

Writing@SVSU

2018–19



SAGINAW VALLEY

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Preface

Every morning I receive a word of the day email. For any language lover, the words in these emails are delicious. Even as someone who has devoted a career to language, I'm often surprised by the weight of a single word. Take, for instance, "pareidolia," or "the tendency to see a specific pattern or meaningful images in random stimulus."¹ That single word encompasses such a powerful memory of time spent in youth staring at the clouds and imagining stories floating across the sky. Each of these daily vocab nuggets is linked by a weekly theme: sometimes the words are connected linguistically while other times the similarities are found in historical events or even cultural movements. These emails recently paid homage to the 50th anniversary of the moon landing with words like "lunule," the white, crescent shaped area at the bottom of a fingernail.² Such a word is bound to score you some *Jeopardy!* or Trivial Pursuit points.

I received the daily word email as I was sitting down to draft this introduction. From my perspective, today's word couldn't have been a more perfect representation of the task of all the writers collected within these pages: "rocket science."³ It seems odd to argue for a word so deeply rooted in the sciences to represent a journal about writing. But that's just it—writing is the ultimate interdisciplinary act. Writing does not happen only in writing courses, but in all areas of study and by using all methods of inquiry. We write to understand, and we read to understand. This isn't to say that either of those tasks are easy. Anyone who has sat down to begin writing anything might feel like the task is comparable to rocket science. But boy-oh-boy, once that essay, lab report, score, or difficult email is finished, we feel powerful. Our words convey passion. Writing provides the experience of explaining new worlds we have discovered; it is our own little rocket ship.

This year's issue of *Writing@SVSU* collects exemplary writing from authors across all five colleges on campus, the Great Lakes Bay Region, and from around the country. In what follows, you will find award-winning essays that applaud the outstanding work of SVSU's student writers. A new addition to this publication includes excerpts from faculty members' personal research, demonstrating that writing is critical in all disciplines.

A sincere thank you to Sharon Opheim, Teresa Stackhouse, Cathy Davis, Tim Inman, and the Office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Behavioral Sciences for making this issue possible.

And maybe, just maybe, as you are reading you will find a single word that will cause you to pause, Google it, and be awed by the gravity of language.

Dr. Kim Lacey
Associate Professor of English
Co-Editor, *Writing@SVSU*

¹ Wordsmith. "A.Word.A.Day—pareidolia." Received by Kim Lacey, 7 Aug. 2019.

² Wordsmith. "A.Word.A.Day—lunule." Received by Kim Lacey, 19 July 2019.

³ Wordsmith. "A.Word.A.Day—rocket science." Received by Kim Lacey, 14 Aug. 2019.

Table of Contents

Spotlight on... The University Writing Awards

“Survival Valley State University,” by Branden Bohling	9
“Forgotten Battles and Unforgotten Experiences: The Eighth Michigan Infantry Regiment at the Battle of Secessionville,” by Travis Faustin	13
“Environmentally Sustainable Voluntourism in Iceland: A Case Study,” by Kellie Rankey	22
“Family Interview and Reflection,” by Emma Kirsch	36
“The Relationships among Physical Activity, Depression, and Grade Point Average in Disabled College Students” by Lauren Meldrum	43
“Playing Nuns,” by Mackenzie Bethune	48
“Roadside Squirrel with Crabapple and Other Poems,” by Kellie Rankey	58
“How to Fix Your Makeup after Crying in a Public Bathroom Stall,” by Allison Sterken	61
“Motivation Matters: The Intent behind Gossip in Jane Austen’s <i>Persuasion</i> ,” by Katherine Manwell	64
“Happier Learning Is Better: A Study on the Link between Enjoyment in Literacy and Confidence,” by Nicole Brydon	70
“gran’s outpatient procedure no. 8,” by Hannah Somalski	75
“Classroom Portfolio,” by Shayla Krygier	76
“Professional Portfolio,” by Emely Williamson	77
“Submissive Women Protagonists in Literature,” by Jayanti Singh	78

Spotlight on... The National Day on Writing

“Sound of a Bullet,” by Nathan Hernandez	84
“An Excerpt from ‘Ruth,’” by Kaleigh Kuhns	86
“Child,” by Samantha Geffert	87
“The Leaking Faucet,” by Rebecca Grable	88

Spotlight on... Students

The College of Arts and Behavioral Sciences, Brianna Meyer	90
The College of Business and Management, Danielle Slonac	91
The College of Education, Samantha Geffert	92
The College of Health and Human Services, Rebecca Carson	94
The College of Science, Engineering and Technology, Trenton Vogel	95
<i>The Valley Vanguard</i> , Kaitlyn Farley	97
<i>Cardinal Sins</i> , Mackenzie Bethune	99

Spotlight on... Faculty

“Images and Words: The Relevance of Writing for Artists and Graphic Designers,” by Emily Kelley	102
“State-of-the-Art Writing,” by Phillip Hanson	104
“An Excerpt from <i>The Emergence of the U.S. School Steel Band Movement: The Saga of Steel</i> ,” by Brandon L. Haskett	107
“An Excerpt from ‘The Impact of Agricultural Land Use Change on Lake Water Quality: Evidence from Iowa,’” by Kevin Meyer	110
“An Excerpt from <i>Real Writing: One Teacher’s Journey</i> ,” by Deborah L. Smith	115

“An Excerpt from ‘The Collaboration between Homeless Shelters and Public Libraries in Addressing Homelessness: A Multiple Case Study,” by Mark A. Giesler	118
“Thermal Analysis of Rare Earth Grain Refined 4130,” by Robert Tuttle	121

Spotlight on... The Center for Community Writing

“Immolation,” by Bruce Gunther	128
“Pickles from the Jar,” by Jean Marie Learman.....	130
“Rescue,” by Deda Kavanagh	132
“My Microphone,” by Lorenzo Russey.....	133
“My Idea of Love,” by Derrick DePriest.....	134
“Home Health Aides—Comic Aides,” by Judy Minster.....	135
“The Time Clock,” by Donald Popielarz.....	137
“Work Myth,” by Ben Champagne	139
“Through the Gate,” by Tracy Deering	141

Spotlight on... Visiting Writers

“How a Single Rosh Hashanah Dinner Sparked 10 Years of Research,” by Devin Murphy	148
“The Strong Man and the Clown,” by Aisha Sabatini Sloan.....	151



Spotlight on...

The University Writing Awards

The Ruth and Ted Braun Awards are presented in the categories of General Education, Graduate Programs, and in each of the five colleges to promote excellent writing across the curriculum. This year two prizes were available in the College of Health and Human Services: one for students in Health Sciences, Kinesiology, or Occupational Therapy courses, and one for students in Nursing or Social Work courses. Two prizes were similarly available in the College of Arts and Behavioral Sciences: one for students in Art, History, Modern Foreign Languages, Music, Philosophy, Rhetoric and Professional Writing, or Theatre courses, and one for students in Communication, Criminal Justice, Geography, Political Science, Psychology, or Sociology classes. Members of the 2018–19 University Writing Committee judged this year’s entries. The committee was chaired by Scott Kowalewski, associate professor of Rhetoric & Professional Writing.

The Braun Awards were established by Ruth and Ted Braun. Longtime supporters of SVSU, they created these awards with the belief that no student can be successful in his or her academic career without writing competence and that no SVSU graduate should enter the workplace without such proficiency.

The Brauns’ support of SVSU extends far beyond these writing awards. Both have served on the SVSU Board of Control and SVSU Foundation Board of Directors. The Board of Control’s chairperson from 1995–1997, Ruth Braun has been active in community service: she has served on the State Board of Education and the Saginaw School District Board of Education, as the president of the Junior League of Saginaw, and as the chairperson of the Board of Trustees of Saginaw General Hospital. Hugo (“Ted”) Braun was a partner in the Saginaw law firm Braun Kendrick Finkbeiner PLC. A recipient of an honorary Doctor of Laws from SVSU, he was a longtime supporter of the school; among his other volunteer work for the university, he served on the Foundation Board’s Finance & Investment Committee. Like his wife, he was much involved in other community organizations; he was president of the Harvey Randall Wickes Foundation, and United Way of Saginaw County honored him with its Outstanding Volunteer Award.

The writings of past Braun Award winners are available online at www.svsu.edu/writingprogram/braun-awards.html.

