "the day after tomorrow." *(A) This word should be used in English immediately and (B) Scientists always look towards the future, some more than others. They are always thinking about "The day after tomorrow." So I feel it's fitting to call him a zeg scientist, because he changed the day after tomorrow, for the better (though an environmentalist might have a different reception).*

The second popular type of phone to exist after Bell's version was the candlestick phone. This style died out in the 1930s when manufacturers started combining the mouth piece. Soon the rotary phone rose up the ranks. According to the article "How We Stopped Communicating Like Animals," by Ben Zigterman, "The rotary phone became popular. To dial, you would rotate the dial to the number you wanted, and then release" (1). Based on my limited interaction with rotary dial phones (again I'm in the emojiers group, not a baby boomer), this must have been incredibly tedious. As push-button phones gained popularity in the 1960s and '70s, the rotary dial phone thankfully began its slow death (Zigterman 1). Around 1963, the "push tone" entered the market. Produced by AT&T, this phone used a keypad to call people. Like the name, it works by "pushing" the keys, the keys then send the operator a "tone" that lets them know who you want to call (Zigterman 1). *(Heads up it's the dirty white colored phone, I mean my grandma STILL has this phone).* And then portable phones came along, according to Zigterman, "Portable, or cordless, phones were the remote equivalent of the TV remote. You were no longer physically attached to your phone's base station" (1). This phone was amazing because people no longer had to be right next to the charging station.

The next revolutionary phone on our list is what I call "the brick"—*or the Motorola DynaTAC 8000X, not that anyone would know that* (see Figure 2). This was the first mobile phone, available at a modest $3,995, weighing 1.75 pounds, and with an amazing 30 minute battery life (Zigterman 1). *(Like an iPhone with serious water damage . . . and no screen).* After they began to sort out kinks with the first phone *(I can't imagine why)* another popular phone hit the market. It was

the Nokia 5110. This candy-bar-style phone came with the ability to change its outer shell (Zigterman 1). And now, we take a trip to the first phone that had a camera, Sanyo SCP-5300: "Released in 2003, the Sanyo SCP–5300 was one of the first phones to include a camera. It was already clear that digital cameras would replace film cameras, but it wasn't clear that a camera could fit in a phone" (Zigterman 1).

Figure 2: The first modern cellphone
(aka "the Brick").

So as I was going thru all of these phones, and I was wondering how I was going to do my primary research. Primary research was a newer concept for me. As an eighth grader, I had never done primary research. MORE PHONES!!! *(Warning by-product of capitalism, buying a bunch of stuff that basically all do the same thing.)* By this time, OK, finally a phone I recognize, the BlackBerry! "BlackBerry, was by far the leading smartphone manufacturer in the 2000s. With their advanced e-mail capabilities, BlackBerry Messenger, and physical keyboards, BlackBerry smartphones were the ultimate business phone" (Zigterman 1). *(I know this phone because when I was little my dad used it a lot . . . until the iPhone came along.)* And last, but by far not the least, iPhones and Androids. According to Zigterman, "When the iPhone was introduced in 2007, Apple brought the smartphone to the masses. With its intuitive touch screen, intelligent sensors, and sleek design, the iPhone has been an incredible success" (Zigterman 1). I guess I should also add that telephones are still very much used today, and, for now anyway, some of these older phones are still out there.

OK, more research . . . texting isn't nearly as old as the first two inventions (The Emojiers Era). As of December 3, 2012, texting (SMS) enjoyed its twentieth anniversary according to a news article "Text messaging turns 20" by Tracy McVeigh. According to McVeigh, "Neil Papworth, a software

programmer from Reading, sent an early festive greeting to a mate.... he had sent the world's first text message, Merry Christmas" (1). You can see a picture of this in Figure 3. Now texting didn't explode overnight; it took time for the world to get used to texting. I don't mean a few months, either. According to McVeigh, "It took seven years from Papworth's festive greeting for texting to take off, let alone spawn that whole new style of linguistics from LOL to L8R… UK mobile phone companies believed people wouldn't want to type in a message when they could simply speak" (1). So, texting slowly grew on the world. Skip a few and we jump to the present. (Well, closer to the present since the news article was written in 2012). According to a survey by Acision, "[Texting] is still the most popular way to message despite competition from e-mail and social networking messaging services with 92 percent of smartphone users still preferring to text" (McVeigh 1). *(So to the 8 percent of you who don't prefer texting that's OK, you can send a telegram)*.

Figure 3: The first ever text message read "Merry Christmas."

OK, everybody is so far on their primary research, but I still can't decide what to do. Alright, what do I know I'd like to have? I want to stray from what everybody else is doing, and I want to be slightly different, so I should stay away from surveys. I want somebody else's opinions though, hmmm, what to do, what to do. Well, I suppose I could do an interview, but who to interview? Light bulb!!! I could interview Mrs. Kieffer. She's smart, and knows what she is talking about. Brain, why couldn't you have thought of this a week ago!!!

So I had a few ideas on how all three genres were connected. I figured that they were all sub-connected, through conventions and history. I just didn't have a word for it. So I just called them "sister genres" at first. Then I began to think more in-depth about the genres' relationship. They all share similar roots, but there was still some differences (maybe cousins?). Mrs. Kieffer said they were called "genre sets" *(probably named by historians)* and "genre families."

Now, families are always supposed to be this big loving happy symbol, in the traditional way you look at families. But siblings fight and clash with each other, usually the oldest wins, at least when you are kids. And the siblings can

be as different as night and day. I think these genres probably behave more like siblings. They clash, and on the outside they are as different as night and day, *especially the telephone*, which doesn't have much writing in it. So I asked Mrs. Kieffer these questions. I really wanted to do a face-to-face interview, but since we were going to ISU for the Spreading Roots Colloquium, I had to take a science test I would be missing. So, instead, Mrs. Kieffer had to type her answers on a Google document. Mrs. Kieffer did this on the bus ride to ISU, which means that one of the questions is answered in two parts.

Evans: How do you feel about telegrams being related to texting?

Kieffer: I'm not sure that I would call them sister and/or brother genres, although I must say that I really like these terms and the idea that genres are related. I think that this is a better way to characterize them than genre sets. (Also, I really like the comments that you include that provide some insight into your thinking—something to definitely do in your journal article). Back to your theorizing, I think brother and sister genres represent how genres move historically and including brother, sister (and even cousin genres) represents a horizontal movement that seems more accurate than just including genres as a set (that implies relationship in a much more general way). So, back to your original question. I think they are close enough to be related, but I wonder if they would actually be parent genres? I think of this genre as more of a vertical relationship, that texting evolved from telegrams, rather than a sibling relationship that would seem to imply a more side-by-side movement. Now, I also agree that they could be time-traveling-ish cousins, evolving from another genre, which is most certainly a possibility. As you said, it's complicated, and that's a really important concept when you are trying to understand, genres. They are complicated and figuring out their relationships is also very complicated. There are plenty of things to figure out, not only how they are related to other genres, but how people use them. We use genres to communicate, and that use determines, in part, how genres are shaped, so we need to consider not only who creates the genres, but also the intended audience that they are created for. (And you know that those pesky unintended audiences also have an impact, depending on plenty of other factors—this is where trajectory begins to play a role). If you start thinking about CHAT, you can see how the complications expand (with seemingly exponential expansion of complications, right?). I won't do a detailed activity system analysis here, but just think about the impact that tools have on our ability to use genres. Texting wasn't possible before certain technologies were available, and neither was the telegram—think about how genres had to travel before the telegraph was invented.

Evans: Do you think they are related enough, through history and their evolution, to be almost sister (or brother) genres? (Is this a thing?). Looking back they could be time traveling-ish cousins I suppose, it's complicated!

They evolved from each other, but they both still exist. OK, I found out they are called genre sets and then genre families, but genre sisters (or brothers, *it's kinda like motherland, fatherland scenario*) sound way: (a) way simpler and easy to understand, (b) way cooler, and (c) the name genre families sounds like historians named it. (I mean families fight but are all lovey-dovey. While sisters and brothers fight constantly or are best friends, they always contradict each other, too. Food for thought).

Kieffer: So, I think the idea of brother/sister/cousin relationships are certainly possible, because of some of the reasons that you mention. And, I think Snapchat is probably a cousin of texting, similar, related to be sure, but not necessarily a sister/brother. I'm really liking this idea, so I'm kinda fighting to think of reasons that it won't work or wouldn't be a possibility. I probably need to think a little more before I can find evidence that it wouldn't be a logical option.

Evans: Do you think this might work for other genres? Why or why not?

Kieffer: I might be having a reception issue here, so I'm going to ask a question and then answer based on my reception since you are sitting close to the front of the bus. And this isn't the ideal place for a conversation (again, problems with reception, just different ones, like shouting, which I don't like to do, and being able to hear you on a noisy bus . . .). I think the genre of the telegram and text messaging are similar, and, in fact, I think they are related. How, let's see. I think it might depend on where we begin historically. If we begin with the telegram, that's a kinda artificial starting place. Certainly there are antecedents for this genre, and it's important to take that into consideration. If you are only tracing these two genres, I think you still need to acknowledge that you're looking at something that could be expanded. (In other words this is a large family tree.) I'm thinking it's more of a parental relationship. Now, there are plenty of other people who think about these things, too. (If I have time today, I'll ask Dr. Walker what she thinks.) I think you'll find that most people who work with genre theories would say that these genres are related. The language that you use for this relationship becomes more contested, depending on the terms you use. We're getting close to ISU, so I'm stopping for now, but I'll continue to think about this, and I'll answer the rest of your questions later.

Kieffer: (Finishing up question 3) I think the genres are similar. If you think about the conventions of both, and do a little genre analysis, you will be able to see those similarities. Both were (originally) short due to the cost of producing the message—people used to pay per text, and I think telegrams were charged by the word. Both were (are) used to send messages quickly. In the case of telegrams, arriving faster than letters. They also used abbreviations in telegrams

to make the message shorter. (You can probably find some examples of these abbreviations if you look at the historical information, and maybe you already have found this. It's been a little while since I've read your secondary research.)

Evans: Do these genres sound like they could be siblings? Explain.

Kieffer: I would call the telegram a parent of the text. I think the family relationship works here, but I wouldn't call it a sibling genre. I think the time-traveling cousin could work, (and it makes me smile), but I think the parent relationship makes more sense to me here. Now, I have to acknowledge that other people who use genre theory may disagree with me. I did have a conversation with Mr. Hummels, who also uses genre theory in his work, and he also thought that a telegram would be a parent genre. Again, this just takes into consideration that we are beginning with the telegram, and that genre has antecedents, as well—you know more members of the family tree.

Thanks for interviewing me. I really enjoy thinking about these relationships, and I'm super excited that you are considering them, as well. Again, I like your theorizing about the sibling relationships of genres, and I will be mentioning it to the other folks that I know who work with genre theory, and I'll let you know what kind of feedback I receive. If you have any other questions for me, I'm happy to answer them. Just let me know.

The second thing I did after reading Mrs. Kieffer's awesome responses, (the first being to get out a dictionary), was to reread the responses because I'm never surprised by what I missed the first time. *(I thought* The Outsiders *took place in New York until classmates started to give their presentations. Oops . . .)* I loved Mrs. Kieffer's responses, and they taught me a thing or two about my research and genre relationships. I read her responses and found myself agreeing with her on just about everything. I'll admit there were some things I was most definitely wrong on, but that's OK. It's now part of my genre knowledge, and I'm sure I will use it in the future *(I did while we were writing this article—I compared the abstract to the summaries on the backs of books, probably parents because I'm fairly sure books came before college articles).*

Thinking deeper into the way things are connected can often lead somewhere you never thought of. Then following human nature and curiosity, you discover more about the world. *(I mean, I always say how much I dislike Shakespeare and his use of "The Queen's English" [That goofy talking style about thee, and thy], but that phrase in itself was actually his quote. He coined the phrase.)* This creates a new understanding of the world, and a reason to dig a little deeper. Looking at these genres as they evolve and change can often lead to new ideas and theories *(and considering that in four to five billion years the sun will explode, we*

better start thinking of a way not to die, if humans are still around). So maybe focusing a lens to the world will help us understand its chaos. And writing can often help us get there. To quote Wayne Dyer, "If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change."

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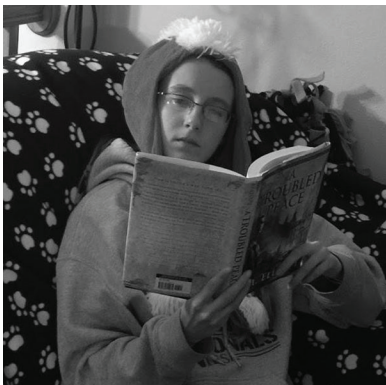
Brooke Evans is a student at Washington Middle School. She enjoys participating in the school music program, including both jazz band and show choir. When she's not singing, she's running cross-country or track. After school, she spends her time reading good books and learning a little more about the world with her two best friends, Tobey and Sarah.

Dan Harmon Uptook Nothing! And Neither Can You

Laura Skokan

Humor is a tricky beast—*What's funny, what isn't; Why it is/isn't.* But this article doesn't address those interesting notions. Instead, Laura Skokan focuses on a single man and why he is terrible at telling jokes. She theorizes about the obstacles to his uptake, reflects on her own, and puts forth a conceptual way to imagine uptake (with pictures.)

WHAT FOLLOWS IS A BIZARRE HYBRID OF A TRANSCRIPT OF AN AUDIO ARTICLE AND A WRITTEN ARTICLE. THE AUTHOR WROTE IT WITH THE AUDIO VERSION IN MIND, BUT SHE COMPLETED THE WRITTEN VERSION FIRST, SO AS TO HAVE SOMETHING TO READ OFF OF WHEN RECORDING THE AUDIO. THIS IS A SNAPSHOT OF THE MOMENT BETWEEN THE WRITTEN ARTICLE AND THE RECORDED VERSION. IT MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. IN THE AUTHOR'S IMAGINATION, IT WOULD BE BEST TO LISTEN TO THE ARTICLE AS SOME THINGS THAT ARE TRANSCRIBED WILL ONLY MAKE SENSE IF THEY ARE HEARD. HOWEVER, SHE HAS ALSO PROVIDED VISUALS AND NOTATION IN THE ARTICLE THAT MIGHT HELP TO FILL THINGS OUT. AND SINCE SHE UNDERSTANDS THAT NO ONE IN THEIR RIGHT MIND WILL DO BOTH, SHE LEAVES IT UP TO THE INDIVIDUAL READER'S (OR TEACHER'S) DISCRETION TO CHOOSE HOW TO GO FORWARD. IT MIGHT BE THE MOST UNIMPRESSIVE CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE, BUT IT WILL BE AN ADVENTURE NONETHELESS. THE AUDIO VERSION CAN BE FOUND AT: isuwriting.com/audio-version-of-when-jokes-kill/.

> *Dan Harmon: A guy . . . a guy goes into . . . a bar and he goes, "I . . . like- like- like . . . "*
>
> *Jeff Davis: We'll be right back.[1]*

Dan Harmon can't tell a joke to save his life.

> *Dan: He goes, "Give me a drink." And the bartender goes, "Here's your drink." And the guy keeps drinking and then after a while, he looks at his watch and he goes, "Oh God, I'm so late. Like I should have gone home like to my wife . . . 'cause I love her." And the bartender goes . . . Um . . . "Are you gonna be in trouble for going home late?" And the guy says, "Yeah." And he goes, "Here's this trick I've learned. So take a . . . Take this $20 bill." [to himself] That's weird that he would give it to him.*

Which is unfortunate . . .

> *Dan: On the retelling, like I think this guy that we think is so stupid in this story, I think he profited.*

. . . because he writes jokes for a living.

> *Dan: I'm not even sure he's married, I think he made $20.*
>
> *Dino Stamatopoulos: Well, not the way Jeff told it.*

Figure 1: Dan Harmon featured here inexplicably dressed up as Iron Man.

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[1]Author provided transcription. Episode 172 of the podcast Harmontown (41:41-56:26). See Works Cited section for citation of podcast.

Dan Harmon is a TV comedy writer (Figure 1). Not just like a guy in a room with other writers. No, he's *The Guy*. He's a showrunner, which might sound like a glorified stage manager or like someone who runs around a soundstage ineffectively yelling into a headset. Rather, showrunners' names are often preceded by "Executive Producer," "Created by," and "From the brilliant mind of . . ." They're gods. So much so that Dan Harmon, showrunner for *Community, The Sarah Silverman Program,* and *Rick and Morty,* started a podcast whose initial conceit was to start a moon colony with listeners, and he will be their mayor. Mayor of the moon colony called *Harmontown*.

I'm one of those listeners.

. . . I've already bought my moon boots.

This joke is from episode 172 of *Harmontown*. All episodes are recorded in front of a live crowd. Onstage is:

> `Jeff: Tell it the funny way.`

Figure 2: Jeff Davis cropped weirdly
to get rid of the other person in
the photo because this was the only
non-copyrighted photo of Davis
that the author could find.

Comptroller, Jeff Davis (actor, *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*, Figure 2). He's the one who told Dan the joke earlier that day and

> `Dan: So the bartender says, take this $20 bill,`
> `        that's the part I'm hung up on.`
>
> `Dino: Yeah, that didn't happen.`

Figure 3: Dino Stamatopoulos featured here without his legendary starburns.

Dino Stamatopoulos (actor, played Starburns from *Community*, writer, producer, general sexual weirdo, Figure 3), who also heard Jeff tell the joke earlier that day.

Dan's shows are all comedies. And oddly enough, what made me start following Dan was a joke.

―――――――――――――――――――――――――――――――――――――――

On the first episode of *Community*, the main character (Jeff) is bullying one of his teachers (Duncan) to sneak him test answers.

Duncan: I'm a Professor. You can't talk to me that way!

Jeff: A six-year-old girl could talk to you that way!

Duncan: Yes, because that would be adorable.

Jeff: No, because you're a five-year-old girl and there's a pecking order!

It's succinct. It's beautiful. It probably shouldn't be referred to as an "it" because there are actually three jokes, one punchline, and two tags (the joke after the joke after the joke). Each more surprising than the next. It's perfect.

But this . . .

Dan: Oh take a—"Take **a** $20 bill!"

Jeff: Why does he give him a $20 bill?

Dan: Sorry sorry sorry. The bartender says, "Take . . . **a** $20 bill."

Dino: Your own $20 bill.

Dan: Your own $20 bill.

Jeff: Because why?

Dan: Well, I'm getting to that.

Dino: He's getting there!

Dan: I just got hung up on— I thought the bartender was giving him the money. "Take a $20 bill. Fold it up?" I don't know why.

Dino: Yeah, I bet. That's not a detail.

Dan: Yes, it is. It is part of it.

Jeff: Let him tell the joke, Dino!

Dino: All right.

*Dan: [Jeff] said— It **is** part of it. "You fold it neatly and put it in your pocket—"*

Dino: Well, Jeff likes talking.

Dan: No, it is part of it.

Jeff (so tickled): It's not part of it.

. . . is a shit show.

So what's happening?

Deciding on a Frame for Analysis

We're not even halfway through Dan's telling of this joke. I'll give you the real joke in a minute, but I'll tell you now that it takes Jeff fifty-three seconds to do the whole joke, and that's only because he's embellishing. It's a classic joke format: three acts—two acts of set-up, one short, hot sentence for the punchline. (For reference, we're at 1:58 of Dan telling the joke, and he's not even to its second act yet.) A lesser critique would say, "Oh, Dan is too wordy; he needs to be more to the point. That will make him funny." But we have evidence that tells us otherwise (the joke from *Community* I mentioned above), and, even though its structure is set-up, punchline, tag, tag, it's still succinct.

We could look at this in terms of **transfer** (skills that you have in one area that may or may not translate to another area) and see this as the difference between talking and writing. We *could*, but I don't want to.

We *could*, but if we looked at this as a transfer problem and said, "Dan knows how to write, but not tell a joke," we may as well wash our hands and

walk away. If we were to tell Dan this *(and Lord knows, I'd be happy to, but then again I'd love to talk to him just, like, in general)*, what is he supposed to do with it? If someone tells you, "You write great tweets, but you can't write great papers," and "All you need to do is take the skills from tweeting and transfer them into paper writing," what are you supposed to do with that information?

I want to be very clear that transfer isn't the problem here. Transfer is a useful tool to examine learning—how we expand our skills and build new wheelhouses for them. When things look as corollary as jokes and there appears a glaring disconnect, that's when examining transfer gets really interesting.

But in order to do that, we need to look at where the disconnect is actually happening. And to do *that*, we need to examine what Dan is actually saying and study his uptake.

> Dan: A guy goes, "I'm enjoying drinking and I've
> . . . I'm not . . . I'm going home late to my wife."
> And the bartender says, "Let me tell you what to do.
> Take a $20 bill. Of your own. And fold it . . ."
>
> [a pause]
>
> Jeff: Neatly.
>
> Dan: Neatly. That part I don't get but I swear
> to God, that's what he said.
>
> Jeff: I never said it.
>
> Dan (as the Bartender): "And when you go home
> to your wife, and she goes, 'Why were you home
> so . . . late?'"
>
> Dino: It's amazing. It's amazing how bad this is.
>
> Jeff: Dino, leave it, leave it.
>
> Dan: I'm telling the exact joke.

Dan is stuck on these words. Take this $20 bill. Fold the bill neatly. Jeff swears he didn't say that. Where did Dan insert this from then?

New Word Syndrome

A new word pops into your vocabulary and you're certain you've never heard it before. "Synesthesia," "portmanteau," "corgipoo." Seriously? What human talks like this? But this weird thing begins to happen. No matter how obscure, that word starts to show up everywhere.

Now, either this means it turns out that we all exist not in a heliocentric world, but in a youcentric world, and everyone has learned this word at the same time as you.

Or you missed it.

How could you, smart cookie that you are, miss such a bizarre word? Especially when it turns out to be absolutely everywhere?

I think of knowledge as "bubbles"—categories, places to store new information. When we're infants the bubbles are "Mom" and "Not Mom" (Figure 4).
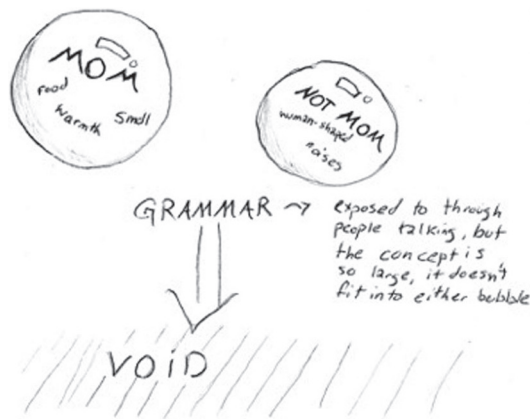

Figure 4: What happens to complex ideas when the bubbles are simple.

We grow and later we might get "Mom," "Dad," "Siblings." We even add a bubble for "other people's moms," which eventually spreads out to be "my friends' moms," "TV moms," or "generic mom type" (Figure 5).
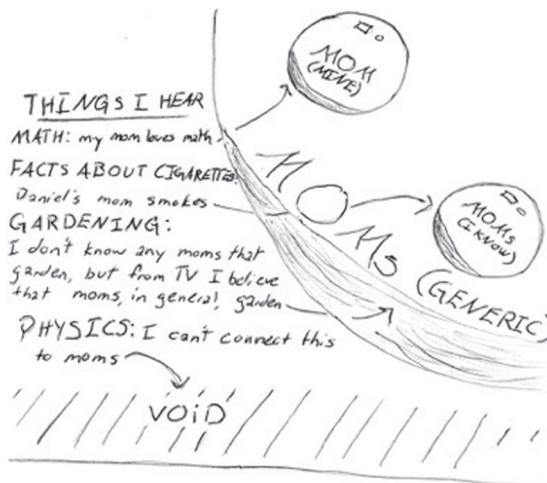

Figure 5: As the bubbles get more complicated, new ideas we encounter fall into different bubble categories.

Like attracts like. A raindrop is pulled toward other raindrops to form into rivulets. But each little stream goes down one path and not another—gets fit into one bubble's pathway and not another. What if the drop gets linked up with a path that can't be bridged? What if you need to put a tiny concept into a slot . . . does the rest of the bubble come along with it? Can knowledge bring with it its own baggage?

This is **uptake**. It is the process of learning new information. New information is based on a reassemblage of old information, of making connections between two ideas. The bubbles image is my demonstration of how I understand the concept of uptake.

Uptake on the Job Market

I started a job that is completely foreign to my existence. I took theater and computer science in undergrad, and English in graduate school. I started working in Internal Audit for State Farm. I don't know if I can explain to you how different those worlds are. But I have an example.

I got brought on through a placement agency for State Farm. The first job interview I had was not for Internal Audit. The placement agent called me up (I still have my notes) and said, "Testing Scheduler."

Some of you just eye-rolled, but my little heart was elated. "Scheduler": just me and Excel alone in our own island. "Testing": why, I'd proctored testing for ISU and for medical students.

In the back of my mind came some questions: Why would business people need testing? And why would so many of them need testing that they needed to hire an additional person whose *sole* job was scheduling them?

Here's the bubble I used to fill that hole: Business people love certifications. It's a tangible, "fact"-based way to demonstrate betterment.

This must be a group that's really dedicated to certification. Maybe there's a limit to the supplies and rooms, and they need a newly graduated Master's student to find the perfect balance. Now, no one told me that, and I didn't ask my questions of the agent, but I used my past understanding to make sense of a new problem. I prepared around my assessment of those two words and the picture I just painted.

And it turns out that no one told me that for a reason. That wasn't remotely the job. (I still don't fully understand what it was.)

I went to the Internal Audit interview. I was determined not to go in blindly again. I listened so closely to the placement agent. I took more extensive notes. "Internal": I get this word, but how it applies to audit, I'm not so sure. "Audit": I think has something to do with taxes; Skyler White from *Breaking Bad* got in some trouble when she was audited; something everyone hates.

What the placement agent says is, "Basically you follow up to see if the people you're auditing put a program on their computer correctly or not." (That's a quote.)

When asked at the interview if I know what the job is, I say, "Yes." Conversationally, I could have left it there, but I paid attention to the placement agent and I wanted to show off. I could explain exactly what she described. So I do.

. . . and they laugh at me.

Three very tall men who are assessing my aptitude are straight up laughing at me.

I would like to blame the placement agent for misleading me twice. But I keep going back to the "Testing Scheduler" interview. What other words was she supposed to use? If that's the jargon[2] that is used in that group, what she was saying was accurate. Was she supposed to assume I'd paint an elaborate picture in my head that was based on jargon she wasn't used to?

