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Journal of Student Research at Indiana University East

Spring 2020 Edition

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the second, standard issue of the *Journal of Student Research at Indiana University East (JSRIUE).* The research, scholarly, and creative projects represented in this issue demonstrate IU East students' accomplishments. The variety and depth of topics our students examine provide keen insights and solid synthesis of ideas and findings. The production of these articles exhibits evidence of the impact research and creativity have on learning, our students, and our faculty. We hope you enjoy this high-quality issue that is informative and scholarly. We recognize and thank the *JSRIUE* editors and authors who worked together to deliver the publication.

COVID-19 offers many obstacles to the production of this issue.

Good Reading,

Sue McFadden, MLS
Associate Librarian for Research

Editor and Journal Manager,
Journal of Student Research at Indiana University East

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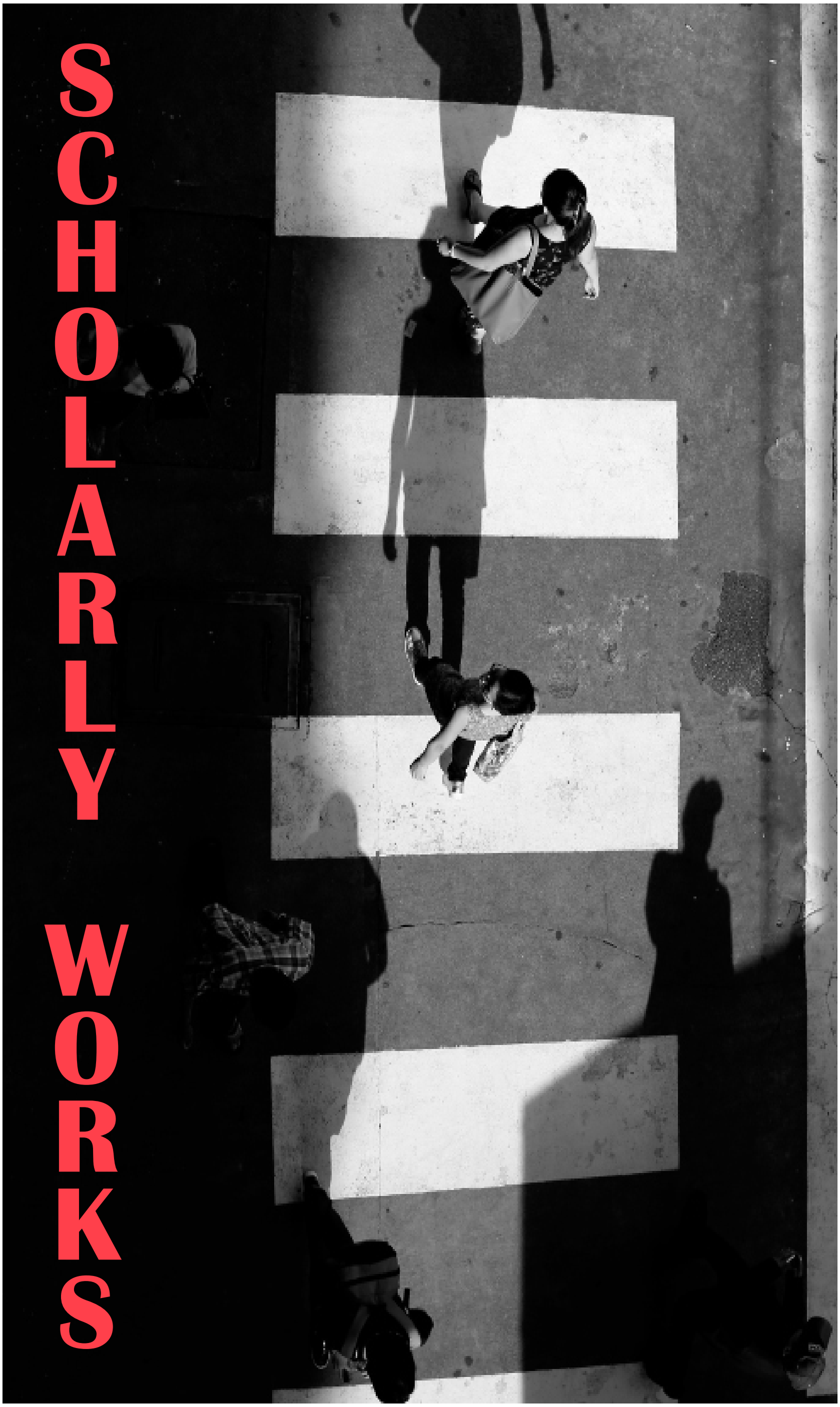
IU East Faculty mentors & editors: Lee Ann Adams, Sr. Lecturer of Education; Jay Barbre, Associate Professor of Education; Brian Brodeur, Assistant Professor of English; Jennifer Drummond, Adjunct Faculty; Shari Fowler, Assistant Professor of Accounting; Edwina Helton, Professor of English; Ron Itnyre, Sr. Lecturer of Biology; Arkadiusz Mironko, Assistant Professor of Management; Tanya Perkins, Assistant Professor of English; Jaynne Rivas, Assistant Professor of Management; LaCalvince Simpson, Sr. Lecturer of Marketing; Beth South, Copy-Editor & Assistant Librarian; and Ongoing support, TJ Rivard, Assoc. Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs & Frances Yates, Campus Library Director.

SCHOLARLY WORKS



Journal of Student Research at Indiana University East

A Place for the Cannon

Heidi Lynn Klein
Faculty Mentor: Lee Ann Adams

Abstract

Those involved in secondary English and language arts classrooms often wonder how to increase student interest and learning. Some suggest that teaching primarily from more recent texts, such as young adult literature, would increase student engagement. If this were the case, canonical texts would be used less often. This author suggests that canonical texts should be of first importance and that different types and genres of literature should all be used in classrooms instead of being pitted against each other.

Keywords

canonical literature, English instruction, High school ED, student learning, student interest.

Introduction

In the context of the secondary language arts classroom, controversial topics abound. Teachers wonder if they should teach books that have been banned in the past. Some might worry that, in the era of technology, learning grammar rules and the difference between a protagonist and an antagonist are obsolete. Among these controversies stands the disagreement about the literary canon: should the canon be kept as it is, should room be made for new texts, or should it be thrown out altogether? The literary canon is, according to Wilczek (2012), "… authors and works that either used to be included in literature syllabi or textbooks, or those works that repeatedly appear in standard volumes of the history of literature, bibliographies, and literary criticism" (p. 1687). Canonical texts are often viewed as outdated and of secondary importance in English language arts classrooms. While teachers should implement a variety of texts and media, the canon is still of first importance. This author would suggest using texts in the following order of importance: canonical texts, modern and nonfictional texts, and other media. Teaching texts with this order in mind will be likely to challenge students, to engage students, and to prepare students to function in the workplace, while still using the existing education system as a base.

Discussion

In order to properly understand the literature debate, it is necessary to first understand the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The Common Core State Standards Initiative states that the CCSS "… were drafted by experts and teachers from across the country and are designed to ensure students are prepared for today's entry-level careers, freshman-level college courses, and workforce training programs" ("About the Standards"). Forty-one states have adopted the CCSS, as well as the District of Columbia and four territories. The standards for English and Language arts are overviewed on the website as follows:

> The Common Core asks students to read stories and literature, as well as more complex texts that provide facts and background knowledge in areas such as science and social studies. Students will be challenged and asked questions that push them to refer back to what they've read. This stresses critical-thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills that are required for success in college, career, and life. ("English Language Arts Standards")

The purpose of education is to challenge students and help them grow. Challenges abound in canonical texts. It cannot be denied that Shakespeare's Hamlet is more challenging to read than Chboski's The Perks of Being a Wallflower, and this language complexity is an extremely useful learning tool, as may be seen in a simple comparison. Take the following lines from Hamlet: "To be, or not to be—that is the question: / Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer / The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune / Or to take arms against a sea of troubles / And by opposing end them" (Shakespeare, ll. 1-5). Most readers would find it difficult to arrive at the conclusion that Hamlet is contemplating suicide. Compare this with a similar passage from The Perks of Being a Wallflower: "I don't know if you've ever felt like that. That you wanted to sleep for a thousand years. Or just not exist. Or just not be aware that you do exist" (Shmoop Editorial Team, 2008). No critical thinking skills are required to determine that Charlie, the main character, is struggling with depression and, perhaps, suicidal thoughts. Such a brief analysis is all that is necessary to prove that, as a general rule, canonical texts are more difficult to read than modern texts. Since the primary goal of education is to challenge students to learn, the canon should be prioritized over young adult literature.

Those who support the canon point out the "… beautiful prose, timeless themes, and simpatico characters…" (Chiariello, 2017, p. 27). Chiariello (2017) also states that reading the canon is important exposure to history: "Learning about the past gives us a deeper understanding of our present day, and authors like Hawthorne and Twain help teach those lessons" (p. 27). Though Chiariello provides support for using canonical texts, she does not forget the opposing view, first listing some general views in favor of young adult literature—cultural relevance, similar writing quality, and a more multicultural group of authors that corresponds to an increasingly multicultural audience—then digging deeper into reasons for and against using both kinds of literature in the classroom. Of the two views listed above, the most popular is to increase the amount of young adult literature used in the classroom and cut out some of the canon.

Aston (2017) espouses this view. His opinion is that the authorship of the canon, as well as who prescribes it reveals power. In the case of the Western canon, that power belongs primarily to white males (Aston, 2017). While the Common Core Standards leave room for literature outside of the canon, Aston (2017) notes that "… teachers may be inclined to continue using the familiar texts of the canon out of comfort, tradition, or district textbook adoptions" (p. 41). The adopting of a literary canon is not a new practice, and the canon is always selected by those in power (Aston, 2017, pp. 41-42). This power belongs to the education system (p. 42), but more importantly, it belongs to a white culture: "The canon has burrowed into culture and curriculum, perpetuating narratives that misrepresent the cultures of non-White people and, more broadly, misrepresent our society, which is more complex and diverse than it portrays" (Aston, 2017, p. 50). Aston (2017) suggests that changes need begin "…with teachers and their students, not with a universal, generic formula or pre-packed curriculum" (p. 50). Stated differently, the power needs to be taken from the education system and given to individual teachers and students who will be able to decide what literature, as well as other media, will best fit their needs.

Young adult literature should be included in the classroom. After all, learning requires that students be engaged; however, according to Hazlett, Johnson, and Hayn (2009), those who advocate for the use of young adult literature in the classroom are often ridiculed. They suggest that the contempt for young adult literature is because of the flashy marketing of low-quality works and uncertainty about what young adult literature actually is (Hazlett, Johnson, & Hayn, 2009, p. 48-49). No matter how much contempt some educators and adults have for young adult literature, the undeniable fact is that most middle school and high school students prefer reading modern young adult fiction to reading canonical texts. As Chiariello (2017) states, "Young readers crave stories that reflect their lived experiences, tackle controversies and dramas they live out daily, and push the boundaries of social norms" (p. 28). Chiariello, like others, suggests a middle-ground approach to literature choices: use both.

Rybakova and Roccanti (2016) also support this approach to the issue. They state that "… these two categories of texts are most powerful when they are connected rather than when pitted against one another" (p. 31). They suggest using young adult literature to scaffold up to canonical literature, and though scaffolding implies that the material with which the students begins is easier, Rybakova and Roccanti do not think that this is the case with young adult literature: "This isn't to say that young adult literature is simpler than the canon-- but, as Lesesne suggested, the best way to begin to scaffold is by using a book that 'has already found a connection to a student'" (Rybakova and Roccanti, 2016, p. 34). They suggest books to pair with canonical texts, showing that the connections would not necessarily be difficult. Some examples of their choices are pairing The Book Thief with Anne Frank's The Diary of a Young Girl, since they both deal with Nazi Germany (Rybakova and Roccanti, 2016, p. 36).

According to Taylor (2015), the CCSS requires that students read nonfictional literature. Though this does require cutting down on some of the classics, many people see this as beneficial. Those who promote this point out that most of the texts that students will read in college, as well as their future careers will probably be nonfictional. Though schools generally are able to pick the texts used in the classroom, the CCSS stipulates several nonfictional texts to be read "… including the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of

Rights, the Gettysburg Address and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'Letter From Birmingham Jail'" (Taylor, 2015). Though the inclusion of nonfictional texts does limit the amount of canonical literature that can be taught, Taylor shows that benefits of including nonfiction include relevance to students and increasing students' academic vocabulary.

A high school education is supposed to help prepare students for their future, whether that future be a job right after graduation or continuing their education. Most people agree on this point, but many do not agree on what is necessary for future generations. Miller and Bruce (2017) do not spend much time addressed the types of literature that should be used in schools. Their main point is best expressed in their own words: "… it is now clear that using images, sounds, gestures, space, and movement to represent meanings is becoming the new human condition in the digital age" (Miller & Bruce, 2017, par. 1).

With this in mind, Miller and Bruce explain how using one modern technology, digital video (DV), could be used in the English classroom and what the benefits of using DV would be. They point out that the CCSS "emphasize learning for the 21st century when most of the standards could be taught with MacGuffy readers and seat-based slateboards" (Miller & Bruce, 2017, p. 15). Technology should not be used merely for technology's sake, but it has the potential to become a very useful tool in the English classroom (Miller & Bruce, 2017, p. 15): "Whether they are writing/researching with video or critiquing media, they become makers (Rosenfeld Halverson and Sheridan), an important identity for their current and future roles in workplace and civic spaces" (Miller & Bruce, 2017, p. 18). Miller and Bruce are right in addressing the future in their article. In an increasingly technology-based environment, students should not be sent out into the world without knowing how to use technology constructively.

Deciding what literature to teach in an ELA classroom can be a difficult task. As can be seen with the relatively few sources for this paper, differing opinions abound. As many suggest, the canon should not be removed from schools, only changed to fit the requirements of individual classrooms. Learning is an individual, as well as a corporate, experience. Teachers should select the texts that they believe are best for their students, keeping this order of importance in mind. Canonical texts should be of first importance because of their historical significance and their existence as the current base of English education. Young adult literature should be of second importance because students find it enjoyable and relevant, and it can be used to scaffold to the canon. Nonfiction should be of third importance because of the context it provides for all literature. Other media, such as digital video, should be of last importance. Life in a digital age requires its presence in the classroom, but it should not take the place of literature in a literature classroom.

Conclusion

The suggested order is not a guarantee of success. There will be students who will not be interested in difficult reading, but the school system will never be without students who lack interest in education through no fault of the teacher or the curriculum. Leaving the canon behind in the name of relevance would be both an abandonment of a treasure and an acceptance of the foolish hope that, if education could just be made fun enough, everyone could succeed. The education system is flawed, but it cannot be fixed by relevance and fun alone.

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Judgement Day: The Walking Dead Poetry Collection

Olivia Ann Paige Ryckman
Faculty Mentor: Brian Brodeur

Abstract

The poems received third place in the oral presentations at the IU East-Student Research Day (SRD) 2020. The presentation is recorded and Olivia graciously shares the online reading of her poetry from the *Judgement Day* collection at SRD ORAL Presentations found at:
https://iue.libguides.com/SRD2020Orals.