The Tyner Prizes are awarded to students in English courses to recognize writers of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Faculty in the English Department nominate student work for these prizes. Tamara Migan, lecturer of English, chaired the selection committee in 2019. The Tyner Prizes are named after Raymond Tyner, a former member of the English Department. Professor Tyner came to SVSU in 1968 and was long affiliated with *The Green River Review*.

The First-Year Writing Awards recognize outstanding writing in the beginning composition courses taught at SVSU. The First-Year Writing Program at SVSU strives to ensure incoming freshmen have a solid introduction to writing at a collegiate level. This program includes two comprehensive writing courses: Writing Skills (English 080) and Composition I (English 111). The First-Year Writing Committee was chaired in 2018–2019 by Emily Beard-Bohn, associate professor of English.

The winners of the 2019 First-Year Writing Awards were as follows:

- First Place: Nicole Brydon, “Happier Learning Is Better: A Study on the Link between Enjoyment in Literacy and Confidence”
- Second Place: Dayna Pembroke, “From Prescription to Addiction”
- Third Place: Jenna Royle, “Nature vs. Nurture of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder”
- Fourth Place: Jenny Wisniewski, “Layered Literacy: Opinions on Literacy Are Formed from the Continual Combination of Many Sponsors”
- Fifth Place: Eric Lehman, “Community of Faith”

The First-Year Writing Committee also awarded the following prizes to students enrolled in sheltered sections of First-Year Composition classes:

- First Place: Shariful Alam Robin, “Lying Is a Good Thing”
- Second Place: Shristi Paudyal, “Connection between Life and Music”

The Seitz Creative Writing Scholarship was created by Jim and Melissa Seitz to acknowledge excellence in the writing of poetry and/or fiction. The scholarship, worth \$1,000, is awarded annually. A graduate of SVSU, Melissa Seitz is a retired member of the English Department much respected by her students and colleagues. During her time at SVSU, Melissa served as both student editor and faculty advisor of *Cardinal Sins*. The 2018–2019 Seitz Scholarship was coordinated by Tim Kenyon, a lecturer in the English Department.

The Diane Boehm Writing Awards for e-Portfolios were first awarded in 2015. Established by Diane Boehm, founder and former director of the SVSU Writing Center and the SVSU University Writing Program, the awards recognize the creative and effective integration of writing and multimedia by SVSU students via the medium of e-Portfolios. Entries are judged according to a portfolio’s ability to do the following: present a student’s capabilities in an engaging, professional, and comprehensive manner; include artifacts and documents that demonstrate deep learning appropriate to the student’s class or chosen major; include perceptive self-reflection; demonstrate creative use of multimedia; and be easy to navigate and aesthetically effective based on the capabilities of the software or program. Coordinated by the University Writing Committee, the Boehm Awards are given for portfolios made for the classroom or for a workplace application.

The Ming Chuan Multilingual Writing Awards were awarded for the first time in 2018 and were established by Dr. Robert S. P. Yien. A longtime supporter of SVSU, Dr. Yien joined SVSU in 1970 and was a recipient of the Franc A. Landee Teaching Excellence Award, he served as the vice president for Academic Affairs, and he has been instrumental in the success of Ming Chuan University at SVSU. These awards recognize writing excellence by international students at SVSU. One award is for students in the English Language Program; the other award is for students who have moved into courses that are required as part of their degree. These awards are coordinated by the University Writing Committee.

Survival Valley State University

Branden Bohling

Braun Award for Excellence in Writing in General Education
Nominated by Erik Trump, Professor of Political Science



Branden Bohling is from Arvada, Colorado. A junior at SVSU, he is pursuing a major in computer science. Branden is a member of the varsity track and cross-country teams. In 2017 he achieved second team all-conference in cross-country by placing in the top 20 within the GLIAC conference, as well as receiving individual all-academic honors for placing in the top third of the Midwest region and maintaining a 3.25 G.P.A. More recently, Branden placed sixth in the 2018 GLIAC Conference Outdoor Track and Field Championships in the 10,000m run.

In Branden's section of Intro to Political Science (PS118!), Dr. Erik Trump asked that students first imagine a world where brain-hungry zombies have consumed every government employee in the United States and then that they apply the political theories of John Locke and Thomas Hobbes to propose a way of rebuilding society. Branden responded to this prompt by introducing his audience to a post-apocalyptic SVSU, where a lack of government control has led civilization to descend into chaos. This piece argues that to restore order, the survivors of such a zombie invasion must follow the philosophy of Hobbes by letting a single, all-powerful leader direct every action in their lives.

By writing this essay, Branden feels he was able to grow both in his writing abilities and in expressing the ideas of political philosophers in fun and engaging ways. He would like to thank Dr. Trump for supporting him through numerous drafts and providing him the enjoyable opportunity to write creatively.

Winter Semester 2020: clouds of powdered precipitation twirl and dance along five-foot-tall snowbanks through a lonely and desolate SVSU campus. It is high noon, but the only sound audible from the bell tower is the whistle of wind howling through the broken glass windows of Pioneer Hall.

No students dare venture inside the classrooms, for they fear seeing with their own eyes the fate every senator, university president, town garbage man, and professor have already experienced: a green, snot-crusted zombie slurping human remains, and exclaiming in a deep, demented voice, "BRAIIINS, TASTY, DELICIOUS, GOVERNMENT-EMPLOYED, BRAAAAIIINS!!!"

One month later: no government employees remain. In the ensuing aftermath of the zombie invasion, the survivors have had to deal with many issues regarding the availability of food, maintenance of housing, and crime. While some have found ways to adapt, the overall campus community has descended into chaos and many urgent issues remain unsolved. In this time of need and desperation, a new government must be formed to restore order. As a concerned citizen and former political science student, I write to help mold our new government into the one that best equips the remaining students for survival. This new government should be formed around the fact we are followers, or at least we were followers before the apocalypse. Professors set the syllabus, the President set the honor code, and the only part of school students got a say about was their classes. Now there is only one class, Survival 101. Failing this class means death. To restore order, some urge the adoption of John Locke's model of government, where the community participates

in the creation of laws and totalitarian power is limited (Locke, 1690/2017, p. 19). However, Locke's model of government reacts too slowly and breeds conflict amongst the few survivors of the zombie infection. This is not a time for holding silly elections amongst radical and untrustworthy young adults, most of whom have no experience whatsoever in maintaining a community. This is a time for action! We must have a steady, experienced leader in place to guide survival. Therefore, we must follow the guidelines set in place by the political philosopher Thomas Hobbes, who argues that life without government is miserable, and we all must respect and obey the rules set in place by a single person or council (1651/2013, p. 17). Without government, society becomes lost, and chaos, crime, and instability ensue. Thus, in these circumstances, the creation of a single, all-powerful leader to guide civilization is necessary, showing those who remain how to live and thrive.

Opponents of a Hobbesian style government will argue for one modeled more closely to the philosophy of John Locke. Locke (1690/2017) contends that a government must be guided "only by the will and determination of the majority" (p. 8). From Locke's point of view, students at SVSU should band together to create a legislature, and this legislature should do what we, as a community, can agree on. However, this idea is flawed. The Admissions Office staff, whose brains are now being digested inside zombie stomachs, specifically created an SVSU community of diverse individuals of different races, genders, and backgrounds, whose views and experiences differ. Getting a majority of students to agree on one thing will be difficult, if not impossible. Additionally, democracy is time-consuming. Due to the zombie infestation, those who have survived are living in chaos. Each survivor has his or her own needs, which need to be assessed immediately. For example, freshmen survivors in our community without cars have to deal with the inability to secure food now that the zombies have eaten anyone who would have honored the unlimited meal plan. We must show action to get these starving freshmen their food now and not let any go to waste.

Life since the zombie invasion has been like a chaotic party. The beginning was great: no school, no responsibilities, and students having fun; after a while, the fun began to run out. Currently the party has become a little *too* crazy: property is being destroyed, nobody has a clear head, and the best thing for everyone's safety is to go home and sober up. The lack of local law enforcement has brought out the worst in students, who have nothing to lose besides the little money in their pocket. Private businesses like Meijer and Einstein Bros. Bagels have remained open so students can get food. But why pay to go to Meijer when one can just ransack the cafeteria for free? Facilities that were once maintained by the University have stopped working, and students without any knowledge of repairing them have tried to find ways to adapt. Textbooks have become a heat source when the electricity goes out, but students cannot agree on which ones to burn, in case someday classes resume.