—————————————————

I had an acting coach who used to say this thing that became shorthand (our own jargon, I suppose) that was "Parade/Parade." It's a reference to the book *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* where one character loves parades and the other hates them. In the book, these characters are talking about a parade, and yet in a sense, neither of them are speaking about the same thing. They're each bringing with them their past feelings and assessments. Even when one of them says "parade" in an upbeat way, the other one inserts all of his negative associations. They're hearing the word, but their bubble overrides the intonation—it erases the speaker's meaning, and in that void, spills in all this past information, this baggage, extra junk, the little bubbles are squeezing into a small hole (Figure 6).

—————————————————

[2]**Jargon:** Words and phrases that have evolved a meaning and use over time that is relevant to a specific group; or, words and phrases that are easily understood by one group that may be unclear to another.

Figure 6: Information that gets squeezed in between bubbles, and the baggage carried with it.

The Actual Joke in Question

It might shock you to learn I am cutting Dan's telling of the joke short since so far it has been anything but. I do this because it just devolves into chaos. And you've been exposed to enough chaos thus far.

. . . and there may be more to come.

We jump back in after Dan has finished the joke:

```
Dan: Did I get the punchline wrong, they didn't
                                          laugh.

                                     Jeff: Huh?

       Dino: Because you didn't set it up right!

                                 Dan: Shut up!

       Jeff: The joke starts with a guy puking on
                               himself, drunk.

                                 Dan: What?!

  Dino: Yeah. That's the only way it makes sense.
```

Jeff: A guy is at a bar, he's been there all day and all night. He's had so much to drink, he barfs all over the front of his shirt. And he just starts crying. The bartender comes over and goes, "Jesus Christ! What the fuck is happening over here?" He goes, "Look at me. I've been drinking all day. I told my wife I'd be home hours ago. I puked all over myself. I can't go home looking like this. What do I do?" The bartender goes, "I'll tell you what you do. Do you have a $20 bill?" The guy says, "Yeah." He says, "Put it in your shirt pocket."

Dino: Fold it nicely.

Jeff: Yeah. "Go home. Fold it NEATLY![3] *Put it in your shirt pocket. Go home. Say you ran into an old friend from school. He's going through rough times. You heard his whole story. He got really drunk. Puked all over your shirt. Gave you twenty bucks for the dry cleaning." The guy goes, "That's genius." He walks home. He's tumbling up the steps. The wife opens up the door and sees him covered in puke and says, "What the hell happened to you?" He says, "I ran into an old friend. He's going through some rough times. He puked all over my shirt. And here. He gave me $20 for the dry cleaning." And the wife says, "There's $40 in here." He says, "Well, he also shit my pants."*

[the crowd responds beautifully]

I think most people in Dan's shoes would just try to repeat the joke verbatim. Dan heard the joke earlier that day. Tried to tell the story of it. Failed. Heard it again now. It's fresh enough in his head that he could just barrel through it phonetically.

Dan: Well. I did . . . I admit to one thing. I forgot that he puked on himself.

Jeff (matter of fact): Yes.

But that's not what Dan does.

---

[3]This is not part of the joke. It's being said to bust Dan Harmon's chops.

> *Dan: A guy—*
>
> *Jeff: Dan Harmon will now tell you the joke I
> just told you.*

Learning on the Job

For whatever reason, I got the Internal Audit job, and I desperately wanted to prove that it wasn't a mistake. Fortunately, they scheduled my hire date around a weeklong training.

I listened very carefully to my coworkers and got a general outline about the job. I created a bubble and started putting the training information into that.

However, the training was an overview about State Farm. (Like way high-level. Nothing that helped me to connect with the job itself.) Now, I survived my education all the way through grad school without once falling asleep in class (including that extremely boring Japanese religion class) . . . but every moment of that training was a fight between me and gravity for who could determine the directional force of my eyelids.

While I think the information they gave might have been good background stuff to know, I had no place to put it. I had my outline of the job bubble. But not a general State Farm bubble. And without that, my brain switched into power-saving mode, and it shut this shit down.

Back to the Scene of the Crime (Against Comedy)

> *Dan: A guy goes into a bar.*
>
> *Dino: He doesn't even have to go into the bar.
> He's already there.*
>
> *Dan: He gets so drunk he's already there.
> And he's like been drinking all day. And then he
> pukes on himself. And he goes, "Oh God. I puked on
> myself. I can't go home with puke on me." And the
> bartender says, "Take this $20."*
>
> *[the crowd laughs]*

Oh my god, he forgot that the bartender doesn't give him a $20. Again. This phrase is so locked in his head he can't get out of it. But he hears the crowd react, and it jogs his memory.

> *Dan: Or, or "Take twenty of your own dollars,*
> *and say to your wife, 'Yeah a guy puked on me. But*
> *he's sorry and he gave me this $20.'" And the guy*
> *goes, "That's good."*

> *Cut to:*

> *[the crowd loses it]*

Dan is so locked into "how to tell a joke" that he begins with "A guy walked into a bar," rather than taking the lesson they've JUST TALKED ABOUT and opening with the guy puking on himself (which is the foundation for every piece of action that follows).

The medium he writes in (TV) is not just joke-writing, but also visuals. I thought at first that maybe he fused the two together. He was so focused in on the neatly folded bill, a visual. And then, in this telling with the "Cut to:"—that's TV talk. You use a hard cut like that to make a joke (the character says one thing, and the hard cut reveals they're doing the exact thing they said they'd never do—wacky!). Maybe the bill was a detail he saw so clearly that that was all he could talk about. His uptake was just on his mental image of the bill.

Uptake Mirage

A strange phenomenon occurs with uptake sometimes. Sometimes people insert things that just clearly didn't happen. I noticed this a lot when I taught ENG 101 at ISU because the classes were structured so differently from students' preconceived notions of English. Sometimes the students would insert things in their memory that never happened. I think it was an attempt to reconcile the "General English Class" bubble with the "This English 101 Class Madness" bubble. (If we take a moment to think about where the "General English Class" bubble preconceptions came from, not just for the individual student, but also from a cultural perspective, that would be a fascinating look at cultural-historical activity theory study, but it would also be another article. Please excuse my shorthand for this one.)

When Dan says walking, I was so excited because he digs in:

> *Dino (quoting Dan, delighted): "Cut to!"*

> *Dan: 'cause [Jeff] says he walks home, but if*
> *the camera's objective the whole time, then you're*
> *not there when he shits his pants.*

> *[the crowd loses it]*

> *Dan (to Jeff): That's on you.*

I was like Jeff 100 percent did not say that. And so I assumed that Dan just made it up because he's visually trying to make sense of the joke, and what he remembers is the visual of the guy walking home.

But I went back and you know what, Jeff actually said:

> Jeff: The guy goes, "That's genius." He walks
> home. He's tumbling up the steps. The wife opens
> the door and sees him covered in puke and says,
> "What the hell happened to you?"

It turns outs I'm the one who didn't take that image up! But there might be a reason for that: it's not the crux of the sentence. That's more, "I'm making the joke sound casual and filling out the world." If the section read:

> The guy goes, "That's genius." And when he gets home, his wife sees
> him covered in puke and says, "What the hell happened to you?"

it would have worked just as well. The logical integrity would have held together. We don't have a recording of when Jeff first told Dan the joke, but the same thing might well have happened then with the folded bill. Jeff could have added a neatly folded bill in for flavor to depict a cool bartender. And Dan locked on to these tiny words because . . . he mistook flavor for substance.

Lack of Substance at Work

Instead of being able to take in what the job trainers were talking about, what I did notice (fixate on) was the language that they used: Like they used "leverage" not as "This thing I'm holding over your head to make you do what I want," but casually like, "Oh you should e-mail Norman. You can leverage his Systems knowledge." (*WHAT!?* I don't think I need to blackmail Norman, can't I just *ask* him?) So I noted each time that came and tried to figure out a working definition, eventually settling on: "Leverage" (in a business sense): to use someone else's understanding/resources to supplement your own. *Weird*.

Or I'd think about how badly designed the training was. Having taught and having designed training manuals, I'd get offended by how bad these were.

It's worth noting two things: First, I connected back to things that I was already familiar with. I needed a foothold to understand this new information and I had one in language and one in training. They are both my bubbles and I could easily put new information into them. Second, both of these things made me feel superior. In this uncomfortable situation where I felt out of my depth, I had to find something that made me feel like I was on equal footing.

Suddenly, I had an explanation for why I had gone through so many classes where I invalidated a text's argument based on the tiniest detail: the material may have been over my head and rather than acknowledge that, I needed to find a way to be superior so I could feel more comfortable.

I may have found a foothold into the knowledge, but I think lost the forest for the trees (or a scrap of bark on that tree).

The Nightmare Continues, but also Ends

As Dan wraps up the joke, he begins to realize he's lost the thread of it. *Again.*

> Dan: So the guy goes home and the wife says, "What happened?" And the guys says, "Well, who . . . The person who puked on my shirt gave me this money." And she goes, "OK. Why is there twice as much money as . . . as the . . ."
>
> [he realizes he hasn't said "$20"]
>
> [the crowd laughs]
>
> Dan: ". . . as the amount of puke." And he says, "But also there's poop in my pants. And he also wants you to . . . He also wants that to be . . . uh . . . taken care of as well. Because he's an affluent . . ."
>
> Dino (quoting Dan): "Why is there twice as much as the amount of puke?"
>
> Dan: That's the joke! That's the whole joke! He said, "Put $20 in there." And she's like, "Why is there $40?" "Because I pooped my pants." "Cause the guy pooped in my pants."

And then he uses the same tactic I did during training. He turns on joke telling.

> Dan: Here's the thing about jokes. I always laugh at them when people tell them, but the thing is when you look back on the joke, everything has been about dishonesty because—
>
> [crowd laughs]
>
> Dan: Because it's all about—

> *Jeff: But you laughed at my joke. When I told*
> *you this joke today at the bar, you laughed so*
> *hard you almost hit your head.*

> *Dan: It's like there's some like turn of phrase*
> *that you're like, if everybody doesn't say the*
> *exact right thing, then the joke's not funny. And*
> *that's bad craftsmanship.*

But the problem isn't saying the "exact right thing" or dependent on a "turn of phrase" necessarily. Rather, the joke relies on an establishment of facts. In Dan's uptake, he's actually focusing in on very specific words and images because he knows where to put them. However, he loses the thread because his bubble isn't built to hold it. And after two failed attempts, he's needing to feel superior, so he attacks jokes. His uptake from this experiment isn't that he has trouble telling jokes or that he gets fixated on specific words and loses the important facts, but that jokes themselves suck.

> *Dino: You're mad because you're finally not good*
> *at something.*

> *Dan: Yeah well. So what? I'm not good at a dumb*
> *thing. It's dumb.*

Similarly, I suspect some of the people reading this article are going to focus on the swears in it. I could easily see people dismissing it entirely based on that fact alone (and that's not the only reason to dismiss it—you can have an in-class lottery and draw dismissive reasons out of a hat!), but I'd like to offer a different option.

My acting coach was in a class once where the teacher was in the middle of a serious lecture and from the classroom directly above their head came this noise. Most likely it was a chair dragging across the floor, but it sounded like a fart. A long, low, juicy fart.

Once it died down, and the teacher resumed his lecture, the fart noise sounded again.

The teacher was poised, though, and turned to the class and said, "Yes. That noise is very funny. But now we have a choice." *faaaaart* "We can either keep giving into this and get distracted by it, or we acknowledge it and as a group, move on."

And the class did! My acting coach said that he would hear the fart noise, but it became less funny, and it wasn't as interesting as the ideas the professor was bringing up. The sound just receded into the background.

Uptake is a similar invitation. It comes with us everywhere—it's impossible to acquire new information without building on the old. There are times when it is a helpful tool. Like these stories I keep interjecting, they're demonstrating my uptake. Internal Audit has nothing to do with Dan Harmon telling a joke; just as my theater background doesn't connect to Internal Audit, but I use the knowledge I have to make connections. That's what I highlighted in my interview. And perhaps I see something others don't, while recognizing that my uptake may limit me from understanding what others are saying to me. So I think it's important to acknowledge when a bubble is limiting your understanding or a bubble is adding in something extra and then decide: Is this helpful or is it pulling you away from where you're trying to go?

I would like to add one final thought. Dan's uptake is so limited that he can't even get the most critical parts of the joke in there. And moreover, he does not learn from either his attempt or from his limitations. *(Which is human and understandable but not what I'm advocating.)* I will say though that he does come up with interesting things for the sake of the audience. He is able to make them laugh, which ultimately is his goal. His uptake, while limited, actually brings about something new, something different, something delightful. And I wanted to acknowledge that, in addition to uptake helping to make new connections or skewing/limiting one's understanding, because we each bring our unique backgrounds and perspectives, uptake might help us arrive at different places than we might intend. And to honor that. Because "Why is there twice as much money as there is puke?" is hilarious. Not part of the joke, but a delightful surprise way off the path that was originally going toward the joke.

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Laura Skokan does some things, and she doesn't do others. Writing bios falls into one of those categories.

"Best of" What Now?

Amish Trivedi

In this article, Amish Trivedi asks us to consider who's making all these "best of" lists that overwhelm our media and whether or not we give up too much authority in the process. Further, we are asked if these list makers even know what they are doing with all this authority.

I really used to love "best of" lists. They're a lot of fun—getting to see what others think are the best episodes of your favorite shows, the best punk albums of all time, or even the worst-dressed people at a particular award show (so you don't end up wearing the same thing to class or wherever it is you go, obviously). Beyond just the lists themselves, the discussions around them are a lot of fun as well: whether you agree with the items on a list or not, whether the people making the list left off something that was super important, or whether or not there should even be a list when it seems like everything on it is equally good or bad.

Unfortunately, I had a falling out with lists. I take that back: I'm still completely addicted to them, but like any good addict, I've come to understand just how problematic lists can be. I suppose it doesn't help that I learned about CHAT (cultural-historical activity theory), probably in the same way you are now learning about CHAT. However, when thinking about lists, I started considering how all those items listed under CHAT (be careful: your instructor might quiz you) function. All those lists out in the world are produced by people, have various forms of representation (usually in the form of a numbered list but sometimes you're just thrown information in a video),

and have different means of distribution, like where they are posted, where you end up finding out that they exist, etc. The reception of these lists is a really interesting one, which I'll touch more on later, but for now, consider what people do with these lists when they read or watch them. How do these lists that exist around us impact the person who has come upon them?

Lists can be a great way of getting conversations started, but who is it that is making these lists? We are inundated with "best of" lists in a variety of genres, covering just about everything that has been released, eaten, read, watched, heard, dropped, come out, or was otherwise consumed. Come to think of it, back in June of 2015, the website A.V. Club posted an article about what the best album was up until that point in the year,[1] further categorizing albums into specific sections in order to talk about them more directly. In some ways, the article was a joke (Best Godspeed You! Black Emperor album in fifteen years?), but it speaks to larger issues with the genre of "best of's": Who are the people deciding what is "best"? How do they (whoever they are) decide what is the "best of" any given category? Beyond those things, I'm curious as to why we give anyone else the task of deciding for us what the "best" of anything is.

How are these lists put together, or, to put it in terms of CHAT, what does the process of production for these lists look like? Do people sit and watch all 180 episodes of *Seinfeld* to decide which the best ten are? How do we know, as readers of lists, whether or not the people who are making the "best/worst-of" lists really have any idea how to decide how to choose among their options? I wonder, by what authority did Joan Rivers get to decide who was well-dressed and who wasn't? It makes me wonder, am I qualified to decide such a thing? I'm bald: Should I be allowed to make a list of best hairstyles? Or alternatively: Would it be OK to disqualify me because of my follicle limitation—even though I still have eyes and opinions?

In this way, "best of" lists can be very problematic. Sometimes we are provided with a brief introduction which talks about a method, but often we are left wondering how anyone decided anything at all. These lists also don't provide us with much detail about how they were developed and decided on. "Best of" lists, when posted/published/etc. by themselves, do not help us understand how that list functions, even when having that information might help us understand the things on the list better or, better yet, help us understand the things that were left off of that list. Having some kind of explanation can be useful in helping us think more critically about how these lists are developed, what we're supposed to get out of that particular list, and whether or not the people who have made the list have developed the proper amount of credibility for us to even believe them.

The "best of" list, as a genre, does not provide the means to explain itself, which sometimes means that a list is incomplete or, at the very least, leaves us with questions about the making of that list. Sometimes it seems this is deliberate, with someone or some group making a list they believe to include everything they think should be included, even if it doesn't truly belong. By whose authority are the people making more culturally significant lists getting together to decide what should be on that list? Consider, for example, *Time Magazine*'s annual list of most influential people.[2] Who are the people making that list? As far as we know, the editors of *Time Magazine* make the list together every year, but you have to wonder how they decide what "influential" means. Naturally, what might be influential to them might mean nothing to you as a reader, but I guess they feel that anyone picking up *Time Magazine* might feel the list they've come up with is close enough to good.

"Best of" lists are designed to make it so we don't have to have a lot of genre knowledge before reading the list, but also so that we can determine for ourselves afterwards where we would like to begin and what more we would like to know (which has its fingers in the pie of CHAT, specifically the reception part). Life is busy, of course, and it is impossible to know everything about any given topic, so we turn to "best of" lists to tell us what we should know in a very quick amount of time. We unwittingly (that is to say, inadvertently or maybe even mistakenly) give over authority for making these lists to an editor or someone who has proven through a variety of ways that they have the credibility to decide what might be included on lists within their discipline. Even in the case where a popular vote (along with complex math) determines the makeup of the "best of" list, we are meant to believe that the system is set up so as not to give a false advantage to any individual item on that list. In other words, reception is kind of interesting here because there is a gap between production and reception, and we fill it by giving the producer authority, one that maybe they haven't earned at all. This gap is, of course, that we don't really understand how these lists are produced or who has allowed for this perceived authority to be given to the list maker. We implicitly give them authority because we want to assume they know more than we do. Again, not always the case.

As an example, the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) allows users to give movies a rating from one to ten on their website. They use an algorithm (if you don't know what that is, it's a fancy math thing that I'm not really too sure about either) that uses a set of factors to calculate which movies are the best, using a system of weighted parameters. Some of these criteria include how long the movie has been out, the number of votes cast overall for that movie, etc., which they use to determine their list of the top 250 movies. At present, *The Shawshank Redemption* is the top movie on the list. Of course, you may

not personally think that Stephen King's prison movie is the best thing ever put on film, but the users of the website have been given the task of voting based on whatever criteria they individually come up with. Sometimes you come to agree with the list of movies at IMDb and sometimes you don't. The credibility here doesn't come from the individuals rating things but rather the group as a whole, the sheer number of people who think something is good or bad. That said, we have absolutely no idea who these raters are and the only real credibility for that list is developed if you happen to agree with it already, which is also entirely subjective.

There is an advantage in the Internet age in responding to these lists: How easy is it to criticize or question such a list via a website's comments section, Twitter, or Facebook, etc.? Social media has made it a lot easier to debate and discuss these lists that come out with such frequency. The uptake and reception for these lists is very different than it used to be, with the Internet providing a space for people to voice their concerns about the decision process of the list or what they feel should have been included or excluded from it. While not always correct, in the sense of being fact-based, modern social media has made it so that the authority of the list-maker can be called into question without much delay and with a reasonable amount of support from others in these forums. Online articles and forums allow more easily for citations as well, not only because of the available technology to link things but also because online forums are not limited to the one hundred word "Letter to the Editor," the previous gold standard in terms of uptake in print media, when that was a thing.

Think about this: What's stopping you, dear reader, from starting a blog, making a list of some sort (could be a list of anything!), and people reading it and sharing it and commenting upon it? I mean, you could just make a list with no criteria or basis for your logic, but it would still be a list in an accessible place. The Internet giveth and the Internet taketh away: we have easy access to materials, but the quality of those materials is hard to gauge without spending some time to consider who made them, how they were made, and what process those materials went through to be presented to you.

Thinking back to reception, however, these forums are infamous for being all over the place, the anonymity of the Internet allowing people to say whatever they want, even if they are just doing so for the spectacle of saying awful things. In this way, we can't gauge how an audience will respond to an artifact of production, but the wild responses you get on a forum seem like they could be just as much a part of the production as the original list. Maybe the comments at the bottom of a website's content even affect how we view the original post and its efficacy. In some ways, because we only feel an authority

but are not presented with one directly, comments on an online forum take advantage of this lack of anyone showing how they produce their list. Of course, as Alfred says about The Joker in *The Dark Knight*, "Some [people] just want to watch the world burn," and the anonymity of the Internet allows people to say things just for shock value, but perhaps we ought to consider how those shocking comments affect our reception of the original piece we were there to view.

While there is often discussion about whether a list is good, what seems rarely called into question is whether or not the people making the list have enough knowledge to make the list. When we consider a list of best albums in a given year, we generally assume the people who are making that list listened to enough albums from that year to decide what the best really is. However, how do we have any idea how many albums that is, or, in most cases, how many albums would make a significant sample size? How many albums might even be released within a given year? Ten thousand? Twenty thousand? It is a difficult question because we are not always aware of all the mediums of production anymore. Maybe something uploaded to an obscure website is really good but if you can't find it on Spotify, the album might as well not exist. There are so many people who have so much more access to recording software and instruments these days, isn't it possible that the best thing that exists in the world right now might not even be accessible to the majority of us?

At the same time, what on earth makes an album "good," or a person "influential"? How these things are determined, let alone defined, is rarely stated and, at best, we are provided a brief essay outside of the list which tells us the process for determining how the list came into being. At other times, there might be a small paragraph or even mini-essay with the list that talks about its significance in a broader sense. However, it is hard to know from the standpoint of the general public whether or not these things provided for us really capture everything we need to know within the list and its extra text.

Part of that, again, is because lists are easy. Who has time to devote to listening to twenty thousand albums to determine what the "best" album of the year/decade/etc. is? I know I don't, but I do imagine that the people making the list get paid to listen to albums all day long, determining whether or not they sound good to them. But herein lies another problem: subjectivity. As I asked before, how do we as individuals decide what is good or bad for everyone else? Obviously, part of the answer has to be credibility. The music editor, whose job it is to listen to all the music that comes across their desk, must have some way of understanding what they think is good and what is bad. The editors at *Time Magazine*, through their position in the magazine industry and the magazine's general place in our culture and our politics,

must have some idea of how to construct a list of influential people, even if we as individuals might disagree. Interestingly, you can even say to yourself, "I don't find that person influential, *but* I do understand how they are influential to other people." (Taylor Swift comes to mind immediately.)

And, the thing about acknowledging the subjectivity of "best of" lists (in terms of both the way they are produced and how they are received) is that it forces us to recognize that the things under CHAT (the "factors," the "terms," the "categories": production, reception, distribution, etc.) aren't just things we can make neat little lists out of (who made it, who reads it, etc.) either. CHAT, as a theory, is something that hinges on human interaction, which is, in a lot of ways, unpredictable. Representation, distribution, and reception are based on how individuals understand something that is produced, so it's difficult to consider exactly the kind of impact something like a list might have. I think, though, that because of the process of production, representation, and distribution, the reception of the audience is based on kind of a blind authority being given to the producers of these lists. CHAT, it seems, has room for these kinds of questions, but we have to be willing to ask them.

But if we're unwilling to ask these questions, we accept the list-maker's credentials, we accept their authority over the list that they are making. What I mean is that we accept that they are smart enough and have enough desire to make the most accurate list that they can in order to maintain that credibility. We as readers or listeners or viewers ultimately have to accept the authority of those making these lists because that is the position we have put them in based on their jobs, their educations, and their overall experience within that field. It's almost the opposite of a three-year-old who won't try broccoli when they have never had broccoli in their lives: they have developed zero credibility on the subject and, therefore, cannot be trusted to make an informed decision. Besides, broccoli is really pretty good.

Sometimes, however, this authority and credibility is undermined when something slips through the cracks, as happened with the 2015 *Best American Poetry* (BAP) anthology, which is published every year by series editor David Lehman and a guest editor, in this case Sherman Alexie. Now, don't let your eyes glaze over: I know poetry isn't the thing you were hoping to read about, but I promise there's plenty of juicy gossip in here that will make this interesting to you, the reader. In fact, it seems that the group of people who write poetry in this country (mostly professors and people in frilly shirts) seem to have nothing but drama to keep us busy. Probably a good thing too: if there were no drama, no one would care about poetry.

Anyways: the 2015 BAP published a poem by a person named Yi-Fen Chou. The poem is called "The Bees, the Flowers, Jesus, Ancient Tigers,

Poseidon, Adam and Eve" and it was originally published in *Prairie Schooner*, a literary journal published by some people affiliated with the University of Nebraska. I won't bore you with the details of the poem, but it is, to be perfectly honest, not too good, but that's not terribly important yet. What is important is that Yi-Fen Chou isn't real. Actually, Yi-Fen Chou is real, but the person who published a poem with that name is actually Michael Derrick Hudson, a white guy that works at a library in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Frustrated with all the rejection letters he was getting (which I can tell you feel like they are sold in bulk packages at Costco), Hudson decided to put an Asian woman's name on his poems in the hopes of getting them published by making people think he was something other than a middle-aged white dude with a receding hairline.

While *Prairie Schooner*, which is generally considered a respectable publication with quality editors and a history of publishing quality work, has not publically commented on publishing the poem, which as I mentioned is pretty terrible (though hopefully you're wondering at this point why I should get to decide for you and maybe you want to read the poem yourself[3]), Sherman Alexie wrote a post online and an e-mail to the other people published in the anthology. Alexie's writings are interesting in that they give us some insight into the process of putting together the BAP anthology this past year:

> I had no idea that I would spend the next six or eight or ten months reading hundreds and hundreds of poems. Hell, it's quite probable that I read over 1,000 poems last year. I might have read over 2,000 poems. It could have been 3,000. Well, let me be honest: I carefully read hundreds of poems that immediately caught my eye while I skimmed hundreds of other poems that didn't quickly call out to me. It's possible that I read more poems last year than any other person on the planet. It was an intensive education in twenty-first century American poetry.[4]

Now, how many poets do you suspect are published in a given year? Actually, that's a silly question because perhaps you aren't terribly interested in poetry and weren't aware that *any* poems were published last year. That's completely reasonable, and I don't blame you for not knowing because, after all, it's poetry. However, I can tell you from some experience as an editor on a few literary journals (you see? That's just me trying to throw a little poetry cred your way) that in all likelihood 3,000 poems barely even skims the surface of all the poems published. That's not to say it's really possible to read all the journals which publish poems each year, but in this case, Alexie had the task of doing just the thing we mere readers are incapable of doing on our own, namely reading a ton and then deciding what was good or what was bad. In a way, we always trust the people making "best/worst-of" lists to do just this: the work we're much too busy to do while also adding their own experience,

which we're far off from earning ourselves. However, that does not mean we cannot question exactly how things are determined for our consumption.