Olivia Ryckman, English-Creative Writing Major from Connersville, IN
CC: Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International

Keywords

Walking Dead, poetry, dramatic monologue sonnets, comic book series, AMC Television, post-apocolyptic America, renewal, death, zombies

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Introduction

These 4 poems were written during Dr. Brian Brodeur's ENG W303 Writing Poetry workshop, later revised. The following poems are dramatic monologue sonnets that consider certain aspects relating to the comic book series and AMC television show, The Walking Dead, including the precarious lives of characters living in post-apocalyptic America. There are two new additional pieces that complement the initial collection

What Andrea Should've Said to Philip

We had warm beds and meds for the
first night in months. I was nearing death and your
people saved me from what I could become.
You still have their photo on the mantle, the
ones you lost. We started over again with each other.
I don't understand why you keep her in the closet
nor why you keep their heads in aquariums, but
I know you are good somehow; I will make you better.

It's a cat and mouse game. I dart between crates and
walls, bent low so your only eye doesn't catch me in
the shadows. You ask me to come back with you, it's
where I belong. No, I never did. It's a prison, unlike
the one I call my own. I should have slit your throat that
night in bed and watched your reign come to an end.

Glenn’s Goodbye to Maggie

The farm was my new beginning,
the one I started with you. I found you in all of this.
The blood, the gore, the confusion could have
Torn us apart, but our lives continued.
We’d sneak into our secret places,
I wedded you with a stranger’s ring, one I cut off
their rotting finger, and you took me anyway.
There’s a new beginning, both of us within you.

Headlights blind me before the man above
us. Smirking, swinging his barbed wire bat.
He smashed our friend into brain matter. He
turns to me, bringing the bat down upon my
head. This is how our story ends. Your screams
forces me to answer, choking out, “I’ll find you.”

To: Lucille,
From: Negan

I named the bat after you- I'm sorry that I did.
    You fought until your brain turned black,
    but I couldn't bring myself to finish it.
I found her when I was with a group that didn't last.
    I battled the living and the dead with her, dripping gore
    by my side, but I wanted you instead.
You couldn't beat the sickness. It was too late.
    It's my fault. If I wasn't so selfish,
    you could have your victory.
I'm sorry I named the bat after you,
    but, at least, this way you could win.

The Phantom

This dream I had was during the time when
he was still mysterious, a ghostly
figure haunting the thoughts and the lives of
political chess pieces. Lodging in
a lavish resort, reminiscent of the
Stanley Hotel. I was alone, I think.
I heard pandemonium coming from
the ballroom where a political ball
was taking place. Donning a gorgeous
gown, I sprinted down the stairs and scanned the
room from the balcony in utter horror.
Blood made crimson pools, staining the floor. The
invitees scramble in panic to
escape whatever, or whoever
crafted the scene before me, though I knew
exactly who's work this was. It was him.
I had my eyes on him. Black tactical
suit, vest resembling a strait jacket,
weapons strapped to every part of him. A
muzzle concealing his mouth and
black bulletproof goggles obscuring his
eyes. Stringy brown hair hides what his facial gear
does not. However, all this is not what confirmed
my suspicions. No, not at all. It was
the bionic arm, replacing the lost
limb adorned with a red Soviet star. That
is exactly what I needed to see.

The Phantom (continued)

The metal glistened in the light from the
crystal chandelier; he did not belong.
It was unreal, something out of a ghost
story. He stood in the middle of the
ruins, surveying his chaos before
spotting me from above. He holds my gaze
for a long moment, daring me to do
something. All I can do is stare. I know
I am not his mission; he already
completed it. Instead, this was the man
trapped inside the monster before me sobbing,
"Look what I have done! Look what I have done…
Forgive me." I always wondered if this
same moment ever happened to the young
man inside the phantom, the Sergeant who
died for his country, but slaughtered for
the one that killed him. Now, my thoughts are confirmed.
I give him a nod, hoping that he gets
what I try to convey. He stares a trice
longer before returning the gesture
and all but floats away and out of sight.
Most are left to wonder if what they saw
was a man or a specter, but I know.
I know what I saw; I will always know.

Peanut Butter Teeth

I want to rip my blue nails off and shred them
until the glittery glue is gone
To keep you away, I'll slather peanut
butter on my teeth and bare them when you

approach. I never wanted to feel this
way, the way that everyone's described as
the best thing to happen to them. Ready
to give it up and die for them. But I

did. I listened to the way you
explained how the race made your
heart do the same, how you related
to the Boy with the Scar, and how I

am the Magical Girl, the girl of your
Wildest Dreams. Your sister said girls
like me didn't exist. I'm wild, contained,
only in books of wonder, but I'm here.

I'm here, between your legs, your hands
on my hips, barely holding them. Tears on
both of our cheeks, mourning for what
could've been, should've been but never will be.

For my sake, and for yours, I'll replace my
teeth with peanuts and snarl if you come around
with sobs cracking the shells, and I'll rebel against
every desire to have you one more time.

The Final Destination: Plastic in the Open Oceans

Tiani Christian
Faculty Mentor: Steven Petersheim
Editor: Ron Itnyre

Abstract

Plastic is an essential resource for manufacturing given the limitless possibilities that it offers for packaging design, but the single greatest downfall of the material is the threat that unrecycled plastic poses to the environment, specifically marine wildlife. Researchers are working to gain a better understanding of oceanic pollution, but we know that there are at least five giant garbage patches that float in our open oceans today. The paper disucusses the problems and possible solutions for this global-marine problem.

Keywords

plastic, environment, recycle, plasic debris, marine crises, wildlife, biodegradability

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Introduction

Plastic is an essential resource for manufacturing given the limitless possibilities that it offers for product packaging, medical supplies, construction, and food preservation, but the single greatest downfall of the material is the threat that unrecycled plastic poses to the environment, specifically marine wildlife. Researchers are working to gain a better understanding of oceanic pollution, but we know that there are at least five giant garbage patches that float in our open oceans today. Marine wildlife, from microorganisms to large mammals such as whales, are victims of plastic pollution, most commonly through the ingestion of/or entanglement in plastic debris. A lack of knowledge on the problem causes hesitancy in finding the most appropriate solution, but it's clear that a reduction in the use of plastic is the first place to seek solutions. Mankind's extensive use and disposal of plastic is largely at fault for the accumulation of plastic debris in the open oceans and beaches, and the harmful effects it has on ocean wildlife, which can be significantly decreased by the general public and corporations working to reduce the amount of garbage that enters the ocean to begin with.

Why Plastic

Versatility is the most important virtue that has attracted manufacturers to the use of plastic since its introduction in the early twentieth century. Plastic was invented as a much-needed alternative for natural resources, the scarcity of which was a growing problem in the late nineteenth century (Science History Institute). Unlike many resources used previously, plastic is very easy to transport from place to place given its light weight, and it has the durability of materials such as metal or glass, which is why its production for commercial purposes has doubled every 11 years since its beginning in the 1950s (Wilcox et al. 11899; Ryan et al. 2000). Unsurprisingly, researchers have discovered that the disturbing amount of plastic found in the marine environment has grown in accordance with the higher production of the material (Wilcox et al. 11899; Ryan et al. 1999). Today it is believed that up to 580,000 pieces of plastic fragments, more than double the amount from 2001, can be found in each square kilometer of the world's oceans, a concentration that never would have been possible before commercial use (Wilcox et al. 11899; Kaiser 1506). It would be difficult for one to argue that the increased use of plastic for manufacturing products, specifically single-use packaging, has no correlation to the increased concentration of plastic debris floating in the oceans.

The durability of plastic is one of the root causes for the buildup of plastic debris. The material is fragile enough to be broken down from large items to small fragments, which is why most of the plastics found in the water are tiny fragments of once larger items (Mole 13). Plastic stands the test of time, however, as it may take decades to centuries to be broken down, if it decomposes at all (Cózar et al. 10239; Ryan et al. 1999). Plastic is broken down through "a combination of photodegradation, oxidation and mechanical abrasion," but even when the plastic is in direct sunlight, it can still withstand for decades (Ryan et al. 1999). To further complicate the issue, the ocean can also provide shelter from UV radiation and a low temperature atmosphere ideal for preservation (Ryan et al. 1999). Plastic's durability is an asset to manufacturers, but a crisis for the marine environment.

Problems

Irresponsible disposal of plastic is a root cause for the high concentration of plastic found in the oceans today. According to Ryan et al., the two main reasons that plastic ends up in the water are the dumping of garbage by ships and "land-based sources such as runoffs from rivers, waste water systems, wind-blown litter and recreational litter left off beaches," meaning that both of these can be attributed to the method of disposal of plastic items (2000). Less than 20% of plastic is recycled around the world, both on a corporate and societal level, which begs the question of whether or not this problem would still exist if that percentage were higher (Howard et al.).

Marine Crises

The consequences that have arisen from the increasing levels of plastic pollution are concerning, especially considering the formation of at least five giant garbage patches in the open oceans (Mole 13). A garbage patch is considered an area of ocean that has an especially high concentration of pollution, and they are composed mostly of plastic "particles smaller than 1cm in diameter" (Cózar et al. 10239). The great Pacific garbage patch is the most familiar to the general public, but there is said to be more in the North Atlantic and Pacific Oceans (Cózar et al. 10239; Kaiser 1506). Plastic can be found around the world, even in places that are mostly untouched by humans, which is concerning given the distance that this material is able to travel (Cózar et al. 10239). Cózar et al. explain how the use of "oceanic circulation models" have aided in the discovery that the debris seems to be accumulating in "all five subtropical ocean gyres" in accordance with the ocean's movements (10239). It's possible that these oceanic movements act as "conveyor belts" and collect debris, in which large amounts ultimately end up in the same "central convergence zone" (Cózar et al. 10239). The mobility of plastic in the oceans is becoming more and more of a concern for the future of the marine environments.

Wildlife

Marine wildlife are the primary victims of oceanic pollution, primarily through ingestion of/or entanglement in plastic and other garbage. The ingestion of plastic affects over 600 species of animals and organisms, especially seabirds, who are most commonly affected by the "mechanical" functions of the body being interrupted (Wilcox et al. 11899; Cozar 10239). Many creatures mistakenly eat the plastic, in which case the item has the ability to cause organ damage or to block the gastrointestinal system (Wilcox et al. 11899). This issue is particularly troublesome given the decreasing populations of seabirds, which are declining much faster than that of other species and could be partially due to the pollution of plastic (Wilcox et al. 11899). In addition, the accumulation of plastic in the gut has been known to cause decreased health or starvation in animals, such as seabirds, due to the lack of available space in the gut for food (Howard et al.; Wilcox et al. 11899). Given that plastic ingestion will reach 99% of seabird species by 2050, one could say that this is an entirely new norm for the health and nutrition of nearly all seabirds (Wilcox et al. 11899).

Entanglement is another significant threat facing ocean creatures today, as becoming entangled in ocean debris can cause bodily harm or death to marine animals such as fish, turtles, and whales. Much of the material in which animals get entangled is fishing gear, both commercial and personal, and it poses a very large threat to those who get caught under or tangled in the gear (NOAA). Immobility caused by entanglement can cause a sea creature to drown or starve, or it could decrease its ability to dodge impending hazards such as boats or predators (NOAA). Entanglement in human-made objects is thought to be the most drastic threat that humans pose to the lives of many whale species (NOAA). Thick pieces of plastic or other items can cause injury to fish or other ocean animals when they become caught, as the items have the ability to cut into flesh, suffocate them, or deform their bodies.

While the danger of ocean plastic is clear to researchers, some objections are being made to the severity of the problem. Biological oceanographer James Leichter points out that "there's a lot more water than plastic" in the ocean, and that the issue of plastic pollution has too little information to know the true impacts that it might have on the environment (qtd. in Kaiser 1506).

While it is true that there is a serious lack of information about the "scope of the problem" in terms of numbers, the paths by which the plastic travels, and the extent of its effects on the environment, there is much known about the effects it has on animals and marine organisms, as well as the abundance of plastic debris (Law et al. 1185). Researchers are aware that there is a lack of knowledge about the effects and extent of marine pollution, but many are hopeful that gaining a better understanding will increase the likelihood of finding a solution.

Necessity, Recycle, & Biodegradability

The necessity of plastic for manufacturing is another objection that the issue of marine pollution faces. Other materials do not offer the durability and light weight that plastic does, which makes it an irreplaceable resource to companies who manufacture products. While there are many alternatives available that would assist individuals and corporations in reducing plastic use, the reality of replacing plastic with one of its biodegradable counterparts would be complex and nowhere near as efficient (MacDonald). All things considered, it's possible that biodegradable plastic, which has a tougher plastic component, would not improve the state of the problem at all if it does not make it through a composting system, which would defeat the purpose of biodegradability (MacDonald). Even if all products were biodegradable, less than 20% of plastic is recycled worldwide and many countries do not have the infrastructure to support the recycling such high quantities anyway (MacDonald; Howard et al.) Without discovering an easier alternative for plastic, the amount of effort and money that it would take on a societal and corporate scale would be unlikely, which dulls the chances of biodegradable alternatives replacing traditional plastic all together.

Although the complete discontinuation of plastic is not likely in our near future, there is plenty to be said about the importance of reducing the amount of plastic that enters the ocean. Ryan et al. claim that in order to achieve a decreased level of pollution, educating the general public and "specific user groups" about the importance of proper garbage disposal practices is necessary, as is governmental involvement in legislation efforts, such as banning the dumping of plastic in the waters (2000). For example, the European Parliament has recently voted in favor of a bill which would severely limit the production of single-use plastic items, specifically plastic eating utensils, straws, containers and cups, and other food and beverage-related plastics all across Europe (Howard et al.). The passing of this bill would likely be powerful enough to modify some of the long-engrained habits of consumers and potentially make a larger impact on efforts to phase out unnecessary plastic items

Solutions

The necessary steps are being taken at a corporate level to reduce the overuse and waste of single-use plastic items such as straws, water bottles and plastic bags. A partnership comprised of 250 organizations (including Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, L'Oreal, and Unilever) who together manufacture 20% of the world's plastic packaging has banded together under the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment initiative (Howard et al.). The committee seeks to "promote a circular economy for plastic" in which plastic waste will be reused rather than disposed of (Howard et al.). In order to make this a reality, "collection and processing facilities" will need to be established to regulate the recycling process of these items, and with the $200 million that has been collected from the NPEGC initiative, these facilities are becoming a realistic goal for the future of plastic waste disposal (Howard et al.).

Similarly, 22 aquariums nationwide are involved in the Aquarium Conservation Partnership, which participates in "No Straw November" and similar efforts, such as lobbying and encouraging businesses like United Airlines and the Chicago White Sox to be more stingy with their distribution of straws (Howard et al.). In the past year, the ACP has "eliminated the need for five million straws" in their efforts alone, which would provide an encouraging incentive for other corporations who are looking to make a difference while also benefiting the reputation of their brand (Howard et al.). In addition to funding and driving the initiatives, the partnerships of these organizations are essential to shedding light on the importance of responsible plastic disposal and setting industry standards.

There is still much to learn about the effects and extent of marine pollution, but enough information exists to understand that it is a threat to the environment, as most researchers and environmentalists would agree. Ryan et al. insist that the best way to find a solution is to gather information about the problem in order to implement the most efficient countermeasures (1999). Recent mathematical simulations have aided researchers in predicting the source of the debris, meaning that it could be possible to find out exactly how much each country contributes to the polluted waters (Mole 13). By analyzing the ocean's currents and other movements, this technology has provided a better understanding of the routes that plastic could travel in one year in the open oceans when leaving from certain points (Mole 13). A better understanding of the sources and fate of the plastic debris floating in the oceans will be a necessary tool in understanding how to combat the problem. For example, it's expected that areas with high amounts of both plastic debris and seabirds are the most threatened by the effects of plastic ingestion, which could help lead protection efforts by identifying problem areas (Wilcox et al. 11902).