Thomas Hobbes describes this condition as a "State of Nature," a place where one looks out only for his or her own private interests and has perfect ability to use whatever means necessary to get what he or she wants. In a state of nature, civilization is continuously involved in "a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man" and "men live without [any] other security than their own strength" (1651/2013, p. 13). Because students have no common power to bind themselves together and decide the laws, right and wrong become subject to each individual's personal or selfish views. Consequently, students must rely solely on their own strengths and intuitions to defend themselves as there is no independent authority to which to turn. For example, a student whose car will not start must trek across a snowy, unmaintained campus and thus decides to steal temporarily another student's bike. As retaliation, this second student decides to slash the tires of the thief's car, so that he may never be able to drive again. In this example, right and wrong are subject to the interpretation of each person. The thief thinks it is okay to steal the other man's bike because his car does not work, while the tire slasher sees permanent damage to the thief's property as appropriate justice. Without a single judge in place to declare laws and consistently punish crime, individuals will be able to enact their wills on one another, often seeking extreme retribution for

the most inconsequential of crimes. The result is constant cycles of passionate revenge being executed without reason, leading to an unnecessary amount of pain and suffering for all involved.

Without a system of governance in place, the survivors will have nobody to which to turn in times of struggle or when crimes have been committed against them. There will be no community, only a dog-eat-dog world, every man against every man, known by Hobbes as war. In such a war, there are “no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death” (Hobbes, 1651/2013, p. 13). Many of the activities students once enjoyed such as art, sports, and mathematics will never again be possible because no matter how beautifully one can sing show tunes, how accurately one can shoot a jump shot, or how elegantly one can derive an equation, not one of these skills is applicable to preventing a gruesome and bloody death at the hands of an adversary. To end this war, Hobbes provides that we must create a government to “be able to defend [its subjects] from the invasion of Foreigners, and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them” (1651/2013, p. 17). That is, the duty of our new government should be to protect us from harming each other, as well as defend us from outside invasions, so that the citizens can once again pursue the activities of a civilized society and advance the state of humankind.

However, for this vision to become a reality, we the students must, as Hobbes (1651/2013) writes, “conferre all [our] power and strength upon one Man, or upon one Assembly of men, that may reduce all [our] Wills, by plurality of voices, unto one Will” (p. 17). This means that no longer will students be able to raid the cafeteria and get food for free, burn one another’s textbooks to keep warm, or party across campus every day. The students must give up these rights to their monarch, and in exchange, he or she will rule with absolute power, acting in full capacity without restraint to provide safety and stability. Although this may seem like a foreign concept to the community, it is not entirely different from the style of governing that the university held prior to the invasion. Prior to the invasion, students respected an honor code set by the President, an honor code on which nobody got a vote. Additionally, students willingly went to classes where they were told what to do by professors because they believed it to be in their best interest. The students of SVSU must keep the mindset that their monarch is their new professor, a professor who will assign homework in gathering food, repairing facilities, and improving the community.

First, however, a syllabus must be signed to decree and establish our new professor and the lessons he will serve in our class of life to say, “I Authorize and give up my Right of Governing myself, to this man [...] on this condition, that thou give up thy Right to him, and Authorize all his Actions in like manner” (Hobbes, 1651/2013, p. 17). In other words, our new syllabus should read: “Provided this agreement is entered collectively by each and every student, We the survivors of SVSU give up our right to act independently to one single leader, and authorize him or her to lead our actions and our lives, so we may once again act as a civilized student body.” Our monarch will be selected as someone charismatic, and convincing, who will have uninterrupted confidence and rule without question (for example, someone from the SVSU Debate Team). He or she will control the strongest goons, who will have the authority of enforcing the law, such as former student athletes. Other specializations include biology students in charge of agriculture, engineers in charge of heating and electrical facilities, and computer science students in charge of creating communication with other factions around Saginaw. All these jobs will be mandated by our new leader, with noncompliance punished by deportation from the university. No longer will people isolate themselves within their dorms, living in fear of their own community members; instead they will transfer this fear to their new ruler, whose strong and just policies will keep them in line.

This is our new school, Survival Valley State University. One day we all may graduate from our totalitarian government to recreate democracy. For now, however, we must drudge on and place our confidence in an absolute government, or else we will descend into more chaos.

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Forgotten Battles and Unforgotten Experiences: The Eighth Michigan Infantry Regiment at the Battle of Secessionville

Travis Faustin

Braun Award for Excellence in Writing
in the College of Arts and Behavioral Sciences,
Arts and Humanities Category
Nominated by Paul Teed, Professor of History



Travis Faustin is from Kawkawlin, Michigan. He began his studies at SVSU in 2017 after completing an associate of arts degree at Delta Community College. At SVSU, Travis majored in history and completed two minors, psychology and public history. His primary area of interest within the field of history is the United States Civil War and, in particular, Michigan's involvement in it. In 2019, Travis was named an Outstanding Graduate by SVSU's History Department and graduated with his bachelor's degree. In addition to his classes at SVSU, Travis has been a student intern at the Castle Museum of Saginaw County History, assisting its staff by conducting research for future projects and exhibits. He is now a graduate student at Central Michigan University and is enrolled in its master's program for history. He hopes to use his expertise and training to achieve his childhood goal of becoming a professor of United States history.

This research paper was written under the guidance of Dr. Paul Teed, who, Travis notes, provided assistance and encouragement throughout the writing process. The purpose of this paper was to serve as a writing sample for graduate school applications. His research process included transcribing handwritten letters, journal entries, and speeches authored by soldiers and veterans of the Eighth Michigan Volunteer Infantry Regiment. By using the words of the Eighth Michigan soldiers themselves, Travis offers a research-driven narrative of their horrendous defeat at the Battle of Secessionville in June 1862, which leads into a discussion of how initial combat experiences had an impact on Civil War soldiers. In addition to winning a Braun Award, Travis presented this paper at the University of Toledo's November 2018 History Colloquium and hopes to have it published in an academic journal.

In the early morning hours of June 16, 1862, the Eighth Michigan Volunteer Infantry Regiment marched courageously, with bayonets fixed, towards a Confederate fort protecting the small town of Secessionville, South Carolina. The events that unfolded over the next three hours would prove to be the determining factor in the legacy and collective memory of these soldiers. Secessionville was one of the Eighth Michigan's initial experiences with combat, and it was the crucial event that provided the groundwork for how the regiment conducted itself in future battles, how the veterans of the regiment remembered the war, and why the three-hour engagement at Secessionville overshadowed the three remaining years of the war in the memoirs of the Eighth

Michigan veterans. Although the members of the Eighth could have been cast in an unfavorable light and forced to forget this painful initial experience with combat, they used the horrific loss of friends, fathers, brothers, and comrades at Secessionville to define their legacy and cement the collective memory of their regiment within the larger narrative of the Civil War.

Secessionville, like countless other initial combat experiences for thousands of other regiments fighting in the war, provided the men of the Eighth with an understanding of combat and loss that could have been drastically different if the regiment had experienced its baptism of fire anywhere else. Take, for instance, the ill-fated Sixteenth Connecticut Volunteer Infantry; its initial combat experience occurred on the bloodiest day in the history of the United States—September 17, 1862—at the battle of Antietam. As detailed throughout Lesley Gordon’s *A Broken Regiment: The 16th Connecticut’s Civil War*, the regiment’s experience at Antietam blackened the fate and legacy of the battered regiment from Connecticut. The initial combat experience of these soldiers at Antietam had profoundly affected the performance and optimism of the newly formed regiment, with many soldiers deserting, refusing to continue fighting, or becoming severely demoralized. Their initial combat experience at Antietam made the Sixteenth Connecticut one of the most failed regiments of the entire war and, years later, forced the veterans of the Sixteenth to reorganize their history to shed positive light on the regiment.¹ For the men of the Eighth Michigan however, their experience at Secessionville was the starting point of a long and celebrated legacy. The horrific initial combat experience embedded itself within the memories of the men who suffered through, and successfully recuperated from, their deadly initial engagement.