Alexie was trusted with an authority to decide based on his credibility, something he has developed and ultimately earned through years of working within the industry as both a published writer and editor. As he mentions in the blog post, he himself has been in BAP five times (even if he now dislikes some of the poems they have chosen to publish), has won numerous awards, published a bunch of books (some poetry, some fiction, some nonfiction, and a book of recipes[5]) and in general has quite a lot of prestige within the literary community. What does it say to you that someone like him (a) skimmed a bunch of poems rather than reading them all closely and (b) in that process, chose a fairly terrible poem that wasn't even written by the person it was supposed to be written by (based on the author's race, which was actually fake)? Doesn't sound too good, does it? Even though he provides a list of rules he says he followed in deciding what belonged in the anthology, obviously somewhere along the path, that system broke down. OK, how could he know that Michael Derrick Hudson was publishing poems under an assumed name? He couldn't, but even he admits he published the poem because of the name on it:

> I'd been drawn to the poem because of its long list title (check my bibliography and you'll see how much I love long titles) and, yes, because of the poet's Chinese name. Of course, I am no expert on Chinese names so I'd only assumed the name was Chinese. As part of my mission to pay more attention to underrepresented poets and to writers I'd never read, I gave this particular poem a close reading.

So now we have a poem published for the exact reason Hudson was hoping it would get published: the Chinese name of its fake author. However, the poetry-reading audience (there are a few left, mostly people in frilly shirts as well) assumed that Alexie had chosen the poem because he thought it was good. While he and the editors at *Prairie Schooner* might be the only ones, people who read the *Best American Poetry* anthology had no reason to doubt that Alexie had included it because it belonged. Even if he, as an author of color, decided to give a work a closer read because he wanted to be more representative, isn't that within his right as the guest editor? Of course it is, but he has earned that for himself by creating good work over the years and trying to promote people he thinks should be promoted.

Unfortunately, in this case, it failed. Michael Derrick Hudson isn't someone who is unrepresented in our society, or rather he as a poet was, but he as a white man isn't. He seemed to go through the process of stealing the

name of someone he went to high school with (told you it was juicy) in order to publish something he claimed was rejected nearly fifty times. For whatever reason, it never occurred to Hudson that maybe his work was just bad and that maybe it deserved to be rejected. However, that's the kind of authority we give editors as readers, to determine for us what should be read and what shouldn't. In Hudson's case, he must have thought that was lame and decided he knew better than all the other editors. Turns out he did, of course, but that's a subject for a whole other essay.

By this point, you may be wondering why we give over our authority to other people, even when those people seem way smarter or better credentialed than we are, when it comes to the "best" or "worst of" anything. Perhaps this is the kind of question you should be asking whenever you read *anything*, taking into account that every genre has experts but that we have to decide for ourselves if what we're reading is reliable and whether the source of the material presented is credible. There are some things we read that we are perfectly fine questioning, but sometimes, when something is meant to be more fun than informative, we take for granted what is being presented to us. Reading and watching things critically is a crucial skill and doesn't mean you can't enjoy those things, just that you should consider a few things when consuming anything.

We as readers have to consider our responsibility when offered a chunk of text or other consumable media by anyone—we have to consider how we are receiving a text and what we are doing with the authority we have over our own thoughts and ideas produced by something we observe. Yes, that teacher/professor/parent or other person might be an authority figure, but it is perfectly reasonable to question whether or not the information they have provided for you is acceptable, whether you as the reader can trust the information within that source, and how it is presented to you. Any text can utilize language or other visuals as a means of production (in a CHAT sense) to manipulate you into believing what it is saying—that's part of the author's or authors' objective through distribution, after all—but that doesn't mean you have to turn a blind eye and not question what is provided for you. What we as critical readers can do is always question those motives, question that authority, and think critically about the information we are provided at all times. "Best" or "worst" of something? Maybe it is, but maybe it isn't. Either way, lists are all over the place, and, just like with anything else you read, it's important to consider what that text is trying to do and how much trust you place in the author or publisher before buying into the argument they are making. It's not a bad habit to form, certainly.

Endnotes

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[5] Actually, I don't think he has published a book of recipes, but until you read this endnote, did you have any idea? You just trusted me not to lie to you.

Amish Trivedi mostly writes poems but also reviews music and books of poetry, which is as much fun as it sounds. He has a book of poems called *Sound/Chest*, an MFA in poetry from Brown University, and is a PhD student at Illinois State University trying to figure out how poetry fits into the modern world. He'd rather spend time collecting guitars and pens.

To Read or Not to Read, That Is *My* Question: Genre Analysis of Book Reviews

Tobey Klungseth

A big reader from an early age, Klungseth uses book reviews frequently. She looks at book reviews almost every time before buying a book. The more-than-you-thought complex genre known as the book review is used by many, and people use it frequently in the book buying process. Book reviews have a huge impact not only on readers, but also new and existing authors. As Klungseth analyzes the genre, she realizes that eighth graders use it less than she thought. Using research and surveys, Klungseth investigates the genre of book reviews.

"A bad [book] review is like baking a
cake with all the best ingredients and
having someone sit on it."
-Danielle Steel-

What's more maddening than digging into a ten or fifteen-dollar book from Barnes & Noble, and realizing it wasn't meant for you? With the help of the genre called book reviews, this situation can be easily avoided. However, to know how a book review helps you with a situation like this, you first need to understand how the genre of the book review works, the kind of people who write it, and what exactly the genre is. For my research, I was very interested in how book reviews affect the way Advanced English eighth graders choose their reading selection, if at all.

Why Choose a Book Review?

Here's your assignment: Pick a topic you would like to write about for the Grassroots Writing Research Journal. *Pick something you would like to focus on for several months.* This was a question I pondered for a while before finally coming up with a decision I do not regret. I know that book reviews heavily affect my decision to buy a book. Book blurbs don't always tell you everything. Since I am an avid reader, I wanted to choose a genre to research that is closely related with my topic of interest. After pondering the many genres that went with the "genre" of "reading," I chose the topic of book reviews, which was hard to research, but it was extremely interesting. My first question was "Where did book reviews originate?"

Book Review Basics

For everything there is a beginning, even book reviews. And for everything there is also someone who started it, even book reviews. As I was researching to find out where book reviews came from, I came across a surprising piece of information in an article by Sarah Fay. In the 1840s, Edgar Allan Poe, a poet and reviewer, reviewed for *Graham's Magazine* (Fay 1). *Man*, have they changed over time. Fay also mentioned that until about ten years ago, the only people who ever reviewed anything were professionals (3). It was their job; they got paid for it. And the reviews were actually helpful. Today, well, it's not like that. Through many of our Internet websites, such as Amazon and *Kirkus Reviews*, anybody can write a review, and, well, they aren't always helpful.

Oh, no! Here I am chatting about book reviews, and I haven't even explained what a book review is. You always need to explain a genre when introducing or discussing a new genre. A book review is: "a critical description, evaluation, or analysis of a book, especially one published in a newspaper or magazine" (*Dictionary.com*). So in other words, a book review is an evaluation of a book, and usually they are published in a magazine or newspaper.

As most words do, a book review has several meanings. I realized this while doing research. I wanted to explain the two definitions, to show their differences. A book review is also something school students write to prove they have read a certain book (see Figure 1), and it is more like a summary than an opinion (Peha). In this case, my research (although difficult) mainly focused around the reviews common people and professionals write to share what they think about a certain book.

Figure 1: A book review template an elementary student might use.

The Convolutedness of Secondary Research

Why isn't Google finding what I need? I don't want to learn about some history book! All I want is a little bit of information behind book reviews! Ugh!
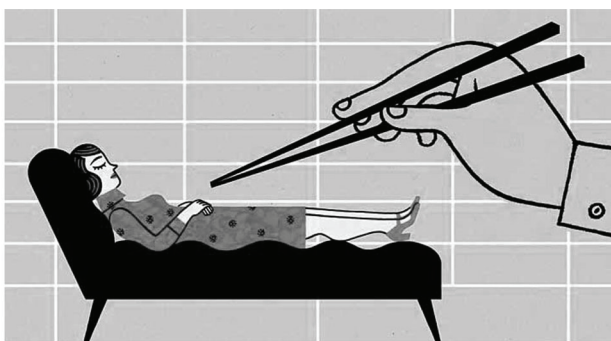
This is what I thought as I searched Google, failing search after search. I typed "the history behind book reviews" into Google, and pressed enter. As results popped up at me on the screen, *nothing* that I wanted or needed came up. I saw results for "History Book Reviews" and two websites on what I actually wanted. Ugh, Google. The first one I clicked on looked super confusing. I scrolled down the page and found another website, but it, too, was confusing. Secondary research is difficult. **Secondary research** is when you look up the information you need yourself—your information comes from somebody else's research, and your sources come from websites and articles.

I tried so many other search engines: Kiddle (the little kid version of Google, which, believe me, wasn't any more helpful than Google itself) and Ebscohost (too confusing and too hard to understand how to navigate the search engine). I even tried the Library of Congress website, and it took a lot of time for them to respond to my request. When they finally replied, they had provided me with two websites. One was a website that I had already had, and another was one that had a lot of advanced language. I found a few really good websites, but, because I had such difficulty, my primary research was the biggest part of my research.

As I searched Google more and more, searching more "advanced," I came across a website. It was an article in the *Huffington Post*. I read it through, and I couldn't believe it. I had finally stumbled across this website, and it was *amazing*. This article talked about how sometimes book reviews can be bad for authors, and dishonest book reviews can have bad effects. I'll talk about bad effects later on. On the website was a link. I clicked on it, unsure if I wanted to leave this website. This was an article on a site called HelloGiggles, which kind of talked about the same thing. It, too, was really great! I killed two birds with one stone. I'll explain all about HelloGiggles later. But there's different kinds of reviewers. What kinds of reviewers are there, and what are their differences?

The *New York Times* vs. "The Fluffy Bunny"

I look at book reviews a lot on Amazon. I don't actually ever look at the *New York Times*. There is a considerable difference between someone who writes book reviews for a living and somebody who wants to share their views and opinions with the world through social media, e-mail, and other online things like that—in other words, the common man, or "The Fluffy Bunny." (It's a weird name, I know, but it's just an example of an Amazon username.) Fluffy Bunnies are everywhere. (This is a happy thought. Fluffy Bunnies for *everybody*.) There is also a difference in the writing. The book reviews look totally different, and the style of writing is different as well (see Figures 2 and 3). Professionals aren't enjoying that their whole career is being duplicated by some common man (Ciabattari). To have your book reviewed by the *New York Times* is the goal of most authors. However, a bad rating from the *Times* could lower the amount of money made off of your book.

Figure 2: Example of a *New York Times* Review.

150 of 175 people found the following review helpful

☆☆★☆☆ **WARNING: Does not work if you are more than one!**,
December 1, 2011

By **Mike R.** (United States) - See all my reviews

This review is from: **Microwave for One (Hardcover)**

I live alone so I bought this helpful book a few months ago. It has truly been a blessing by saving me from having a bad case of "The Doubts" each time I microwaved anything from popcorn to soup. Never once did I have to worry if I was "doing it right."

Then one day, a friend came over and I decided to microwave for two. I looked through the book and discovered that no where in this book (not even in the lengthy footnotes) was there ANY mention of microwaving for two. NOT ONE WORD! So I got out my trusty calculator and I doubled the cooking times in the book. Bad idea! My popcorn came out burnt and crispy. I won't even go into describing what my soup came out like except to say that not only would you not eat it, but neither would your cat! (My cat just ignored the overcooked mess.)

So buyer beware: The instructions in this book will work fine for one. BUT NOT FOR TWO!

Help other customers find the most helpful reviews   Report abuse | Permalink
Was this review helpful to you? (Yes) (No)   💬 Comment

Figure 3: Example of a "Fluffy Bunny" Amazon Review.

To Change or Not to Change? Now That Is the Question

Speaking of bad reviews and their effects on us, the HelloGiggles article discussed how, sometimes, reviews can change your opinion on a good book. Grace Cox, the author of the article "Do Online Reviews Take The Chance Out Of Book Buying?" discusses how she read a book that she loved. Cox checked Amazon to see the reviews after she read the book, and noticed that the book she loved had a lot of one-star reviews. Cox realized that if she would have checked Amazon before buying the book, she wouldn't have bought it.

Even though looking at book reviews can help us avoid books we may not like, sometimes it's useful to go shopping without looking at book reviews. Let me give you an example. Several years ago, I bought a series by Lauren Child. The books were great, and they were funny. In these books, the main character had a literary heroine named Ruby Redfort. Well, apparently, Lauren Child had just written the book starring Ruby Redfort. My mom found it at Barnes & Noble and I immediately fell in love. Same as Cox, I checked the book reviews on Amazon, and some of the reviews said that the book was boring. A few people even said it had "lousy binding" and that they'd prefer the Kindle version more. Since I do own a Kindle, this is what I would have done. However, sometimes I like reading the paper version, and sometimes I like reading the electronic version. I asked my peers if this kind of situation had ever happened to them, and, according to my surveys, some eighth grade Advanced English students think differently than I do (see Figures 4 and 5).

Two responses from one of my surveys are shown below:

You read a book and really love it. Then you check Amazon book reviews and are surprised to see how many 1 & 2 star reviews there are. (Has this ever happened to you?)
(40 responses)

● Yes, that has SO happened to me!
● Um, kind of.
● No, that has not happened to me.

42.5%

37.5%   20%
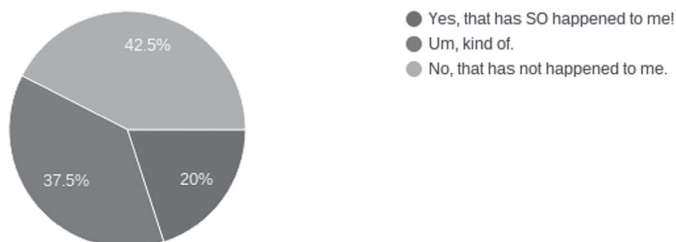
Figure 4: Participant responses to the question, "You read a book and really love it. Then you check Amazon book reviews and are surprised to see how many one- and two-star reviews there are. (Has this ever happened to you?)"

Has this ever happened to you?: You read a book and really don't like it. Then you check Amazon book reviews and are surprised to see how many 4 & 5 star reviews there are. (Has this ever happened to you?)
(40 responses)

● Yes, that has SO happened to me!
● Um, kind of.
● No, that has not happened to me.

35%

30%

35%
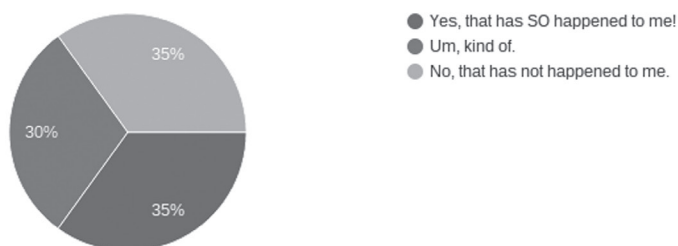
Figure 5: Participant responses to the question "You read a book and really don't like it. Then you check Amazon book reviews and are surprised to see how many four- and five-star reviews there are. (Has this ever happened to you?)"

The Bad Effects Reviews Can Have on Books and Their Authors

It's simple: "[i]f you haven't read the book, don't leave a review" (Wooten). Seriously. Don't leave a bad review, or even a spectacular review, if you haven't read the book. Why ruin someone's career with your thoughtlessness? I was reading through an online article by Penny C. Sansevieri, called "Can Book Reviews Hurt a Book's Sales?" As I was reading through the article, she discussed how a few one- and two-star ratings can bring a book's average rating from five to about four-and-a-half (Sansevieri). If several people lie about their opinion of a book, it will probably affect the author. This is an example of a CHAT (cultural-historical activity theory) factor called reception. **Reception**

is how a reader understands a piece of writing, and what they think about the writing. Reception can be applied to two places in the process of a book review. When you read a book, you tend to have some feeling about it. You liked it, or you didn't. You thought it was hilarious or dull. Or maybe you found a lot of errors, which made your reception, as well as your opinion, different. These are all examples of reception, for sure. It also applies to the book review itself.

Say someone writes a review of a certain book, saying the book was really bad. If another person reads it, their reception is most likely going to be: "This person did not like this book, so maybe I shouldn't read it." Even though most people don't know it, reception is used a lot in the everyday world. Reception is something every author should think about. It plays a big role in the book market. Unfortunately, America is easily swayed by other people's opinions. What I wear, what I eat, what I think, how I feel . . . and what I think about the book I'm holding in my hand. If a book has an average rating of three or four, people may immediately think it's a horrible book. Do they actually look at why people didn't like it? Probably not. Most likely they put the book back on the shelf (or click the back button online), and move on. For the author, this is unfortunate. I'm not saying you should leave amazing book reviews if the book is horrible, either. It can have the same effect. If someone thinks the book is going to be great because of a lying review, they will be upset. They may leave a bad review. *Leave* honest *reviews*!!! Even though sometimes book reviews aren't helpful, a lot of the time, they *are*! But they can't be helpful if they aren't truly honest.

Book Reviews Are Helpful, Too!

I always look at book reviews when buying books now. I bought a book a few years ago that disappointed me. It covered a topic that I don't exactly approve of, and it didn't say anything about the revolting topic on the back of the book. After reading the book, I was horrified, and told my parents about the topic that I had been reading about. They were also horrified and disappointed that the topic wasn't mentioned on the back. Now, whenever I go shopping, my dad has his phone ready to look up the book I want to buy. I skim the bookshelves of Barnes & Noble, and then I read the back of the book I have chosen. If it appeals to me, I hand the book to my dad, he looks it up on Amazon, and he reads the review. He tells me what he discovers, and what other people thought about the book. If it sounds for the most part that other people liked it, I'll buy it. If it doesn't, I keep skimming the shelves to find something more appealing and/or appropriate. This little process has saved me from some books that I wouldn't have liked otherwise. However, according to my primary research, some eighth grade Advanced English students do not use reviews.

DIY–Do It Yourself

Primary research played an enormous part in my research. **Primary research** is basically the research you do yourself. The information comes directly from something you did. Two good examples of primary research are interviews and surveys. As some of us have been taught in our younger days, Google is our "only source of information" and "if you don't know the answer, search Google." What *is* true is that, a lot of the time, Google does have the answer. However, when doing research as complex as this is, Google doesn't always have the answer. Primary research is important when doing this kind of research. It is something you *must* do, period.

After determining the focus of my research, which was to find out what Advanced English eighth graders knew about book reviews, and how they used them. I knew interviewing about forty-three students individually would take far too long. So I sent out a Google Forms survey to the students in both English classes to see several things: what they think about book reviews, if they use book reviews, and how book reviews affect the way they decide to buy a book, or not?

I sent out a survey, which we will call Survey A, to the forty-three eighth grade Advanced English students. *All* of them responded, which was surprising, because usually, if twenty percent of the people respond, the sender of the survey is satisfied (Kieffer). *One-hundred percent* of the people I sent it to responded. This is GREAT! This is an example of another CHAT term, called socialization. **Socialization** is who you interact with, and why you are interacting with them. In this case, I interacted with my classmates to learn information. I sent them a survey, which believe it or not, is a genre. If they hadn't responded, I would have had no information, so socialization is very important. On Survey A, I had several questions where they could pick more than one option, or it was a short answer response. Basically, what I did was take the results of Survey A, summarize the responses, and sent out another survey, Survey B. Forty out of forty-three students replied to Survey B, which I thought was wonderful. Ninety-three percent of the people that I sent it to. The results of the two surveys astonished me. My peers only pay attention to book reviews some of the time.

Do book reviews affect the way you, as a buyer, select your books?
(43 responses)

- ● DEFINITELY, 100% of the time
- ● Depends on the author
- ● Sometimes
- ● NOPE!!!

46.5%

14%

9.3%

30.2%
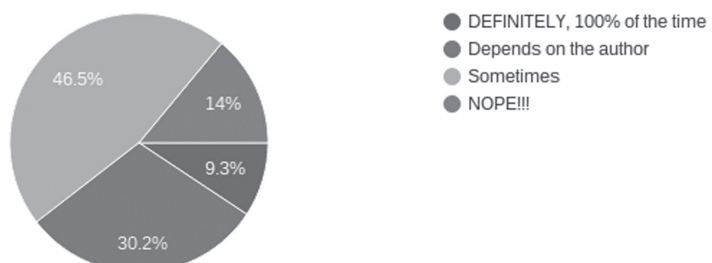
Figure 6: Responses to "Do book reviews affect the way you, as a buyer select your books?"

Do you look at book reviews before buying a book? (43 responses)
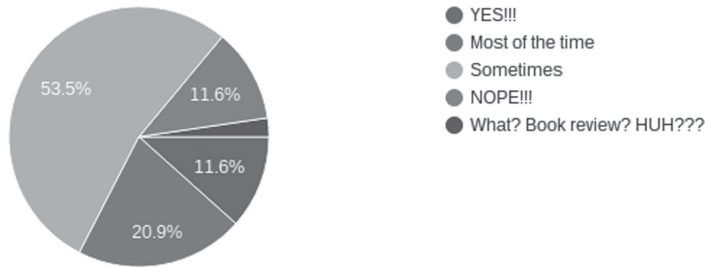
Figure 7: Responses to "Do you look at book reviews before buying a book?"

What is the most important part of a book review? What is going to influence you the most?
(40 responses)

Figure 8: Importance of Book Reviews.

What I realized is that eighth graders only look at book reviews sometimes, and book reviews affect them only some of the time (see Figures 6 and 7). An eighth grade audience is possibly an unintended audience for a book review. When doing my research, both primary and secondary, I realized that the genre of the book review is meant for people older than eighth graders. We eighth graders have grown up with technology, resulting in people not reading books as much. I am not this way, however, I know *many* of my fellow eighth graders *are*. I have noticed that our generation likes phones more than books. Therefore, the genre of the book review was, and is, not meant for us.

Speaking of phones and electronics and such, just because I was curious, I sent out a third survey. This included questions like: "How much time do you spend daily on phones or other electronics?," and "How much time do you spend daily reading?" (see Figures 9, 10, and 11). I sent it to the forty-three Advanced English students and thirty-three replied. That's pretty good, about seventy-seven percent. Here are some of the not-so-astonishing results.

Daily, about how much time do you spend on phone (or other electronic)?
(33 responses)
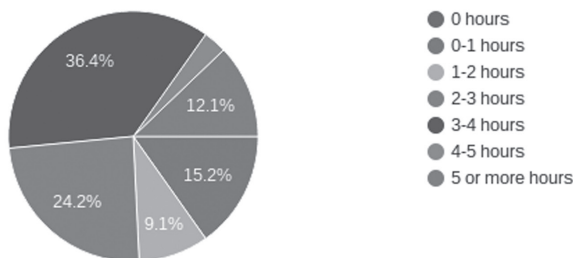
Figure 9: Responses to "Daily, about how much time do you spend on phone (or other electronics)?"

Do you read books more, or do you spend more time on your phone NOT reading books (or any other kind of electronic)?
(33 responses)
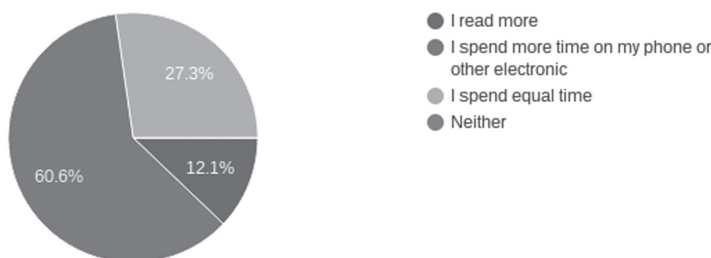
Figure 10: Responses to "Do you read books more or spend more time on your phone not reading books (or any other kind of electronic)?"

Daily, how much time do you spend reading? (33 responses)
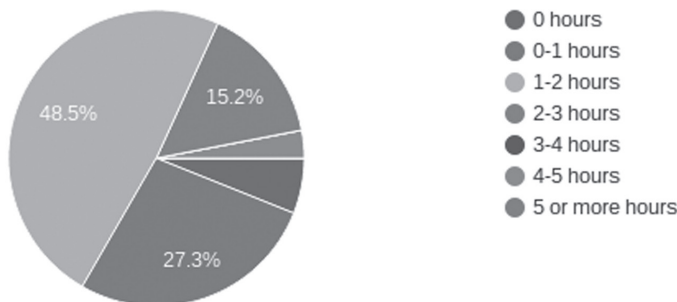
Figure 11: Participant response to "Daily, how much time do you spend reading?"

According to my first two surveys, a lot of eighth graders check books out at the library, so if they don't like the book, they can just return it (see Figure 12). They don't lose any money because of it. I look at book reviews most of

the time. I do not like to check books out from a library (I feel like it's too much responsibility). So they don't use the genre of the book review to determine their reading selection, but the genre of the book cover. I don't look at book reviews if it's an author that I know well, or if it's a series I know well.

Where do you get your books from MOST of the time? Pick ONE. (40 responses)
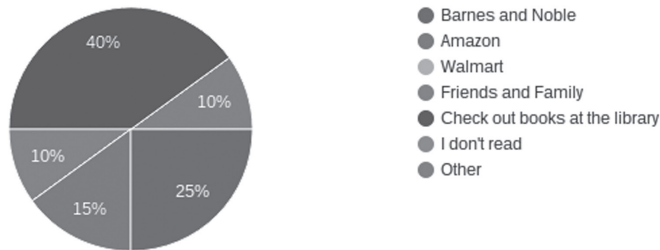
Figure 12: Participant Responses to "Where do you get your books MOST of the time? Pick one."

We are also at that age where our parents still provide us with some things, sometimes books, so it doesn't matter if the book is good or not. It isn't our money. I, again, do not think this way. When I buy books, I buy them with my own money. So I am careful to check reviews to make sure it is something that I would like. Doing this saves me money. Because, like most people, if the cover is interesting, then I want the book. Looking at book reviews is helpful, believe me. But sometimes, like I said before, they can also damage our opinion. Look at reviews, or try something new. It's your choice.

The Pressure's on YOU!

Think carefully next time you buy a book. Do you look at book reviews, or are your eyes your biggest judge? In other words, do you judge a book by its cover? To you, is the review printed all over the front cover, with pictures and titles? Is it really that hard to just take two minutes to read a book review? Would you rather part with fifteen dollars unnecessarily? Book reviews are a quick way to see if you'll like the book or not. Of course, sometimes, it's good to take a step back from looking at reviews, and find that hidden gem (Cox). It's like a game of truth or dare, sort of. Find a kinda-sorta truth online, or be daring, and try a book without the help of "The Fluffy Bunny." Listen. Listen to "The Fluffy Bunny." You don't necessarily have to agree, or even trust them, but listening is enough. Just listen.