Public education and media efforts could provide an additional push to help improve plastic use and recycling habits. Much of the alterations that could be made by the individual are relatively simple, such as carrying a reusable water bottle in place of disposable ones, avoiding use of unnecessary single use plastic items like straws and stir sticks, and signing up for local recycling collection services (Hutchinson). However, stronger actions like beach clean-ups organized by organizations and clubs and citizens supporting bans on single-use plastic items in local government legislations would have a more direct impact on the problem of ocean pollution (Hutchinson). Countless companies have begun to make it a priority to engage in recycling and plastic reduction efforts, but the general public also needs encouragement from corporate brands, media outlets, governments, and educational institutions to modify its daily disposal behaviors. But moreover, the system that allows for the consistent production of plastic needs to be reevaluated and manufacturers should be encouraged, or required, to produce less harmful materials.

Conclusion

The overuse of single-use plastic items has caused an abundance of plastic particles in the oceans, and the increasing concentration of debris in the water is becoming a growing concern for the environmental safety of marine wildlife. Plastic, while offering an ease of transport and durability to manufacturers, poses a severe threat to ocean creatures from microorganisms to whales alike through the mistaken ingestion of plastic particles and entanglement in debris. The irresponsible waste disposal and low recycling rate that most of the world is accustomed to today is another one of the primary contributors to the concerning amount of litter floating in the oceans. If the general public understood the magnitude and impact of marine pollution and the simplicity of the alterations necessary to make a change, a larger transformation could take place, especially if these practices became societal norms. A better understanding of the extent and effects of marine pollution are necessary to finding the most effective solutions. With big-name organizations, governments, environmental and educational institutions, and a growing portion of society participating the efforts to reverse the effects of marine pollution, the future is hopeful for our beloved oceanic environments.

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Religion in Multiculturalism. The Less-Navigated Landscape

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Editor: Jennifer Drummond

Abstract

Influenced by the Iserian reading stages and the effects that it might have on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners' reading and writing skills, and the exploration of religion in multiculturalism, the present research is set to explore this less-navigated topic in multiculturalism. ESOL learners, as part and parcel of the American composition classroom, come from different spiritual backgrounds and divergent reading and writing skills. Our major task, as teachers in the pluralistic society, should be to maintain an inclusive environment for the less-represented population and the dominant equally. This research explores the effects of the Iserian reading theory and the Talk Out Aloud (TOL) technique on ESOL learners' writing and reading skills. In this study, the themes chosen for the students are based on religion in multiculturalism. Since this research paper is still not implemented, I played the role of a student answering some of the activities. The answers showed the significant impact that this collection of units had on me as an ESOL learner and a multilingual. It further suggests some recommendations for teachers aspiring to tackle this facet of inclusion and teaching composition.

Keywords

ESOL, English for Speakers of Other Languages, composition, religion, multiculturalism, Iserian reading, TOL technique, Talk Out Loud, Talk Out Aloud

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Introduction

Reading and writing are the mechanisms by which we interact and develop intellectually. The emphasis on the reading response and how it is transformed into writing has taken many directions in literature and writing courses. However, attributing a liberating voice to the multicultural, multilingual learner requires careful planning. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students, as part of the diverse student population, should receive equal opportunities for inclusion in writing and reading courses. They should indeed be engaged in the process of acculturation through dialogue, monologue, and personal style development. How teachers should design lessons akin to the ESOL learners' intellectual and personal self within the academic setting is approached in this paper. In a sequence of lessons, the present paper delves into the less-discussed topic in multiculturalism with particular attention to the Iserian reading stages. My personal experience as an ESOL learner and teacher informed my selection of the reading texts and the strategies in this project. After exploring readings on multiculturalism and living the experience of a multilingual student in the American context, I decided to flesh out my insights into an instructional design on inclusion and teaching reading and writing. Religion in multicultural education has been the less-discussed dimension. In this project, which is based on multicultural pedagogy, incorporation of spirituality, religion, and oppression constitute the thematic background of the readings in a sequence of units that are designed and intended for ESOL learners within the American context. The objectives that are aimed at in this project, therefore, are divided into the following:

General Objectives:
1. Choose and level multicultural texts for ESOL learners.
2. Incorporate religion-awareness into multiculturally-responsive reading and writing courses.

Specific Objectives:
3. Design model units and lessons plans for ESOL learners
4. Modeling by choosing mentor texts that are thematically-inspired by ethnicity and religion.
5. Develop ESOL students' reading proficiency through the TOL technique akin to the Iserian reading stages.

The main research questions that I set to answer, henceforth, are the following:

1. How can inclusion in writing and reading instruction help ESOL learners develop strong reading strategies?

2. What implications, if any, has religion on multicultural pedagogy in ESOL writing courses?
3. To what extent can meta-cultural, ethnic, and religious awareness create a safe inclusive learning environment?
4. What effects does the TOL technique have on ESOL learners reading and metacognitive skills?

Theoretical Overview and Rational

Uncovering the mechanisms of interaction between the text and the reader has taken multiple directions within academia. Reading, as a dynamic cycle of intake and output, has predominantly intrigued philosophers, literary critics, educators, and the emerging cognitive and neural research-inspired linguists. Reader-response theory—or Reception Theory, as Wolfgang Iser prefers to call it--was the preferred literary analysis theory until the 1960s. The German psychologist and philosopher, Iser wrote *The Act of Reading*, and *The Implied Reader* to account for the importance of the interaction between the reader and the text. Unlike Hans-Georg Gadamer, Iser's treatise is directed to fiction analysis, hence limiting the scope of its generalization to other fields of study. If Iser's interest is in the interactional process that the reader generates while reading the text, then there needs to be an intrinsic value in the mental capacities of the reader that can act and react to the text through inferencing, locating, gap-filling, and replaying the imaginative and aesthetic value of fictive texts.

Taking the reader as a principal-agent in the realizations of the textual meaning and its significance, Iser devoted his two books to pinpointing the precepts of reading as an understanding model. Inspired by Roman Ingarden's "schematized views", Iser classifies the literary reading into three main parts, the "artistic" text, which is the author's creation, its "aesthetic" value, which is achieved by the act of a reader reading the text, and the "literary work," which "lies halfway between the two" (Iser I). He goes on to say that there is a virtual world, which results from the interconnectedness between the text and the reader.

During the trial of recognition, imagination, and recreation in search of meaning, the reader's mind works out ways to piece parts of the text together in what is termed by Iser and Cognitive Linguists as "gestalts"; or "frames" to use Ervin Goffman's term. "It arises from the meeting between the written text and the individual mind of the reader with its own particular history of experience, its own consciousness, its own outlook" (Iser 289). The awareness-raising techniques that result from the theories can indeed open up ways for our intellect in a journey of otherness to accept and negotiate texts written about other cultures. "Every text read draws a different boundary within our personality so that a virtual background (the real "me") will take on a different form, according to the theme of the text concerned. This is inevitable, only for the fact that the relationship between alien theme and virtual background is what makes it possible for the unfamiliar to be understood" (Iser 299).

Among the gaps in Iser's reading theory is the role of selection and personal interest in reading. He explains 'expectations' and 'anticipations' without acknowledging the role of purpose and interest in reading particular texts (quoted in Hamilton& Schneider 642). If a multicultural approach to pedagogy is fostered, Iser's approach would favorably turn these criticisms to advantage. Indeed, readers tend to choose what appeals to their interest and that reading is a "goal-oriented activity", but by encouraging students to give life to the ideas in the text through imagination, perceptions, experiences, and to seek 'hidden meanings', they will learn how to secede from their reading prejudices. In the context where I learned and taught, giving the learner total freedom to react and interact with the text has limited dimensions. We were alerted against the use of personal "I" in formal academic writing due to the cultural rhetorical differences between our first language (L1) and the target language (English as a Foreign Language). Exploring the Iserian reading stages would be a concern for novice multicultural learners who are unfamiliar with it. As an ESOL learner, I was taught how to "identity gaps, locate information, ask questions, and revisit the text", but the whole process was done interchangeably without denoting each with a separate title. Equity pedagogy should tackle all facets of teaching and learning, including learners' rhetorical style choices.

One of the challenges teachers following Iser's model might face is the generalization of his act of reading to all types of readers. His theory is mainly based on the 'implied reader', a quality that is restricted only to a few students. If his theory is to be taken as a milestone for reading instruction, more elaboration on reading as a natural process that a real reader and a real author negotiate should take place. This can be achieved through modeling the thinking process that the students go through as they read texts. It is equally vital to demonstrate an understanding of reading as a matrix of text, and possible readers, as Stockwell says,

> …neither the text alone nor the reading alone, but the combined effect and experience of the literary object in the conscious world. It should be clear from this formulation that the most principled and direct way of attempting an account of what is happening on each occasion of literary reading must involve a proper knowledge of how the language in and of the text works and a decent understanding of how readers 'minds work. (Peter Stockwell 45)

Multicultural education is an arena for negotiation, between cultures and identities; The reader-response approach is one of the ways that teachers should enact to enhance this negotiation, and develop a meta-cultural competence in diverse cultural student populations. Teachers following Iser's approach can "open a space in their classroom where diverse cultural codes of all kinds will be contested" (Roemer 914). Though it might be outdated, Marjorie Godlin Roemer's article on the applications of reader-response theory to ensure equality and cultural negotiation seems important to consider. She recounts an experiment using the Iserian-based teaching model with first-year students. The teacher that Roemer observed asked students to offer responses after reading the first chapter of Richard Write's *Black Boy*. Instead of interpreting the whole chapter, they focused on the opening of the chapter, where the character was beaten seriously. Her students, instead of elaborating on the main events of the text, turned the discussion to the cultural negotiation of this particular violent act. "One student began: "I really was upset by the violence of his home." Another: "What do you mean, violence?" First: "You know . .. the brutality . . . when he's beaten." Second: "You mean when his mother whips him? That's not brutality. Do you think he should have set that fire?" (913). She further exemplifies from *Hunger of Memory* by Richard Rodriguez to showcase the consequences of silencing students "in which education can "declass" someone and simultaneously alienate him from himself and any possibilities of using his education as a transformative experience "(917).

Her proposal for a liberating, student-attuned, culturally-cognizant pedagogy that is akin to student aspirations--and based on the reader-response theory--is one of the ways teachers can pursue to take a multicultural approach. She concludes that "reading is not viewed merely as a special skill applicable to courses in English Departments, but rather as a necessary transaction we all hold with the world. Reading becomes the study of how we make sense of things, focused both on shared texts and on what we, as individuals and as a group, make of them" (Roemer 219).

Iser's stages of reading, which build toward making meanings out of texts by bringing the learners' individual interpretive readings to the text can be applied through the Think Out Aloud technique. ESL/EFL (English as a second Language in English speaking country/English as Foreign Language in a non-English speaking country) learners' "lack of experience with a creative, personalized mode of reading is compounded by the linguistic, cultural, and social dimensions of a foreign- language text, for which they are the non- intended audience" (Kramsch quoted in Davis 420). Therefore, ESL/EFL students should be oriented to dissect the text through a sequence of questions at each segment of the text. Davis, in his article "The Act of Reading: Pedagogical Implications of Iser's Reader Response Theory", details the steps that the teacher and students in an EFL context should follow to analyze a French novel. His main aim is to provide foreign language readers a means to voice their reflections on the text where the teacher acts as a mediator and a facilitator to the transition of meaning from students to texts and vice versa. He concludes that "integrating reading into the foreign-language curriculum entails multiple dialogues: between reader and text, between teaching-mediating reader and not-yet-competent reader, and among student readers. This dialogic process ought to make the foreign language more meaningful and, thus, make acquisition more natural" (Davis 426). In this sequence of lessons, the students will be trained to use the TOL throughout their readings of the selected texts. The lessons will also be supplemented with Iser's reader-response stages though they will not be explicitly explained to give students free personal style choices. As an example of multilingual learners, my analysis of the Marilyn Monroe poem, which justifies the implicit presentation of the Iserean reading stages to the learners, seemed different due to my internalized linguistic systems.

I preferred to integrate the whole process that I went through while first reading the poem, watching the video, and doing some research to uncover the hidden meanings that the author wanted to convey.

According to Lee Anne Bell, "Social justice refers to reconstructing society in accordance with principles of equity, recognition, and inclusion. It requires confronting the ideological frameworks, historical legacies, and institutional patterns and practices that structure social relations unequally so that some groups are advantaged at the expense of other groups that are marginalized" (4). Unlike diversity, which describes the natural intrinsic qualities of cultural and societal differences, social justice is a broader term that accounts for a universal interest in co-existence, co-operation, understanding, appreciation, and equal material distribution. Choosing appropriate content and pedagogical perspectives in Social Justice Education (SJE) is geared to "increasing personal awareness, expanding knowledge, and encouraging action" (Bell 60). Instructors should skillfully attune learning outcomes to students' needs, perceptions, and aspirations, and particularly avoid content that presents stereotypical views on particular groups. Pedagogy-wise Bloom and Krathwohl's teaching model appropriately addresses the learning stages that every learner goes through, Bell et.al claim.

Though realizing social justice seems less feasible in a highly pluralistic society, raising awareness of the history of oppression, Christian hegemony, and White racism is an integral part of taking action toward ourselves and our society (Bell 1). Instead of taking the literal dictionary definition of oppression, Bell investigates the multifaceted nature of the concept. For her, oppression is defined through its covert and overt features which characterize "it as restrictive, pervasive, and cumulative; socially-constructed, categorizing, and group-based; hierarchical, normalized, and hegemonic; intersectional and internalized, and durable and mutable" (Bell 6). It is through an appropriate and thorough understanding of oppression that SJE can be feasibly-enacted. Though I had a personal experience with religious stereotyping, as described in the following line, I was unaware of the terms to describe it, nor the origins of this impediment to SJE. It is true that my head covering was stereotyped overtly by a teenager, and another person appreciated and questioned my 'good pronunciation'; but it all depends on my perceptions of acceptance to be part of the society and to take action to live peacefully together. It is this attitude that my simulated students would be exploring through the proposed units.

Religion, as a spiritual part of human beings, constitutes a major element of education. Salili and Hoosain expand on the notion of religious intolerance that multicultural, diversity, and SJE addressed only vaguely. They propose a multifaceted approach that tackles the underlying cause of religious stereotypes; and by learning and opening dialogues in educational and workplace settings about accommodation and the assimilation process that religious groups experience. Hoosain and Salili demonstrate that religion is a strong force that led to conflicts and tensions globally throughout history. They add that it is the only issue that people die for throughout history, henceforth it should be addressed in multicultural education to cope with the diverse and complex individual spiritual and religious identities inside the classroom and institutions at large. Their proposal transcends the identification of stereotypes and intolerance to "an appreciation of the trials and tribulations as well as triumphs of different religions" (3). Hoosain and Salili note that religion in multicultural literacy is additive rather than subtractive, for it develops students' critical thinking skills. As part of nonpartisan multicultural education, the religious dimension, when openly discussed, "is not meant to replace the student's personal or familial religious experience…" (4). Separation between the State and the Church has problematized the discussion of religion and multicultural education. If a multicultural, social justice, and diversity approach to education is basically-built on inclusiveness and appreciation of difference, diversity, and 'otherness' (even if this last word is considered segregational by some religious groups if it takes a religious connotation), the spiritual side of the human education-bound individual should be accepted and appreciated.