The Eighth Michigan has a long, though relatively unknown, history within the larger narrative of the war. Comprised of volunteers from Flint, Michigan, and the surrounding areas, the Eighth distinguished itself by “fighting in practically all the southern states from the Mississippi river to the Atlantic Ocean” over the course of the war.² The eighth volume of the compiled works of the *Record of Service of Michigan Volunteers in the Civil War, 1861–1865* gives a brief overview of the history of this overlooked regiment. After being mustered into service in late September 1861, the 915 men of the Eighth were assigned to duty along the Atlantic Coast in the Port Royal Expedition with the ultimate goal of capturing the invaluable Confederate port city of Charleston. When the expeditionary force reached the mouth of the harbor, they became engaged with Confederate Forts Beauregard and Walker, both of which surrendered to the Union naval bombardment. The surrender of these forts marked the largest victory the Union had in the harbor. After only one and a half months and many small engagements, including the battles at Secessionville and Wilmington Island, the expedition was disbanded, and the Eighth was reassigned to the Ninth Army Corps and served in the Second Battle of Bull Run. The men from Michigan were then ordered to Maryland, where they saw heavy fighting at both South Mountain and Antietam. In March 1863, the regiment was in Vicksburg, Mississippi, assisting General Ulysses S. Grant with the siege and eventual capture of the city. The “Wandering Eighth,” as the regiment came to be known, spent the remainder of the year giving chase to Confederate General Longstreet’s division across Tennessee. After being furloughed to rest and recruit more soldiers, the Eighth marched once more with the Ninth Army Corps to Virginia, where it endured the deadly Battle of the Wilderness on May 6 and suffered heavy casualties at Spotsylvania Courthouse on May 12. The final major engagement of the “Old Eighth” was at the siege and fall of Petersburg, where they were engaged at the Crater, Weldon Railroad, and Ream’s Station.³

Although the Eighth Michigan Infantry took part in some of the most horrendous circumstances and battles of the war, the battle of Secessionville stands out within the surviving

¹ Lesley Gordon, *A Broken Regiment: The 16th Connecticut’s Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014).

² Adjutant General’s Department of Michigan, *Record of Service of Michigan Volunteers in the Civil War, 1861–1865*, vol. 8, *Eighth Infantry* (Kalamazoo: Ihling Bros. & Everard, 1905), 1.

³ *Ibid.*, 1–3.

memoirs of the Eighth Michigan veterans. This gruesome Union defeat and initial combat experience of the Eighth is the defining moment in its history. In fact, what has been written off as an insignificant skirmish on James Island was the most significant event of the war in the minds, memories, surviving reminiscences, and legacy of the Eighth Michigan soldiers.

The journey to Secessionville was in no way easy for the men of the Eighth. Before they reached the maze of islands on the South Carolina coast, the Eighth Michigan embarked with a larger Union force dubbed the “Expeditionary Corps” under the command of General Thomas W. Sherman.⁴ The force consisted of approximately fifteen thousand Union soldiers that were divided into three brigades. Then eighteen-year-old soldier Orrin Bump described the excitement felt by the men of the Eighth upon receiving notice of their assignment: “After having become thoroughly disgusted with the irksome duties and dull monotony of the routine of camp life... it was with boyish glee that we hailed the news that we were to sail under sealed orders in October.”⁵ Freed from their so-called “irksome duties,” the Eighth Michigan embarked upon a steamship headed for the coast of South Carolina.

After a twenty-day journey that has been described as “an unusually stormy voyage,” the fleet of more than fifty Union vessels reached the South Carolina coast in early November 1861.⁶ After exchanging fire and persuading the Confederate forts protecting Hilton Head Island to surrender, the Union ships docked, and the soldiers set up camp on the island. Through the winter, members of the Eighth, most likely to the dismay of Orrin Bump, were assigned to picket and guard duty, sharing the task with the other regiments present at the Hilton Head encampment.

In early spring, the Union forces began to spread to out from their main headquarters on Hilton Head. Capturing and blockading the Confederate harbors along the Atlantic coast were crucial to the Union’s plan for victory. However, these acts were easier said than done. The expansive swamplands and numerous islands made the path to the harbors an exhausting one. During this time, the Eighth Michigan was part of a reconnaissance force tasked with finding and assessing the strength of Confederate fortifications and encampments protecting the ports at Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia. After engagements with Confederate forces at Fort Pulaski in Georgia, in Beaufort, South Carolina, and on Georgia’s Wilmington Island, the Union soldiers marched through the marshes until they reached James Island, which was merely one mile away from the Charleston harbor at its closest point. If the Union forces could take the island, it would be a perfect staging ground for a larger assault on Charleston. However, they would first have to rid the island of the Confederates. This task would be difficult for the Union Expeditionary Corps due to the terrain and their unfamiliarity with the island, and one Confederate position would eventually prove to be impossible to break through. The small earthwork protecting the town of Secessionville was the site of the Eighth Michigan’s ultimate sacrifice and the location of their most unforgettable combat experience.

The small town of Secessionville sat on the east end of James Island, only four and a half miles away from the city of Charleston. A summer home for wealthy cotton planters, the island itself was something of a plantation. As one source notes, fields of corn, potatoes, and cotton belonging to Thomas Grimball occupied the land between the Stono River to the east and the many streams and marshes on the island. An unfinished Confederate earthwork protecting Secessionville could be seen overlooking a large fallow field in front of the Grimball plantation. The earthwork, which is generally described as being in the shape of an “M,” spanned the entire two-hundred-foot

⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁵ Orrin Bump, “Expedition to South Carolina in 1861–2,” undated typescript, folder 4, Michigan in the Civil War Collection, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Michigan Commandery Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1.

⁶ Arend Vanderveen, handwritten war reminiscence, 1915, folder 24, Michigan in the Civil War Collection, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Michigan Commandery Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1.

width of a choke point leading into the town. Forming the narrow strip of land on which the earthwork was built were two marshes, one to the north and one to the south. Shallow, but filled with thick mud and low shrubs, the marshes provided a natural deterrent for anyone who thought they could flank the Confederate position.⁷ Eighth Michigan soldier Orrin Bump described the land around the earthwork in this way: “on either side [of the earthwork] was a low impassable marsh, in front of the fort there was a large cotton field, surrounded by an Osage orange hedge extending about one half mile to a piece of wood.”⁸ Additionally, a prominent seventy-five-foot-tall observation tower standing within the work became the namesake of the rebel fort. Tower Battery boasted an armament of an eight-inch Columbiad cannon, two twenty-four-pound rifled cannons, two eighteen-pound cannons, and a mortar battery, all of which were trained on the open field directly in front of the position. The guns sat above a large earthen wall that had been built to be approximately nine feet high.⁹ At the base of the wall, the Confederate soldiers had dug a “deep impassable ditch” to further complicate the progress of those trying to climb to the parapet.¹⁰ Although simple and hastily constructed, Tower Battery would prove to be a more formidable position than anyone on either side of the imposing wall could have imagined.¹¹

While operating in South Carolina, the Eighth Michigan was under the overarching command of Major General David Hunter. As the commander of the Union’s Department of the South, General Hunter was responsible for all Federal forces occupying or acting in the Confederate states of Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. A task of such crucial importance to the Union cause could not be carried out by one man alone. Therefore, Hunter divided the states into more manageable regions overseen by district commanders. Brigadier General Henry Benham was assigned to carry out Hunter’s orders in the Northern District of the Department of the South. Thus, South Carolina, being the most northern state out of the three in the Department, became General Benham’s base of operations. Under Benham’s command, the Eighth Michigan, along with approximately twenty other regiments, marched blindly into a devastating defeat at Secessionville.

According to Colonel William Fenton, the marching orders to Tower Battery were given on June 16, 1862, by Brigadier General Benham at one o’clock in the morning, and the lines were ready to march by two o’clock in the morning.¹² Fenton, once the commander of the Eighth Michigan, had recently been promoted to command the First Brigade of Brigadier General Isaac Stevens’ Second Division. For this reason, Fenton’s men were commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Frank Graves on the battlefield. In total, the Eighth Michigan, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Hawley’s Seventh Connecticut, Lieutenant Colonel McLelland Moore’s Twenty-Eighth Massachusetts, and Captain Alfred Rockwell’s First Connecticut Artillery made up the First Brigade of Stevens’ Second Division.¹³

One of the orders received by Stevens and relayed to his brigade commanders was the direction to “maintain the most perfect silence” and “rely exclusively upon the bayonet in encountering the enemy.”¹⁴ The Union force then commenced their march to Tower Battery with weapons unloaded and bayonets fixed. This order was obeyed by largely all of the regiments

⁷ Patrick Brennan, *Secessionville: Assault on Charleston* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1996), 158–159.