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"#Goals": Examining a Subgenre of Social Media

Melanie Holden

In this article, Melanie Holden takes a deeper look at #goals, a sub-genre of social media that has captivated young adults. Through cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), she examines what she sees as the problematic way that our culture partakes in this trend.

I'm going to start this article off with a not-so shocking but somewhat embarrassing confession. I am completely addicted to all kinds of social media. As a girl in college, I think that my fascination is a typical one; seemingly everyone spends time plugged into their social media outlet of choice on a daily basis. I don't believe I have an actual problem with limiting my time spent online, but my roommates, friends, and family members are convinced that I am wasting my entire life hiding behind the dimly lit screen of my iPhone.

To be completely honest, I never thought in-depth about the effects social media has until I decided to look at it through a writing researcher lens. I was already largely aware that our generation is in love with content, refreshing news feeds, and knowing exactly what Kim Kardashian is doing at this very moment. A study recently done by the Kaiser Family Foundation shows that "today's teens spend more than seven-and-a-half hours a day consuming media—watching TV, listening to music, surfing the Web, social networking, and playing video games, according to a 2010 study of eight- to eighteen-year olds" (Ahuja). I'm not sure that I spend up to seven hours on social media sites daily, but this statistic does not surprise me. What did surprise me was what I found when I decided to analyze a specific trend in social media that is commonly known as "#goals."

"#Goals"

If you have an account on Twitter or Instagram, you have most definitely seen an influx of "#goals" postings. If you do not consider yourself a social media guru, let me break this subgenre down for you. As a generation, we have become rather obsessed with posting pictures that make us look desirable, and we try to convince people through these posts that we are perfect in every imaginable way. The idea behind "#goals" captures this idea perfectly. As an active member of the social media community, I thought this was just a trend, but when I examined it as a writing researcher, I became concerned about the implications that this has on me as well as my peers. I recently stumbled upon an Instagram post that my longtime friend had put on the site about her fitness progress since she began working out. Underneath the picture were comments from three different people that only said "#goals." I began to wonder what this hashtag meant. Others had posted "#goals" on things that I had posted before, and I took it as a compliment without any further investigation. The first time I analyzed the idea of "#goals" through CHAT (cultural-historical activity theory) analysis, I became largely aware that our reception and socialization of sites like Instagram had led my peers and me to believe that we should model our goals on what we see online.
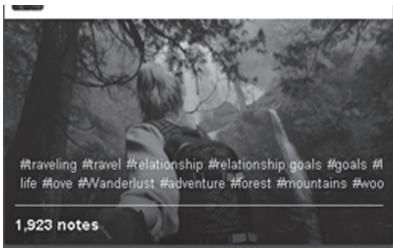
Figure 1: An example of "#relationship-goals" picture posted to Instagram.

Figures 2 and 3: Examples of "#goals" posted on Twitter. Figure 2 captures "#breakfastgoals" while Figure 3 gives an example of "#workoutgoals."

Figures 1, 2, and 3 give us examples of teenagers posting pictures which, in reality, show a very small glimpse of their lives, but these pictures show an attempt to make others want to be like them. The teens who post these pictures use #relationshipgoals (see Figure 1) in an effort to make their peers want to have a relationship like theirs, and this is repeated with #workoutgoals (see Figure 3) and even things as arbitrary as #breakfastgoals (see Figure 2). Whether they are meant to or not, these hashtags send the message that unless you have a relationship like mine, or look like me, or eat like me, you are not as desirable. Most importantly, this adversely effects other teens as it

gives them the false idea that they should try to embody exactly what they see online and make that their actual goal. As strange as this idea may seem, we can look at things like "#goals" as a sort of subgenre of social media. If we examine this trending topic under the lens of CHAT analysis, it just may help us get a better grasp on the topic.

Social Media Culture

We know that CHAT asks us to analyze the culture in which a text was created. In case you were wondering why today's teenagers spend their free time plugged into the Internet obsessing about being just like their peers and then calling it reaching their "goals," we need not look any further than culture. It is no secret that social media has inundated our world over the past few years. As I already stated, this trend is even more popular amongst teenagers. Recent stats correlated by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, along with Harvard's Berkman Center, show that "Ninety-five percent of teens aged twelve–seventeen use the Internet, and eighty-one percent of them use social networks" (Kaiser) With staggering numbers like this, it is easy to recognize that the fad of social media is generated at large by our culture's fascination by it.

Social media is completely fueled by our empowerment of these sites. With so many teens plugged in for elongated periods of time, we see the rise of the social media genre: blogs, Instagram pictures, tweets, pins, and the list goes on. With increased awareness of these mediums that display our lives in a seemingly picture-perfect setting, we see our culture participating in the social media subgenre. This is where "#goals" comes into play. It may seem ridiculous to some to analyze something as trivial as the text of subgenres in social media, but I think that the hashtag has a lot to say about our culture and what interests us. I admit that I am guilty of sitting behind my phone and editing a picture and then holding my breath once I hit "post" in hopes of receiving the maximum amount of likes. It may seem silly and schoolgirlish, but our culture, for the most part (at this point in time), embraces the idea that our lives should be public for others to see as well as to judge. We want people to think highly of us and "like" our pictures, which gives us the notion that we are liked. To put it simply, the culture that millennials have embraced has become largely accustomed to the "like" lifestyle.

The History of the

To gain a better understanding of how our culture became so fascinated with social media, it is important to see how things like the # became a symbol that has been so widely adopted into our language. The background and future of

something like social media is different than any medium of genre we have seen before in a multitude of ways. The most obvious of these reasons is that with the capability the Internet gives us, we have endless potential to get anything published immediately for a large group of people to have continuous access to. The hashtag has been a big part of this. When you hashtag something on most social media sites, including Twitter and Instagram, you are able to see every post that incorporates that hashtag. This (the hashtag) has become one of the most recognized subgenres of social media, but where did it come from? It would be so strange to scroll through my Twitter feed today without seeing a hashtag, but if I would have used a hashtag on social media a few years ago, people would have no clue what I was trying to do. This subgenre has quickly inundated everything from national news to Instagram pictures.

According to BusinessInsider.com, the hashtag was first used on Twitter in 2007 by a former Google designer. He intended it as a means to help group specific things together. From that point on, we began to see social media sites adopt the idea, and slowly it made itself evident through all forms of media. Today it is used in various contexts throughout Twitter and Instagram. Anything important happening in the world is most likely trending on Twitter because of a hashtag that is associated with it. It is easy to see why we should be concerned with the genre of hashtags in social media because they are *literally* everywhere. This also elicits the main reason why it is important to concern ourselves with subgenres of the hashtag like "goals." As consumers of content we can see that our culture places value on the hashtag. When we are presented with things like "#goals," it sends the message that we should be concerned with this idea as well.

The Activity of "#goals"

When we spend time plugged into our network of choice, we are participating in an activity system. Social media now plays a huge role in our culture, and this, coupled with the history of networking, allows us to experiment with getting our thoughts in the open for other people to see. Both of these elements (social media and the idea of networking) relate strongly to us taking action in the social networking community. Once we become active in the culture and history that these sites create, we become adept at participating in the genres and subgenres of the sites that we choose to be active on. Teenagers especially seem to succumb to the latest crazes of social networking. This is made evident through teens' use of things like "#goals." The idea behind this subgenre of our favorite networks is to look at someone, or what they are doing, and then actively decide that you want to be just like them; by doing so, you somehow reach your arbitrary goal of eating as cool of a breakfast

or having as nice of abs as someone else. In order to have these "goals", we must first log in and become active in the social networking community itself.

Applying CHAT to "#goals"

When researching through the lens of CHAT, we are asked to consider the various components of this theory. This means that we must investigate a genre in many different ways, including through an analysis of the text's representation, distribution, socialization, and reception. Using these terms to consider "#goals" allows me to see that **representation** deals with the way that we are trying to represent ourselves through what we post online. **Distribution** refers to the methods that I use to distribute my posts, including the specific tools and platforms of social media that allow others to see my posts. **Socialization** investigates how others interact with what I post, which, in this case, means whether they like, share, retweet it, etc. The **reception** of a social media post indicates how the message itself is received by others as well as their reaction to it.

When it comes to "#goals," what we post online is supposed to represent who we are and what we are thinking. We may be flattered when someone comments "#goals" because it means that they want to present themselves the same way that we have. This is a central motive behind "#goals": the person who posts does so because they hope it represents them positively. The issue of distribution takes this to a whole other level. The distribution of posts and content on the Internet is virtually limitless. Social media has created a level of permanence to the ideas that we choose to display. If we post a picture, status update, blog, etc., it is nearly impossible to know that the artifact has ever been removed even if we choose to delete it. Furthermore, we have a very limited idea of how many people have actually seen a post or who those people actually are.

Our resources (as consumers of content) allow us to screenshot, save, and share whatever someone else has posted. If one person saves a picture that you post before you delete it off your social media page, their ability to plaster that image all over the Internet is virtually limitless. This idea is a key component of what makes the trajectory of social media so complicated. The vastness of the Internet has given the genre of social media texts and subtexts a much different level of distribution. Content that was once limited to newspapers and books is now literally at the tip of your fingers 24/7 and is distributed to limitless amounts of people. This means that when a person is positively represented through something that they post, it can be distributed all throughout the Web enabling vast numbers of people to have access to it.

Additionally, often someone will post something with "#goals" on it to Instagram and then share that same post to their Twitter and Facebook accounts. This allows the representation of their "goals" to be distributed through many different networks. It seems like a lot of work, but teenagers do it for the reception that they get from those who see their posts; their ultimate goal is to receive positive feedback from their followers. To breakdown a brief CHAT analysis of "#goals," it goes a little something like this: *I want to represent how awesome I am, so I'm going to distribute this rad picture of me all over social media so that everyone tries to be just like me and I receive a bunch of comments about how great I am*. Well, maybe this isn't exactly what someone thinks before posting a picture of themselves with "#goals" on it, but when we examine this through the lens of theory, this is all that is actually accomplished.

Tying it all Together

Just in case you're still completely lost trying to understand this whole "#goals" thing, this is what I interpret it as: *I want people to see my pictures, think I'm really cool, and want to be like me. I want to be looked at as someone's "#goal."* As arbitrary as this may sound to those of you who are not eighteen-year-old girls, our culture, and more specifically our generation, has widely adopted the idea that social media matters. We have started to believe that you should look at a post on social media and aim to copy it, so that others will want to be like you just as you want to be like them. In reality what this really adds up to is that you want others to aim to be like the person you advertise on your social media, and you want to be like the person they advertise through theirs. If you're wondering what I mean by this, take a look at the person sitting next to you right now, and then look at their profile picture on Facebook. Their picture probably looks a lot different than what they look like now, but I'm sure that on some of these photos someone has commented "#goals." The person we portray on social media is typically not the most accurate depiction of who we really are. This means that when someone comments "#goals" on your post, they aren't even really trying to be like you, but the person you are trying to portray on Facebook.

As an admitted social media nerd, I have definitely taken an active role in these subgenres of social media, and this revelation was a lot for me to take in. In the past, I have found it to be a huge compliment when someone comments on a picture or status update of mine that what I was doing was their "#goal." When I began to look at this idea behind the lens of genre and CHAT analysis, I realized just how arbitrary it all was. I spend time daily on social media sites for a number of reasons, mostly because they are addicting, but also because I think that they have something to teach us.

Social networking has the ability to do truly wonderful things. From keeping in contact with distant relatives to learning about breaking news from your Facebook feed, social media allows us to become more aware of the world around us in a much quicker manner than we have ever seen before.

As a college student (and through this writing research project), I have also become well aware of the negative side of spending much of your day plugged in. I will still look to social media daily to see the latest celebrity gossip and to check up on my friends and family, but I probably won't let social media decide what my goals are anymore. Don't get me wrong, I'm not ditching the idea of goals, but I am ditching "#goals." I've learned that what I want to do, or the person I aim to become, should be genuine aspirations that come from me and not my Twitter feed. I guarantee that the person I am on Facebook is not the truest version of me, and the same goes with most of all the other users of social media. Next time you find yourself wanting to comment "#goals," just remember that there are much bigger goals to reach for than what this particular subgenre has in store for us.

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Let's "Chalk" It Up: Fun Pastimes Turned Advertising Gold

Sydney Velez

"Drawing" from the world around her, undergraduate double major in public relations and English studies, Sydney Velez explains how fun, kid-friendly activities that children participate in have become a prominent way student groups get the attention of students on college campuses.

When I was younger, I lived in the big city of Minneapolis, Minnesota where there was no shortage of concrete. My parents always urged me to go outside and play instead of staying cooped up in the house all day. I was never very happy about this because I was not a very outdoorsy child; I much preferred to spend the day in my little reading corner. However, my favorite thing to do outside was to make art on the sidewalk. I took the thirty-two pack of sidewalk chalk that my parents bought me (I suspect they were excited to buy me anything that would keep me outside) and went to town. I made intricate drawings of pirate ships, birds, and trees with swirling colors that they could never be in real life.

As I grew older, my sidewalk chalk creations began to change. Instead of beautiful pictures of birds flying across the concrete, I began to write messages. Threats to my brother, funny things for people to glance at when they walked by, or messages in code so my friend would know what time to meet me in our secret place that night. I have long since shed my passion for drawing in chalk every day, but I have noticed that some of my fellow classmates have not. "Chalking" for advertising purposes is widespread throughout universities everywhere.

Some of the chalk advertisements I have seen at Illinois State University have intricate drawings accompanying them (nowhere near as beautiful as mine used to be, of course), some are just a phrase I do not quite understand, and some take up the entire plaza outside of Schroeder Hall! How did we transition from outdoor play to concrete billboards?

The Spark of Interest
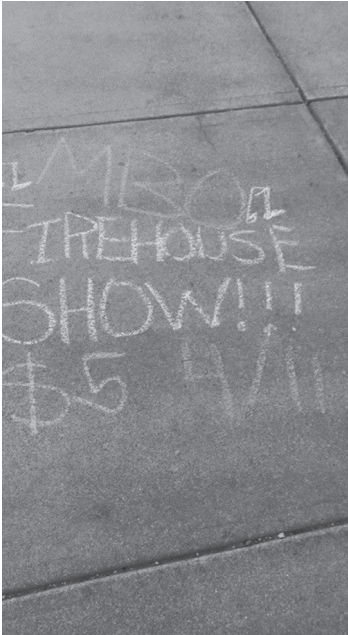
Figure 1: Firehouse Advertisement.

On campus, there are always chalk messages on the ground to try to snag the attention of a student body that, let's face it, does not pay attention to much around them. One day I was walking to a class in a hurry with my head down just trying to get through the throng of people that were also hurrying to class. Since my head was down, I happened to notice a chalk announcement with a lot of colors and fun writing. I stopped and read further. It was about a comedy group on campus, and I thought to myself, "Golly, I want to go see that!" Later on I went to see their performance. Was it the chalk that made me want to go? How had it done that? The chalk writings are so widespread around this campus, as well as many others, that I became curious about how they affect students.

Common Uses of Chalking and Why

The morning walk to class as a college student: head down, headphones in, and no interaction with anyone or anything. Students are a group of people that are hard to engage, as they could care less about anything outside of their immediate bubble. Therefore, advertising to this group is challenging. "Chalking" is most commonly used on college campuses for advertising of clubs, events, or even voting. If we take a look at Figure 1, we can see that the people organizing the show at Firehouse, a local pizza place, wanted to get as many students there as they could so they wrote it on campus where everyone could see it. This is a basic advertising strategy. You put an advertisement where your target audience (the people you are looking to snag) can see it. The sidewalk is a place where everyone looks, especially college kids with their heads down on their trudge to class every morning. If everyone looks down then there is a higher chance of people becoming curious.

This is similar to how I reacted to the comedy show advertisement. I thought back to Joyce Walker's article "Just CHATting" where she discussed **reception**. Reception refers to how a text is understood and/or used by the receivers of the text. The creator of these chalked messages understands that this form of advertising will grab their intended audience's attention because this is a place every student looks at in a casual way. They attempt to use the messages to create a certain reception in the students: to fuel curiosity or to encourage students to make decisions about events they may want to go to or clubs they might want to join. Reception is especially important for college students who may not be very open to a message's content in certain settings compared to others. Most likely, this is what drew my eye to the message regarding the comedy show; I was already looking down on my way to class then became curious when seeing chalk advertisements.

Branching off of that, chalking is used on university campuses because the university itself wants to reach the student body with other important information. I often see advertisements such as "Don't forget to sign up for classes!" or "Summer school information sessions now open" or "Study abroad—It will change your life. Give us a call @ 309 *** ****." The university does this in order to reach out to students in a colloquial way. It helps them spark an interest that gets students to connect to the office to learn more. I perceive chalk to have a friendlier tone. I say "friendly" because chalk is mainly associated with outdoor fun or a pastime for children. When "children" and "fun" are the first words to come to mind, it comes across as a less intimidating medium that can better reach students that might be overwhelmed by these messages coming directly from a faculty member. The reception of a friendly message written in chalk on the sidewalk a student uses to get to class feels less oppressive; ergo, they are more likely to receive the message well.

Components of a Chalk Advertisement

There are some chalk advertisements that win over the audience and inspire people to go out to a certain event, but there are also bunches that get overlooked. I wanted to figure out what made the difference on a college campus. I went to the corner store and bought some $ 0.99 sidewalk chalk, a pad of paper, and set out on a valiant scientific journey.

Color

To begin, I did a test to see if the color of an advertisement made a big difference in the reception of the message. I set up on a Monday at 11 a.m.

when it was bright and sunny and ended at 1 p.m. I chose 11 a.m. because this is a popular time for many people to be going to classes or coming out of them, in my experience—not too early or too late. I worked with the campus organization heading up the "Day of Compassion" to do my research. The organization asked for volunteers to do the chalk advertisements, so it was the perfect opportunity for me. The two advertisements I created were in the same plaza with mostly text, which ensured that there were limited variables. I created the first chalk advertisement (see Figure 2) using large arrows and text to show where people needed to walk to get to the event. I did it completely in one dull pink color. Then I sat by to watch every passerby's reaction to my work. I acted like I was casually hanging out on the quad. I was positioned directly next to the advertisement, but I tried my best to blend in. I was specifically looking for whether they stopped to look, paused to read, or if they went toward the event, as these were all signs that they were influenced by the ad. To determine if it was "read," I looked for people cocking their head or looking specifically at the ad for a prolonged time (six seconds or more).

Figure 2: "Day of Compassion" Advertisement in Schroeder Plaza.

What I found was that even though my first advertisement was a large word/arrow combination by people's feet in a high traffic location, students did not pay much attention to it. I noted only about seven people out of the mob of students, in the two hours I observed, actually read it. It got even more faded as the day went on, and even less people looked at it. I then did a separate chalk advertisement with the same message/design but with a variety of brighter colors. I observed in the same time frame and place again. I observed a large spike of people noticing my lovely work; nearly thirty people stopped to read it. One man, who was walking in the direction of the dorms on west campus, stopped to read what I had wrote, and turned

around to go to the event and took photos with Reggie Redbird. My research showed that color made a difference to how many people were noticing it. When I used a less vibrant color, it went unnoticed. When I used bright colors people stopped to look.

After finding such a large gap in the amount of people paying attention to the brighter-colored advertisement, I looked into if there was a deeper reason for this phenomenon (why people seemed to notice the brighter colors in the advertisement more). I found insight while reading "Saliency of Color Image Derivatives: A Comparison Between Computational Models and Human Perception" by Eduardo Vasquez, et al. in the *Journal of the Optical Society of America. A, Optics, Image Science and Vision*, published in 2010. In this article, Vasquez notes that:

> Human visual attention is for an important part bottom-up driven by the saliency of image details. An image detail appears salient when one or more of its lowlevel features (e.g., size, shape, luminance, color, texture, binocular disparity, or motion) differs significantly from its variation in the background. Saliency determines the capability of an image detail to attract visual attention (and thus guide eye movements) in a bottom-up way (613)

"Saliency" here means the pop-out effect of the color vs. its background. The more of a contrast there is, the more the human eye is drawn to it. This made me understand what my research was actually showing: the advertisement I drew in chalk was more noticed because the brighter colors I used stood out more against the gray of the pavement making people's eyes notice the message. Color is very significant because it draws the eye to your message which gets it noticed and therefore also gets your message read— making it key to communicating with chalk. I think this is because color is very expressive. The people creating the event wanted to convey a message embedded in the color. The first "Day of Compassion" advertisement was done in warm colors which were meant to communicate that the event was warm, loving, and welcoming; whereas, the second advertisement with brighter colors seem to communicate a livelier, fun, and exciting environment. In my study, most students were drawn to the brighter colors which may show that they are more interested in fun and exciting events.

Placement

The next topic I wanted to investigate with sidewalk chalk was the prime placement for an advertisement where it would get the most views. I looked at advertisements laid down by the Bilingual Club on campus because they had their advertisements in diverse places on campus that were all drawn the same way, which allowed me to focus on just the placement success, not

color, size, etc. Many of their advertisements to recruit new members were in Schroeder Plaza, one of the busiest places on campus. The other one that I looked at was outside of Stevenson where the Languages, Literatures, and Cultures office is located—a place with a more specific language-oriented clientele. I repeated my original procedures for consistency; since I was looking at ads in two places, I did them on separate Mondays. Again, I sat right next to the ads and watched for physical cues that students were stopping to read the ad. I was not surprised to observe that more people noticed the messages in Schroeder Plaza. The volume of people viewing the message in the plaza vs. outside Stevenson was almost double. The plaza simply had more people exposed to it. That ensured the message was being seen by the most people possible. When looking at placement, it reminded me of another CHAT (cultural-historical activity theory) element discussed in Joyce Walker's "Just CHATting" article: **distribution**. Distribution, in this case, refers to the thought behind the choices this group has made in where to place their advertisement. They understood that their message would have the most exposure in the highly concentrated places on campus, which is telling about their organization. By these decisions I would conclude that the Bilingual Club wanted to gain as many numbers as they could, not necessarily just people who are already involved in the language department.

Frequency

The amount of these messages being drawn around campus is a significant factor. In my own experience, the more I see something that I recognize around campus, the more likely I am to stop and read the message. When I was in high school, I had a teacher that would force me to do the same chemistry problem seven times before I could move on to the next problem. She said that seven times was the amount of repetition required for my brain to retain the most information. Much like in my chemistry class, effective messages need enough exposure for people to remember what you are trying to say. With sidewalk chalk they can use the same message along one pathway so that when you are walking you keep seeing the same thing until you eventually read it. Though I did not test for this variable, I think that considering frequency would help explain why I was won over by the comedy show chalk advertisement; I saw the same advertisement about twice a day for a week which gave me the high exposure that imprints messages to receivers. Also, in conjunction, I think that when I see the same message over and over again, I start to assume that more people are going. Whether it is true or not, when I see twenty advertisements I assume tons of other students have seen it and are potentially going to this event. If more people are involved in this event, then it is perceived as "popular" or "cool," further enticing me to join. This genre of writing is easy to put in multiple places at once which makes it persuasive.

Text vs. Pictures

There is also the component of artwork being incorporated into messages that changes the effectiveness of the message in sidewalk chalking. In my own experience, I love looking at advertisements with artwork or pictures. In my field research for text vs. pictures in chalking, I focused on the advertisements for the Gamma Phi Circus on campus that was opening the weekend after my research. They were good candidates for this section because they had different types of chalk advertisements with both pictures and text giving me much to study. I replicated my experiment from the other topics, taking note of the amount of people stopping/reading the chalk announcement on the ground.

The first chalk advertisement that I looked at was the Gamma Phi Circus ad that included a fun drawing of a circus tent (See Figure 3). It had many other artistic qualities to it such as fun writing and a smaller illustration of a star holding balloons. The advertisement had a lot of whimsy, which I thoroughly enjoyed. When I observed people walking past it, an overwhelming amount of them stopped to look at the drawing, turning their heads to see the whole image and read the bottom part with information. In the two hours I was there, I counted forty-six people reading it on their way to and from class. This clearly shows that people are drawn to fun art. Artwork intermixed with your ad seems to grab people's attention and pique their interest long enough for them to read the other information in the advertisement. The other Gamma Phi

Figure 3: Gamma Phi Circus Advertisement.

Circus ad that I observed that was parallel to this ad was not looked at very often, I suspect, because it was just a block of text. The people I observed did not even glance at it twice. A potential interference with my observation of this second ad for Gamma Phi Circus was that it was an older advertisement that was walked over much more so it seemed to be faded. The difference in "newness" between these ads might have contributed to their individual popularity.

Drawbacks

Using chalk is a way to keep **ecology** in mind. Ecology is the environmental factors that affect a text. The way chalk interacts with the environment is unique.

In my research, when looking at the Bilingual Club's chalk advertising on the second Monday that I was observing, it rained most of the day. Sidewalk chalk obviously washes away in the rain, which is problematic if a group is trying to send a message. Chalk lacks permanency that other advertisements might have. On the rainy day, there was not a single person during my observation period that stopped to look at the messages. Most people seemed flustered by the weather, in a hurry, or with their head down completely. In my own experience, chalking is only effective when the weather cooperates, so in the late fall through early spring, sidewalk chalk is not a medium that is used frequently. The risk of weather ruining ads is a major drawback of the medium for those who use sidewalk chalk as a way to hook people for organizations or events that are time sensitive.

In the End

From this project, I discovered that there are plenty of ways to make chalk announcements or advertisements your own, make them entertaining, and still accomplish goals. For me, chalking began as a fun way to get across a message that people will love looking at. It also served to inspire an investigation into a unique perspective on what forms advertising can take in the life of a college student such as myself. I now realize that many factors were at work that day that I saw a chalk advertisement for that comedy group. The message I was seeing was colorful which initially snagged my interest. As I continued to observe the advertisement, I enjoyed the writing and attempt at pictures included. Once the ad caught my eye with the design elements, I was engaged enough to read fully about the event. The ad was compelling enough for me to take notice, and then I saw it a few more times which prompted me to find out more details. I went to the comedy group's website to confirm the time. The advertisement was the initial spark. Overall, the advertisement I saw had a good balance of color, placement, frequency, and pictures making it a successful chalk advertisement. Chalk, for me, has grown from just something fun to do when I was forced to play outside as a kid, to a way to communicate with people on a larger scale.

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The Llamas that Light Up the World

Avery Fischer

Memes: Cute, small animals. Political figures. Historical comparisons. You can find a meme about practically any object in existence. *Llamas:* Fuzzy, weird, and lovable creatures. It was only natural that llamas and memes would get together. But who would have ever thought that llamas could help us uncover a pattern that has been going on for thousands of years? In this article, Avery Fischer investigates a genre that melds two things he loves: memes and llamas (llama memes). But he discovers that memes are much more than what's on the Internet, and trying to determine which llama memes people prefer (and why) is trickier than it seems.