Religious schema is the backbone of learning about and for religion. Psychological research proves that people develop this schema from childhood through formal and informal teaching. Through a repeated practice that is intentional or unintentional, the self-religious schema becomes firm and hard to change. That is, "self-focus increases the devotee's awareness of other peoples' views about religious materials" (Hoosain and Salili 6). This can be achieved through activating this schema inside the teaching environment. When teachers and students call upon the religious side of their being, they strengthen their self-focus and openly negotiate it vis-à-vis others present in their environment. In the first quadrant of every chapter in Adams et.al's book *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, they include self-awareness, self-focus, Who am I? activities, which serve as milestones for recognizing the impact of stereotypes, privilege, and hegemony in society (182).

H.S Wilson advocates "an empathetic teaching and learning of world religions" (9). Loving the other neighbor in world religions is the binding aspect of all religions. Like educators, religions sought out ways to impart knowledge and contribute to the well-being of humanity. Religious leaders were and still are practitioners of thoughtful life values teachings and appreciation of human capacities of equality. Multiculturalism, according to Wilson, is a term that includes the labels "multiracial, multiethnic, multicolor, multilinguistic, multireligious, multicast, multitribal, class, and gender differences"; however, his approach to multicultural education calls for celebrating multireligious ethos. Although some multiculturalism scholars focus on teaching "worldviews," as they pertain to wider populations including secular views (atheists, agnostics…), incorporating the religious dimension into multiculturalism should be enacted at the individual level. P.L Glanzer affirms that "educators must become conscious of the influence of secular as well as religious worldviews on education, knowledge and themselves"(quoted in Salili &Hoosain 12). In a pluralistic society, which many countries are experiencing, religious plurality is inevitable. The ability to accept the other from another religion or "physical and political outlooks" should evade misunderstandings that might arise due to the lack of, or unwillingness to understanding how other religions evolved, or what factors led to the superiority of dominant religions over others.

America prides itself on the many religious and secular beliefs that compose the diverse population. In the "Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders", participant world leaders declared their commitment to collaborate with all men and women of goodwill "in pursuit of peace in all its dimensions"(15). Wilson's framework of including religion into multicultural education looks at the historic teachings of faith traditions, what he terms the "Golden Rule" of world religions (15-16). His vision for a globally inclusive pedagogical practice aims to teach the positive aspects of religions, which requires the appropriate choice of contents, teacher preparation, and pedagogical practice. Sonia Nieto contends that "Becoming a multicultural teacher…means first becoming a multicultural person" (quoted in Salili&Hoosian 37). Wilson also suggests that teachers aspiring to enact multiculturalism and religion into their teaching should be cognizant of the learners' "concerns and quests" (37). Nord& Haynes further state that "One can't be an educated human being at present without understanding a good deal about religion and its role in human affairs" (quoted in Salili&Hoosain 38).

Christine Clark takes a broader view of religion and multicultural education. Like Adams et.al, she questions the intrinsic patterns of Christian, white privilege in American society and worldwide. Her experience as a member of OHRP (University of Maryland's Office of Human Relations Programs), which is built on multicultural-religiously-inclusive learning and work environment, provides insights on how educators and policy-makers can combat Christian privilege and White supremacy. The concept 'Us and the Other' is becoming problematic as it takes different connotations over time. Clark declares that "Us/them thinking is, at its very core, anti-intellectual. It discourages critical thinking and the more complex understandings of human behavior that critical thought helps us to garner" (171). Therefore, the aim of including religion should traverse the "other" us and develop participants' critical thinking, "compassion, and collective self-interest" (Clark 174). Dialogue between students, teachers, and workers in the educational setting or the workplace is one of the strategies the author used throughout her experience. She describes the reluctance that Christian Fundamentalists showed to talk openly about their own religion because they consider it "a violation of their practice of Christianity" (Clark 186). This is one of the hurdles to multicultural education, she assumes. For a successful and inclusive education to take place, professional development-and dialogue that results in new insights about religiously-inclusive learning are needed.

As part of ethnic content, incorporating religion into a multicultural curriculum should be presupposed by a needs analysis of the learners' interests. ESL/EFL curricular are already built on needs analysis. The four levels of ethnic content integration Banks proposes are: "the contributions approach"; "the additive approach"; "the transformative approach"; and "the social approach". In the first level, teachers should focus on "heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural elements". In the second level, teachers can add "content, concepts, themes, and perspectives to the curriculum without changing its structure". In the third level, contents of the existing curriculum are "transformed to enable students to view concepts from the perspectives of diverse ethnic and cultural groups". In the fourth level, "the students make decisions on important social issues and take actions to help solve them" (quoted in Lim Na 12). If teachers want to incorporate discussions about religious oppression for adult learners, they should follow the last two models.

Within the classroom proponents of the multicultural approach propose an individualized approach to teaching. Teachers should make personal connections with students, communicate high expectations with each student, and listen attentively to grasp what the learner wants to say (Higbee et.al 23). The first two lessons are geared to this objective. The students and the teacher create a safe inclusive environment by creating their own personality collage. They will also be engaged in a group awareness activity through a model text. I chose mentor texts written by writers who experienced oppression to show students models of how injustice can be combatted through the power of the pen. The simulated advanced ESL students that would receive this intervention would get reinforcement through introducing the "Cycle of Socialization". This lesson aims to raise students' awareness of how socialization process takes shape, its sources, how it affects their lives, and "how it perpetuates itself" (Harro 46).

After this initial exposure to multicultural texts about self-identification, students will be introduced to the two novels, *The Giver* by Lois Lowry and *Love, Hate and Other Filters* by Samira Ahmed. They will also be watching a video about hate crimes. The sequence will be supplied by a WebQuest that is based on *The Giver*. WebQuests have attracted my interest in this particular project due to their positive effects on ESL/EFL students. It is also one of the strategies that motivate learners and increase collaborative and cooperative capacities. Ferris & Godar explain the underlying constructs of WebQuest learning. Four main constructs are developed in the learning process, "critical thinking, knowledge application, social skills, and scaffolding" (55). As a resourceful and challenging web-based means of engaging students in critical thinking, WebQuests, according to Bernie Dodge, meet critical thinking development theories. He further claims that the "instructional goal of WebQuests is that a learner would have analyzed a body of knowledge deeply, transformed it in some ways, and demonstrated an understanding of the material by creating something that others can respond to, online or off" (quoted in Ferris& Godar). As students follow the steps within the WebQuest framework, they develop and manipulate knowledge constructs. They also engage in group activities, which fosters cooperative learning. Scaffolding is another benefit of the WebQuests. Each step is carefully chosen for learners to arrive at new understandings of the material and learning goals of the lesson. As I demonstrated previously, the WebQuest consists of a process within a process. The aim of this systematic process is "to transform what they read into new form" (quoted in Ferris & Godar 56).

Aware of the feelings that might arise in the classroom when the religious oppression and Christian Hegemony are introduced, students will read and sign on a consent form at the onset of the second unit, which clarifies group and discussion norms, and withdrawal from discussion options. Reflective journals would be part of each unit as they would help the teacher evaluate students' motivation and needs. As Adams et.al note, "It can be easier to focus on the bias, prejudice, and discrimination experienced by marginalized religions" (287). In this religious-oppression-inspired sequence, I chose texts that narrate the experiences of oppression and sameness. There are also some recommendations for the teacher implementing this sequence of units. The latter should hold no particular preference or imposition of one religion over another. They should have resources for students to explore and learn about their religion or another religion but in another setting outside the classroom (Adams.et.al 287). Another recommendation would be to give the minority who show no affiliation to a specific religion the opportunity to openly engage in the "cultural bias against the non-believers in the context of Christian Hegemony" (287). The second novel *The Giver* by Lois Lowry centers around the "all are equal" under one rule, which can be interpreted by any minority group as oppression and deprivation of one's private religious or cultural difference. Though this requires higher critical thinking skills from the participants, I assume that advanced adult ESL learners would successfully interpret the two novels due to the various religious and secular backgrounds they have.

Assignments

Lesson I Model Plan

Unit One: Developing meta-cultural awareness (Who am I?)
Grade level(s): Advanced ESL/EFL (American context)
Duration: 90mins
Lesson Title: Developing meta-cultural awareness (Who am I?)
Students' Objectives:
Students will:

1. Analyze mentor texts.
2. Learn the ethical standards and the objectives of the unit.
3. Become aware of the intersections of multiple identities.
4. Learn the difference between personal and social identity.

Materials: White board/ markers.

Lesson Procedures:

Pre-tasks (10):

T (teacher) explains the learning objectives of the unit and the lesson.

T distributes a note on Ethical standards, which includes: avoiding the use of offensive language, respect for each other's' arguments, and the use of euphemism. Use "I" instead of the offensive directive "you.".

Tasks (50mins):

T asks students, "Have you ever felt ashamed of your family or wished you were living someone else's life? What about your heritage or family would you have changed?"

Ss (students) answer verbally, and the teacher elaborates on how identity has become a complex concept.

T distributes text handouts.

Ss read silently.

T asks students to write for 10 mins about what they were thinking about when they read the text.

Ss read aloud their short paragraphs.

T elaborates on their answers.

T asks students to work in pairs to answer the following question: discuss the changes Granados's mother made to their lawn. Do you think anyone cared what the lawn looked like? Why or why not? Why do you think Granados was concerned about what it looked like? Discuss your group's thoughts with the class.

T explains that writing in this session is preliminary. They should refine their papers before submission in the following week.

Post-tasks (5mins):

T asks students to read the handouts (Adams et.al 106-108) provided as homework. They should revisit their paragraphs and develop them into a one-page long paper.

T reminds students that they should bring the mentor text to class in the next session.

Lesson II Model Plan

Unit One: **Developing meta-cultural awareness (Who am I?)**
Grade level(s): Advanced ESL/EFL (American context)
Duration: 90mins
Lesson Title: Developing meta-cultural awareness (Who am I?) (Cont)
Students' Objectives:
Students will:

1. Develop meta-cultural awareness.
2. Grasp the meaning of social identities.
3. Write a self-identification collage.

Lesson Procedures:
Pre-tasks (10):

T asks for Students' reflections on how each individual identity shapes the way they interact with the world. The teacher can model how it is done. The Mexican student (in the mentor text), for example, might share how being biracial allows her to be a part of two worlds.

Tasks (50mins):

T Introduces the socialization wheel, and students revisit the mentor texts through it.

Ss write a self-identification collage (with particular attention on how ethnicity and religion help define some people from some cultures taking inspiration from the mentor text and the Socialization Wheel (Source: Harro.B qt in Adams.et.al 107).

Post-tasks (10mins):

Ss write introductory reflective journals on what they learned from the identity exploration unit and what do they anticipate to learn from the following unit on Religious oppression and hate crimes.

Unit Two: Religious oppression/ explorations of religious oppression and hate crimes.

Lesson III Model Plan

Grade level(s): Advanced ESL/EFL (American context)
Duration: 90 mins
Lesson Title: Introduction to Religious Oppression
Students' objectives:
Students will

1. Explore personal views of their own religious/non-religious experiences and perspectives, as well as with those of their extended family and the cultural context.
2. Recognize the impact of stereotypes and experiences of minority religious groups in US society.
3. Analyze Love Hate and Other Filters by Samira Ahmed through the lens of religious oppression.
4. Transfer input from readings to their writing.

Lesson Procedures

Pre-tasks (10):

T introduces the theme of the unit and distributes the consent form stating that diverse feelings might arise from the contents of the unit, whichso it is part of their learning process. T also informs them that withdrawing from discussions is acceptable.

Tasks (50mins):

T distributes an excerpt (chapter 12-13) from the novel Love Hate and Other Filters by Samira Ahmed.

Ss read the excerpt silently.

Ss haved a timed-writing activity (15-20 mins) recording their reactions to the text following the Iserian first stage of identifying gaps.

Teacher uses the TOL technique to help students through the process of understanding oppression in the story. Students should record teacher's modeling for future reference.

Ss in groups discuss their thinking aloud about what they thought about when reading the text;. wWhat life experiences they brought to the story.

Ss revise their first written reaction of the novel to add details gained from the group discussion. They should formulate questions about religious oppression and Christian Hegemony in US history. Ss can also explore social identities vis-à-vis religious affiliation, as demonstrated in the novel.

Post-task (10mins): Homework:

T asks Ss to read the text on the history of religious oppression (source: *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* by Adam et.al 257-261) to further explore the concept and back their paper.

T asks students to think of other types of oppression to be discussed in the next session.

Sample Response

Lesson I Sample Answer

1. Immediate timed writing response to the mentor text (True Colors by Christine Granados)

The generation gap is one of the most common topics that writers explore. In this text, the writer recounts her experience as an American and a Mexican. She first explains how she sees herself as American as apple pie. She then explains the juxtaposition between her mother's Mexican-inspired lifestyle and hers in El Paso. Granados recounts how she disdained the four frog statues that her mother put in the front yard, as they caused her to feel un-American. In another incident that shows the author's refusal to be openly identified as Mexican, she changed the bright yellow paint of their garage doors. However, at the end of the essay, Granados claims that the same experience she had with her mother surfaced when she discussed paint color choice with her son, but unlike her mother, she was compliant and pursued her son's choice. This is another indication that generation gap eases according to cultural heritage and how each one self-identifies in a pluralistic society. Why does the teenage author think the frog statues and the yellow paint in the front yard are abashing? How did she come to this conclusion? Is it a generation gap that led to the misunderstandings between Granados and her mother?

2. Immediate timed writing response to *Love, Hate, and other Filters* by Samira Ahmed

   Reading the two chapters from the novel raises very deep and tense feelings. The main character Maya seems to be living an ordinary life like any teenage American girl. She enjoys friendships and learning. She also aspires to achieve what any other high school student dreams of. However, troubles are in her future. Those troubles originate from her religious affiliation—she is a Muslim who is stereotyped by her school and society. When she heard about the lockdown, unlike her friends, she was hoping that the attacker would be a non-Muslim due to the oppression that she might experience as her did family after the events of 9-11. After confirming the news of the bombing in Springfield, one of her classmates 'Brian' shouts, "It's a Muslim terrorist, they hate America (Ahmed 148)". Why did Brian make such a claim? Why was the teacher silent about his reaction? As events unfold, the students were able to leave school safely, but Maya's worries grew. She has "waves of nausea" and refuses to eat. The suspected terrorist is a Muslim Egyptian who shares her last name. Her feelings of alienation and rejection intensify. She longs to be a "plain old teenage American (Ahmed 153)". She wants to share the sorrow as other Americans do without being anxious, or fearful of being labeled 'a presumed terrorist' instead of an American. The feelings that Maya goes through are very appealing to every Muslim American. After the September 11th attacks, Islamophobia accelerated. The number of hate crimes against Muslims increased, and both overt and covert prejudice were witnessed among Muslims and even non-Muslims who were mistakenly-identified. Oppression has devastating impacts on individual lives and the community at large. Through Maya, the author brilliantly touches upon matters of concern to the minorities who continuously struggle to fit into American society. It is one of the examples of religious oppression that minorities overtly experience. What other types of religious oppression manifest in American society? How can minorities combat religious stereotyping and prejudice?

Implications for future classroom teaching

The sequence of units that are devoted to self-identification and religious oppression are designed for ESL students, as mentioned earlier. This population, which is presumably taking a combined reading and writing class in the American context, would consist of various adult students from different cultures, with many religious and secular beliefs. Each stage of the instructional design should be implemented carefully. I assume that this would take a whole semester. Teacher expertise is very essential to this type of instruction. Teachers should be cognizant of the changing definitions of diversity and multiculturalism, and the different world views of individual learners. As Judith Stiehm asserts, "diversity as a symbol rather than a concept requires a new language and fresh conceptualizations" (141). The multilayered institutional population conceives and experiences diversity differently, henceforth limiting the initiative of social justice and "harmonious diversity". Students, policymakers, and faculty have unique experiences of diversity. Age, social status, and everyday challenges have molded these experiences, and their share of diversity is restricted to what they visually-conceive. Although policymakers encourage diversity, they remain, observers "they have been and continue to be exempt from attempting to live it" (Steihm 143). To this end, if I taught these units or any other teacher who aspires to indulge in this facet of multiculturalism, particular reference should be made to theories of multiculturalism and diversity appreciation.