⁸ Bump, “Expedition to South Carolina in 1861–2,” 7.

⁹ Brennan, *Secessionville*, 158–159.

¹⁰ Bump, “Expedition to South Carolina in 1861–2,” 8.

¹¹ Brennan, *Secessionville*, 158–159.

¹² William Fenton, “8th Michigan Infantry Record Book, 1861–1862,” handwritten daily accounts, folder 7, Michigan in the Civil War Collection, McCreery-Fenton Family Civil War Papers Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 17.

¹³ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1885), series 1, vol. 14, 58–59.

¹⁴ United States War Department, *War of the Rebellion*, 59.

engaged and undoubtedly contributed to the initial devastation of the Eighth Michigan upon entering within firing range of the Confederate position.

With Companies “C” and “H” of the Eighth Michigan Volunteer Infantry leading the way, the Union division silently marched to the field that would soon be the site of its defeat. All was silent, as expected, until the sound of the Union men marching startled four Confederate sentries stationed at an opening in the hedge that sealed the field off from the main road. According to Colonel Fenton, at least two of the men marching in the lead with Company “H” were injured by the sentries’ musket fire.¹⁵ Although Fenton admitted this small blunder, he stated that “silence was still preserved” and that the Union force did not return fire.¹⁶ This claim, however, is disputed by some of the veterans of the Eighth Michigan who noted that the firing of the Confederate muskets did, in fact, alert the Rebels inside the fort.¹⁷ Despite the factual discrepancy, it is known that the Confederate pickets were successfully captured and sent to the rear of the Union line, and the soldiers marched on through the opening in the hedge to the field in front of Tower Battery.

As the first soldiers of the Eighth Michigan filed through the hedge, the drums of the enemy camp began to sound.¹⁸ It seemed as if the short struggle with the Confederate pickets had, indeed, alerted the men within Tower Battery. The Rebels mounted their batteries, and the air immediately filled with the sounds of thunderous cannon fire. However, traditional cannonballs were not being hurled at the Eighth Michigan from the Confederate position. The large guns within the fort were being loaded with grape and canister shells. This type of ammunition effectively transformed the artillery into giant shotguns with hundreds of pellets, each weighing approximately one pound, speeding out of the barrel of the cannons and into the soldiers from Michigan. Aside from the grape and canister shells being fired, one Eighth Michigan soldier noted that “junk of all sorts” and “pieces of chain” were also found scattered around the battlefield, presumably fired by the Confederate cannons.¹⁹ This claim is supported by others; Colonel Daniel Leasure of the One Hundredth Pennsylvania observed that “a perfect storm of grape, canister, nails, broken glass, and pieces of chains [were being] fired from three very large pieces on the fort.”²⁰ Every devastating volley from the Confederate cannons tore a deeper hole through the center of the Eighth Michigan’s battle line. Of this horrific sight, Orrin Bump wrote that it was as if the center of the Eighth had been “[mowed] down like grass before a scythe.”²¹ Nevertheless, with a fierce determination to reach the earthwork, the Michigan men continued their bayonet charge, displaying a gaping wound in their center where friends, fathers, brothers, and comrades once stood.

Accompanying the horrendous barrage of artillery fire was the hail of bullets from rebel muskets on the parapet’s top. As the “singing, whizzing missiles... came flying on all sides and about all parts of [a] person,” Eighth Michigan soldier John Buchanan was praying to simply survive the engagement.²² Nonetheless, he and the other valiant men of the Eighth never wavered from their task of pushing toward Tower Battery’s earthen wall while “leaving the ground in their rear strewn with their dead and wounded.”²³ As the lead companies in the charge ran and dodged enemy fire, they found themselves falling into the seven-foot-deep entrenchment that had been dug

¹⁵ Ibid., 65.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Bump, “Expedition to South Carolina in 1861–2,” 7.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ United States War Department, *War of the Rebellion*, 72.

²¹ Bump, “Expedition to South Carolina in 1861–2,” 7.

²² John C. Buchanan to Sophie Buchanan, handwritten letter, June 29, 1862, folder 2, Michigan in the Civil War Collection, Buchanan Family Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

²³ United States War Department, *War of the Rebellion*, 70.

in front of the wall.²⁴ Although momentarily disoriented by the previously unseen ditch, the Eighth continued their ascent to the parapet. By assisting one another in climbing up the wall, some men of the Eighth Michigan finally found themselves standing on top of the nine-foot-tall embankment. These few men from the Eighth had the unfortunate distinction of being the first Union soldiers to see combat from within the enemy position.²⁵ The Michigan men who made it to the top of earthen wall proudly unfurled their regimental battle flag to signify that they, although traumatized by loss, had attained the most prestigious position out of any Union regiment fighting on the bloodied field. However, “those who should have supported [the Eighth Michigan] broke and ran from the grape and cannister [shells] and did not reach the fort.”²⁶ With their supporting Union regiments in disarray and retreating, the men of the Eighth realized that their struggle to the parapet had been in vain, a small success in an ultimate defeat. With no other regiment to support them, the Eighth Michigan struggled to maintain its position along the base and on top of the earthwork. Finally, Benham called off the attack, and Stevens’ order to retreat was received by the Michigan men. Though long overdue, the order came as a relief to the battered Eighth. Scattered along various points of the earthen wall, the Michiganders ran, crawled, and limped their way off the field, unsupported by all except tardy Union artillery fire from behind the hedgerows. Those whose movement had been hindered by injuries and those who opted to ignore the retreat order were soon surrounded and taken as prisoners by the Confederates swarming out of the earthwork. After nearly three hours of pure destruction and chaos, the battle of Secessionville had concluded. The Confederates had won the day, and the Union had lost all of its current hopes of capturing Charleston. By July, the Union forces stationed on James Island had retreated and were sent to assist with other Union operations. For the time, the Union goal of capturing Charleston was put on hold.

In an after-action report of the battle, Brigadier General Stevens recalled that “the Eighth Michigan made the most heroic exertion and suffered the most terrible losses” out of any regiment engaged on June 16.²⁷ Stevens was obliged to prove his words to be true, for at the end of his report he included casualty counts for each of the regiments. The count shows the extent of damage that occurred to the Eighth Michigan Volunteer Infantry Regiment during the horrendous charge. The Eighth was comprised of 534 men when it formed into initial battle lines in the early morning hours of June 16, making it the smallest regiment within Colonel Fenton’s First Brigade. Out of those 534 Michiganders, only 349 made their way off the field, for a total of 185 casualties. By comparison, the First Brigade, as a whole, had 334 dead, wounded, and missing soldiers. The Eighth Michigan’s sacrifice, in other words, was over one half of the total casualties; one in every three soldiers belonging to the Eighth did not return from the battlefield unscathed, that is, if they returned at all. Stevens’ report also revealed that the Eighth alone took almost as many casualties as the entire Second Brigade, with the Second Brigade reporting only six more losses than the Eighth. In terms of fallen officers, the Eighth suffered more drastically than any other regiment engaged on June 16. Out of its twenty-two field officers, only nine were fortunate enough to walk away from the field. This loss again proved to be more than the combined loss of officers from the other regiments in the Second Brigade. For official records, these numbers are sufficient enough to describe the destruction laid upon the Eighth. However, these numbers meant little to the men

²⁴ Charles McCreery, “Address by Charles McCreery at 1st Reunion of the 8th Michigan Infantry, 1867,” typescript, folder 14, Michigan in the Civil War Collection, McCreery-Fenton Family Civil War Papers Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 7.

²⁵ Herbert W. Beecher, *History of the First Light Battery Connecticut Volunteers, 1861–1865* (New York: A.T. De La Mare, 1901), 146–47.