I love memes. I have always loved memes. When my class started this project, I was relatively busy, and our assignment was to write a short description of a subject suitable for writing a paper on. For some reason at that point in time I was thinking about llamas, and I decided to just wing it and write a page on all I knew about them. I cannot say I had any special connection to llamas, or that I saw any potential in them as a topic either, but I really tried to make them as appealing as possible in that paper. Once I had a project, I entered the first stage of my writing research process where I wait a little and just mull over my thoughts. This period of my writing process gives me time to get my ideas together. The problem was that any time I thought about llamas, my mind became drawn to llama memes, which led to researching many different llama memes on Google Images. After a little while of this, I realized that a research paper on llamas would just not work. I could not go and do "real research" on llamas, and I could not think of how llamas had anything to do with writing. However, I became very interested with the memes I was researching, and for this reason I switched topics—deciding to really get into what makes a meme a meme.

Figure 1: A typical meme.

When we think about memes, we often think about comic pictures set with text merging into a single joke (see Figure 1). This is one type of meme, the modern Internet meme. But memes are so much more. Memes are anything that spreads.

This definition was a bit surprising for me because when I started this project, I thought that memes were just amusing pictures online. But I was alarmed when I read Richard Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene* and found that he thinks that songs, fashion, and engineering are all memes because they spread (192). Armed with this new perspective of memes, I started thinking about an example for the generic "meme," and I settled on religion and the idea of saints.

Within nearly 2,000 years over 10,000 people have been sainted, and while a handful are well-remembered, most fade. Also, with biographies and written works about well-known saints consistently being created, images of the saints emerge that sometimes upscale their holiness or leave out the messier parts of their lives. This makes saints both people and traditions. Saints are memes because they are ideas that are updated and passed around: a tradition. I realized that in this tradition-based definition, memes are everywhere. Memes are our culture, transferring itself through thoughts, and mutating along the way into different forms.

At this point, I realized I had to get a bit more specific. I did not want my article to be about anything or everything, I wanted it to be

about Internet memes, and so I started my research. While browsing the Internet during my thinking stage, I came across "Makes a Meme Instead: A Concise History of Internet Memes," by Linda Börzsei from *academia. edu*, which I started mining for information. It was at this point that I found that "One of the earliest (and maybe even the first) Internet meme was the emoticon" (Davison). The "sideways smiley face" composed entirely of punctuation marks was created on 19 September 1982 by Scott E. Fahlman" (Borszei, 5). Scott pioneered a vibrant tradition. Though the Internet meme was originally your average :^), this new form of meme was sped up by daily user-to-user contact on the Internet. I also learned that because it was no more difficult than typing out a word, memes evolved quickly. People began experimenting, and this new meme generation began to evolve (see Figure 2). The Internet became a catalyst for memes, making evolution happen in a matter of days (unfortunately, those in my generation were not involved in the genesis of this great event). Now is the time to step back again. Scott's smiling face was not an isolated incident. Humorous memes began popping up everywhere. During this narrowing-down stage of my writing process, I came across many sites formed to easily make more conventional types of Internet memes, like imgflip.com—the same sites that originally supercharged the meme-making process.

```
*-(     Cyclops got poked in the eye
*-)     shot dead
*8-)    Beaker (the Muppet lab assistant)
*:*     fuzzy
*:**     fuzzy with a fuzzy mustache
*:o)    Bozo the Clown
```

Figure 2: Alternate forms of punctuation faces from *All the Smileys in the Known Universe*.

Through all of my research surfing the Internet, I slowly came to the understanding that for a long time, Internet memes had lived in relative obscurity, and tucked away far from mainstream culture. A new trend ended this: memes as pictures with text. Those iconic pictures and media from before gained new life as Internet users began captioning pictures with their own parodies of a situation or written thoughts of the pictured subject (see Figure 3). Luckily for us, the pictures and media from before were no longer static, they were being built upon, evolved, and changed. Many people became enamored with this laughable way of viewing the world. I personally fell for the quirky expressions and the lovable nature of llamas. And so, I was able to put together my two research topics.

Figure 3: A diagram of a typical meme.

Since the rest of this article will be about llama memes, I figured I should give some preface to make them more understandable. I searched the Web for widespread llama meme families/causes, and these are my favorites, in chronological order. These memes will be referenced throughout the rest of the article. *The Emperor's New Groove* (2000), a Disney movie about an Aztec ruler transformed into a llama, sparked an entire new wave of meme innovation: llama memes powered by the hilarious expressions of Kuzco the llama. Eventually, llama memes moved on from shots of *The Emperor's New Groove* movie to pictures of actual llamas. Several key events have affected llama meme creation, such as the great Sun City, Arizona llama chase of 2015 where two llamas escaped from confinement into a retirement community and were picked up by national broadcasting. Llama memes also take the shape of other memes, such as the photobomb llamas during the photobomb craze (2014), and the "sad llama" epidemic (2013). This evolution of tradition classifies llama memes as part of the larger meme universe.

For my research, I hung up llama memes at my school and Illinois State University (ISU) with an invitation for anybody to take one in order to show that memes evolve over time (see Figure 4). My theory was if people are familiar with memes then they will recognize them, understand them, and think that they are funny even if they are not online. The proof would be that people would take the meme. I hung up equal numbers of memes from four events (a.k.a. meme flurries) set in different time periods, and I reasoned that if tradition was evolving, recent memes would be the overwhelming choice.

My specific research plan was to put out equal numbers of memes from four periods. There were four individual memes from each of these categories, and the memes were labeled 1-16 for data purposes. The categories were:

Figure 4: A picture of my memes at ISU by Mrs. Kieffer.

- *The Emperor's New Groove* (2012–2013)

    ○ Memes based off the llama, Kuzco, in the 2000 movie *The Emperor's New Groove*.

- The Great Sun City Llama Chase (2015)

    ○ Memes from two escaped llamas in an Arizona retirement home.

- Drama Llama (Current/Long Running)

    ○ A llama that likes drama. Usually a funny llama with glasses.

- Famous People/Llamas (Current)

    ○ Llama memes involving famous people/icons.

The methods and quantities of memes were different between ISU and my school because of constraints I had to work around. At my school I had a smaller audience, so I printed out fewer memes. My school is divided up into a 5-6th grade section and a 7-8th, so I split the memes I was going to use and placed two different batches in two different spots. In total, at my school I printed out **32 memes** (two of each) divided into two groups, and I had **7 hours** of meme observation.

At ISU I had different constraints. My ELA teacher, Mrs. Kieffer (also an ISU English 101 instructor), checked my memes for me, but she only went to ISU on Tuesday and Friday. That meant that the memes had to remain at ISU for a longer time, and that I could not check up on the memes on a day-to-day basis. Mrs. Kieffer had the idea of creating a logbook where people could check out when they took a meme, and she placed my memes in

the ISU writing program offices for a time. In all, I printed out **128 memes** (eight of each) in one place with **14 days** of meme data collection. My final constraints were that when I printed out the memes, some were larger (to my mind, making them more desirable), and some memes may have fallen to the ground, giving the appearance that they had been taken. I eventually decided that I had no control over these steps of my process, and so I accepted them as factors that could skew my results.

The exact results of my memes cannot be solidly compared between ISU and my school because by the end of the day, all the memes at my school were gone. That means that at ISU the memes will be compared by how many of each type of meme was taken, and at my school the measurement was how early in the day the memes were taken. My method for ISU was that I found the average of each category's memes taken to find the most desirable category. At my school, I checked my memes five times, so I ranked my memes 1-5: 5 if the meme was taken in the first period, 4 if the meme was taken in the second period, and so on. Then I found the average of the categories at my school. The results go as follows:

	Middle School Total	7–8th Grades Only	5–6th Grades Only	ISU Writing Program
The Emperor's New Groove	2.375	1.75	3	5.75
The Llama Chase	2	1.75	2.25	2.5
Drama Ll.	2.625	2.5	2.75	2.75
Famous Llama	2.875	3.25	2.5	3.25

My results were very interesting. *The Emperor's New Groove* was a complete surprise (see Figure 5). I was expecting it to be wiped out, being an older subject, but it scored right up there with the top in some categories. *The Emperor's New Groove* scored badly in the Middle School Total count, coming in third. This was because of the 7-8th grade results, where it came in last, tied with the Llama Chase. However, *The Emperor's New Groove* came in first with the 5-6th grades and at the ISU writing program, where it had an especially impressive margin. My conclusion from this is that some of the 5-6th graders may have seen *The Emperor's New Groove* recently (it is on Netflix—I watched it there for my research). I do not know for sure though. They may have just liked the

cartoon llama. My theory about the ISU Writing Program is more definite. Regular students, who I am aging at 18-24, would have been 2-7 years old during the 2000 release date of *The Emperor's New Groove*, being in the target audience for this children's movie, possibly giving it a sizeable push. Grad students would have been older (at least in their late teens) when *The Emperor's New Groove* came out, so they would have been aware of the characters.

Figure 5: One of *The Emperor's New Groove* memes displayed for my project.

The 2015 Llama Chase did not do well, also contrary to my expectations. It came in last with the middle school as a whole, last in 7-8th grade, tied for last with *The Emperor's New Groove* in 5-6th grade, and last at ISU. This was a surprise to me because I assumed it would do well with its recent media coverage, but now I understand that it did not have widespread reception (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: One of the Llama Chase memes displayed for my project.

Drama Llama memes had a reasonably good showing, coming in second with my school's total and 7-8th grade. The Drama Llamas came in first place with the 5-6th grades, balancing with second-to-last place at ISU. Last year, there was a lot of "Drama Llama loves drama" stuff going around with specific people, one of my peers in band even has it written on his music binder. This makes me assume that "Drama Llama" was a phenomenon that circulated among younger children and passed the current ISU students by (see Figure 7).
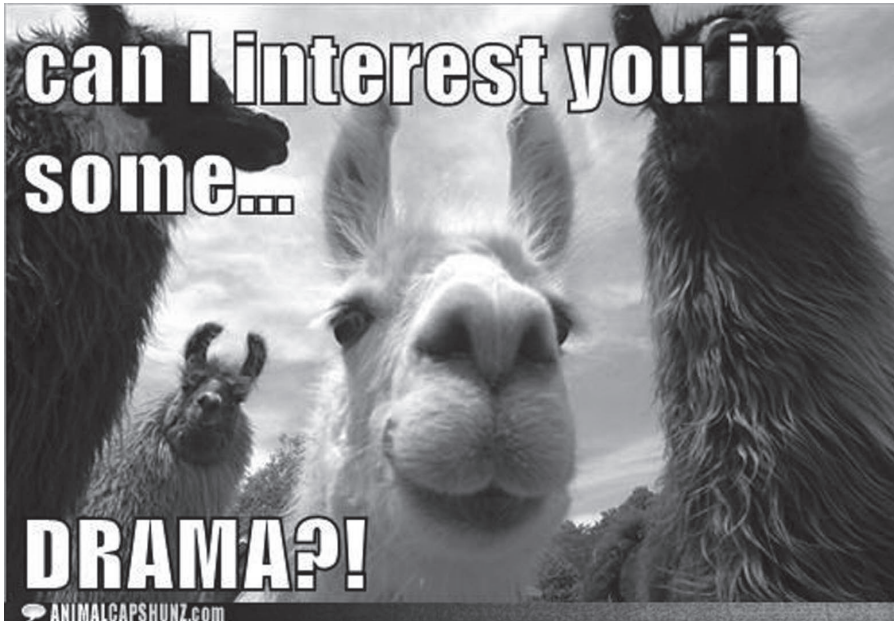
Figure 7: A Drama Llama meme displayed for my project.

Out of all our llamas, "Famous Llamas" were easily the most popular. They scored first in my school's total and 7-8th grade. They scored third in 5-6th grade, but came in second at ISU. I do not think that this was because of prior exposure to llama memes, but instead just plain recognition of famous figures paired with fuzzy horse-like animals (see Figure 8 below).

Figure 8: A "Famous Llama" meme displayed for my project.

In my research method, I cannot be totally sure of the reason why a participant would take or not take a meme, and I will never know because it was completely anonymous. I can make my best guess as to why somebody may have taken memes though. *The Emperor's New Groove* was a very unique showing about how memes change, and I did not initially realize that I was dealing with an audience that remembered so far back. The Llama Chase and Drama Llama were expected results, Drama Llama being current and well known, and the Llama Chase being more obscure. Famous Llamas were a hit possibly because of overall familiarity. As I said earlier, I cannot be sure the exact reason why somebody takes or does not take a meme. I do hope, though, that this hypothesizing and showing you my writing research process can give you an idea of how to investigate your own interests.

I have written an article all about memes, and you have read it. So doesn't it only seem right to add a bit to meme culture =:^?

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"Spam, Spam, Spam . . ."[1]: A CHAT Perspective

Md. Mijanur Rahman

This article is an attempt to make meaning of the genre of spam in e-mails from a writing researcher perspective. Using cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) as a framework, the author uncovers some of the complexities of the genre of electronic troublemaking as a writing practice.

"Most of us using the Internet e-mail service," Guido Schryen observes, "face almost daily unwanted messages in our mailboxes. We have never asked for these e-mails, and often do not know the sender, and puzzle about where the sender got our e-mail address from" (1). The messages being talked about here are nothing other than "spam," which, according to Kevin Gao, is a kind of e-mail that is sent from an anonymous source to large numbers of people in an unsolicited manner (157). While most e-mail users may simply ignore spam as a genre of electronic troublemaking, from a writing researcher perspective, it is a literate activity that is worth looking into.

As it happens, spam e-mails take many different forms. While some spams work as product advertisements, some come with executable virus files, others surprise you with some get-rich-quick schemes like lottery winning notifications

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[1] The term "spam" in lowercase referring to unsolicited e-mail, according to Costales and Flynt, is "attributed to a Monty Python skit in which a group of Vikings sang "Spam, Spam, Spam," increasing in power and volume until it eventually overpowered all other conversations" (6). "SPAM" in all uppercase is, however, a trademark of Hormel Foods Corporation, referring to a kind of canned meat substance (6). In this article, the term "spam" has, of course, been used in the sense of unsolicited e-mails that overpower the digital conversations.

and lucrative business proposals (Schryen 1). In this article, I am going to talk about only one example of the get-rich-quick category (i.e., spams containing lucrative, but easy-to-grab business proposals), in such a way that triggers answers to questions related to all types of spams in general. In so doing, I will be using cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) with its associated terms of Production, Representation, Reception, Distribution, Activity, Socialization, and Ecology as an analytical framework to have a more robust understanding of the genre of spam than what a merely textual analysis can provide. This application of CHAT to spam revealed a whole new world to me.
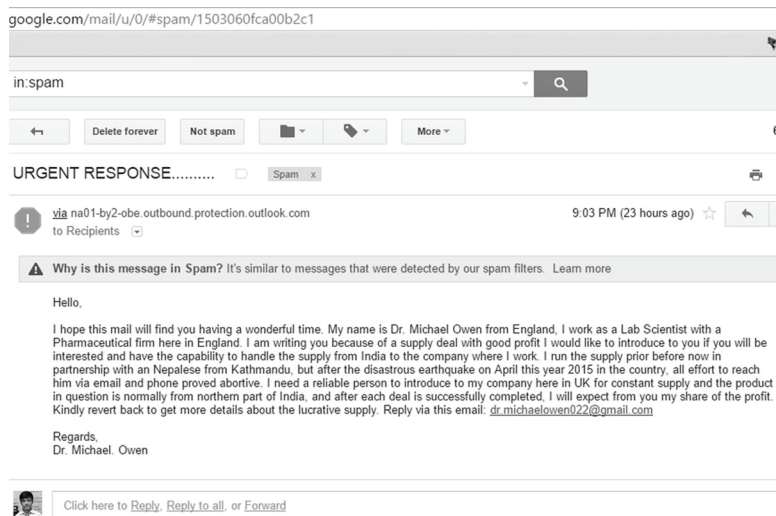
Figure 1: A screenshot of a randomly selected spam in my e-mail.

What does spam look like? In terms of appearance and textual features, it is like any kind of e-mail that we regularly exchange to communicate information and to do many other things (see Figure 1). But there is certainly something creepy about it that makes it spam. Just see who sent or produced this mail. If you always thought of the person signing in at the end of the e-mail as a producer of the e-mail, then one "Dr. Michael Owen" (who declares in the body of the e-mail that he is "from England" and works as "a Lab Scientist") would be considered the producer. But he is not. It is spam, after all. Have a look at the suggested reply e-mail "dr.michaelowen022@gmail.com." The guy reported to be "Owen" did not even use this e-mail to send the spam. If you look at the address at the top bar where you generally find the sender's e-mail address, it shows something like "via na01-by-2-obe.outbound.protection. outlook.com." Who in the real world would want to use this cumbersome e-mail address? These were things that made me more curious than ever.

In order to satisfy my increased curiosity, I kept asking a series of questions, such as "How does it get to my spam folder?" "Don't the

spammers target the inbox?" "What are the motivations behind troubling the e-mail users?" But answers to these questions, as you see, were not immediately identifiable just by looking at the body of the spam e-mail. This is where I turned to the framework of CHAT which, according to my understanding, allows us to see through the complexities of genres that we encounter in the world. In this genre research process, I also drew on a number of books on spam and e-mail marketing to produce a coherent and meaningful investigation here.

The first CHAT term I started investigating was the spam's **production**, which generally refers to "the processes and negotiations involved in creating texts under specific conditions, using specific tools, and following certain practices" (Sharp-Hoskins and Frost). The concept of tools, which overlaps with the concept of **distribution** (explained later), also seemed most interesting to me here. In terms of tools, the first thing that the spammers need is to gain access to our e-mail addresses. In a sense, spammers "harvest" people's e-mails from the web in a process that Jeremy Poteet calls "stealing candy from a baby" (4). People compromise their e-mail addresses in a number of ways making them vulnerable to spam abuse. They sometimes give away their own e-mail addresses themselves. "Obviously, if there was a large flashing neon sign saying SIGN UP FOR SPAM," Poteet explains, "few people would fill in the information" (7). But if there is a sign of a "giveaway" or a "deal," people often willingly sign up with almost any site. E-mail attackers are constantly looking for techniques like this to trick you into supplying your information. Be it a "cheap" health insurance quote or "a free vacation to a fancy location," we are very likely to give our "candy/e-mail" to the unsuspected spamming devils (7).

Our e-mail addresses get harvested not only from the forms we submit, but also from the websites that have our e-mails published. Spammers have numerous tools to extract e-mail addresses from these webpages. You may be surprised to hear that there is a type of computer program called *spambot*, a possible blended form of "spamming robots," that performs the e-mail harvesting by scanning any site that has your e-mails posted (Poteet 13). Forwarding groups of e-mails even in a friendly network can also expose them to spammers. Also, spammers or hackers can often guess many e-mail addresses by looking at the regularity of e-mail formation policy of any particular organization. As an example, can you guess how Illinois State University makes our e-mail IDs?[2] Hackers can also simply hack the web application to determine valid e-mail addresses (13).

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[2]Illinois State University forms the first part of our e-mail addresses, also called ULID, by adding the first (and often the middle) initial followed by the first five letters of the user's last name, often adding a number to differentiate between people having similar initials and last name.

Apart from the tools aspect of production, the next CHAT term that bears a special relevance to spam is **distribution**, which is used to refer to "who a text is given to, for what purposes, using what kinds of distribution tools" (Sharp-Hoskins and Frost). According to Jeremy Poteet, "after a spammer has a list of e-mail addresses, their next step is to weed out invalid and inactive e-mails" simply by sending an e-mail to the address and seeing whether the message "bounces back" (39).

Besides checking the authenticity of the e-mails, the spammers try to find their right audience, too. The general rule, according to Poteet, is that they do not discriminate about whom they are sending the e-mails to while "selling sexual enhancement or the next get-rich-quick schemes" and they do it "*en masse*," though "many companies use services that target their mailings to particular demographic groups to maximize their returns" (9). You might be wondering, "How do they do that?" The question is tricky, but part of its answer lies in the fact that "when you provide your e-mail address, you're probably disclosing much more information that you realize" (9). They can also glean your Internet habits by simply locating your e-mail in different sites.

With the list of e-mails harvested, verified, and evaluated, the next step to spamming seems to be the easiest task ever, and the audience is apparently now just one click away from the spammers. But here comes the crux of the issue. What was supposed to be a simple press of the "send" button in e-mails turns out to be the most challenging job ever for the practitioners of the spam genre. The distribution of spam is not that easy as it is heavily impacted by two other scenarios which you can readily understand by using the CHAT terms activity and ecology. Then this intertwined concept of distribution, activity, and ecology forms a major point of focus in what is considered representation in CHAT. **Representation** refers to anything that happens before the production of a text, like the planning and designing of the spammers in furthering their aims in spamming. During this stage, the spammers need to consider elements surrounding the spam's activity and ecology very seriously. So, let us try to understand what these two terms mean as they relate to spam.

According to my understanding of Activity Theory, the AT of CHAT, the term **activity** is generally used to refer to a system in which multiple actors, human or non-human, with their own, often competing, goals make their own contribution to a social scene. The spammers do not live alone in a secluded world of digital technology. Their activity of sending spam en masse with their clandestine and dubious agenda is just one part of the **activity system** of e-mail service in the digital space, which is not only inhabited by the millions of vulnerable e-mail users but also by their service

providers and their stake-holding governments. These multiple actors play their own roles which can also be explained by another significant CHAT term, **ecology**, which "points to . . . the physical, biological forces that exist beyond the boundaries of any text we are producing" (Walker 161). Ecology presents two big hurdles for spammers: one is the laws of the stake-holding government, and the other is the filtering system of e-mail service providers.

The good thing is that the apparently unprotected inboxes of users like you and me do receive some legal protection by the State, which cares for how its citizens are inhabiting the electronic space, and whether this has any unwholesome impact on others. For example, the spammers do not always know the age range of the e-mail users who might be underage children. Spam containing adult content and services might do a serious disservice to them (Gao 158). Those who are not children also face possible risks in another way as spam is often designed to solicit sensitive and confidential financial information like "credit card details or personal data such as social security numbers that can be used for identity theft, credit card fraud, and a host of other crimes" (158). As part of their job to protect consumer rights, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) enacted the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003. While this act is considered fairly ineffective at stopping spam from being sent to people's inboxes, the violators still run the risk of hefty fines if they get caught. This legal aspect of the spam's ecology, which, of course, exists beyond the boundary of e-mails in the actual physical world, always works as a limiting factor in spam distribution. That's why, in order to avoid the legal repercussions, the perpetrators often use a third-party server located outside the United States to send spam (158). This also explains why the spam from my inbox cited above has an odd-looking e-mail sender who people may not be able to track, or even if they are tracked, the law may not have enough jurisdiction to mete out justice to them.

So you might be thinking that the outside servers should effectively end the problem of distribution. But wait, the spammers have another ecological hurdle to cross, the biggest one in their attempt to sneak into the much-craved inboxes. The seemingly hapless e-mail users have another stakeholder to fall back on. In my case it is Google. E-mail service providers like Google have their own filtering systems in place that, in terms of activity, are in direct opposition to the activity system of spammers. The providers' care for the inbox is, however, a bit different from the way CAN-SPAM law cares. According to Gao, "for e-mail service providers, having a good spam filter is just good business" where the customer is a person with an e-mail account and their revenues are "based on the amount of time that a user spends in their inbox. Most of them, for example, serve web-based ads within the online version of an e-mail" (159). Keeping the user in the inbox increases

the likelihood that they will click on the online ads or at least see them more. Frequent spam could drastically reduce the frequency of the user's visits there, or they may even switch to other less distracting service providers (159). So providers like Google are commercially motivated in their activity of filtering and that must be overcome by the spammers to promote their competing interest in money-making.

What the above scenario indicates is that the distributors of spam need to take the spam filtering into account as it presents a sizable hurdle of ecology—diverting all unsolicited e-mails to the spam folder. The filter poses the trickiest challenge to the spammers as it works in accordance with an individualized algorithm that is not always accessible. However, a number of experts like Kevin Gao in his book on e-mail marketing and Vivian in the "Spam and suspicious e-mail" section of the *Google Support* website present a host of factors that work as stumbling blocks to spam. Their descriptions can be categorized into three major types of factors that help the filter identify spam as spam: content of the e-mail, action of the e-mail user, and network reputation.

In terms of content, any e-mail containing mature or adult content, explicit language, and get-rich-quick schemes (such as a lottery winning notification or a lucrative business proposal) will face the block (Gao 161–162; Vivian). The spam selected for close attention earlier in this article belongs to this get-rich-quick category. It offered me, and maybe millions of others, a chance to take up a supplier position that could tempt any commonsense business person, though it seemed too good to be true. To achieve this purpose of filtering based on content, the spam filter seems to have a built-in censoring dictionary containing words or lexical items that are typically associated with spam messages. Gao lists some 200 lexical items that could be flagged as spam. A few examples include "accept credit card," "big bucks," "cash bonus," "fantastic deal," "hidden assets," "Nigerian," "online biz opportunity," "Viagra," and so on (166–168). The second group of factors are the different types of actions taken by a particular e-mail user that might work as a filter. For instance, any e-mail that is blocked or reported as spam by users will end up being in the spam folder. Then, if the e-mails from a particular sender continue to remain unopened by the users, they may be flagged as spam. The final and third group of factors are the reputation of the senders and their domain names along with their presence in the international blacklist that decides whether e-mails from any source would be filtered as spams (Gao 161–162; Vivian). There is every possibility that the spam e-mail cited in this article was affected by this ecological constraint too, and the sender may not have been in the good book of Google as well.

Thus the spam e-mail as a genre on the fringe goes through a trajectory that is characterized by a number of activity systems working together with

competing and mutually contradictory objectives. But, you might wonder, why do spammers continue to send this troublemaking genre of writing to people? What is the use of it? How can they survive in their business? How many people are actually lured and why? Returning to CHAT, what is its reception? The answer is that there are a great number of people who have lost or exposed their candies/e-mails and are still vulnerable to deception. It may not be you or I as we are already in the know of things regarding spamming practices. But even if one out of a thousand or even a million responds to spam, compromising their confidential financial data, Gao argues, the purpose of the spammers is served so well that it may overshadow or outweigh the failures in millions of other cases (158).