For institutions, the implementation of these units should be first discussed as most educational settings in the United States abide by the separation between state and church. Even if the choice of texts in this sequence is neutral, some students or teachers would think it is inspired by my religious affiliation. Hence, the modifications might be to consider variations in the texts chosen. Any other minority's experience can be incorporated. The objectives of the whole unit are raising students' awareness of oppression and the multidimensional perspectives of identification. As I demonstrated earlier, universal human values facilitate interreligious and intercultural communication if skillfully-implemented by the instructor.

The texts that were chosen for this project would increase students' self-identification skills. They also contribute to multiculturalism since "cultures that have provided the horizon of meaning for large numbers of human beings...are almost certain to have something that deserves our admiration and respect, even if it is accompanied by much that we have to abhor and reject" (Taylor 101). In future classroom practice, the lessons would be surely incorporated into my curriculum design. I would also transform the whole curriculum following Banks' four models of designing a multicultural curriculum (1995). "Multicultural content infusion should be seen in every unit, curriculum guide, textbook, audiovisual aid, and even the physical environment of the school. An infused curriculum should focus on where we, as a global community, have come from and what we have the potential to achieve in the future, including past, present and future problems, conflicts and triumphs" (Robinson 191-192).

Final Reflections

Enacting a multicultural approach to social justice requires legislative and institutional decisions, curricular reforms, reconsideration of teaching philosophy, and policy-makers adaptability; faculty and student self-assessment, reconsideration of teaching styles, and real-world diversity-awareness. For successful integration of multicultural approaches to writing and literature instruction, teachers--who are the principal part of the process--should choose appropriate texts that ensure voicing for every individual. Teachers should develop students' critical thinking "and the need for students to inquire into why people believe the way they do and how beliefs affect people's norms and perspectives" (Hoossain & Salili 224). Assigning research projects on the history of certain religious practices, religious stereotypes, and hate crimes can help eliminate misunderstandings, fear, and hatred that students might develop from media and other religiously-intolerant sources (for a list of guidelines to promote discussions about religion in the curriculum read Hoossain & Salili 232-233).

For a successful and inclusive education to take place, as well as professional development, dialogue that results in new insights about religiously-inclusive learning is needed. The aim of including religion should traverse the "other" us and develop participants' critical thought, "compassion, and collective self-interest" (Hossain & Salili 174). If I get the chance to teach in the American context, for which the present research is designed, I will first strengthen my understanding of other religious and non-religious beliefs and how they affect students' lives. As an ESOL learner, the books reviewed in this course spoke to me both intellectually and personally, my students would equally benefit from the selected readings, socialization wheel, and religious oppression discussions. Making change is the aim behind taking this course; so, it will be if carefully and skillfully implemented.

Conclusion

Throughout my learning journey in multiculturalism, diversity appreciation, and the social justice education sphere, I was continuously searching for content that would help me see myself as a multilingual and a Muslim. My choice to navigate the less-navigated area in the available literature on multiculturalism was reinforced with Adams et.al book *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* and Salili& Hoossain's book *Religion in Multicultural Education*. The authors of the works that I reviewed throughout this course showed the multiplicity of multicultural resources, and approaches that mainstream universities experienced, are experiencing or will be experiencing. By drawing inspirations from quantitative and qualitative studies, the authors develop an oeuvre for educators interested in implementing, investigating, or reflecting on multicultural education. Due to its complexity, achieving social justice by giving voice to every individual learner without hyphenating, or silencing the dominant is a tedious task. However, appropriate decision-making, thorough awareness of authority and self-efficacy, appropriate curricular designs, meeting students' aspirations in courses, everyday life, and the political sphere, as well as re-considering the fine line between disciplines can lead to promising multicultural education for all.

My exploration of the concepts contained in the books was implemented through the succession of units on meta-cultural awareness, religious oppression, and hate crimes. The units were thematically-based on the topics I described and linguistically-based on Iser's reading stages and the Think Out Aloud technique. Self-recognition is a complex concept, as demonstrated above; enacting a multicultural approach to our teaching or contributing to Social Justice Education requires a thorough understanding of our own selves vis-à-vis the other-selves. The sequence of lessons was limited to four lesson plans which are part of the whole design, due to the quantitative limits of the project--details about the other lessons were instead attached as appendices. In the sample response section, as I could not test these lessons in a classroom setting and as a multilingual and a Muslim, I am uniquely suited to serving as a sample ESOL student. The whole project paper was set to answer questions, as stated in the introduction; however, for more valuable and reliable data, it should be conducted inside real classrooms in the American context.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Units Plan

Sample Units: Religion in a Sample Multicultural Curriculum

Unit 1: Developing meta-cultural awareness (Who am I?)

Week 1: self-identification through modeling. Exploring modal texts on how diversity shapes identities. Texts from the book America Now: Short Readings from Recent Periodicals (121, 126), and other resources for repertoire info .

Week 2: Students' reflections on how each individual identity shapes the way they interact with the world. The teacher can model how thisit is done. The Mexican student (in the mentor text), for example, might share how being biracial allows her to be a part of two worlds. Introduce the socialization wheel and have students revisit the mentor texts through it.

Students write a self-identification collage (with particular attention on how ethnicity and religion help define some people from certainsome cultures, taking inspiration from the two mentor texts and the Socialization Wheel from the diversity book.

Introductory Reflective journals on what students learned from the identity exploration unit and what do they anticipate to learn from the following unit on Religious oppression and hate crimes.

Unit Two: Religious oppression/ explorations of religious oppression and hate crimes.

Week 1: Introduction to the unit (consent form and religious identity awareness activity). Who's in the room? activity (282); Group Norms and Guidelines.

Read the excerpt or chapter from the novel Love, Hate and Other Filters by Samira Ahmed.

Timed-writing activity (15-20 mins) on reactions to the text following the Iserian first stage of identifying gaps.

Teacher uses the TOL technique to help students through the process of understanding oppression in the story.

Week 1: (continued)

Homework: provide repertoire-filling resources for students to explore history and types of religious prejudice/ oppression. Paper on other types of religious oppression in the community (group work).

Week 2:Viewing a documentary on hate crimes (https://www.niot.org/cops/hatecrimedetective)

Timed-writing activity (15-20 mins).

In-class discussion of students' collaborative work to explore other types of religious oppression in the society.

Unit Three: Hegemony and the melting pot veil

Week 3: Read *The Giver* by Lois Lowry and watch film version (home work)

Timed-Writing activity (15-20 mins) or quiz

TOL technique questioning with students.

Homework: repertoire resources to explore religious oppression and hegemony from the book (*Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* by Adams et.al 272-273).

Week 4: WebQuest on *The Giver*, the ideal society. (http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.student.htm).

Week 5:Discussion of the project plan, students (a. develop an original plan for the context they choose: academic or professional settings). b. Create a diversity song or an article to be published or shared with the community.

Final reflections on the themes covered.

Final paper.

Appendix B: Group Norms

1. Develop the ability to acknowledge what you know, but don't pretend you do know;
2. Give others the benefit of the doubt;
3. Suspend judgementjudgment;
4. Stop making assumptions and go to a source;
5. This process is not an avenue for conversion;
6. Be sensitive to the closeness of the issue to the person and of the person to the issue;
7. Seek first to understand, then to be understood; and,
8. Make a commitment to your and others' individual readiness (Clark 198).

Appendix C: Lesson IV Plan model

Grade level(s): Advanced ESL/EFL (American context)
Duration: self-paced (two weeks)
Lesson Title: The Ideal Society
Internet Site URL: http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.student.htm
Author: Dr. Nellie Deutsch, EDD/CI
Students' objectives: (Students will)

1. Analyze and explore sameness as a form of oppression in Tthe Giver by Lois Lowry.
2. Use and consult relevant web links
3. Transfer input from WebQuest to their writing.
4. Prepare a final team report.
5. Present their work to the community.

Stages of the WebQuest found at: http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.teacher.htm#Introduction

The webquest forms the structure, resources, and content of this lesson. The following excerpted WebQuest pages include key points to assist the reader for the lesson plan IV context:

"Introduction

Lois Lowry wrote a novel about a community that seems to function perfectly. "The Giver" appears to describe a perfect society. What makes this community flawless? How has this society managed to keep things organized and under perfect control? It seems that man has finally found the ideal way to live until one member of the community starts to uncover flaws.
The students are assigned by the elders of the community to investigate why Jonas, a promising young man chose to leave the community. What made this gifted individual, chosen to be the next Giver rebel against the norms? What went wrong? What flaws did he reveal in this seemingly perfect community?

Tasks

The Team will uncover what Jonas found impossible to live with and fix the flaws in the community.
The committee will keep track of all the information they disclose from observations and interviews in a journal:
http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.committeejournal.asp
The members will present their findings and suggestions on a big screen for the whole community to view in the main auditorium. This will be done by either PowerPoint, video or play .

Process

The teams will follow the instructions as stated in the student process. The following guidelines will help you and your team:

1. Organize yourselves in teams of four. Find out about team organization and work on the following page: http://www.nelliemuller.com/Task_and_group_work.htm
2. Make sure everyone on the team has read The Giver by Lois Lowry. You should refer to the story as you work on the project.
3. Read the Tasks above and divide your work among the team members. Each member will interview another member of the community and find out what happened to Jonas. This can be his parents, sister, friends, The Giver or any other member of the community you feel would offer relevant clues as to what happened.
4. Write your individual interview reports http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.committeejournal.htm
5. The final product is a collaborative writing report that sums up the four interviews. The interviews are added to the appendix. The writtening report consists of seven parts. http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.writtenreports.htm
6. Each member will be evaluated for both team http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.evaluationofthecommitteesreport.htm and individual work: http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.individualreports.htm
7. Edit your written observations and the results of your

interviews as a team. Check the team evaluation rubrics: http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.evaluationofthecommitteesreport.htm to find out how you will be graded for team work.

8. Plan your presentation http://www.nelliemuller.com/Oral_Presentation.htm
9. You are encouraged to present your work in a creative way. You can use visual aids and other multimedia techniques like video, audio or PowerPoint presentations.
10. Make sure that each member of the committee is ready to present one aspect of the findings. Check the team evaluation rubric for your presentation: http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.presentation.htm
11. The grade is out of 100: 25 points for the individual work, 25 for the team presentation and 50 points for the team collaborative writing report.
12. Do not hesitate to ask questions throughout the project. Your teacher and I will be available. Please use the following page to send questions to me: http://www.nelliemuller.com/Write_nelliemuller.htm

Resources

The Giver: Notes on the book
http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/giver/summary.htm
Utopia: A perfect society
Utopia by Thomas Moore:
http://www.d-holliday.com/tmore/utopia.htm
Definition and other material on the subject of utopia:
http://users.erols.com/jonwill/utopialist.htm
Utopian Studies:
http://www.utoronto.ca/utopia/links.html

PowerPoint assistance:
http://www.powerpointbackgrounds.com/powerpointlinks.htm
Free templates:
http://www.awesomebackgrounds.com/freesample-ok.htm

http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/CT011323751033.aspx

Journal guides:

http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.committeejournal.htm

Graphics:

http://www.bellsnwhistles.com/

Evaluation

The students grades will based on the following criteria:

1. Individual interview and report of one of the members of the community (25 points).
   http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.individualreports.htm
2. Team final written report of the committee's findings (50 points).
   http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.evaluationofthecommitteesreport.htm and http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.writtenreports.htm
3. The team presentation of the committee's final conclusion (25 points).
   http://www.nelliemuller.com/Theperfectsociety.presentation.htm

The team will present their findings to the class by audio and visual means.

- The team presentation will be at least 5 minutes long.
- One member will introduce the topic.
- Each member of the team will speak about their individual work.
- Another member will add the conclusion.
- The presentation will include both audio and visual effects.
- You may present your work by means of: PowerPoint, video, movie, art, poster work, music, or dance.

The team will be graded for structure and content:

Structure:

- Did the presentation have an effective introduction?
- Were the major points illustrated, explained and summarized?
- Was there an effective transition between the main points?
- Did it have an effective conclusion?

Content:

- Was the content accurate?
- Did the presentation hold the class' interest?
- Wasere presentation media used effectively?

Conclusion

Students will reflect on the following questions:
How perfect was the society in *The Giver*? Did Jonas do the right thing by leaving his community?"

Appendix D: Mentor Text

True Colors by Christine Granados review the entire text at: https://www.texasmonthly.com/the-culture/true-colors/

[The beginning of the article from the *Texas Monthly*, May 2014]
As a teenager, I held firm to the notion that I was as American as apple pie — even though, growing up on the border, I ate apple pie once a decade or less. The closest I came to the classic dessert were the empanadas1 we got from the vendor who happened into Moe's, a Mexican restaurant in El Paso's Lower Valley. .....

Source: Atwan, Robert. *America Now: Short Readings from Recent Periodicals*. 11th edition New York, Bedford/ St.Martin's, , 2015.

Writing's Places: An Exploration of Immediate Environment and Student Perceptions of Writing

Elana Cutter
Edwina Helton, Faculty Mentor

Abstract
Through reflection, descriptive observation and knowledge of writing process the author describes the space, intention, trends, and other variable that impact student writing and writing environments. The practical and research knowledge about writing environments described in the article identifies a missing piece of research related to the student experience. This literature review yields planned and potential research in the classroom to extend the scholarship on student writing environments.

Keywords
writing environments, student perceptions, writing's situatedness, place, writing space, student trends, writing process theory

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Introduction

The hum of the HVAC system reverberates around the corners of my classroom as I look from face to face, curious about the extent to which my students are engaging with their writing. Within two weeks they will submit the most intellectually challenging and lengthiest piece of academic writing of the semester, and so it is a high-stakes and intimidating obstacle for many of them. They are all the type of student who value grades and who want to achieve some level of success in their academic writing; and yet, I see indifference among a handful of my students as they wrestle with their priorities. Some are chit-chatting about show choir, others are looking for early Black Friday deals, and some are seduced by the continuously connected and entertaining universe within their cell phones.

Informally, I have noticed this same trend throughout my years of teaching. Specifically, when it comes to providing in-class time for an out-of-class writing assignment, there are those students who seem to hunker down and allow their ideas to flow with ease, and there are those students who actively avoid it. No doubt, a host of variables play into the causes of such behaviors, but most recently I have wondered about the role in which immediate environment plays in writing's challenging and complex processes. What is happening in the environment to discourage some of these students from actively engaging with their writing in that moment? Emilie Siddle Walker writes that there is "a belief that students' expectations about learning do not substantially differ from those of their teachers" (323). Walker addresses an essential assumption about writing process theory, one which aligns with the kind of assumptions I would like to consider when looking to my students. She notes that such a belief, the idea that students and teachers match in how they understand learning, is inaccurate. We can apply such a thought to our understanding of writing and its processes.

Though I have my own professional knowledge, habits, and understandings of how writing works (or does not work, on some occasions), this does not mean my students' understandings align with my own. As a result, I must check my assumptions about when and where students choose to write, then strive to understand what their preferences are and why those preferences exist.