²⁶ John C. Buchanan to Sophie Buchanan, handwritten letter, June 17, 1862, folder 2, Michigan in the Civil War Collection, Buchanan Family Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

²⁷ United States War Department, *War of the Rebellion*, 60.

whose lives would be forever altered by the horrors of June 16, 1862. Attached to each and every tally was the name of a comrade whose sacrifice would never be forgotten particularly in the surviving documents from the veterans of the Eighth.²⁸

“It seems almost a miracle that anyone came safely away from that slaughter pen,” remarked John Buchanan of the Eighth Michigan in a letter written to his spouse nearly two weeks after the assault on Tower Battery.²⁹ Buchanan frequently wrote to his wife, Sophie, throughout the war. In fact, Buchanan had written a letter to his wife just one day after the battle of Secessionville that assured her of his safety and provided details of the Eighth’s role in the engagement. Although he had written his wife a letter already, Buchanan wrote her a second one speaking again about his experiences at Secessionville. At the time of Buchanan’s writing of the second letter, the Union encampment was moving off James Island. John Buchanan even admits in this letter that the “solemnity [of the day was] all destroyed by the busy scenes of [his] current encampment.”³⁰ The fact that Buchanan was still writing and thinking about Secessionville when he was forced to move beyond it is not surprising, especially in the life of a soldier. However, his letters definitely show that Buchanan saw enough importance in the battle to write about it and then reflect upon it once more. Many other veterans did as well. Take, for instance, the numerous memoirs and speeches written by the veterans of the Eighth Michigan years after the Civil War came to a close.

Orrin Bump, who served with the Eighth Michigan from 1861 to 1864, left behind a reminiscence of his experience fighting with the Eighth. Although Bump saw combat in some of the deadliest battles of the war such as the Second Bull Run, Antietam, Spotsylvania Courthouse, and the horrendous Wilderness, he only composed one writing about his experiences. Bump titled the undated typescript of only nine pages “Expedition to South Carolina, 1861–2,” and a discussion of the battle of Secessionville takes up almost one-third of the entire manuscript. One must wonder why, out of all the memories Bump must have had concerning his time with the Eighth, did he choose to write exclusively about his early experiences in South Carolina. Why did Bump feel, when it came to the engagement at Secessionville, that he “must make special mention”?³¹ Where simple descriptions and short paragraphs once characterized his writing, vivid imagery and memories dominated his focus on this small window of time. It is clear from Bump’s reminiscence that the battle of Secessionville never faded from his memory. He felt it important to document his experiences on that bloodied field for others to read.

Dr. Arend Vanderveen, who served with the Eighth Michigan for the entirety of the war, also made special mention of the regiment’s involvement at Secessionville. During a speech given in October 1915 to the Michigan Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Dr. Vanderveen reminded those in attendance of the Eighth’s sacrifice at Secessionville. The battle is mentioned not once, but twice within Vanderveen’s speech, the only engagement to be discussed multiple times. Describing the Eighth Michigan’s attack at Secessionville as “a most daring and dashing assault at a great sacrifice of life,” Vanderveen first gave specific details of casualties suffered and a brief overview of events leading up to the eventual retreat.³² Vanderveen then mentions the battle later in his speech as one of the Eighth Michigan Regiment’s most personal (i.e., unique) memories of the war.³³ Out of every brutal engagement throughout four years of war that Vanderveen could have discussed, he chose the small engagement at Secessionville. Much like the veterans previously mentioned, Secessionville had a lasting effect on Vanderveen, an effect that the raging flames of the Wilderness or the gruesome aftermath of Antietam did not produce. Secessionville, as it would seem, was an important point in the war to

²⁸ Ibid., 62–64.

²⁹ John C. Buchanan to Sophie Buchanan, June 29, 1862.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Bump, “Expedition to South Carolina, 1861–2,” 6.

³² Vanderveen, handwritten war reminiscence, 4.

³³ Ibid., 7.

every living survivor of the Eighth, and the seemingly important nature of the battle to this relatively small group of men was strengthened at the first reunion of the regiment's veterans.

On June 16, 1867, the surviving members of the Eighth Michigan Volunteer Infantry Regiment held their first reunion at Fenton Hall in Flint, Michigan. The specificity of the date of the reunion was not chosen by accident or coincidence; it was the fifth anniversary of the regiment's struggle and devastation at Secessionville. Reverend Charles McCreery endured the entirety of the war and served as a second and first lieutenant as well as a captain in various companies of the Eighth Michigan. Because of these prestigious positions, he was given the honor to speak at the reunion. Early in his speech, he reminded his audience of the significance of the date, asserting "we come in these hours of friendly greeting, upon the anniversary of one of the most brilliant engagements in which the Regiment participated."³⁴ One can only imagine the cheers that specific line received by the men who surely had not forgotten that dreadful day. Although his typescript speech totals to be sixteen pages long, McCreery used two of them to discuss the Eighth's involvement at Secessionville. In a speech where battles as significant as Antietam, South Mountain, and Vicksburg only received a short paragraph, the now-forgotten battle of Secessionville was fully emphasized. In other words, an engagement that only lasted hours was given more time and space than battles that lasted days.

Due to their unwavering determination and execution of their orders, Secessionville was not the last battle of the men of the Eighth Michigan. It was, however, the battle that introduced the young soldiers of the Eighth to the hard hand of war and to the deadly cost of a larger conflict. In this way, Secessionville cruelly prepared the Eighth for an unforeseen future. The Eighth Michigan's role at Secessionville remains important in other ways. In an age where the ability to acquire new information surrounds us and more is learned about the Civil War each day, contemporary historians still tend to focus on the large, decisive battles of the war, but introductions to the larger war and the ways in which they shaped the memories of the men who fought in them must not be forgotten.

Historian Earl Hess touches on the importance of first combat experiences in his work *The Union Soldier in Battle*.³⁵ Maintaining that the foundations and definition of courage are rooted within a soldier's first combat experience, Hess uses the example of how a Union soldier's conduct during his initial battle experience could determine whether he were fit for fighting in the first place: "If [a soldier] broke and ran at the first shot, he could forget about becoming a soldier. If he managed to stand his ground through the initial volleys, he would know that he had passed the test."³⁶ As Hess notes, initial combat experiences had increased meaning to regiments and soldiers well before the veterans would write their detailed memoirs of them. These first experiences with combat not only shaped a soldier's memory of the war, but also defined how a soldier and those around them would view him in combat. Furthermore, Hess speaks to the important fact that "men with no previous insight into the psychology of the soldier simply took what battle had to offer and either caved in under its pressure or managed to cope."³⁷ In the case of the Eighth Michigan, Secessionville was not the first time the regiment had fired their muskets upon the enemy. It was, however, the first *real* engagement where they encountered an entrenched enemy and left the field displaying an excruciating loss in their ranks. Many regiments proved themselves in this manner, through their initial combat experiences, but many also caved under the immense pressure to perform well under deadly circumstances they had never encountered before.

For this reason, it was said once, after the battle of Secessionville, that "the Michigan Eighth may be said to be no more."³⁸ That statement could have been true had the soldiers of the

³⁴ McCreery, "Address by Charles McCreery," 1.

³⁵ Earl Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 76.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Brennan, *Secessionville*, 270.

Eighth not responded the way they did to the horrendous conditions endured on June 16, 1862. The Eighth Michigan easily could have been cast in an unfavorable light, considered to be cowardly, or simply been riddled with desertion after their brutal experience at Secessionville. Events like this unfortunately occurred to many regiments, such as the Sixteenth Connecticut. If, like the unlucky Sixteenth Connecticut, a regiment happened to experience its first tastes of combat at a particularly deadly engagement, the regiment's response to the initial combat could wreak havoc on its legacy, or it could become the beginning of a celebrated collective memory shared by the regiment's veterans. The latter occurred within the persevering Eighth, and the valiant soldiers were distinguished and shaped by their experience. The loss of so many friends, brothers, and acquaintances, along with the absolute destruction of their officer staff, forced the men to form tighter bonds with one another; their shared loss at Tower Battery created a brotherhood among them that had been forged in the blood of their fallen comrades.

Thus, to better understand the men who fought in the Civil War, we must look at their initial combat experiences. Some of these first experiences are larger than Secessionville, as evidenced by the poor Sixteenth Connecticut, but some may be even smaller. By overlooking these small engagements and first combat experiences, contemporary historians are depriving themselves of the opportunity to learn more about the individual men and regiments who made up the Union and Confederate armies. Although the significance of small or early engagements may seem minor when compared to the larger narrative of the Civil War today, historians must not dismiss that these initial tastes of war were often regarded as the most important and defining experiences to the men who suffered them. The story and legacy of the Eighth Michigan have only begun to be uncovered in this paper, but many similar stories are still hidden within the surviving words of the soldiers themselves. It is the task of modern-day historians to uncover these stories of all regiments and apply them to the larger narrative of the American Civil War. By bringing these forgotten battles and unforgotten experiences back into the overarching narrative, historians will create a richer understanding of and take a fuller look into the war that shaped this nation, and, in doing so, they will be keeping some of the most important memories and experiences of these soldiers alive.