I still remember the case of one of my younger brothers bringing me an electronic check, saying that he just needed credit card information to claim the $100,000 that he won on a random survey. Obviously, I made every attempt to make him understand the actual circumstances behind the hoax. However, he was not entirely pleased with my explanation because he, as part of the response to the spam, followed a set of distinct procedures to get the electronic check. My information saved him from the spam trick, but the world does not have a lack of people who are vulnerable to the traps of these get-rich-quick schemes. That said, "spam e-mail," according Gao, "is not an illogical business practice, it is simply an unethical one" (158). In terms of CHAT, spam e-mails have enough positive reception to make the business survive.

The distribution of spam features another dimension that has a lot to do with the way people receive spam in their individualized situations. It is, in light of the filters, now expected that the unsolicited e-mail messages will be diverted to the spam or junk folder in any given e-mail service, but there are two variations to this practice. One is that some spam still find its way into the inbox because spammers are smart people (often smarter than the Internet service providers) who continue to update their systems or practices at a faster speed than the providers do (especially the small organizations). An outdated filter cannot stop the spam. The second variation is just the other way around. This is reflected in what I have heard many of my friends saying: that some of their important e-mails end up being in spam folders. This situation is explained by a technical term in the world of e-mail service: "false positives" which refers to the "legitimate e-mail messages that are incorrectly marked as spam" (Poteet 151). While the filter can protect your inbox from "the unwanted e-mails," it runs the risk of sending your valid e-mail messages to the spam folders (2). This phenomenon helps to dissipate the binary of spam and regular e-mails, forcing many people to check their spam folder more frequently that they regularly do. The worrying factor is that false positives might occur when you are waiting for a job offer letter

because these e-mails contain many of the content features that a typical spam e-mail does as illustrated by the sample spam in this article.

Costales and Flynt, in their book on how to fight spam, visualize this situation as a kind of warfare between what they call "gorillas" and "guerrillas" (13). They note that "over the past few years spam e-mail has evolved from nuisance to scourge, now headlines speak of an antispam arms race and millions of dollars [being] lost in the battle with spams"(13). They observe that "the fight against spam has become a full-blown war" that is being fought "between the huge Internet Service Providers on the one hand (the gorilla) and the duck-and-run spammers on the other (the guerrillas), leaving most ordinary citizens in the role of a downtrodden populace" (13).

So what appears to be a simple cursory look at the spam (or even the inbox of e-mail) is actually a hotspot of a number of activity systems: the e-mail service provider attempting to block out the spam from the user's inbox, and the spammers doing everything in the world to sneak into people's seemingly unprotected inbox, all activities with a commercial purpose in mind dramatized on the hapless e-mail users. The unsolicited e-mail in your spam folder shows only a tiny fraction of what happens in the actual world as part of the complex and complicated digital practices which I might not have ever known if I hadn't used CHAT methodology in this research.

This study thus supports a much talked about point in writing studies that genres are a kind of "social action" (Miller 153). Spam is social action in that it is "typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations" of making money out of the digital space we occupy (159). Spam, as a genre, exists beyond the boundary of the text in a complicated social setting that needs to be taken into account if you want to understand it in its totality. Simply looking at the text could not help my understanding of spam, because spam (like all writing), is complex and complicated. Without the framework of CHAT, my writing research would have been seriously impaired here. So I end this article with the following unique mix of greeting and warning:

All Hail CHAT!!! Beware of Spam!!!

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An Investigation of Recipes

Hailey Langstaff

In this article, Langstaff looks deeper into the genre of recipes. She searches for what may be taken for granted in, or missing from, various recipes and how that might be connected to assumptions about antecedent knowledge and antecedent genre knowledge. She uses many different examples and research methods (including baking) to test her research theory and attempts to investigate the reception of specific recipes as well.

I had been wondering about the genre of recipes for a while but mainly considering: What is taken for granted about a recipe, and why? To try to explain what I mean here further, I think that there are things taken for granted when it comes to recipes, both by the authors as they write them and by the audience as they use them. For example, an author may not take into consideration that the audience may use different units of measurement when writing a recipe, or the audience may not be precise while following the recipe. I wanted to know more about this, and I wondered why this happened. I thought maybe some of this might be related to what authors of recipes assumed the readers already know, and that maybe some of this was based on the recipe user's preferences and prior experiences. In order to try to figure this out, I set out to research recipes further.

To begin my research into this topic, I first started by looking into some background and historical information about recipes. I began by searching online for the history of recipes. My English Language Arts teacher, Mrs. Kieffer, directed me to a website that discussed what I was looking for (see Figure 1). I found that the first recipe recorded, according to Lynne Olver, was from 10,000 BC. It was for flour, bread, and soup. According to Olver,

"The first soup recipe was recorded in 10,000 BC. This recipe originated in France, but up until the 18th century, it was not served in restaurants.". In the first century, recipes started to become more popular. On this website, Olver has listed twelve different food recipes, as well as Bible era food recipes, and recipes from ancient Rome. I decided to look deeper into these recipes to find out their origins and any other background information.
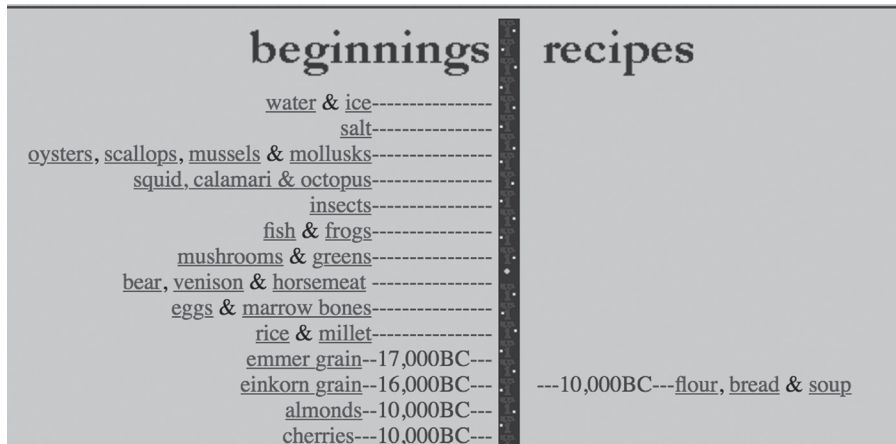
Figure 1: A screenshot image showing the first recipe recorded.

I started to read into the flour recipe first. The website said that, "The flour recipe originated from an Azilian culture of southern France, where it was first used to grind pigments. The first recorded bread recipe originated in Ancient Egypt" (Olver 1). At first, the breads were grainy and hard. I have tried the bread made from this recipe from a past lesson about food in the early times. It was not very appetizing.

For some, a recipe may not be a term that they are familiar with. Recipes are "a set of instructions for making or preparing something, especially a food dish" ("Recipe"). Now for an in-depth look at this term. On *Dictionary.com* it states, "Origin of this name: Latin term that originated from the term receive. Late Middle English is where this term came from after changing from Latin roots" (Recipe). Recipes are usually used regarding cooking or baking. A set of instructions to build something is also considered a recipe.

While the human race was still evolving, there was not a known way for the humans to write recipes. Instead, when they found something edible (whether it needed to be cooked or not), they would eat it. Mostly everything was eaten raw. Nowadays, it is written on every menu at every restaurant that eating raw meat may cause sickness! "At about 1,400,000 BC to 500,000 BC, Neanderthals started to use fire" (Olver 1). (In my mind, fire can be compared to a huge present. Not only is food more nutritious because of fire, we are also less likely to get sick from food-borne bacteria.

Cooked food tends to taste a whole lot better, too.) Instead of recording recipes, which was not possible at the time due to their lack of knowledge and tools, they would follow the same basic food diet of whatever they could find that was edible. People would communicate and visually show each other their way of cooking, although it may have been a pretty easy concept: find food, cook over fire if possible, eat. Now that I had learned a little bit more about the history of recipes, I was ready to get back to my overall research question.

Beginning the Search

To begin my search to figure out my research puzzle of what may be taken for granted in a recipe and why, I chose to go to my favorite recipe site, *Allrecipes.com*, to see if I could find out anything by looking at an online recipe and the comments included. I chose to go with the most classic dessert recipe (in my opinion) out there: the chocolate chip cookie. I started by going through the recipe itself, to see if I could find what information might have been left out by the author. That may not seem important, but really it is because it shows what the author took for granted about their audience and what they would already know. I think that when people create recipes, whether they realize it or not, they make assumptions about the readers' (or audience's) antecedent knowledge. I learned in class that **antecedent knowledge** is basically all of the stuff you already know.

While looking at the first recipe I noticed that, the author, ELIZABETHBH, thought ahead and gave the Celsius and Fahrenheit degree measurements, which told me that she didn't assume her audience was only people in the United States. I decided then to move on to the comments to see what people using this recipe thought. These cookies have an overall four-and-a-half-star rating on a five-star scale, so I was expecting a majority of the feedback to be positive. I then went to look at the low-rated reviews to see if their comments would show me if I missed anything that was left out of the recipe (something the author took for granted that their audience would know), or what the audience might have missed. Most low-rating reviews were one sentence, such as "I wouldn't make these again" (Best Big, Fat, Chewy Chocolate Chip Cookie). The other low-rated reviews were pretty much based on preference, such as "too sweet" (Best Big, Fat, Chewy, Chocolate Chip Cookie). The people who didn't like what they made said the cookies were too dry, or crunchy, which I think are really about preference. But one thing that I have learned from my own experience in baking is that everyone's ovens are different, so changing the cooking time according to your oven is key when baking or cooking to assure you get the

finished product that you hope for. Therefore, I wonder if that is something that is taken for granted in this recipe: the cooking/baking time of something depends on the type of oven you have, which is a tip that is not usually included in recipes. It is something that the author takes for granted that the audience already knows.

Later, as I was researching on *FoodNetwork.com*, I chose to research the vanilla cupcake. I read through the recipe, and this one did not include the Celsius temperatures, but instead just the Fahrenheit temperatures. Although this may be an easy conversion using Google, it may also stop some of the intended audience from using this recipe. Like the last one, this recipe does not guide the reader to be observant of their own ovens and baking/cooking times. The recipe I looked at was very descriptive and gave lots of detail, which is usually a convention of this genre, but very helpful as well. Moving on to the comments, I chose, once again, to focus part of this study on the so-called negative reviews, so that I could see what may have been left out of the recipe or taken for granted that the reader or author overlooked. The first comment I read said, "I do not recommend this recipe. The "cupcakes" come out so dry and they taste like cornbread but worse!" (Food Network Kitchen). This comment was kind of general, but I did find one more saying almost the exact same thing. However, I couldn't find any more reviews saying that they didn't like the outcome. Even so, my study is not so much on taste, but more on what is taken for granted. In this case, while most reviews gave a four-five star rating, these two reviews stated the cornbread comparison. I wondered whether the cupcakes may have turned out like cornbread because of either not following the steps given in the recipe, or that they overmixed/undermixed the batter. From this website, then, I added to my list of things that might be taken for granted by the author: the idea that the audience will already know how long to mix the batter. It's not always listed in the recipe as a step, and when it's not, people usually judge how long to mix things based on their own prior experience.

Later, as I was looking through another recipe website, *Food.com*, I was trying to choose another recipe to look at. After looking at two dessert recipes on the other two websites, I opted to research a more savory dish. I was trying to change up the type of recipe, so I could get a better feel of what other people think about recipes for different types of foods. Plus, I was also looking for what may be left out of a dinner- or lunch-time recipe, instead of sweets (which may not appeal to everyone). I kind of looked around the site for a few minutes to just take it all in. Finally, an idea came to me. I decided on chicken potpie, a classic dinner meal that even the pickiest of eaters, my sisters, enjoy. I went with the recipe titled "Homemade Chicken Pot Pie" (breezermom).

Figure 2: Example picture by breezermom of the final product
from her recipe.

This recipe had some really amazing pictures, which I thought may be a good way to get your reader to choose your recipe (see Figure 2). Including pictures of the process (and the final product), which is what breezermom did, shows the reader how their potpie is supposed to look. If you have a reader who is inexperienced, pictures are not only guiding, but also very helpful. After a mouth-watering couple of minutes looking at the pictures, I got to work. The author of this recipe only included the Fahrenheit temperature, which may be a problem for people using the metric system. Moving down the recipe, the author of this recipe did not include a lot of detail in their steps, so maybe the pictures made up for that, but I was not so sure since I did not end up making this recipe myself. Even though this recipe seems pretty easy to follow, someone who is not skilled in cooking may disagree due to lack of detail, which could impact the final product. This recipe also did not include that you should watch your cooking time based on your oven, but it did say "Bake for forty minutes or until crust is golden brown" (breezermom).

Then I went to *The Pioneer Woman* website, because I, personally, love her show. I picked a recipe titled "Mexican Layer Dip" (Drummond). Now, her recipe is a lot different than the others. She doesn't just have lists of ingredients, steps, and such, but instead she states every ingredient/step and has a picture with it (see Figure 3). As I was reading through this recipe, there seems to be nothing she really left out, which may be because it doesn't have to be cooked/ baked (besides stove top heating things up, but that is the same for almost anyone who knows how to work the stove). As I scrolled all of the way down, I noticed that she has the conventional recipe at the bottom of the page as well, which includes lots of detail. Then, I started looking at the comments/reviews again to see what other people think. Well, the first comment I saw was of someone referring to her as "P-dub!!!" (Drummond). This made me laugh a little bit and sort of reminded me of a sport's team nickname. No one seemed to have any bad experiences with this recipe, so that's pretty good for the author and audience.

3/4 cup grated sharp cheddar. I like grating it myself...but you
don't have to.

Figure 3: Example of a picture for each step of recipe.

Trying New Tactics

To better understand others' reception of a recipe, I decided to make a survey
for my forty-three other classmates to take. **Reception** helps to explain how an
audience perceives or understands something, which was important to take a
look at because it would really help out my research. Forty-two of the forty-three
students responded. The questions were based on if they made something (food
or constructed). Either way, a recipe or a set of instructions was used. I first asked
if they thought someone's reception of a recipe was important. As expected, all
but a few, thirty-nine students of the forty-three, said yes (see Figure 4 below).
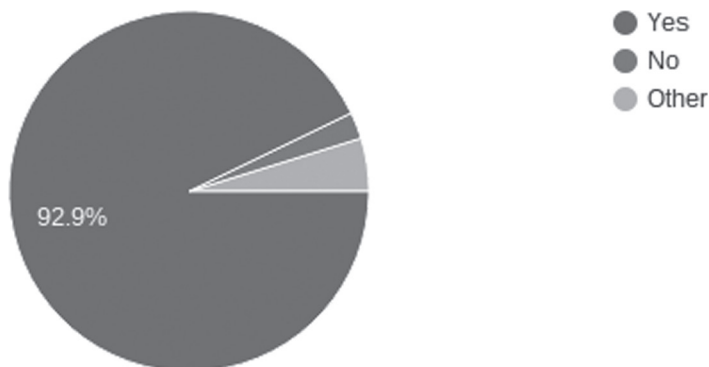
Figure 4: Pie chart showing results from question 1.

I also asked my classmates what their reception of what they made was so
that I could take a look to see if their reception had something to do with the
recipe they followed. This was to help me find out if there was anything that my
classmates may have taken for granted about the set of instructions they followed.
Twenty-nine students of the forty-three said that their reception was good, and
their product came out as expected, while eight didn't, and one responded with
a completely random response, "January Babies" (see Figure 5 below).

Them Brownie were rad
yes
Itr went as EXPECTED
Yep
Yes, my Ramen Noodles turned out ok.
I turned out as expected
It turned out expected, good.
Yes, it turned out how I expected
Yes.
January Babies
It went as planned.
No. It went a totally different direction. Although the food was still great!
Yes, it turned out fine.
Yes it did
No, the cheese didn't melt and I wanted to eat it then.
Yes it did. I cook quite a bit so by now I know what to expect and how to do things. Sometimes I just throw things together to see what happens and from there I experiment.
It did turn out the way I expected.
no it tastes terrible

Figure 5: A portion of my results, including the random response.

Some people who said that they followed a recipe regarding cooking/baking then stated that they followed a recipe that they usually use, or that they have been cooking/baking for a while so they know what they're doing, similar to antecedent knowledge. The remaining said that their product turned out OK, while only a few said that they completely failed. The people who followed a set of instructions regarding building something mostly said it turned out as planned. Whether they built Lego sets or something requiring more effort or skill, each person said that it had turned out as planned, and that the set of instructions they used was good. Overall, I would say that my results showed me that the recipes that my classmates followed did not leave out any major steps or other things, which I had hoped. There may have been some things that they realized that were taken for granted in their set of instructions, which may have impacted their final product, but I thought it was safe to assume that this idea did not cross most people's minds. For example, if you're baking brownies, and you have a conventional oven that uses Fahrenheit temperatures, you will not think twice about why a recipe only includes Fahrenheit because you're used to using just that. That is what makes the research question I am trying to figure out so tricky: people just might not notice what is missing or taken for granted in the recipe.

The Test

As I was looking through a cabinet in my house, I found a cookbook from when I was really into baking and cooking. Then I thought to myself, "this will help me get some more information; plus, I have an easier time comprehending things I can read in paper copy than I can online." I was

hoping to find some things that I hadn't found in my previous research online. I began by just reading and flipping through the cookbook to see if I found anything out of the ordinary, or interesting. I chose a recipe titled "Chocolate cake" from *The Cookbook for Girls* (Smart 84). This recipe not only included step-by-step instructions, but it also had a picture for each step. I really liked how this recipe was set up because it included so much detail but was also understandable and easy to read. I also liked how eye-catching it was, which seems important to making sure that your recipe stands out.

What I found really interesting about this recipe was that it included alternative measurements for people not living in the United States, which is something I didn't see in other recipes during my previous research. This recipe also included the Celsius cooking temperatures. In my research I found that most authors do not include the metric system measurements or the Celsius temperatures, in their recipes. I guess that maybe this means that the authors take for granted who their audience will be. Although this may not seem like a big deal, if someone from a different country wanted to make this recipe they may have trouble finding the correct measurements for the system that they're using. This may make the person decide to just not make this recipe, or to leave a negative comment, which is not a good thing when you want their reception of your recipe to be good.

After analyzing this recipe, I decided to go ahead and follow it to see what results I would get. I followed all of the steps as carefully as I could, hoping to get the best results possible. I also chose not to substitute any ingredients, as I have found that some people do sometimes when making recipes. When making this recipe, there were some things that I had to look up, such as how to convert ounces to tablespoons. This wasn't hard for me, but it was a thing that the author took for granted that people using the recipe would already know how to do. I also realized if someone wanted to make cupcakes instead of cake, they wouldn't know how much time to bake for because there wasn't information given for different cooking times for making cupcakes rather than cake. So, I chose to just keep an eye on them. Next, I realized that the recipe didn't include the tip "different ovens vary cooking time." (However, the recipe did include a tip that they can be served warm with ice cream!) Overall, this recipe turned out very nicely. The pictures helped to show me what the batter should have looked like, and I got some pretty good results, but not in regards to how it tasted. I, personally, thought the taste was not very chocolatey and was missing something.

I then wanted to ask my family members for their opinions of my final product to see if they agreed with me on this. My brother stated, "Do I have to eat another bite? Not the greatest, it has a weird taste." Well, off to my younger sister, who said "LOVE IT! Tastes amazing, moist." So, we have

one "go" and one "no." I also wanted my other two sisters' and my dad's opinions. As I received the feedback from my sisters, one said, "I've had way better," while the other said, "WISH I COULD HAVE TEN OF THEM. I loved the feeling, flavor, fluffiness, color. It's awesome!!" (And *yes*, she did actually yell the first sentence.) My dad stated, "It tastes bland, needs more flavor" (Langstaff Family).

Overall, from my family members' opinions, I wasn't really able to get a better understanding of this recipe. If you asked me, I would conclude and advise people that the amount of cocoa powder in this recipe is not enough to flavor the cupcakes appropriately. But, some people in my family felt differently. When thinking about if this might relate to what may be taken for granted in a recipe, I realize that this isn't really about what the author thinks the reader already knows though. This (the amount of cocoa powder) is really about preference, which I don't think the author of a recipe can entirely plan for.

When working with a genre that you are familiar with, you sort of get used to its conventions, and you just expect it to be the same all of the time. I learned in class that there is a term for this, it is **antecedent genre knowledge**, which basically means what you already know about a genre from your previous experience with it. But, there are things you may not realize when working with the genre over time because you just think it will always be the same, when in reality, things are always changing about every genre. This happens because all authors write in their own way, and what may be normal for one, is the total opposite of another. By reading further into the genre of a recipe and taking a look at what may be taken for granted, I found a lot of information that I hadn't realized before. If you're going through the activity of following a recipe, you're probably not thinking about the conventions, what's missing, what other people think, and things like that. Mostly, or at least for me, I just hoped the product came out as planned. This leads to my conclusion that, although what might be taken for granted about a recipe (either by the author or by the audience) may not cross your mind, it's definitely there, even though you may not notice.

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Hailey Langstaff is an eighth grade student at Washington Middle School. She enjoys listening to music, reading, traveling, shopping, and sports. Langstaff found the inspiration for this article because she has enjoyed cooking/baking in the past. Outside of school, she likes to hang out with friends and family. At home, Langstaff has a pet dog named Cocoa and four siblings.

Multilingual Notes as a Tool to Understand Super Dense Readings

Su Yin Khor

Su Yin Khor investigated her dual-language note-taking method that emerged from her struggle to understand class readings. What she discovered was that her notes were more than multilingual scribbles on complicated theories and tricky terminology.

The hours before my Wednesday night class were more or less the same for the majority of my first semester as a Master's student. I was constantly anxious and worried. The readings for this class redefined the word dense, and preparing for it was difficult. The hours leading up to my class at 5:30 p.m. were agonizing, and Mrs. Time would constantly remind me that time was slipping away.

"It's 3:30, you better start now, Su Yin!"

"It's 4:45, so you should eat before class, if you ever complete the readings…"

"Oh, hey, look at that, it's 5:30, good luck in class!!!"

With Mrs. Time sitting on my shoulder, I contemplated dropping out of school—that's how freaked out I was *every single Wednesday*.

Sorry, I lied.

I was actually freaked out pretty much every day of the week, not only Wednesday, because the majority of the readings during my first semester were incredibly dense. Every page was crammed with complicated words, difficult

theories, and references to research by unfamiliar scholars. I was afraid that I wouldn't be able to understand them, which would prevent me from actively participating in class. It made me go bananas, and I'm sure that you know what I'm talking about. I mean, I'm studying linguistics, *the scientific study of language*, and TESOL, *teaching English to speakers of other languages*, so when I was introduced to concepts like CHAT (cultural-historical activity theory, a way to look at writing and activities involved in the composition of texts), a bunch of complicated terms, and theories that all ended with an *-ism*, my brain froze.

To be honest, the readings scared me. They intimidated me, and this really did a number on my self-confidence. You're probably thinking that it should've been a piece of cake for a graduate student, but let's reconsider that answer. If people tell me that they're in graduate school, I will automatically think, "Oh, you're a smart cookie! School must easy for you!" However, after I say that smart-cookie line, I remember that people that I've met say the same things about me. If anything, it's hard. I'm expected to understand all the readings pretty quickly and participate actively in class. Since I couldn't get away with not reading them, what did I do? Could I just pick up a SparkNotes study guide for every book I had to read? Nope, not possible.

Facing My Fears: Creating Hybrid Notes

You know that feeling when you have nightmares where someone is after you, and you try over and over again to get to a safe place, but nothing happens? It was sort of like that. It felt like I was stuck in a maze where the readings were out to get me. So, what did I do to get out?

Well, I started taking notes in two languages in order to deal with this sticky situation. I was born and raised in Sweden, but I learned English in school, so what emerged when I was feeling overwhelmed was my note-taking method that involved meshing Swedish and English. I incorporated the use of Swedish in different ways depending on how challenging the readings were. I would start writing something in English and switch to Swedish or from Swedish to English. Occasionally, I'd translate sentences from English to Swedish. Sometimes, using Swedish was a conscious choice, and sometimes it wasn't.

At first, I was hesitant about resorting to this method when things got rough. *Why use two languages to understand the readings? I'm in an English-speaking environment, use English!* It was a debate that I had with myself from time to time, and it seemed like combining Swedish and English was purely a way to survive my first semester of graduate school. However, if we look deeper, my notes reflect more than my struggle with understanding the readings. Before we discuss my notes, let's talk about some core concepts that will provide you with contextual information. They will help you understand my notes, and the purpose of this article.

Translingual Practices: Shuttling Between Different Languages and Varieties

Why are our literate practices important? Who cares about me writing in two languages? Why write about some mundane activity like note-taking? Well, look at the kind of writing, or genres, that you engage in. Would you throw in ☺♥♫ in an academic genre like a history paper? Probably not. Just like you know that I wouldn't write this article in all caps BECAUSE YOU'D THINK THAT I WAS YELLING AT YOU, WHICH I'M NOT, BUT YOU CAN'T HEAR ME SO YOU WOULDN'T KNOW THAT, and you know this because your prior experiences with writing tells you that this isn't how you write to people unless you're mad at them.

Your previous experiences have constructed your **antecedent knowledge**, in this case, your prior knowledge about writing. In fact, with every writing experience, school-related or not, your antecedent knowledge develops, so it's changing and growing even at this moment. It tells you how to write appropriately in different writing situations and contexts. You already know the difference between informal and formal writing, like tweets and forum posts compared to newspaper articles and research papers. Even if we're not always aware of the existence of our antecedent knowledge, it's still something that we bring with us to every writing situation.

Mixing two languages in writing is called *code-meshing* (while *code-switching* refers to the mixing of codes in speech). "Code" refers to words and phrases, and "meshing" is simply to mix. Code-meshing is a big deal in something called *translingual writing*. To figure out what this actually means, I did some research. Here is what *Collins English Dictionary* has to say about *trans-* and *lingual*:

> **Trans-**
>
> across, beyond, crossing, on the other side
>
> ⇒ ■ transoceanic, ⇒ ■ trans-Siberian, ⇒ ■ transatlantic
>
> **Ligual**
>
> (*rare*) of or relating to language or languages

When we "translingual" our writing, we bring together two or more languages to make sense of something that we might not have fully understood if we had only used one language. After looking up the actual meaning of "translingual," my own literate practices make more sense. I'm not putting together sentences willy-nilly by using random words from two languages—I'm code-meshing. Using all of your linguistic resources to figure stuff out doesn't

mean that your language abilities are insufficient—they're more than sufficient. Every piece of writing that we create contains traces of our life experiences, writing experiences (good and bad), and our knowledge of language. We are who we are because of our experiences, and this is what I can see in my notes: pieces of who I am bleed into every piece of writing that I have composed.