There are certain habits that we form as writers, especially those of us who must sit down and write consistently; we tend to choose our locations with care, knowing what kind of environment might impede our success and what kind of environment might encourage it. For me, I tend to seek out a quiet atmosphere where there are few to no other people present. Right now, I am sitting in my living room with the washing machine whirring back and forth in the background. Beyond that, there are no sounds, and there are no people in my immediate vicinity. I sit on the couch with my legs up on the ottoman, which is generally the pose I strike when writing, and I have a glass of water that I tend to ignore when I find writing's "flow" and that I tend to consistently nurse when my thoughts seem to halt. I seem to be nursing my glass of water pretty consistently today. Because I notice this habit in myself and the habits of my students when in the classroom, I cannot help but wonder: what are the spaces that they choose to write in, and what do their habits look like when they write in them? Surprisingly enough, especially considering how instrumental location inherently seems to be to writing, there is not much research in writing studies or process theory that unpacks the happenings or significance of the immediate places and spaces that writers choose to compose in.

As Hannah Rule determines in her 2018 review of writing's rooms and immediate writing environments, "writing's situatedness is most often theorized on expansive networked, social, and ecological scales" (404). Rule discusses the same issue that I had when first exploring this topic. Despite extensive searching through databases, I could find few pieces of scholarly literature that spoke directly to the issue of immediate writing environments. The foci of writing process, postprocess, and post-postprocess literature delved into more expansive understandings of writing environments at cultural, geographical, and global levels.

To demonstrate a leading example of this, let us look to two researchers who are entrenched within the study of writing environments. Sidney Dobrin and Christopher J. Keller describe "how different models of place and space limit or expand our understandings of diverse, texts, disciplines, peoples,cultures, and the world in general" (2). Here, their content alludes to greater components of space and environment while exploring the more abstract sociocultural environments that surround a writer. Dobrin and Keller ultimately demonstrate the trend in analyzing the forest as opposed to the trees when it comes to writing environments. There is value in this, but to ignore the trees of which the forest is composed is to ignore the immediate experience of the metaphorical trees.

Within the study of broadened writing environments, however, we can occasionally find discussion of more narrow, immediate writing environments; researchers in writing studies and writing environments recognize the need to perform research over immediate places in which writing occurs. Lynn Worsham, for example, distinguishes the concepts of "space" versus "place" when considering the whens and wheres that writers choose to write. "Space" refers to a cold construction of an environment that "actively creates and perpetuates alienation, apathy, and thoughtlessness," and she contrasts this with "place," which consists of an environment that is "meaningful, habitable, and therefore memorable" (Worsham 32). In considering these thoughts from Worsham, I am reminded of the importance of language, and so I now must consider the idea that my students prefer a "place" rather than "space" when writing.

Ultimately, Worsham speaks metaphorically about physical spaces and architecture in order to draw comparisons between how "the contemporary world of actual buildings and landscapes have not been crafted with wisdom and care," making it more "space than place" (32). She argues that such a perspective undermines how we might consider the reciprocal relationship between environments and writers as well as how these places' create an "impact on human life and imagination" (32). Though Worsham's concerns are on a grander ecological scale by the time she evolves her thesis, the immediate environment and physical place in which a person chooses to write also bears significance on the creation of a writer's content. Though writing is not solely a process of cognition, the sort of considering and reconsidering that goes into the writing likely attributes some of its form to the immediate places surrounding the writer.

In a continuation of the discussion of "place" as a space with meaning, Christopher Schroeder surveys environmental and spatial contexts. Schroeder's overarching concept that he explores within the text has to do with larger geographical contexts and their impact on writers and their voices. He declares that "place figures significantly in the selves we construct and the narratives we tell ourselves," which is a difficult comment to disagree with (99). I imagine that many of us are of the opinion that we have been and continue to be shaped by the geo-cultural contexts we surround ourselves with, and so our understanding of the world around us is shaped by the stories that are told both to us and by us according to that context. Within the narrow scope of planning my research project and its focus on immediate physical and virtual places, I find my focus becomes more of a review and analysis of several microcosms of the greater context of which the writers are a part. Schroeder then proceeds to state that "place is also important to meaning, as meaning is contingent upon the meaning-maker's position in time and space" (100). In response to this, I propose that it's only through an understanding of immediate time and space that broader, more abstract understandings of meaning-making can occur, and other scholarship supports this.

Within these conversations of large-scale writing environments, some scholars state that a narrower focus on immediate elements of environment is essential to studying writing and its processes. Jody Shipka notes that elements which contemporary researchers are failing to observe are "the technologies that students use in order to create and sustain the conditions for engaging in [writing and its technologies]--turning on lights, arranging themselves at desks, on chairs, on beds, and so on" (10).

Though Shipka's own research works with abstract environmental systems, she recognizes the need for explorations of immediate environments and what they show about writers and their processes. Nedra Reynolds aligns with this comment and states that "writing's materiality begins with where the work of writing gets done, the tools and conditions and surroundings . . . [that help] to trace the threads or remnants of literacy practices" (167). Here, Reynolds identifies the need to archive how writers interact with their surroundings while writing, and Margaret Synerson furthers this by noting the physical-material dimension of writing processes. She declares that "texts emerge through writers' and readers' physical interactions with material structures . . . Writers and readers are physical beings, too" (Synerson 18). Each of the aforementioned scholars recognize how necessary it is for writing studies researchers to study the elements within immediate environments, yet little research exists that delves into such content.

In planning the logistics of how I will approach data collection from my students, however, I must also address the limitations of writing places and immediate environments. In her essay "The Ecology of Study," Martha Cooper speaks to the abstractions of rhetorical situations which surround a writer. When considering the rhetorical situation of any written piece, a writer's immediate environment would be but one of the several elements that falls within the context of the rhetorical situation. Bearing this in mind, Cooper integrates the words of James Reither, who states that "writing and what writers do during writing cannot be artificially separated from the social-rhetorical situations in which writing gets done" (367). Her purpose in citing Reither is to note that her topic of study cannot holistically account for every minute detail that could be found within the infinite complexities of the rhetorical situation because to attempt to isolate factors within the writing's situation can result in one-dimensional and potentially problematic findings. Reither speaks here of the context of the writing, and to an extent, I must bear this limitation in mind. Each element of the rhetorical situation surrounding the writing does impact how and why students approach academic writing in a certain way. By attempting to isolate and study my student's perceptions of how their immediate physical environment affects their writing, I must be wary of artificial misrepresentations of what's happening with my students' choices in writing environments and their perceptions of how those environments affect their writing.

As a result of my observations of my students and our biweekly routine of in-class writing as well as the clearly identified need to research this subject area further, I now find myself traversing this little-explored subject of study. I argue that we cannot separate our corporeal selves from the process of writing, and thus a writer's immediate surroundings are an essential and necessary part of understanding the complexity of writing's composition.

Planned Methods

Through my observations of student behavior while writing in a classroom environment and the study of scholarly literature over writing environments, my controlling research question becomes, "What kinds of environments do my students choose to engage with when writing for an academic purpose? And how do those environments, specifically the physical places that surround students when they write, affect the perceptions my students have of academic writing?" To explore ways of understanding potential answers to these questions, I must begin with the stories of my students because the data that I seek from my students are essential components of their lives as writers. This consists of their perceptions of writing and its environments to the selection of when, where, and how they choose to write; thus, as I plan to collect information from them, I recognize that I am here to both tell their story and my own as I use these narratives to influence my methods of teaching composition.

To start, my plan is to study my own students. They consist of high school seniors who have, for the most part, grown up in an affluent suburban high school just outside of a sprawling urban setting. These mostly motivated students elect to take W131, a dual-credit class through Indiana University, during either the fall or spring semester of their senior year. Their backgrounds in reading and writing vary, however. Some of these students experience the richly analytical yet AP-test-dominated curriculum of Literature & Composition their junior year of high school, and the remaining students enroll in the stimulating yet general-track curriculum of English 11. Much of their previous English / Language Arts coursework also involves literature that's been analyzed through the lenses of literary and rhetorical strategies. W131: Reading, Writing, & Inquiry, alternatively, is composed entirely of nonfiction reading with analytical and argumentative writing. Also, the demographics of my students in W131 tend to be reflected by the school's overall statistics: about 83% of the school is white, and about 5% of students receive government-subsidized funding for lunch. I note these characteristics because they have the potential to indicate nuances in understanding my students' perceptions of writing.

These demographic background elements affect "the thoughts and actions of the human narrative agents," the description provided by Karri A. Holley and Julia Colyar in their essay "Rethinking Texts: Narrative and the Construction of Qualitative Research" (682). In the story of this planned research project, the "human narrative agents" will be my W131 students, whose perspectives and behaviors I choose to study in order to better understand their habits, choices, and perceptions. The term "agent" works especially well to describe these students because it conveys their activities in such a way that demonstrates their active involvement within the research. Without their actions and recordings, the research would not be possible.

The story these students will share reflects the writing environments they choose, their perceptions of writing, and the way in which their environment affects their perceived productivity and inspiration while writing. I plan to collect information about how they think the classroom environment affects their perceptions of writing and its processes, how the digital environment affects their perceptions and processes, and how alternative physical environments, such as their home or other public spaces, affects their perceptions and processes. Though I have some theories and anticipatory thoughts on their perceptions, I am curious to see the nuances that their data will reveal as "the plot begins with [my] unresolved question or issue" (Holley and Colyar 683).

In the quest to seek out data and learn more about immediate writing environments, I plan to collect information as these agents begin their second major paper for the semester, a 4-5 page comparative analysis. This is one of the most challenging and comprehensive analyses that they will be asked to write, and many of them might feel overwhelmed and intimidated by it, which I have noticed from my past observations of students.

Prior to beginning a draft, I plan to ask students to consider a series of 25 Likert-Scale statements via questionnaire. These statements were created as a result of trending behaviors that I have noticed of all students when they write, not just my W131 students. The questionnaire includes five statements that ask for students' perceptions of how levels of writing inspiration and productivity are affected by listening to music, being around other people, being in the classroom / school environment, during the afternoon or evening hours, and being in public places other than school (see Appendix A). In addition to the Likert-Scale statements, there will also be three open-ended response questions. Instructions included with the open-ended responses attached to the questionnaire request that students reflect on what their ideal and less than ideal environments for writing are. Together, these two forms of data collection will constitute my preliminary data that help me more accurately gauge how my students think about their own interactions with writing and its processes in a variety of environments.

After collecting the preliminary data, my subjects will begin drafting their second-to-last academic essay for the semester, and during this drafting process, I will ask them to complete a time-use diary over the course of four days (see Appendix B). This time-use diary will function as a self-reporting log where they will track the periods of time in which they write, the main activities they complete while they write, up to three parallel activities that they participate in as they write, and their general and specific locations where they write. Requesting students to describe their parallel activities while writing is my way of asking what other activities they actively work with as they construct their draft. Throughout my career, I have observed students frequently participating in supplemental activities that relate with the process elements of writing. For example, when drafting during class, I often see students texting about pieces of their essays, using a thesaurus to find synonyms, or reviewing the contents of their source materials. Other students also participate in activities that are unrelated to the drafting process, e.g., snapchatting with their friends, shopping online, having Netflix on in the background, or listening to music. Beyond these parallel activities, the final forms of data that they will log include ratings on a scale of 1-10 that strive to capture their perceived physical levels of comfort while writing as well as their perceived levels of productivity.

I plan for the time-use diaries to capture elements of students' real-time environments while they work to compose. This work includes scenes that capture the classroom's physical space. This type of student writing also includes scenes that capture physical spaces outside of academic settings. Such scenes demonstrate Journet's concept of "boundary negotiation" as students interact with the physical spaces around them and virtual spaces found within their compositional tool (53). My hope is that the intersection of these spaces will make for interesting explorations, especially as students target and describe their parallel activities that exist within their virtual space as well as their physical space.

The final form of collected data will be that of a recorded interview with one randomly selected student. The interview itself will be open-ended, though there are some questions that I have generated in order to guide the conversation should it veer off course (see Appendix C). Though I plan for the voices of several of my subjects to play a role within the discussion of the results, this one student will be the controlling agent of the conversation as I narrate the stories that my writers have to share about immediate writing environments, their writing processes, and the perceptions that lie therein.

In divulging their thoughts and in attempting to make sense of them, I recognize that I will need to morph the story of my students in such a way that it reflects their experiences and shows that the "knowledge [learned from them] is constructed rather than discovered" (Journet 52). These will be my students' words and insights on their own experiences of writing, and by exploring them, I seek only to learn more about them and their writing processes in order to understand and to use the information to improve ways in which I approach writing instruction and writing environments.

Discussion

In her argument that defends the study of immediate writing environments, Hannah Rule declares that we "upend [the] image of disembodied writing processes, reflect upon the infinite particularities of everyday writing rooms, and see how writing processes iterate differently through material staging and physical moves" (428). Through the exploration of my students' interactions with writing environments and the choices therein, I certainly will garner a sharper understanding of how and why they are guided by certain perceptions of academic writing, and I hope to explore the nuances through more substantial data collection and data dissemination.

Based on informal discussions, observations, and reflections on writing that I've reviewed from my students, patterns emerge that illuminate some of the choices that they make when selecting and reflecting on their immediate writing environments. First, it seems that secondary students are generally aware of what kinds of environments suit them best when seeking to write, even if those environments are not entirely the same. Though there may be trends in how they attempt to find their focus, be it through isolating themselves from others or by listening to music via headphones, it ultimately rests on how the student understands his or her own mind and how the mind copes with levels of attention, motivation, and inspiration while writing. Such information indicates the value and importance that students place on individualization and autonomy when selecting writing environments: they want to choose when, where, and how they will interact with writing's processes.

In addition to this abstract autonomy, students also demonstrate a clear preference for a flexible setting that allows for the physical manipulation of themselves and their writing materials. Such settings might provide them room to organize their materials in such a way that makes sense to them, or they might also have the need to control the ways in which their bodies are positioned. This, then, demonstrates the need for autonomy at both an abstract and concrete level; in order to enhance their state of mind, they perhaps first require a sense of choice in where they locate themselves and how they locate themselves within that space.

Because I have heard students discuss among themselves and with me the sorts of environments that they perceive to be effective for their writing, it seems that they do have some basic understanding of how to self-regulate; and yet, as demonstrated by my informal observations multiple times over the course of the semester, it also seems that several do not follow through or take preventative measures to actively construct their writing environment in such a way that allows them to be optimally effective. For example, though students recognize that social influences generally hinder their writing progress, students still choose to seat themselves next to their more social counterparts. A seemingly easy fix is for the instructor to require that students sit in seats away from their friends, yet I am curious about their levels of self-regulation and about how my seat selection further removes their agency in the classroom setting. It's already a somewhat stifling environment because of the 50-minute, 7-period, 5-day grind of which we all partake. If I were to take on my authoritative role and control where they sit, to what extent might my assigned seating further impact their ability to engage with their writing?

The same lack of self-regulation seems to also apply outside of the context of the classroom, however. Several students this semester have explained to me that they do not effectively write in their bedrooms because they are prone to distraction, yet many have shared with me that the primary location of their writing is, in fact, their bedroom. Considering this, there seems to be a level of cognitive dissonance when it comes to selecting when and where to write. Though instinctually they are aware of the locations that would suit their writing, they still do not consistently choose to write in an environment that they perceive will work best.