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Environmentally Sustainable Voluntourism in Iceland: A Case Study

Kellie Rankey

Braun Award for Excellence in Writing for the College of Arts and
Behavioral Sciences, Category Two

Nominated by Warren Fincher, Associate Professor of Sociology



Kellie Rankey is a fourth-year Honors student pursuing a B.A. in creative writing with a minor in sociology. Her writing has garnered awards including the Tyner Award for fiction, the Tyner-Roethke Award for poetry, the National Day on Writing's First Place awards in both fiction and poetry, the National Scholastic Gold Medal, and the 2017 Student Paper Award of the Michigan Sociological Society. Kellie leads the Writer's Roost creative writing group on campus, has served as event leader for bi-weekly creative writing events hosted by CounterCulture, is copy editor and associate editor of *Cardinal Sins*, and spent a month abroad in the summer of 2018 volunteering for Icelandic environmental organizations.

The class for which this paper was produced was an independent study designed to go along with Kellie's volunteer work in Iceland, and she worked with Dr. Fincher to create the objectives for class assignments. The paper here is one of two papers she completed for the course and focuses on voluntourism along with its environmental impact. Kellie shares that her biggest challenges throughout the process of writing this paper were learning enough about the tourism industry to sound credible and condensing months of journal notes into a coherent structure. However, at the end of this challenging process, she found that writing this paper helped her to process and reflect on her experience in ways that she hadn't following the trip and wouldn't have without this assignment.

In recent years, Iceland has become an incredibly popular tourist destination. The wild expanse of largely untouched natural landscapes outside of Reykjavik bring in increasing numbers of people from other countries year after year. Tourists are becoming such a fact of life in Iceland that a French photographer, Timothee Lambrecq, has started including tourists in his photos of Icelandic nature. He argues that "it is just more real[...]. Tourism in Iceland has been growing massively [...] and by now, tourists are actually a part of the Icelandic landscape" (qtd. in Widiger). However, as much as tourism has become a natural part of Icelandic life and a huge force in the country's economy, the impact of these tourists is not always positive or easy to accept. Feargus O'Sullivan of online news source *CityLab* writes that tourists often engage in environmentally destructive behavior, like "[pitching] tents in vulnerable landscapes." At their worst, he describes tourists causing problems with public sanitation and engaging in acts of insensitivity, including one instance in which a tourist "picked out the words 'SEND NUDES' on a mossy hillside... [causing damage that] will... take 70 years to disappear as the moss slowly, laboriously regrows" (O'Sullivan). Given the importance of the natural landscape to Iceland's tourist industry, economic function, and inhabitants, any environmental threats or damage like the above are of critical concern. As the tourism industry continues its pattern of steep, exponential

growth in Iceland—and as the country’s recovering economy continues to depend on that growth—it is clear that it must be in some way tamed so as to minimize its negative impacts.

Some Icelandic non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have capitalized on the tourism boom through volunteer tourism, better known as “voluntourism.” These organizations recruit volunteers internationally, often with the help of larger umbrella organizations, for environmental, social, and cultural projects aimed to address various initiatives in the country. Because much of the research conducted on voluntourism is focused on travel to developing countries, one objective of this paper is to contribute to a growing body of literature regarding practices of voluntourism and sustainable tourism in developed countries like Iceland. In this paper, two environmentally focused Icelandic NGOs utilizing a voluntourist workforce—Worldwide Friends (WF) and SEEDS—are assessed using aspects of sustainable eco-tourism and personal experiences in two-week programs run by both organizations. First, some context regarding Iceland’s environmental issues as well as qualities of sustainable eco- and volunteer tourism established in recent literature are provided. Then the organizations’ voluntourism programs are assessed through a comparison of expectations set by information packets and the reality of the program experience, as well as an evaluation of how well the organizations applied elements of sustainable voluntourism and addressed Iceland’s real national or local environmental concerns. In closing, the paper suggests areas for improvement in these NGOs that may be relevant to other Icelandic organizations involved in the tourist industry.

Environmental Challenges in Iceland

For one to understand how effective any Icelandic NGO is in addressing environmental concerns, a general understanding of what concerns are currently relevant is necessary. According to environmental resources on the Icelandic governmental website, Iceland’s main problems include the need for a sustainable use of marine resources in fisheries, the loss of vegetation and resultant wind erosion, and the threat posed to nature conservation by both tourism and energy companies (Icelandic Tourist Board). Following the identification of each problem, an ongoing course of action to address or cope with the problem was outlined. For example, the Icelandic government explains that the Icelandic Soil Conservation Service is working to fight erosion and desertification by restoring vegetation, emphasizing that this is a big priority (Icelandic Tourist Board). This description of Iceland’s environmental concerns and the actions taken to combat them supports their traditionally “green” image, but for some this image is more of an illusion.

Journalist Gabriel Dunsmith writes about Iceland’s environmental problems from a different perspective in the article “Iceland’s Environmental Paradox,” published by popular Icelandic news outlet *The Reykjavik Grapevine*. Rather than taking the government’s word about environmental efforts as unquestionable, Dunsmith spoke with locals and activists to get a sense of what problems Icelanders see for Iceland’s environment and whether the government is really as active as they say they are in handling them. According to Dunsmith’s sources, Iceland is not a “paragon of sustainability” as the government may have one believe, but instead has been “greenwashed,” misconstrued as a model of sustainability when statistics point to the opposite.

The article posits that the country’s biggest issues are cars, commodities, and carbon emissions. In terms of the rate of vehicle ownership, Iceland is behind only the United States with the second-highest number in the world, and that number is rising with help from Icelanders and tourists (Dunsmith). Although the appropriate energy resources exist to replace all gas-burning cars with those that run on renewable electric energy, there has been little public or governmental action toward doing so, in part due to the incentive created by a recovering krona and lower gas prices (Dunsmith). Commodities’ impact on the environment stems from a thriving, Westernized consumer culture in Iceland: with a high volume of resource use comes a high volume of waste. Despite some optimistic recycling programs, Dunsmith describes that Iceland lags behind the rest of Europe in this regard. Finally, the article indicates that Iceland’s biggest current environmental

concern is the growth in their carbon emissions. A number of statistics emphasizes the problem. For example, an increase of 4.5 million tons in carbon emissions occurred within a mere 8 years, translating to a whopping average 14 tons of emissions per Icelander. The true weight of these per-person emissions averages becomes clear when the number is compared to that of other larger countries: it is “far above Japan (9 [tons per person]), the United Kingdom (8 [tons per person]) and Germany (9 [tons per person]), and still higher than Russia and South Korea (both 12.5 [tons per person])” (Dunsmith). Considering Iceland’s low population—around 338,000 people—such high emissions averages are alarming.

Clearly, Iceland’s environment is under pressure from a variety of stressors. In addition to the government-indicated challenges posed by the fishing industry, vegetation loss, wind erosion, and threats to nature conservation, the country also struggles to be efficient with its vehicle usage, resource use, and carbon emissions. Because a number of these problems are not being addressed effectively by the government and because the problems either are or may be exacerbated by tourists, some Icelandic NGOs, like WF and SEEDS, have recognized the immense positive potential carried by voluntourism. Engaging with this model of tourism in a way that creates tangible positive change, however, is not a simple task.

Defining an Environmentally Sustainable Model of Voluntourism

Environmentally sustainable voluntourism (ESV) is informed by multiple, sometimes overlapping, models of tourism, including nature area tourism, ecotourism, responsible tourism, and the general model of voluntourism, among others (Dávid; Goodwin; Boluk et al.). To understand the conglomerate model of ESV, these separate models of tourism are first defined separately.