Even if you "only" know English, this translingual writing practice relates to you too because speakers of one language also code-mesh. Languages are flexible, and they allow you to play around with words and phrases. Remember when I wrote everything in all caps and threw in emojis? You knew that this article wouldn't be written like that because you know the difference between informal and formal English. When you message a friend on Facebook, do you start off the message with "Dear X, the weather is lovely today, care to join me for a walk?" and sign it? You probably don't, and if you do, maybe you're just trying to be funny. The point is that you know how to modify the written (and spoken) language to make it appropriate for different writing situations, which also means that you know how to play around with words and mesh different codes. We know how to adjust the way we write, and we do it consciously (maybe for a desired effect) or subconsciously all the time, whether we use one language or two. This brings us to the next discussion: *language varieties*.

The Soda-Pop-Coke Conflict: Language Varieties

As I discussed in the previous section, we're all translingual writers. Our translingual practices reveal how we use all our linguistic knowledge to shuttle between linguistic contexts. In fact, the number of languages you speak is irrelevant, and that is because we all know different varieties of languages. Although you might know one language, you consciously or subconsciously alter it to fit your audience when you write and talk. This knowledge is incredibly important and valuable because it's part of who you are.

In linguistics, "variety" refers to variations of a language, like varieties of American English. These are not deviations, or incorrect forms, but *specific* forms of a language with their own particular rules and patterns. This includes regional differences but also differences among social groups. To illustrate this better, think about the varieties that are spoken in other states, or areas. Even better, think about the soda-pop-Coke conflict that severs the bonds of even the strongest friendships. I say soda, but what do you say? Pronunciation is also an area filled with conflict. How do you pronounce "crayon"? What about "aunt"? Do you say "y'all" or "you guys"? Would you like some "syrup" with your pancakes? I'm sure you'd get different answers if you asked your friends to pronounce these words.

We can also look at how different groups of people communicate with each other. *What words, phrases, and expressions do they frequently use? What grammar is*

distinct to their group? For example, younger generations tend to use abbreviations (such as LOL, OMG, etc.) and emojis to express themselves. Other examples would be African-American Vernacular English (AAVE), Spanglish, or the English variety that my parents speak, Malaysian English, Manglish.

Just like you, I also know different varieties of different languages. As you will see, the linguistic knowledge that I have is part of my identity, just like your linguistic knowledge is part of your identity. My parents are Chinese, and they were born and raised on a Malaysian island called Penang. They moved to Sweden, so that's where I grew up. I learned to speak a variety called *Penang Hokkien* as a child, and it's a Chinese dialect that's very specific to Penang. I'm sure you've heard dialects like Mandarin and Cantonese on TV, but my dialect is so different that I can't understand them, even though Hokkien originally comes from China. These varieties have developed in different ways to the point that they must be distinguished from each other. There are huge groups of Chinese, Indian, and Malay people in Malaysia, so we borrow words from each other. Since Malaysia used to be a British colony, English words are also thrown into the mix.

In addition, I grew up in a neighborhood with a large immigrant community in Sweden, so I learned a "non-standard" variety of Swedish, known as *Shobresvenska*, as well as "standard" Swedish. Shobresvenska is named after *shoo bre*, literally *hi* or *hi brother*, a common greeting among younger immigrants. This variety borrows many words from Arabic and Turkish, but also English, and a few other languages. This shows that the linguistic knowledge that we have is shaped by the linguistic environment that we're in, and in turn, it shapes us and our identity. Let me demonstrate this by showing you a few examples of "standard" Swedish and Shobresvenska. Have a look at Table 1, and pay attention to the words that are underlined, in **bold**, *italicized*, or a *combo*.

Table 1. Comparison between English, "standard" Swedish, and Shobresvenska.

English translation	"Standard" Swedish	Shobresvenska
Example 1		
A: Did you like the movie?	A: Tyckte du om filmen?	A: Gilla du filmen?
B: Yeah, it was **really** good.	B: Ja, den var **jätte**bra.	B: Aa den va **fett** bra.
Example 2		
I have **a lot** of *money*.	Jag har **mycket** pengar.	Jag har **fett** med para.
Example 3		
Come on, *hurry*! We have to **go**!	Kan du *skynda*! Vi måste **gå**!	Aboo *jalla*! Vi måste **gitta**!

It doesn't matter if you don't know Swedish, as I'm sure that you can see that the words are different. You might also see that Shobresvenska is different in many ways, but the grammar is either similar, or the same as "standard" Swedish. Perhaps more importantly, the point of this chart was to show you that I'm influenced by the languages and varieties that I know (whether they are similar or very different), and the people around me, just like you are. This also influences other aspects of my life, like the writing that I do. Just to clarify, *fett* literally means *grease* in Swedish. *Para* was borrowed from Turkish, as well as *aboo* and *gitta* (but in another form), but *jalla* is Arabic, and I use all of these words frequently.

Regardless of whether you know one or five languages, you still have the knowledge of how they're used in different writing (and speaking) situations and contexts, and this is important knowledge. It might seem trivial, but it's not—it's part of your antecedent knowledge that helps you navigate through different writing situations. For example, based on my own writing experiences, I wouldn't write a research paper using Shobresvenska, as it's not appropriate for the situation and that particular genre, but when I write my lecture notes? Sure, that's no problem. It doesn't matter if I use formal or informal Swedish in my notes. It doesn't matter if I throw in English either, because language use in the genre of note-taking is more flexible.

Now, I will go ahead and show you what my notes look like since you have some background information on language varieties and translingual writing. The notes come directly from my notebooks, and although you're not expected to read them, I just want to give you a peek into my brain and see what the notes look like. I've provided an English translation under each image so you know what the notes say.

My Hybrid Notes

I have no intricate system for structuring or organizing my notes. I just use regular notebooks and regular pens in black or blue ink. I don't think about grammar or spelling, which is why my notes are incredibly messy and terrible, and borderline impossible to read.

I have noticed that certain situations prompt me to use Swedish, or mix Swedish and English, and I have identified some factors that seem to influence these practices:

1. Unfamiliar information vs. familiar information

2. Dense material vs. accessible material

These factors can overlap in different ways. For example, an article can contain unfamiliar information but be accessible, but it can also be familiar but dense, so there's a number of situations where I turn to using Swedish. Let's start with the unfamiliar vs. familiar information.

Unfamiliar Information vs. Familiar Information

I think that 80% of my readings were unfamiliar, but I will show you the notes that I took during orientation for new teaching assistants. During this orientation we were introduced to genres, CHAT, and the Writing Program's approach to writing, which I found to be very confusing. Everything that I knew about writing had been thrown out the window. In my mind, genres referred to books and music, and CHAT? I had no clue. Now I can see that my notes also contain traces of confusion, and portrays my struggle with processing new information.
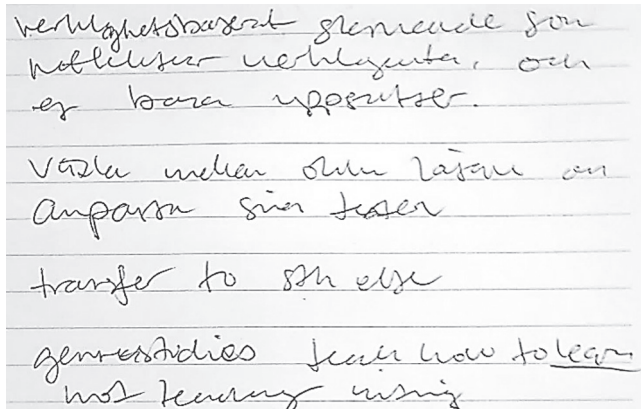
Figure 1. Notes on Genres, CHAT, and the Writing Program's Teaching Philosophy.

"Verklighetsbaserat skrivande som reflekterar verkligheten, och ej bara uppgifter. Växla mellan olika läsare och anpassa sina texter. Transfer to sth else. Genre studies teach how to learn, not teaching writing" (English translation of Swedish text: Based on real-life writing, and not just assignments. Switch between audiences and adapt our writing.)

The Writing Program's genre/CHAT approach to writing was completely unfamiliar to me, and I had a hard time understanding it. I was never taught how to think about writing from a CHAT/genre perspective, so this completely re-programmed my understanding of writing. Genres were incredibly confusing to me, and in order for me to process all the information, I had to write it down in Swedish. I couldn't understand it at all in English. As you can see, I also switched from Swedish to English ("transfer to sth else . . .") because this part was easier to understand, so it wasn't necessary to write it down in Swedish.

Another unfamiliar concept that I encountered concerns testing. In my testing/assessment class, we discussed different ways of testing and assessing students who are learning their second language. The world of testing was a lot more complex than I thought. Have a look at Figure 2:
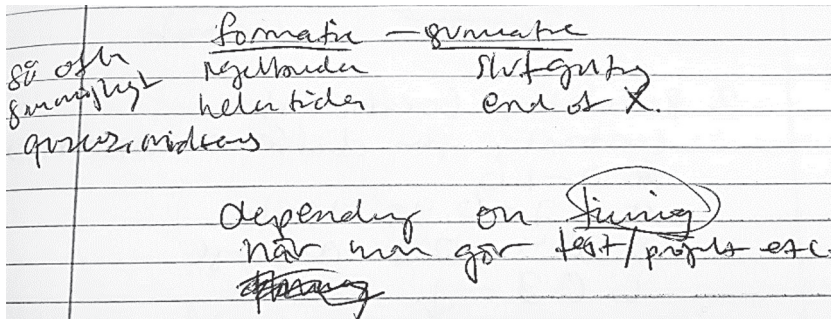
	Formative	Summative
Så ofta som möjligt, quizzes, midterms As often as possible	*Regelbunden* Regularly	*Slutgiltig* Final
	Hela tiden Constantly	*End of x* End of a semester/year
Depending on timing när man gör test/project etc. Depending on timing when assigning tests/projects etc.		

Figure 2. Notes on Testing and Assessment.

Talking about testing by using technical terminology was challenging. We had to learn a lot of technical terms to understand the material, and after a while, it became overwhelming, so I had to incorporate Swedish so I could understand some of them. It helped me understand the material better, and I became more familiar with the terminology by using my own words to explain them, rather than reading the textbook and copying the text.

I have shown you two examples of what my notes could look like when I try to deal with unfamiliar material. The unfamiliarity of the material scared me, and I had to do anything I could in order to learn. In the next section, I will show you how my translingual practices helped me when I dealt with dense readings.

Dense Material vs. Accessible Material

When it came to processing material that was found in the land of theories, the overall difficulty, no matter how familiar the subject was, made it so

challenging that I had to rewrite and translate words and sentences. I also had to look up the basic information online in order to understand them. Sometimes, I worried so much about my lack of knowledge and experience that it prevented me from learning, and it was hard to come out of that vicious circle. I didn't want to fail graduate school, and I experienced a lot of anxiety during my first semester. So, I forced myself to put on the pants of curiosity and be brave.

The first image of this section is about CHAT, and my attempt at explaining each CHAT convention using my own words. Let's have a look at Figure 3:
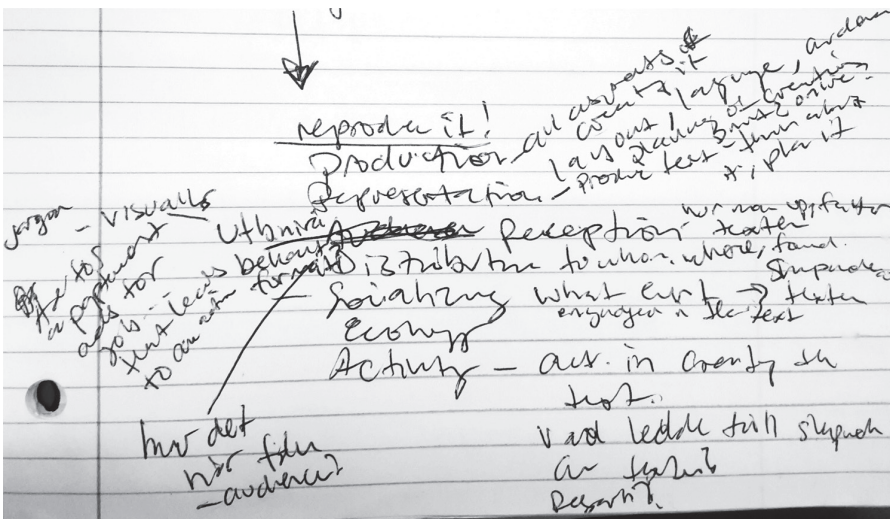
Figure 3. Trying to Explain CHAT.

Reception—hur man uppfattar texten. How the audience perceives/understands the text.

Activity- *allt* in creating the text. *Vad ledde till skapande av texten? Research?* (English Translation of Swedish text: Everything that involves creating the text. What leads to creating the text?)

A lot is going on in Figure 3. I thought that it was hard to understand the readings because the authors who explained CHAT used equally dense terminology and words to explain it, so reading the articles on CHAT didn't help me understand it at all. They just made me confused. To me, the hardest conventions are reception and activity because they overlap too much with the other conventions. Representation is difficult too, but somehow I managed to explain it in English. (I still look up reception, activity, and representation every time I do something that is CHAT-related. *When will I learn???*)

In my "-*ism* class," we asked our professor if he could talk about Marxism, and let me tell you, this was TOUGH. It was like some kind of intellectual boot camp. Personally, the readings from this class were super dense already and also unfamiliar. In Figure 4, you can see that I used Swedish quite frequently because there was too much information I had to write down, while also trying to process what my professor was talking about, so I could keep up.
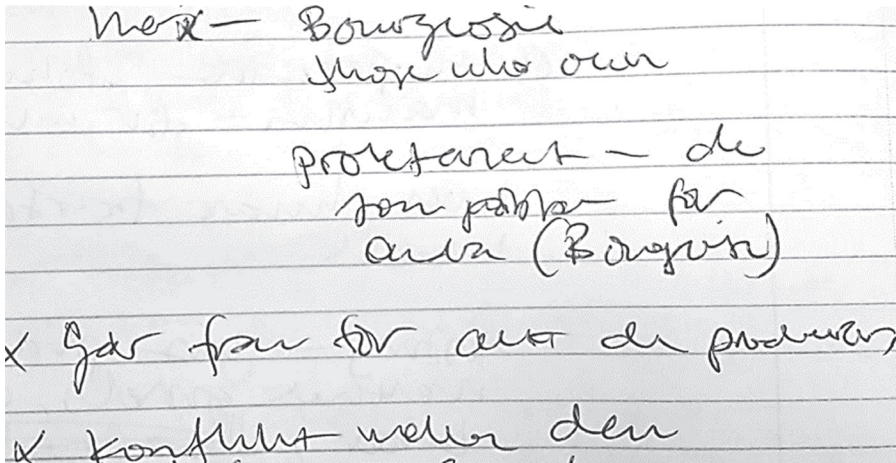
Figure 4. Trying to understand Marxism.

Marx – Bourgeoisie those who own.

Proletariat-*de some jobbar för andra* (bourgeoisie). (Proletariat- those who work for others.)

Går fram för att de producerar. (Develop/move forward because they produce.)

Konflikt mellan dem. (Conflict between them.)

What is going on here? My professor talked about Marxist theory, which I didn't know in-depth at all. I only had some surface knowledge of this theory (if you could call it knowledge, hmm . . .), and plowing through the definitions of the terminology was definitely a challenge, so I switched to Swedish and threw in English in some parts of the notes.

The Sum of the Cardamom

Kidding.

That was a literal translation of a Swedish expression, *summan av kardeumman*, which means *bottom line, the point is,* which is what I will get to now.

After discussing my own note-taking, the sum of the cardamom is that knowing varieties of languages and/or being bilingual provides the speaker with a great source of knowledge that they otherwise would not have. I can't speak for everyone else, but in my case, knowing multiple languages has allowed me to draw from different resources to help me process all the –isms and terminology that were thrown at me.

Knowing different varieties, and knowing English as a second language, has helped me in my academic life. Rather than being seen as deficiencies, I recognize that I have this wealth of knowledge that I can draw from to help my learning process and everything else that requires an extra boost from my brain. If there is anything that I want you to remember or learn from this article, it is this: No matter what language or variety you speak, whatever your first language is (or second language, if you happen to know one), whatever your proficiency level is—take advantage of that knowledge. It will help you in so many ways in life and in school.

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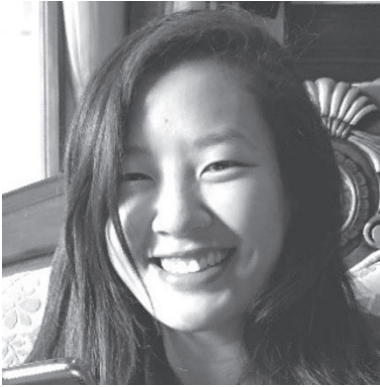
Su Yin Khor is a Master's student in linguistics and TESOL, and is mainly interested in second language acquisition issues. She snacks a lot.

Translating the Untranslatable:
Making Meaning of Idiomatic Expressions Across Languages

Sanam Shahmiri

Sanam Shahmiri interviewed seven people who spoke languages other than English to learn about how they translated untranslatable expressions. Through her interview findings, she demonstrates how translingualism is closely tied to writing research identity and uses CHAT to look at this activity system's influence on antecedent knowledge, uptake, and transfer.

Ever wondered if there was a word out there for when sunlight filters in through the leaves of trees? How about that sad feeling of nostalgia for a person, place, or thing that is far away from you? Or even that feeling of being alone in the woods and connected with nature? There's a word for that, but it's not in English. The first one is "komorebi," and it's Japanese. The second one is "saudade," and it's Portuguese. The third one is "waldensamkeit," and it's German. These are just some words in foreign languages that don't have direct English equivalents.

Chances are, if you've been on Buzzfeed, the *Huffington Post*, or Facebook recently, you've noticed a trend in articles with titles like: "Eleven Untranslatable Words from Other Cultures" or "Thirty-eight Wonderful Foreign Words We Could Use in English" or "Twenty-three Fascinating Words with No Direct English Translations" (actual article titles). These kinds of articles have risen in popularity in the past couple years and are commonly accompanied by artwork and Instagram-like photos. What these articles reflect is a new trend of acceptance toward diverse cultures or multiculturalism on a global scale. Scholars call these efforts by several interchangeable names: translingual or transcultural writing or simply "translingualism."

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According to Penn State professor and linguist Suresh Canagarajah, "translingualism" refers to how languages influence and are always in contact with each other creating new meanings (41). Translingualism also deals with how humans compose across different language systems. It's not as simple as saying that people can switch between languages when they write. In order to understand this concept, as Canagarajah explains, we need to see "the production, circulation, and reception of texts that are always mobile; that draw from diverse languages" and how they involve communication between different communities (41). So, translingualism encompasses the ways our language backgrounds influence *how we write* and also *the way we think about and approach new writing situations*. It brings together many other aspects of writing and the learning processes such as tacit or antecedent knowledge, uptake, and transfer. It can even be seen as an activity system. But, wait. What do these technical terms even mean?

Antecedent knowledge is knowledge we already have that we bring to new learning situations; often this knowledge is tacit, meaning that we are not aware we even have it unless it is brought out in some way. **Uptake** refers to the way we take up knowledge and skills, in other words, the way we learn. **Transfer** refers to how we take what we've learned and apply it to other situations. **Activity systems** are a lens through which we can look at literate activities, such as translingualism (and the use of expressions) that emphasizes how they are based on concrete interactions between people, can be improvised, but are also shaped by history and culture, and therefore change over time (Prior, et al. 18). Now that we've gotten these definitions out of the way, we can focus more closely on my main research question: How is translingualism closely tied to writing research identity, especially for those who speak, write, and conduct research in more than one language? When I mention "writing research identity," I mean our reflection of our own writing abilities when faced with different writing situations. For those who are fluent in more than one language, they may feel that their identity is closely tied to their language knowledge or their cultural background. This can have effects on how these people approach unfamiliar writing situations and lead to differing interpretations of expressions.

One of the most interesting aspects of translingualism is how it shows that language is socially constructed. Every person is informed by a perspective and cultural background that is unique to themselves, whether it is foreign or within the US, which can be noticeable in the way that person writes or speaks. Issues of power and privilege are connected to this notion as certain words, expressions, and even languages themselves can become privileged or dominant over others. As one can see, our language practices, whether spoken or written, are complex. In order to understand translingualism, it

can be helpful to use the aspects of CHAT (cultural-historical activity theory) and theories of activity systems as lenses.

According to Joyce Walker, CHAT helps us to think about and study "how people act and communicate in the world—specifically through the productions of all kinds of texts" (71–72). The elements of CHAT (such as production, reception, and socialization) help us look at what goes into textual production and give us a method to analyze texts, whether written or spoken. Activity systems are a part of CHAT and, to paraphrase an expert on the topic, David R. Russell, refers to cooperative interactions aimed at achieving a goal. Through these lenses, we can look at the psychological and social processes of achieving that goal through the interactions between people and the tools they use to achieve that goal; in this case the tool we are focusing on is language. These are the tools I used to begin my research on untranslatable expressions.

What can I say? I'm a lover of languages and a lover of words. I also love learning about other cultures and the experiences of those who speak more than one language. I hope that I, too, will someday speak more than one fluently. To begin this research on untranslatable expressions, I asked my classmates and family members about their language experiences. Many of my classmates speak more than one language, are the children of immigrants, or are international students. The purpose for my investigation was to gain insight into cultures that we may think are different from our own and to find connections such as expressions that cross cultures. In order to do this, I interviewed several classmates who speak different foreign languages. In the chart below, I have listed the people I interviewed with the languages they speak. I did this to show the range of languages spoken in my sample but also to serve as an easy reference.

Person Interviewed	Language Background
Amish Trivedi	Gujarati
Su Yin Khor	Chinese and Swedish
Agathe Lancrenon	French
Karlie Rodriguez	Puerto Rican Spanish
Cristina Sánchez-Martín	Castilian Spanish
Mom	Farsi
Dad	Farsi

By incorporating a diverse range of language backgrounds, I hope that my findings will be more valid and reliable. I am also interested in seeing how my findings fit in with a CHAT analysis, to see how the way we learn to make meaning of expressions can be analyzed through the specific CHAT aspects of production, reception, and socialization.

Production

Expressions are produced over time and are influenced by politics, history, and culture. It is difficult to trace the etymologies, or origins, of expressions, perhaps because they haven't been documented throughout history or because they often evolve out of everyday conversation. In thinking of production, it is important to think about how texts are created and molded by people and other factors. This is something I found through most of my interviews. There are many ways that untranslatable expressions are formed and understood.

One of the major influences of the use of and understanding of these expressions across interviews came from interactions with family members. For example, when I interviewed one of my classmates, Amish, he explained how he had wanted to use a Gujarati expression as an epigraph in his book, so he asked his family members to help him write it in the original script. In telling the story, he explained how his father used to say the expression "jagyah tarathi savar" to him when he was a teenager and would wake up late. In Gujarati, this expression means "It's morning whenever you get up" or "Your day starts whenever you get up." To him, it meant "whenever you come into knowing something is the dawn."

jagyah tarathi savar

In order to get this expression translated for his book, Amish had to use the tools and resources at his disposal, in this case his family members who could speak and write in Gujarati. First, he tried teaching himself from a children's penmanship book. Then, he asked his parents over the phone, who directed him to ask his uncle. He e-mailed his parents and then his uncle texted the script back in Gujarati. The process to get this quote translated in the original Gujarati involved many different kinds of texts, such as e-mail, phone conversations, and actual text messages. In this case the activity system was his family. Amish's conversations with his family members were necessary for his uptake.

Some other important aspects that go into the production of expressions that are difficult to translate are the interplay between culture, morality, politeness, and how through language this can influence a person's actions. For example, when my classmate Karlie described her untranslatable expression, "veruenza a hajena," the most fascinating part was her description of how one comes to know the meaning of this phrase through physical and emotional social interactions.

According to Karlie, this expression refers to how "if you're in a room and someone says something embarrassing, it's the feeling you get of being embarrassed or ashamed for that person, even though you are not the one who's doing that thing." Whether from near or afar, those people who feel "veruenza a hajena" will even "get up and leave the room or cover their

veruenze a hajena

eyes," she said. Through these physical practices or actions, the emotion is conveyed, communicated, and understood between the people involved in the situation. In this example, cultural understanding is key, yet it seems that this phenomenon could easily be found in other cultures, though those cultures might not have a specific term for it. According to Karlie, this is a "cultural phenomenon" that she's only heard of in Puerto Rico, but I could easily see this happening in many other cultures, especially those that emphasize collectivism as a value.

To understand these kinds of expressions, it's helpful to imagine what kind of similar expressions or words exist for these situations in the languages we speak. Imagine if you were embarrassed for something someone said; would you not cover your eyes as well, even possibly involuntarily? It seems that in this scenario, the physical gesture naturally results from the emotional reaction of a person. Feelings of empathy and embarrassment are common across many cultures, so this expression may have translingual equivalents after all, maybe not linguistically, but psychologically.

Reception

Reception is the CHAT aspect that deals with the ways that texts are taken up and used by others (Walker 75). In the case of expressions that are untranslatable, this becomes really important. For the second part of my interviews, I asked my participants about expressions in English that were confusing to them when they first heard them. I found that there are so many expressions in English that seem natural to me but that continue to be confusing for the people I interviewed. It was really funny to hear some of these examples and the ways that these people went about understanding them.

When I interviewed my classmate Su Yin, who speaks Chinese and Swedish, she revealed that she was confused by the English phrase "that's right up your alley." She said that when she first heard it a few years ago, she was confused as to whether it was "a bad thing or a good thing" and reflected that "there's no context for me that would help me explain it." Imagine if you heard this expression for the first time and didn't know what it meant. Would you take it literally? Would you assume that it has a sexual connotation based on the word choice? That's what Su Yin thought it was about. She also had a problem with the expression "You don't know shit." She reflects on how the meaning of the word "shit" varies across contexts. Sometimes "shit" has a negative connotation, is used as a verb, is used as a noun, or is used to mean "anything" in slang, not to mention all the other possible meanings of the word.

that's right up your alley!

You don't know shit!

Considering this new information and reflecting on how I've heard these expressions growing up in the United States, I am now more aware that how we understand language is extremely complex. It wasn't until I started asking these questions that I was faced with my own assumptions about the meanings of expressions and how we often take them for granted. I also found it funny that I never even questioned their meanings, origins, or why we even say these things. I never thought hearing these words and expressions would be weird for someone or difficult to understand, but this confusion happens all the time, especially for those who grew up speaking another language.