To write the previous sentence makes it sound as if I blame my students for their choices, but I argue the contrary. Instead of determining that students lack self-regulation, I instead propose that it is my students' ultimate lack of autonomy that affects their behavior and habits when it comes to writing. Secondary students experience limited ways in which they can control the environments around them, from the spaces in the classroom to the spaces in their home. Perhaps it's because of the limitation in choice and limitation in adequate location that impede these writers in actively engaging in their processes. By exploring the data collected in the process above, I hope my findings will allow me to gain a clearer understanding of how students think about their own sense of agency and the effects it has on their perceptions of writing.

Conclusions

Consider the "space" that is school, which is comprised of largely institutional aesthetics that are made for function rather than fashion: square rooms, beige paint, standardized chalkboards, and fluorescent lighting. Such descriptions speak to Worsham's sharp conceptual contrasts between "space" and "place." What we have here is a space that perhaps "[has] not been crafted with wisdom and care" and thus it does not "impact human life and imagination" (32). Writing is, admittedly, a creative and complex process, and without the vitality of rich surroundings, how well can we expect our writers to engage with their cognitive processes? If a student's focus becomes, if just for a moment, enchanted by the screen of the student sitting next to them and overwhelmed by another's writing fluidity, how can we blame them for not being able to engage with the process?

As I anticipate results of this planned research, one outcome I hope to include is a call for teachers to reconsider their assumptions about the spaces that are their classrooms, spaces where students are coerced into writing despite the inanimate lifelessness of an environment that strives to stifle. This will be a call for teachers to seek out "places" rather than "spaces," for them to look outside their classrooms and to seek out an environment that stimulates rather than stifles, that liberates rather than subjugates. Then, perhaps, the reticence of our writers will decrease just a little more than before.

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Appendix A: Writing Environments Questionnaire and Survey

Preface: Through the following series of statements and questions, you'll be asked about your perspectives on writing environments when writing for an academic purpose. When asked about your attitudes and perspectives on writing, this is always in reference to academic forms of writing. Also, within the context of this research, a writing environment can be understood as both the physical and virtual spaces in which you choose and/or prefer to write.

Part One:
Questionnaire Statements with Likert Scale Responses

1. In class during the school day, I feel unmotivated to write.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

2. In class during the school day, I feel compelled to write.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

3. In class during the school day, my mind feels stimulated enough to write.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

4. In class during the school day, I feel that I am able to write productively.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

5. In class during the school day, I feel uninspired to write.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

6. At home in the afternoon or evening, I feel unmotivated to write.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

7. At home in the afternoon or evening, I feel compelled to write.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

8. At home in the afternoon or evening, my mind feels stimulated enough to write.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

9. At home in the afternoon or evening, I feel that I am able to write productively.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

10. At home in the afternoon or evening, I feel uninspired to write.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

11. In a public place other than school (such as a library or Starbucks), I feel unmotivated to write.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

12. In a public place other than school (such as a library or Starbucks), I feel compelled to write.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

13. In a public place other than school (such as a library or Starbucks), my mind feels stimulated enough to write.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

14. In a public place other than school (such as a library or Starbucks), I feel that I am able to write productively.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

15. In a public place other than school (such as a library or Starbucks), I feel uninspired to write.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

16. When listening to music, I feel unmotivated to write.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

17. When listening to music, I feel compelled to write.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

18. When listening to music, my mind feels stimulated enough to write.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

19. When listening to music, I feel that I am able to write productively.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

20. When listening to music, I feel uninspired to write.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

21. When surrounded by other people, I feel unmotivated to write.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

22. When surrounded by other people, I feel compelled to write.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

23. When surrounded by other people, my mind feels stimulated enough to write.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

24. When surrounded by other people, I feel that I am able to write productively.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

25. When surrounded by other people, I feel uninspired to write.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Part Two: Open-Ended Survey Responses

1. In what kinds of environments do you feel you are the most productive? What elements of those environments make you feel more productive? In other words, why do you think you're more productive in those environments?

2. In what kinds of environments do you feel you are the least productive? What elements of those environments make you feel less productive? In other words, why do you think you're less productive in those environments?

3. Describe your ideal writing environment. Include descriptions of the physical space, descriptions of the virtual space, the time of the day, the people who are with/near you, the secondary tasks you have going on (music or Netflix in the background, a messaging app open, etc).

Appendix B: Time-Use Diary for Tracking Writing Environments & Activities Appendix B:

Appendix B: Time-Use Diary for Tracking Writing Environments & Activities

Preface: Complete the following chart to the best of your abilities over the course of the next four days. Share as much detail as you are able to during the times that you choose to write.

Day One: Tuesday, November 19th

Start Time	End Time	Main Activity	Parallel Activity 1	Parallel Activity 2	Parallel Activity 3	General Location	Specific Location	Level of Comfort, 1-10	Level of Productivity, 1-10
9:15am	*10:07am*	*Composing intro and writing articulate thesis.*	*Searching Google for synonyms*	*Texting with peer about thesis & misc stuff*	*Listening to music*	*ZCHS*	*Cutter's Room*	*7*	*8*

Day Two: Wednesday, November 20th

Start Time	End Time	Main Activity	Parallel Activity 1	Parallel Activity 2	Parallel Activity 3	General Location	Specific Location	Level of Comfort, 1-10	Level of Productivity, 1-10

Appendix B: (Continued)

Day Three: Thursday, November 21st

Start Time	End Time	Main Activity	Parallel Activity 1	Parallel Activity 2	Parallel Activity 3	General Location	Specific Location	Level of Comfort, 1-10	Level of Productivity, 1-10

Day Four: Friday, November 22nd

Start Time	End Time	Main Activity	Parallel Activity 1	Parallel Activity 2	Parallel Activity 3	General Location	Specific Location	Level of Comfort, 1-10	Level of Productivity, 1-10

Appendix C: Writing Environments Interview Questions

Preface: The interview with one randomly-selected research subject will be held in a more open-ended, conversational style format. The interview will be recorded. Question #1 will be the starter question, but the interview may then proceed in a variety of directions based upon the subjects' responses. These questions serve only as a guide incase the research subject struggles to converse with the researcher.

1. What do you think about writing environments?
2. What are your perceptions of academic writing?
3. What are some of the things that you think you struggle with?
4. What are some things that you might like about it?
5. What kind of physical spaces do you prefer to write in? Why do you prefer them?
6. What kind of body position / seated position do you like to be in?
7. What kind of environmental space do you like to be in? What's going in your physical surroundings?
8. Do you like other people to be around you? Why / why not?
9. What kinds of things do you like to do while writing? What's appealing about those things? Do you think those things make you a more productive writer? A better writer? Why or why not?
10. What about when you're actually in school? Do you feel like a productive writer? Why / why not? When in Cutter's class? When in study hall or another class? Why / why not?

Business Research: The Importance of Reports

Abstract
The following business research provides three student reports identified by and introduced by Jaynne Rivas, Assistant Professor, IU East School of Business and Economics. These reports are examples of the research business managers need for daily work to keep businesses responsive to the demands of the company, competitors, and consumers.

Keywords
company reports, decision making, business reports, managers, daily operations, strategic decision-making, value chain, company value, competitor

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The Importance of Reports: Introduction & Conclusion

Jaynne Rivas, Faculty Mentor

Introduction

What is the importance of business reports based on research? Why should students practice how to make this kind of report? The short answer is that these reports help managers to make better decisions. Making decisions is the fundamental responsibility of managers, and it keeps businesses running. Decisions about strategic directions are undoubtedly among the most important for firm performance and survival. These decisions represent a challenge for managers because they are complex as a result of the multiple factors involved and because managers usually make them under the pressure of the daily operation of the business. Therefore, having a well-done report supports managers' abilities to avoid bias, take the best possible course of action, and, of course, keep their jobs.

The business environment is one of the relevant factors affecting strategic decision-making. Understanding the external and internal environments demands a high quantity of information as well as good-quality information. For example, when analyzing the external business environment, Ed Davis identifies a fundamental competitor in the beer industry, Anheuser-Busch, in his report about the Boston Beer Company, while Kayetlyn Carter identifies some others, such as Bud Light Wheat, Bud Light Platinum, Blue Moon, and ShockTop. Similarly, when analyzing the internal business environment, Chris Boutcher identifies Avon's online sales system as one of the primary activities in the value chain that is causing a decrease in company value. Other important areas for strategic decisions include strategy design, generic and corporate strategies, and strategy implementation. The reports mentioned are examples of the kind of research a manager needs when making strategic decisions.

AVON: A Fight to Remain Viable In the Cosmetics Industry

Chris Boutcher

Company History

Avon was founded by David H. McConnell, a traveling salesman who gave fragrance samples to his women customers, in 1886 (Avon, 2020a). When he realized how well the fragrance samples were received, he recruited women to help in this new business model. Before the firm adopted its current name, in 1928, McConnell called it the California Perfume Company. Avon's most infamous sales strategy is the "Avon Lady," which started when Persis Foster Eames Albee recruited other women to help with perfumes' marketing and sales. Within 12 years, and with Albee heading marketing and sales, Avon had recruited more than 5,000 representatives.

By 1968, Avon was operating throughout the contiguous United States and Canada, providing many women an opportunity to earn an income (Avon, 2020b). Over the years, Avon continued to expand around the globe. Record sales were achieved during the Great Depression, when sales pricing was introduced, reaching over 70% of increase. One of the world's longest-used slogans, "Ding-Dong, Avon Calling," helped propel sales from the 1950s through the 1970s. Avon not only sold products for women, by women, but also created the Avon Foundation, which focuses primarily on women's issues such as breast cancer research and battling domestic violence. As of 2019, Avon boasted annual sales of $4.76 billion and was a global leader in cosmetics.

Challenges

Avon's main challenge is declining year-over-year revenue. Its revenues decreased steadily between 2011 and 2019, from $9.3 billion to $4.76 billion, respectively (Shahbandeh, 2020). The door-to-door sales strategy that gave Avon its famed "Avon Ladies" is struggling to compete with e-commerce retail giants such as Amazon, Target, and Sephora (Mourdoukoutas, 2016). With declining revenues and a rejected takeover offer in 2012 from Coty, when its shares were trading at $24.75, its stock price fell over the next three years, to $7 per share by 2015 (La Monica, 2015).

Not only has Avon seen declining revenues, a host of legal issues have also surrounded the company, such as accusations of bribing Chinese officials with merchandise such as Gucci purses, which resulted in the development of a compliance overhaul regulatory reform program that cost the firm more than $4 million (Dockery, 2016). These acts of bribery, which occurred in 2006, helped Avon gain a foothold in China, to clear regulatory hurdles, and to obtain direct-selling licenses; all of them provided Avon a clear upper-hand in the Chinese market. A $500 million federal bribery probe in the US also cost the company dearly.

Finally, a cultural shift has affected Avon, leading to lost sales. As women have gained access to more lucrative employment opportunities, their desire to work for the firm has waned (Trefis Team, 2019). This shift away from women staying at home to working outside the home has changed the door-to-door marketing strategy that helped Avon to thrive for so many years.

Porter's Five Forces

When analyzing Avon's performance in light of Porter's Five Forces, both the threat of new entrants and the threat of substitute products become clear. Considering the low cost of entry into the beauty market, many players are primed for success. Avon's success came from having someone arrive at consumers' doors and allowing them to sample their products. With the advent of retailers such as Ulta and Sephora, however, consumers can now easily test many similar products simultaneously (Kestenbaum, 2018). Since the costs associated with entering the market are low, there are many substitute products for Avon cosmetics. This problem is amplified with the ease of obtaining these products from retailers such as Amazon,

Target, Sephora, or Ulta. When customers have many options and see little differences among the products, it is easy to see how Avon's products end up being pushed aside for other similar ones.

Value Chain Analysis

Avon's value chain analysis, as it pertains to its firm infrastructure, has been marked by the numerous CEOs who have come and go through the years, especially more recently. One pitfall that Avon failed to recognize was the potential of e-commerce. As a result, Avon failed to implement a robust online ordering capability until after its competitors had already done so. This lag in technology implementation was costly. When it comes to marketing and sales, Avon had been successful for more than 100 years, but more recent legal troubles and global expansion efforts have hampered these successes. "Ding Dong, Avon Calling" was one of the longest-running advertising slogans in history, but is now a relic of the past.

Generic Strategy

Avon uses a differentiation strategy by gaining and maintaining customer loyalty by offering superior products. Avon has achieved this strategy using a direct-sales model and by keeping costs low, while providing customers with the personal touch that is lacking from online retailers such as Amazon and big-box stores like Target. Avon's differentiation strategy, however, has been accompanied by many pitfalls. The unique nature of Avon's products has not been something its customers considered valuable. Its Sustainable Packaging Initiative for Cosmetics is one example of an effort that seems underappreciated (Avon, 2018). Another pitfall of Avon's success has been the imitable nature of its products. With the boom of the cosmetics industry over the past two decades, many new players have entered the market with little resistance, taking advantage of soaring demand (Yahoo Finance, 2020).

Current State of Avon

Natura agreed to buy Avon in May 2019 ("Natura agrees to buy Avon," 2019). Avon's declining business, from revenues of $9 billion in 2011 to a valuation of just $1.4 billion at the time of the deal, meant that Avon needed a rescue boat. Avon's most promising market was in the emerging market of Brazil, which has protected the door-to-door sales strategy that Avon uses. Natura was Avon's most significant competitor in this market. With this deal, Natura could expect an annual savings of $200 million. Avon and Natura are not yet out of trouble, but this acquisition makes the new firm one of the largest cosmetics producers in the world. With e-commerce thriving, it will be imperative for these companies to perfect their products and to add products that customers need. The threat of substitutes remains extraordinarily high, and both Avon and Natura must produce high-quality products. All the problems detailed above remain for the company, and its corporate strategy must adjust if Natura and Avon hope to remain viable in the cosmetics industry.

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Boston Beer: A Company With A Sustainable Competative Advantage

Kayetlyn Carter

The Boston Beer Company brews more than 60 styles of Samuel Adams beer and other alcoholic beverages, including Twisted Tea and Angry Orchard Hard Cider. The mission of this company is to “seek long-term profitable growth by offering the highest quality product to the U.S. beer drinker” (Boston Beer Company, 2020a). As of the close of trading on April 13, 2020, the stock price of the Boston Beer Company was $386.34, a change of -2.6%, yet significantly higher than the 52-week low of $258.34, while below the 52-week high of $444.65 (Boston Beer Company, 2020b).

Porter’s Five Forces can be used to infer a lot of information about Boston Beer, including its strengths and weaknesses. There is always a threat of new entrants joining the market. These include wines, craft beers, and premium beers. At present, there are many substitution threats for Boston Beer’s products, including Bud Light Wheat, Bud Light Platinum, Blue Moon, ShockTop, and home brewing options. In addition to product substitutions, there are competitors, such as MillerCoors, Heineken, and Sierra Nevada. One element in Boston Beer’s favor is its size-based bargaining power. The company has an annual output of 6 million barrels of beer. However, given its size, the firm is at risk of losing its status as a “craft brewery” (Dess et al., 2019). The year 2019 was a successful one for Boston Beer; it shipped more than 5.3 million barrels (Duprey, 2020). If sales for 2020 match 2019 levels, it would account for more than 6 million barrels, which would cause the company to lose its craft brewery status. The increasing number of premium beer drinkers is good for Boston Beer’s finances. Though many companies offer similar premium products, Boston Beer has, to date, retained its bargaining power over its suppliers (Dess et al., 2019).

Boston Beer’s value chain framework includes a great deal of important information for anyone interested in working with or against the company. Its inbound logistics include contract brewing, reliable suppliers, Class A stock, its “Freshest Beer” program, and production planning (Dess et al., 2019).

The Freshest Beer program is a tremendous asset to Boston Beer. It works by requiring distributors of Boston Beer's products to store all beers in a chilled warehouse for no more than one to two weeks. When the beer is no longer fresh, Boston Beer buys back what has not been used, and it is sent to a beer recycling facility (Samuel Adams, 2020). The firm's outbound logistics include having power over independent breweries and the Freshest Beer program. The Program is part of Boston Beer's outbound logistics because it makes it possible to produce better "on-time" service and promotes cooperation with distributors.

Boston Beer uses alchemy and science operations to yield better beer ingredients and brewing methods. As a requirement for marketing and selling Boston Beer's products, each salesperson must be knowledgeable regarding the brewing process and its benefits and engage in drinker education. Boston Beer also makes more than beer. Its product line includes craft beers, premium beers, seasonal beers, flavored beers, twisted tea, and HardCore Cider (Dess et al., 2019).

The resource-based view of the firm is a strategic framework that evaluates internal resources in terms of key characteristics, valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable (VRIN); therefore, it is crucial to use when evaluating Boston Beer. One of Boston Beer's vulnerabilities is that Samuel Adams Boston Lager was voted "Best Beer in America" the first year it was introduced. This has forced Boston Beer to maintain a certain quality level, as it would seem that something was wrong if the company did not continue to be voted the best. Boston Beer has also been voted one of the top brewing companies in the US, which is also a vulnerability similar to being voted "Best Beer in America." By contrast, Boston Beer enjoys a sustainable competitive advantage, since new breweries have a small chance of being voted "Best Beer in America" in their first year. Samuel Adams Boston Lager's recipe has been passed down from generation to generation, and Boston Beer's craft beers have been compared to premium beers (Dess et al., 2019) This recipe is valuable to Boston Beer, due to its connection to the founders of the company, and because it cannot be duplicated by competitors. Samuel Adams Boston Lager's recipe is rare, imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutable, which sets Boston Beer apart from its competitors. These are rare occurrences when it comes to the beer industry. It would be costly for a new brewery to imitate what Boston Beer does, given that it has specific, proprietary brewing methods.

Boston Beer has been highly successful in the past few years, with 2019 being its best year to date (Duprey, 2020). Based on the analysis and theoretical framework, it is no surprise that Boston Beer is continuing to grow and anticipates surpassing the expectations set by society and its competitors. Even though there are multiple competitors and substitutions for Boston Beer and its products, the company has a sustainable competitive advantage due to its past accomplishments, rare beer recipe, and variety of offerings. Customers, competitors, and investors should expect to see more from Boston Beer in 2020.

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Boston Beer Company Strategic Analysis

Ed Davis

The Boston Beer Company is the second-largest craft brewery in the United States (Kaduk, 2020), but its growth has been stagnant for the past three years, as the industry has been facing a crisis in beer sales (Dess et al., 2019). In 1984, Jim Koch, Harry Rubin, and Lorenzo Lamadrid started the Boston Beer Company. In the early years of the company, their beer, Sam Adams, won several awards for quality, including "Best Beer in America" and the distinction of becoming the first American beer to be sold in Germany (Sam Adams, 2015). As the company grew, it limited its sales to retain the "craft beer" title, which restricts brewers to sales of no more than 6 million barrels per year (Brewers Association, 2020). Sam Adams' main challenge has been trying to grow with the expanding craft beer market, instead of shrinking alongside the traditional beer market (Dess et al., 2019). As American beer drinkers have increasingly begun to turn to craft beers over those produced by large companies, Boston Beer Co. has worked to maintain its foot in the craft beer market, but without much success.

When looking at the case of the Boston Beer Co., we see that it is in a competitive market positioned between two tiers of the industry, yet not truly fitting into either level. Given the limitations of the craft beer requirements, the company is limited in its overall production, but because it is so large, the brewer is often not regarded by many consumers as a craft beer. At a time when craft beer sales are growing and many other types of beer are experiencing a decline, the Boston Beer Co. is stranded between being too large to be seen as a desirable craft beer, yet too small to be viewed as a big player in the beer industry.

When we examine the Boston Beer Co. in the context of Porter's Five Forces, it is clear that the firm is facing threats of new entries, substitution, competition, and buyer power. With deficient barriers to entry and high buying power, new craft breweries are constantly opening across the nation, increasing competition. While none of these breweries alone can take a significant market percentage away from the Boston Beer Co., combined, they create a many substitutes and areas of competition that cause Boston Beer Co. to lose market share. In addition, large brewers, such as Anheuser-

Busch, maintain the largest share of the market and use tactics to try to stifle competition by putting pressure on distributors. Finally, the Boston Beer Co. faces competition from liquor and wine suppliers selling substitute goods. As beer drinkers are commonly willing to switch between brands or styles of beer, or even types of alcohol, the Boston Beer Co. has no shortage of threats from competitors and substitute goods.

When we look at the value chain for the Boston Beer Co., we find that it is mainly dependent on foreign farms for raw materials, which makes the firm susceptible to market disruptions in several ways, from increased tariffs to droughts. In response, it established the "Alchemy and Science," division to help mitigate these risks. Boston Beer Co. is also reliant on distributors to ship their goods to retailers, due to federal laws regulating the beer industry (Dess et al., 2019). As a result, larger breweries can use their clout to push distributors to stop shipping goods from smaller brewers, such as Boston Beer Co., or limit the numbers and availability of shipments. Finally, Boston Beer Co. faces a threat from more educated and discerning consumers who want to drink craft beers and to help local businesses. In response to these threats, Boston Beer Co. has limited its production to maintain its craft beer title, yet it is not seen as a craft beer of choice by many consumers. The firm has also built a 300-member sales force to work in significant areas and educate consumers on the brand and the benefits of craft beers.

The VRIN (or Valuable, Rare, Imperfectly Imitable, and Non-substitutable) analysis is not very favorable to the Boston Beer Co. While its products is priced high, alongside premium beers, slipping sales figures show that consumers do not find the beer's value to match its pricing. In light of the recent explosive growth of craft beer breweries in the US, Boston Beer Co.'s products is not considered rare; in fact, they are becoming increasingly easy to obtain. The firm also faces a lot of competition because, while every beer may be unique and slightly different, there are growing numbers of options in all categories of beer. One beer is easily substitutable by many other types of beer, or by wine, liquor, and other beverage options. As a result of the unfavorable VRIN framework, the Boston Beer Co. relies on its Alchemy and Science group to help find opportunities in the industry, increase its products' quality, and stabilize its supply chains. The firm also has an abundance of educated employees who can work efficiently and train new employees to the company's standards.

The Boston Beer Co. uses a general differentiation strategy to appeal to a broad audience as a unique product that is worth the higher cost. Despite recent attempts to reduce overhead, however, its products are still primarily priced at the premium beer level, instead of the lower craft beer level, where they are trying to compete. Even though production is limited due to the craft beer title, Boston Beer Co. remains able to sell to a broad range of customers, unlike many other craft breweries.

Since the publication of this case study, one significant change the Boston Beer Co. has made was to replace its CEO, Martin Roper, with Dave Burwick (Armental, 2018). This had the effect of raising the stock price by 16% over the past year. One big change that Burwick implemented was a $300 million deal to acquire another craft brewer, Dogfish Head (Maloney, 2019). Previously, Boston Beer Co. had focused on lower overhead costs, lean processes, and investing in its own equipment. This acquisition signaled a new direction in corporate finances by focusing on growth instead of overhead. The acquisition also indicates a possible coming consolidation of the craft beer industry.

While it will be a long time before any significant consolidation occurs in the craft beer industry, the Boston Beer Co. has made an excellent first step with its recent acquisition of a competitor. The move has helped to decrease competition while heightening the name recognition of the Boston Beer brand and increasing market share. This move may also signal a change in strategy from general differentiation to a cost leadership approach. Such a change would help sales, given that Boston Beer Co.'s products are priced higher than many competitors and substitute goods. By replacing the CEO, the firm has also signaled that it recognizes the competition and pressure of the industry. The replacement is an acknowledgment of the fact that the firm needs to change its focus.

Boston Beer Company has traditionally used a broad differentiation strategy to appeal to a large market in the craft beer industry. This strategy has been moderately successful; however, a change in strategy or pricing would allow for increased market share and the growth of a more loyal customer base. In a competitive environment, such as the craft beer industry, it is critical to maintain a competitive edge over the increasing number of competitors and substitute products.

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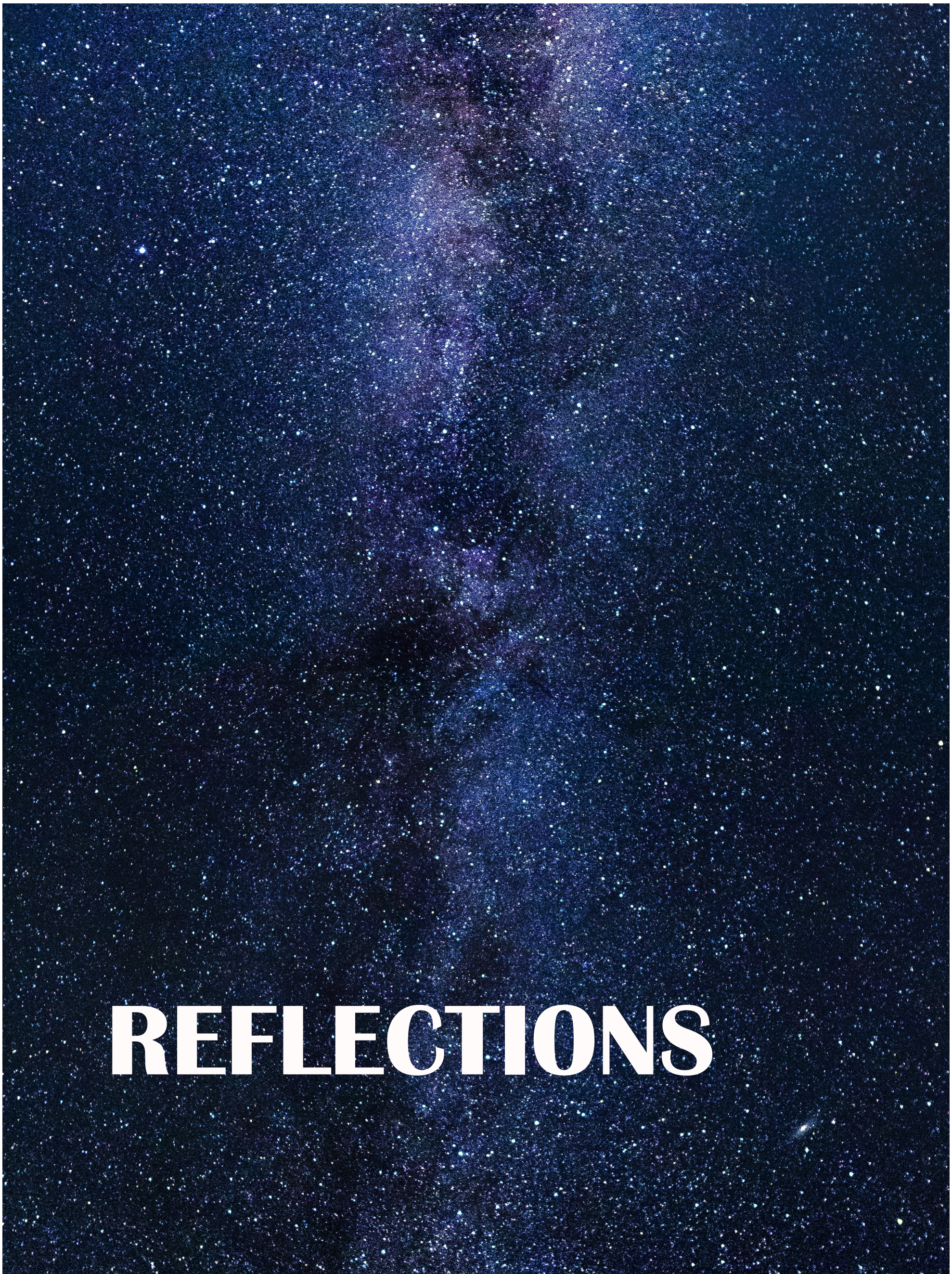
Conclusion

Business reports help managers to make decisions, and business reports based on research help managers to make better decisions. The sources of information play a key role in guaranteeing the quality of the report; they can be recognized newspapers (e.g., The Wall Street Journal), business magazines (e.g., Forbes), business associations (e.g., the Brewers Association), or companies' websites. A good example of the type of decisions managers can make based on business reports can be seen in the last paragraphs of the reports. For example, Chris Boutcher recommends to Avon keeping a differentiation strategy based on the "good quality of products" because of "the high threat of substitutes." Similarly, Ed Davis suggests to Boston Beer considering a low-cost strategy to fight the high competition in the industry, while Kayetlyn Carter emphasizes the importance of the company resources. Recommendations based on facts gathered from deep, quality research will facilitate managers' decision-making and contribute to firm performance and survival.


REFLECTIONS

Experiencing Astronomy: Through a Student Learning Lens

by Sue McFadden, Editorial

Key Words

astrometry, astronomy, undergraduate research, stars

As a librarian I am interested in the experiences of undergraduate participants in academic research. Librarians study information systems and ways to assist others in most forms of information retrieval. In Fall Semester 2019, I had the opportunity to observe a research experience designed for undergraduate and high school students, offered by the Institute for Student Astronomical Research (InStAR) Seminar, Double Star Astrometry. IU East Assistant Professor Wes Tobin invited me to the seminar, with InStAR's Rachel Freed as the instructor and manager of the national online program.

I entered this experience as a new student, with little knowledge of the systems, nomenclature, or expectations of astronomy or astrometry. Librarians study information systems and ways to assist others in most forms of information retrieval. I have some general knowledge of the night sky, the sun, and planets, but the deep information and catalogs of astronomy and astrometry are new information systems to me. The reference list shown with the article is just the beginning of the collected information and observations of the study of the stars. The sciences of chemistry and physics provide ways to measure and understand the stars and universe.

Technology allows many complex formulas to be completed faster and without individuals manually demonstrating calculations. One way this helps in astrometry is in the concept of plate-solving, the use of telescopes, cameras, images, star databases (observations), and star analysis to develop a dimensional star map relating one star to many. The process sounds easy, I look at the night sky and see seasonal stars, some of them are named and in constellations. However, add some of these facts: constant movement of earth, the solar system, the galaxy, and the universe; the star databases created over time and by various individuals; multiple reference points from the earth; and the vastness of the universe in relation to the earth, and the process is complex.

The study of double stars has been recorded and described since antiquity. These stars are now organized into three categories: Optical doubles; Visual binaries; Non-visual binaries. The double star catalogs generally include most observable optical doubles. Through telescopic observation some optical doubles become visual binaries by proving them gravitationally bound, which requires observations over time. Non-visual binaries are those double stars identified using other scientific measures. Plate-solving helps astronomers direct telescopic observations to reference the same objects over time and from a variety of devices.

The seminar provided the background and resources for the team to select a couple of optical double stars for further observation to add to the science to determine visual binary stars. The established seminar process included access to star databases and online information sources, access to telescopes and cameras for a series of images to measure double stars in relation to each other and compare to previous observations, a method of recording the team's observations, and the writing of an article for potential publication. This process follows proven, scientific practices.

The experience of learning new perspectives is what drew me to librarianship. The double-star seminar experience brings resources to my toolkit to help others. The astrometry seminar informs and extends my understanding of undergraduate research and the possibilities for students to become an astrometric scientist or a citizen-scientist discovering exo-planets.

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