But what about words in other languages that don't have English equivalents? Words like these can be difficult to explain or convey meaning for when the cultural background is not there. My friend Agathe explains this with the French word "assumer." She says it's a word that many Americans that she's known who have studied French said "they wish they had in English." She describes how it doesn't quite mean the same thing as "I assume." To her, "it's more than that. Like when you do something stupid or say something stupid" a person uses this word to convey that "I own it, I'm OK with it" and it's not as natural in English. She also points out that "assumer" has become a popular word among young people in France, especially teenagers who are trying to show that they're "original but don't want to be at the same time." So, the use of expressions and some of these untranslatable words are related to generations, personality, timing or one's situation in life, as well as having meaning personally and within a larger social context, which leads into our last lens of analysis through CHAT: socialization.

assumer

Socialization

In CHAT, **socialization** is comprised of "the interactions of people and institutions as they produce, distribute, and use texts" (Walker 76). When applied to expressions, this aspect of CHAT is the most crucial, even more so when those expressions are not easily translatable across languages. When we use expressions, I think most of us assume that others know or are familiar with them; we assume rapport. It makes sense that we come to know over time what expressions are appropriate for what kinds of situations and with what people. When writing or communicating with other people, it helps to know where they're coming from, what kinds of knowledge they are bringing to the situation, and if they will understand cultural references in order to get our messages across. So, what happens when there's a misunderstanding or gap in communication?

Coming from a different linguistic or cultural background affects our understandings of and uptake of new expressions, not to mention their

connotations. If a person does not know the meaning of an expression, it could lead to some awkward and funny moments, but also confusion or feelings of being an outsider.

When I interviewed my dad, he listed several expressions he learned in the workplace that, to him, were unusual. Even now, he admits that some of these expressions or words are "weird" for him to use. For example, his boss will sometimes say "you just have to suck it up" when dealing with a problem with a client at work. To my dad, who comes from a conservative Iranian background, the word "suck" used in a workplace is inappropriate. "It's not a word I would feel comfortable using," he said, especially when talking to an authority figure like one's boss. But, even so, he understands the meaning of the phrase as "it's the cost of doing business." This scenario reflects a difference in formality between cultures and taboo subjects, and even connotations that are also biased by gender and patriarchy. In this situation, we see how my dad's socialization in a more conservative culture has affected his uptake and use of certain words and expressions that are used commonly in English. This also reflects the impact of generation and politics on language use and one's willingness to use certain words. The influence of the workplace as an institution also has an effect on what kinds of phrases or words are used, though in this case there is a lack of formality between coworkers as opposed to the expected formal language use.

> You just have to suck it up!

For Cristina, who came from Spain, the phrase "hanging out" was troublesome. It led her to a series of questions when she first heard it, such as "What do you mean? What are we going to do? What does it entail?" Where she comes from, "hanging out means I'm going to meet someone to do something in particular and that's the deal, so we need to have a plan in mind." Apparently, in Spain, people don't just hang out for no reason. There has to be an occasion or a plan. She says, "that concept is hard to understand because we just don't do that."

> hanging out

In Cristina's case, the expression "hanging out" has no meaning because, as a cultural phenomenon in Spain, from her particular experience, Spanish people just don't do that. In this case language, or lack thereof, reflects reality; the absence of this activity is reflected through the lack of a phrase for it in the language. The role of expectations, or planning, involved in the social interaction is de-emphasized in the phrase "hanging out," which may reveal something about American culture, maybe as more spontaneous or "go with the flow."

When I interviewed my mom, she came up with a whole list of American English expressions that baffled her. Some of them she still does not use though she's been living here for about thirty years now. My mom would try to make sense of these expressions by logically trying to figure them out,

and only to find out that they just don't make logical sense. One of these expressions is "it's raining cats and dogs." It was humorous to hear my mom's thought process as she tried to make sense of this. She said, "Cats and dogs, they can fight, but what does it have to do with rain? Is it their noises? Is it their fighting? I still don't know, but I know that when it is raining so hard, they say 'cats and dogs,' but maybe I refer it to the loudness, because the water has nothing to do with cats and dogs, you know?" Another expression she found confusing was "cute as a button." She really doesn't get it, "What is cute about buttons?" I don't either, Mom. (Who comes up with these phrases? Are they just trying to confuse people?)

It's raining cats and dogs

Conclusion

In terms of textual productions and literate practices, it is important to be aware of expressions like these that have no equivalents in other languages. When writing in different genres, it is important to consider the audience by asking questions like: Would a group of people be ostracized by the use of certain word choices, expressions, or phrases? What about expressions or phrases that have no literal meaning? Would it be difficult for people who are not familiar with the cultural context to understand the use of this expression? When we write or speak it is helpful to consider how our choices affect those we socially interact with. Our choice of words, written or spoken, can exclude people. Of course, this depends on the situation or context in which the act of communication is taking place and the knowledges different people bring with them to these interactions.

In this article, I've presented two ways this can happen: words and phrases in other languages that have no English equivalents, and then words and phrases in English that have no equivalents in other languages. However, there are exceptions to these rules. For example, one expression that manages to cross cultural and linguistic boundaries that you may have heard is "Don't look a gift horse in the mouth." Though I personally have never heard this expression in conversation myself, it did come up in my interview with Karlie who speaks Puerto Rican Spanish and with my parents who speak Farsi, and after doing some research, I found that it is a common English expression too.

Don't look a gift horse in the mouth!

Karlie translated this expression from Puerto Rican Spanish as "you don't look at the teeth of a horse that's been gifted to you," which means, "you're not supposed to re-gift. You're supposed to just like the gifts you get." This is used in her culture to teach children to be grateful for what they have. This has the same meaning in Farsi as well, though the wording is slightly different. Again we see the influence of culture, morality, and generations on the socialization of this expression in particular.

Across each interview, I found that language is definitely tied to memory. It is difficult to come up with expressions on the spot whether they have direct equivalents in another language or not. Though the people I interviewed were aware these expressions exist, many of them found it difficult to pull them out of their tacit, antecedent knowledge, even when I had prepared them with questions beforehand.

Also, when dealing with this topic, it is important to consider the history of cultures and how language is passed down through family and generations. Our uptake of expressions happens from childhood and almost instantaneously becomes tacit; it is difficult to even articulate the meanings of expressions or translate them to someone who is not from the expression's linguistic or cultural background. Many expressions are nonsensical, and though their etymologies may lead us to a better understanding of them, most of our learning of expressions comes through socialization and not formal training, so it is hard to get at the meaning without using resources like dictionaries, unless we simply grew up in that culture or speaking that language.

Expressions are learned through exposure and immersion into cultures. They are learned through lived experiences and social interactions whether they are written, spoken, or physically acted out. Often expressions are used to teach moral lessons or politeness. Other times they're used to express a feeling more simply or establish rapport between people. Whatever the intention, expressions give insights into cultures that we may think are different from our own and often show us that we're not as different as we may have thought.

When coming across expressions that are unfamiliar or untranslatable, it can be useful to adopt a writing research identity to make uptake easier. An open mind and flexible attitude not only will allow us to accept linguistic and cultural differences but can facilitate our own learning of new vocabulary or ways to express ourselves.

In a world that is becoming increasingly global through the rise of technologies like the Internet and social media, it is important to consider ourselves in relation to the activity systems surrounding us. Looking at the political, historical, and cultural factors that influence our understanding of the world, we can use that knowledge to broaden our perspectives so that we can be more well-rounded and understanding of those who are different from us. We can use that knowledge to help communicate our message more effectively in various genres. Using CHAT as a tool for investigation, we can also gain insight into translingualism and realize some of the challenges that come about when trying to translate between foreign languages, such as with idiomatic expressions. Otherwise, we might just be treading water . . .

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Let the Dance Speak to You:
How Dance Is a Cultural Artifact of Communication and Connection that Endures

LaToya Carter

Feel the rhythm. African Student Association dancer LaToya Carter explores one of her biggest passions: African dance. Considering how dance is an interactive circle of give and take between performers and audiences, Carter connects dance to cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT). She demonstrates how by zooming in on the processes and practices of dance as interactive text, we will find that dance, like writing, is a vital cultural artifact, a tool that we respond to and make specific meaning of, which is passed down and adapted for different purposes in various social contexts.

Circle of Give and Take

We were performing on stage in front of our peers. The sun was beaming down upon us; outside performances are not always my first choice, but we were having fun! My heart was pounding with force, but my mind and body were free. As I looked to the right of me, I saw my dancemates' faces, and they, too, looked free. We were in total rhythm . . . connecting. Our bodies flowing from left to right as we transitioned to new positions on stage, we knew we were making everyone feel it. The communication we were having on stage, we did not want to end. No, we were not actually talking amongst ourselves, but there was communication between us as well as between us and the audience. Although we were not literally *talking* to the audience, from our facial expressions and costumes to the movements of our arms and legs all the way down to the stomping of our feet, our dancing was doing all the talking for us. And, the audience was speaking right back to us by using their facial expressions, clapping their hands, and tapping their feet. It was body and music language being reciprocated—nonverbal communications—and it was powerful. As a dancer for the African Student Association (ASA), what is special about dance to me is just how social and interactive it truly is.

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In "Just CHATting," Joyce Walker talks about CHAT, which stands for cultural-historical activity theory, and the different CHAT terms that help us research writing, such as "socialization." Walker explains **socialization** as being the interaction between audiences, producers, and their creations (76). When reading, even though we might not realize it, we are interacting with the words on the page as well as with the author who wrote it. We look at the writing piece and try to understand not only what the author is trying to say to us but also how and why they are doing so in that particular context. For example, as a student, do you remember those questions at the end of our reading assignments, such as, "What did the author want you to take away from the story?" I do. And although those types of school questions represent the interaction between teachers and students, usually associated with performing for a grade, those questions also encourage students to interact with what they are reading and the authors who wrote it. As we read, we are taking up lots of different information and trying to make sense of it for ourselves.

In other words, we interpret the piece of writing based on our own understandings, motivations, and prior experiences, and this is mixed with what the author is attempting to communicate. At any time during our reading, our connections with the writer and their creation can often lead to a response—a response that is similar to answering end-of-story questions as we did in class, but also one that means something to us beyond the classroom and assignments. Have you have ever read a good book, and when you were finished, you just had to tell someone about it? You might say, "That was good!" Maybe you read a book or perhaps watched a movie (remember, movies are writing forms too), and you did not like it at all. You might say, "That was terrible. I can't get those two hours of my life back." In short, we read, interpret, and connect to *what we think* is being conveyed, and we respond in some way to that meaning. And this reaction is not a linear process. We can do these things during all parts of the interaction; it's *a circle of give and take*, which is what makes it a social practice. Dance proves that communication is not always textual.

For instance, the ASA Dance Team performs a traditional, passed-down routine, which is very much a narrative, called "Warrior Princess." In this dance, we will start off as a nurturing woman who is at home taking care of a baby. The audience will pick up on the hints, our body language, when we do different moves, such as rocking a baby in our arms. Later in the dance, we will transition into the persona of a warrior where we leave our child at home and go off to fight. The audience will read our nonverbal communication when we bend over and extend our cradled arms out, as if we are putting our baby gently down, and then we will run and thrust our arm out and back, just like we have a bow and arrow and are shooting at something. Our facial

expressions will go from gentle, sweet, and calm to determined, daring, and fierce. In the end, we hope that the audience interprets it—reads it—in a way that connects to the narrative story we just performed.

These very ideas and theories can be applied to dancing as well. It's one thing to say dance is a form of communication, but if we zoom in on processes and practices of dance as text, we will find that, like writing, dance is a vital cultural artifact, a cultural tool that we respond to and interact with, which is passed down from generation to generation and adapted for different audiences, reasons, and purposes in various social contexts. In *Cultural Psychology: A Once and Future Discipline*, Michael Cole defines an "artifact" as any tool that is "an aspect of the material world that has been modified over the history of its incorporation into goal-directed human action" (117). Dance is interactive and social as a "goal-directed human action" that helps us connect, evolve, and even survive, so dance is a cultural artifact that endures, which helps us endure. Let's look at three distinct dances—soukous, azonto, and eskista—and how each is situated in diverse social context and practices "as goal-directed human action," making dancers and audiences feel connected to our creations and audiences of the past, present, and future (117).

Stomp It Out: Background on Each Dance

The soukous is not one specific dance but actually many different types of traditional dances, which are performed by Congolese people in Congo. Soukous not only refers to dance but music too. Dated back to the mid-1990's, soukous can be known as a combination between both Cuban and African music. The content of the dances consists of mainly moving your hips and bottom, but leg and arm movements are involved too. This dance can be performed to any genre of African music. Some soukous dances are more intense than others. Some people use these dances for rituals or to bring healing to people in need.

The azonto dance originated in Ghana in the early 1990s. It is one of the simplest dances to learn. It has become very popular mainly because it can be performed anywhere, whether you are at a party, wedding, even a funeral, where dancing is another way for people to honor a loved one who has passed away. Traditionally, you would find men performing such dances with the casket on their shoulder. The dance consists of a one-two step in which you move your hand up and down. Many dance teams have taken azonto into their choreography. This dance is usually performed to more upbeat songs, but you can perform azonto to any genre of music.

The eskista dance originated in Ethiopia and is one of the oldest traditional dances still performed today. The eskista is a simple dance that consists of moving your shoulders back and forth and is performed by both men and women. While the azonto is performed with modern upbeat music, in my years of seeing the eskista, I have never seen it performed with upbeat music, but it is rather performed with traditional Ethiopian music. Traditional Ethiopian music can be played with traditional instruments, such as the *kebero*, which is like a drum, a *washint*, which is a flute, and a *kirar*, which is a guitar, as well as many other traditional instruments. (As an interesting side note that I don't have time to discuss here fully: Eskista sets the precedent of many other dances, including the "Harlem shake," which brought about a debate on whether or not black Americans were appropriating African culture.)

Feel the Rhythm! How Dance Is Communication.

Soukous

The soukous communicates in many different ways with the intended audience. The dance is based on the religion of the Congolese people. According to Arenastage.org, "Congolese traditional dance is rooted in ritual. Usually done in recognition of the spirit world, each dance has its own rhythm, movements, physical motif or inspiration, and song." Many people will sit around and listen to the dancers and be taken by the spirit. The context of the dance can be altered depending on the person who performs it and how they perform it.

Communication plays a huge role when it comes to African traditional dances. Interpretation in dance is especially important, and both audience and dancers can have different interpretations. Dancers think about things such as: how much did the audience interpret? did the audience understand what was going on? and did I convey the right interpretation? As a dancer, you never want to give the wrong interpretation because these are passed-down body narratives and body texts with specific meanings. So, not interpreting the dance correctly can leave the audience a bit confused or even upset, depending on what they have interpreted from your performance.

This is also why costume is so important in dance (Figure 1). Many African dance teams do not realize that they should not paint their face with dots, at least not without carefully researching the potential meanings of these markings. Face paint started in different villages all throughout Africa, and each pattern can portray a different meaning. If a dance team was performing with a pattern on their face that someone from a village may wear when they

are about to sacrifice something, a person from that village may be confused when you do not conclude the performance with a move that elicits some kind of body language sacrifice. Of course, that is just an example, but it is important for dance teams to think about how an audience may interpret their performance before performing.

In "Just CHATting," Joyce Walker talks about **production**, which is all the resources you use in creating your text. In the context of dance, "production" is all the resources you use within the dance and what the goal of the dance may be (74–75). Whether it is costume, face paint, or music, all three are used to create this dance for a specific purpose or feeling. As a student you can think about this when creating a PowerPoint for class: what is your production? What do you use to create your text? And for what purpose? As a dancer, it is important to consider your production and purpose before performing because different cultures and different peoples can read things much differently than you may think.

For example, I have seen the flamenco dance performed by dancers from the Spanish culture. I loved the performance, but I did not know the dance had meaning and purpose behind it. I cannot connect to the dance like someone from that culture without researching more about it. This does not mean that someone from another culture cannot understand at all, it just means someone from that specific culture watching their traditional dances would be able to interpret it with more of an immediate understanding than perhaps someone from another culture.

As an ASA dancer, I try to spread different cultures of dance to people on campus, which really shows just how important this cultural artifact is to me. And that's what ASA is all about: spreading the African culture to students here on campus to pass it down. Some people look for different meaning within the dance. For example, the soukous can communicate many different things, such as spirituality, warmth, healing, and protection. If one needs healing, they would go and see the soukous dance so that they can receive that healing. A simple dance can bring these renewing feelings to a whole village.

One may ask how I receive this sort of communication from a dance. Going through tough situations in life helps you connect to traditional dances. To see dancers on stage convey exactly how you feel can bring such a relief to your life and make you feel like you're not alone. When I perform traditional dances, I take them seriously because you never know whose heart you may touch. Although I am the one doing the "goal-directed" actions, I still receive some of the benefits from it, such as freedom and connection. When I am on stage, I feel like every problem I have just goes away and for that moment it's just me and dance, and I absolutely love that moment!

Figure 1: Costumes are just as important as the dance itself. The costume is a form of communication and can tell you where the person is from and what type of dancing you are about to receive. For example, if someone is wearing face paint, often times, they are from a village. Certain costumes and face paint give off a certain religion or background. You can go to this website for more information https://afrodanciac.wordpress.com/dance-style/.

As a dancer, my job is to help the audience understand each movement whether it's through my facial expression or my body movements. The audience also communicates back whether they know it or not. Clapping, dancing along, even a simple tapping of your feet can show communication. Have you ever been somewhere and you heard a tune for the first time; at first you're just listening to it, but then later you notice you began to tap your foot, rock side to side, and even start humming it to yourself? Well that's exactly what the audience is doing. First you're just watching the performance, and then you began to clap, smile, and dance a little in your chair hoping nobody noticed. That's you becoming involved and connecting with the performers. You are showing through your body language that you are enjoying it. Many audiences don't know that performers also feed off your energy. When you are excited, that makes us even more excited, and we give you all the energy we have left. Ideally, it is the audience's job to understand what the dancers are doing on stage; of course it can be sort of challenging, especially if you are from a different culture. On the other hand, it is the dancers' job to make communication as clear as possible and facial expressions help a lot. A dancer's face can tell you whether it is a sad, happy, or serious moment at any part of the dance. As mentioned before, I was a warrior princess who had to leave my child behind to go fight in one of my performances, so I made sure my face showed determination and anger and that I was ready to go out and fight.

Azonto

"Dancing, as an art form, has always been expressive. And the West African dance craze 'azonto' certainly communicates a message although in a more direct way than other dances do" (Chigozie). The azonto dance (see Figure 2) can communicate different activities, hobbies, and actually speak to other people; it is as if you are doing sign language through dance. For example, one can pretend that they are sweeping the floor by moving their legs and arms in a certain way. Better yet, one can flirt with someone while doing the azonto by doing different motions like signaling them to come over, or to text them by moving their fingers in a way that you would do if you were texting someone. Many may be in disbelief that one simple dance can communicate good things, bad things, and inappropriate things. It's all in the performer and what are they trying to communicate.

Figure 2: Go to this website to see these dancers azonto. In this scene of the video the dancers were pretending that they were washing themselves. Also see how you interpret this dance vs. how your friend may interpret it, remember everyone doesn't receive the same message.
https://vk.com/video170402306_1626292215?list= a14c42ced7e787f394
This link will show the azonto being performed at a funeral.
www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=azonto+performed+at+funeral

The communicator/dancer has to be careful at times when doing such dances that it does not offend someone. For instance, if a guy is flirting with a girl through the azonto dance in a sexual way, the girl may interpret the guy as being disrespectful, which may offend her. On the other hand, another girl can interpret the dance as a compliment. It is the same exact move, but it gives off two very different interpretations. That's why it is so important to outline the dance to make sure it is appropriate. The relationship between dancer and audience is closer than you think.

This situation of dance refers to "representation." In CHAT, **representation** is how one plans things out. As a dancer you need to think, plan, and practice before performing. Just as if you were planning on how you are going to present something to a classroom, both situations have an audience. The ASA dance team had the opportunity to teach a young audience here in Normal different African dances, and azonto was one of them. The kids had a blast; one girl even asked if she could join our dance team. Although the kids did not know that they were communicating through this dance, I was able to, as their audience, interpret their dance movements. I was able to receive happiness and joy through their dance and it was awesome. The azonto has become very famous and is being performed nationwide, which means this dance has been passed down and translated in many ways that one can only imagine.

Eskista

Many Ethiopians may know the eskista (See Figure 3) as "the dancing shoulders" because that is exactly what it is. So the next question may be: How can "dancing shoulders" communicate to an audience? According to cultural activist Martina Petkova, "significant movements are having a great impact on the Ethiopian indigenous society as a whole. Some of the ideas and themes in this dance are actually inspired from the relations between the genders, work life, and religion." People take their life struggles or happiness, put it into the dance, and translate these situations and feelings into body language to communicate with the audience. The eskista can communicate joy, pain, and happiness; it may be one of my favorite dances to watch as it is so beautiful. This dance is usually performed at weddings and other social gatherings. The eskista is usually only performed at happy festivities, as opposed to the azonto, which I explained earlier can be performed at funerals. This brings up an important point: knowing where and who to perform a certain dance to is important. This refers to the CHAT term **distribution**, as in who is receiving the text and where (Walker 75). The ASA dance team was once invited to perform at a church event. We knew that certain dances like the "mapouka," a dance which focuses on your waist and bottom, would not be appropriate for the event, while the eskista fits that context perfectly.

Overall, the eskista is a fun dance! Not only to watch but to perform as well. The ASA dance team incorporates many different dances from all over the continent of Africa. The eskista has one of my favorite dance moves. I literally have the biggest smile on my face every time I perform it. It's such a happy dance that it even brings joy to the audience as you can see them smiling as well. When the ASA dance team performed this routine, you could see people in the crowd trying to do the dance too. To see the audience's

Figure 3: In this video you can watch Ethiopian girls perform the famous eskista dance in their traditional Kemis dress.
http://www.diretube.com/ethiopian-talent/watch-ethiopian-girls-dancing-eskista-enjoy-video_8f1abd6a0.html

facial expressions that night was priceless! That dance brought so much joy to the room that everyone, by the end of the dance, was on their feet. They most likely didn't understand the Ethiopian music. I don't even understand the music because it is sung in a different language, but the dance itself was able to communicate to everyone in the room.

I interviewed my friend, Tehaynish Demilew, who is Ethiopian and in her junior year here at Illinois State University and is very familiar with eskista. Tehaynish learned how to do the dance from the Ethiopian Community Association, an after-school program, when she was six years old. This is an example of how dance is an artifact that is taken up, learned by individuals, and passed down through generations, so much so that they have after school programs to teach such dances. Sometimes they dance the eskista for fundraisers to raise money and cultural awareness. Tehaynish believes that the eskista communicates cultural enrichment and celebrates diversity and how to really enjoy each other's presence. "Eskista is not a competition," Tehaynish says, "it's a beautiful dance that can bring you joy."

Dance Lives On! Create and Connect. Evolve and Endure.

Joyce Walker explains how CHAT is "an important acronym for our writing program, because it refers to a set of theories about rhetorical activity (how people act and communicate in the world—specifically through the production of all kinds of texts), that help us look at the how/why/what

of writing practices" (71–72). Considering dance in light of this theory, we can see that it is an important form of communication, a textual cultural artifact without actual words that is passed down through generations. Dance is interactive and social as a "goal-directed human action" that helps us to not only create and connect, but also to evolve and endure.

In fact, African dance was the most effective way to communicate during slavery. Due to language barriers, dance was a cultural artifact used to create, communicate, and survive. Separated from families and friends, and often sold across oceans into communities in which many did not speak the same language or dialect, slaves were both unable and also forbidden to communicate verbally with one another. So they created and passed down their own cultural texts in different ways. Included in these were dance narratives—which integrated music, song, motions, rhythm and body language—used to connect, empathize, share feelings and frustrations, and relay vital information to one another.

In "Legacies of Slavery," Dr. Alan Rice writes about how dance and music were cultural tools and that African "dances had particular meanings and could convey specific ideas." Interestingly, Rice reveals how the "limbo" dance, where you try to bend down as low as possible to pass an object, was created by slaves and actually "spoke directly of the limited space in the slaving ships and the African ability to escape it." Another dance, called the "cakewalk" was created by American slaves in the south. Rice writes how, "This dance poked fun at the plantation owners. In this way, African resistance to slavery was expressed culturally." Without a doubt, dance was a means to create and connect as well as to evolve and endure.

Ultimately, as seen with many African dances, story is important and proves how narratives are not just textual and can include body language and passing down of vital information and energy. Considering these different types of dances, African dancers want audiences to receive a message, share emotions, and experience the interactive circle of give and take during their performance. All of this connects right back to socialization (and other CHAT terms) because this is "writing" and "reading" without using words. It also shows how alternative forms of communication are cultural artifacts with deep human meanings and purposes.

I asked my dance friend Tehaynish if she could picture a world without dance, and she said, "No!" I couldn't picture the world without dance either. What would we do when our favorite song comes on? If I was to live in a world without dance, I would be living a life knowing something was always missing. Dance is a part of life and, in my view, living on. The environment,

the audience's energy, and the connection to other people is what makes it so special (Figure 4). Being on stage and hearing my friends and family cheer me on is what keeps me motivated. I feel alive! It is fun to hear the shouts from our friends, "You go girl," "Let's Go ASA," "Yasssss Girl," or "Ooh, they're killing it!" Both dancers and audiences affect one another. We feed off each other's energy and create a story that speaks and moves . . . and speaks and moves on . . .

Figure 4: 2014-2015 ASA (African Student Association) Dance Team. In this one single picture we have women from all different cultural backgrounds. We have women that are Congolese, Nigerian, Jamaican, Ghanaian, Sudanese, and African American. No matter where each person is from, as a dance team we are opened to all different types of dances across the African continent.

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Publishing with the *Grassroots Writing Research Journal*

GWRJ Editors

Our Mission Statement

The *GWRJ* is dedicated to publishing articles by writers and scholars whose work investigates the practices of people writing (and acting) in different writing situations and in a variety of different genres. 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 where writing happens.

Because 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, 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. However, accepted articles will be informed by either primary research into writing behaviors and activities and/or by 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, we do have deadlines for upcoming issues. For issue 9.1, which will come out at the beginning of the Fall 2018 semester, articles must be submitted by January 20, 2017. The deadline for consideration in our 9.2 (Spring 2018) issue is May 15, 2017. Please contact the Associate Editor at grassrootswriting@gmail.com with queries about possible submissions and to submit your work.

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

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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. So 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 certain kinds of 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," and 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 and 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 the types 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, including 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 that is 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 that 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 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 kinds of 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, that they work in similar ways across all kinds of genres and writing situations. While it is possible to trace similar kinds of literate 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 really 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 and 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 the last several issues we have seen authors take up this call in interesting ways. Issue 7.1 and 7.2 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 the current 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 Translingual in Mobile Gaming") or Sanam Shahmiri's article in this 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 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 be crucial to add interest and information to a text, but copyright issues will need to be considered. Charts, graphs, or 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 him or her 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 or 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. But since 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

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.