Nature area tourism is understood to include “all the leisure activities taking place in the natural environment,” but is “not necessarily value-oriented” and “does not concentrate on cognition of cultural values” (Dávid 211). Ecotourism is a branch of nature area tourism that adds a value-oriented approach to the activities, encouraging “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretations and education” (International Ecotourism Society qtd. in Goodwin 40). Despite its goals, ecotourism is sometimes not consistent with responsible tourism, which is “about taking responsibility in order to make tourism better” as well as “using tourism to make places better for people to live in and also better to visit” (Goodwin 37). Harold Goodwin, a professor of responsible tourism at Manchester Metropolitan University, summarizes how nature area tourism, ecotourism, and responsible tourism may be combined under ecotourism, indicating that this model of tourism “[must] take responsibility for making a better form of nature tourism not just for consumers, but also for communities by making a more significant contribution to local livelihoods and funding conservation efforts” (40). Together, these models of tourism contribute to the “environmentally sustainable” wing of ESV.

Generally considered, voluntourism is “an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment” (Wearing qtd. in Boluk et al. 272). By incorporating ideas of environmental sustainability into the practices of voluntourism, this definition helps to bring the component tourism models together into the model of ESV. Thus, ESV may be defined as a model of tourism that involves organizations utilizing volunteer-tourists (voluntourists) both to create an environmental consciousness through education and leisure activities and to create a symbiotic experience of tourism in which tourists and visited communities benefit.

For ESV to work, it must avoid the pitfalls of its component models of tourism. Despite the fact that “visitors arriving to given destinations have different behavior[s] or attitude[s] towards that area,” ESV must align the behavior of tourists with environmentally conscious practice (Dávid

214). This means ensuring that the development of a tourist industry in an area avoids “inadvertently facilitat[ing]... irresponsible behavior” (Goodwin 45) like “neglecting local needs, impeding work progress and the completion of unsatisfactory work” (Boluk et al. 273). In essence, ESV should not cause more harm than good to the area in which it develops, and this relies on the cooperation of tourist organizations, local communities, and tourists themselves. Instead, ESV should support the local economy, involve local communities in planning and environmental efforts, foster communication between tourism industry shareholders and the community, and train and develop skills both in volunteers and the local community, ultimately creating a “tourism policy [... that is] an organic part of the general politics of local society” (Dávid 213). Of course, as Boluk et al. observe, ideal models of tourism are largely instructive; it is difficult to actually “create a benign industry” (273). To decrease the chance and frequency of the negative impacts of ESV’s component models of tourism, one must acknowledge them.

Growth in Iceland’s tourism industry shows no signs of stopping. In addition to rising numbers of tourists, the country’s economy became dependent on tourism as a source of revenue after the crash of the banking sector during the 2008 economic crisis. An expanding tourism industry has since helped with the krona’s recovery as well as the national debt. Yet, the fact remains that the exponential growth of this industry has an environmental impact that outpaces government efforts to address it. The environmental work conducted by Icelandic NGOs utilizing a voluntourism model has much potential to effect positive change by picking up the slack. However, unless they ensure the environmental sustainability and general sustainability of these efforts, it is hard to see how these organizations will begin to remedy the harm done by tourists and create a more responsible culture of tourism in Iceland. Thus, these organizations would benefit from focusing on ESV as a model for their environmental voluntourist efforts. In the following section, I analyze my experience as a voluntourist in Iceland for the organizations WF and SEEDS to determine the extent to which they embody practices of generally sustainable tourism as well as those of ESV.

Case Study: WF, SEEDS, and One Volunteer’s Experience in Iceland

Sustainability is a critical aspect of voluntourism and thereby of ESV, with part of that sustainability hinged on organizations’ ability to engage consistently the interest of tourists. Failing this, organizations will find themselves without the workforce necessary for their projects as well as the funding that workforce provides. Thus, a generally sustainable model of voluntourism is a prerequisite of ESV; organizations must be able to garner and maintain a volunteer workforce before they can effect change with environmentally sustainable projects. In the following sections, WF and SEEDS will first be assessed in terms of the general sustainability of their voluntourism models. Following this, their effectiveness and adherence to the ESV model will be assessed. Both of these assessments will be informed by my personal experiences in a voluntourism program conducted by each organization.

General Sustainability: A Question of Expectations and Realities

In discussing the findings of their case study of medical voluntourism in an impoverished South African community, Boluk et al. suggest that volunteer expectations are one of the most important factors in the general sustainability of voluntourism programs. They explain that while “the satisfaction of the voluntourists was affected by multiple internal and external forces [... it] ultimately ties back to their expectations and/or needs” (Boluk et al. 282). Voluntourist satisfaction relates to the general sustainability of voluntourism programs because it affects the ability of organizations to maintain their workforce, and the importance of expectations in determining that satisfaction, in turn, makes them important to programs’ general sustainability. Of course, however, expectations are not the only factor that influences general sustainability. Expectations can only

inform the actual practices of voluntourism organizations if they are tied to experiences of and reactions to the organization's programs. In other words, the general sustainability of a voluntourism program relies in large part on how voluntourist expectations align with their experiences in the program. Thus, my assessment of the general sustainability of the voluntourism programs conducted by WF and SEEDS begins with an outline of my expectations and a discussion of how the real experiences compared. The combined understanding of expectation and reality then culminates in an assessment of the programs' general sustainability.

Expectations

The base for volunteer expectations of the WF and SEEDS programs was established first by brief overviews of the workcamps and then by detailed information packets emailed to participants by WF and SEEDS. Trip overviews were available on the website of the Canadian Alliance for Development Initiatives and Projects (CADIP), a nonprofit umbrella organization that works with various voluntourism organizations worldwide to organize a voluntourist workforce for their initiatives. These overviews indicated that the WF program worked with the Rehabilitation and Health Clinic in Hveragerdi, Iceland, and that the SEEDS program worked with natural park officials in the town of Vik y Myrdal. Overall, the overviews are essentially advertisements for the programs, and although they use some language from the organizations' information packets to provide program details, they do not go into as much depth. Once a volunteer officially registers for a trip by paying a fee to CADIP, each volunteer organization emails the volunteer one or more detailed information packets regarding the voluntourism program. These packets, being more detailed, go further in establishing volunteer expectations than the overviews. The following table and discussion describe the specific expectations set by both the WF packet and the SEEDS packets, which include extra trip fees, the work involved in the program, possible leisure time activities, camp leaders, accommodations and food, and program and organization objectives.

Table 1
Summary of Program Descriptions in Information Packets

	WF	SEEDS
Extra Trip Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For participation: €250 For transportation: €60 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For participation: €250 For transportation: €90
Work Hours	"9am–3pm" with "a one-hour lunch break"	"9:00–5:00 with breaks for lunch and coffee" ("Trails")
Work Involved in Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agricultural work ("help with growing the tomatoes, cucumbers"; "making tea from Icelandic herbs") Environmental work ("do some environmental work around the property") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental work; construction and trail maintenance ("doing environmental construction and repair work in hiking trails and walking paths"; "mark and repair hiking trails or walking paths around the town and in the mountains"; "cleaning and beautifying the area... hand-picking garbage or collecting trash" ["Trails"]) Potentially strenuous ("The work can be physically demanding and requires a good physical condition" ["Trails"]; "working sites [may] be located far from lodging facilities")

		and may have to be reached by foot; you may also be required to carry tools or equipment to the sites with you” [“General Info”])
Possible Local Leisure Time Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swimming (“free access to the local geothermally heated swimming pools”) • Opportunities for hiking in the local area • International nights (“Every evening volunteers from different countries will present their countries of origin and culture in an informal way.”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swimming (“access to the local swimming pool, sauna, and hot tubs” [“Trails”])
Possible Excursions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple travel opportunities outside of local area (“reasonably priced weekend excursions to some of the most popular, beautiful areas and natural wonders that Iceland has to offer”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized by SEEDS or host (“SEEDS or the local host will arrange activities for you during the free time.” [“General Info”]; “SEEDS and/or our hosting partner will organize free time activities in the area” [“Trails”]) • No opportunities for travel outside of local area due to limited range (“if your project is outside Reykjavik we can only organize [excursions] if the location is within 50 kilometers of the city” [“General Info”]) • Opportunity to see local sights (“glacier walk tour”; “a ride on a zipline” [“Trails”])
Camp Leaders	Trained (must complete “one week of training” before starting program)	Trained (“your camp-leaders have been trained to run the workcamp” [“General Info”])
Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dorm-style housing (“volunteers will be staying at a fully equipped bungalow consisting of several double bedrooms and a living room”) • Beds provided • Laundry facilities provided (“there is also a washing machine”) • Internet access provided (“wireless internet is provided free of charge”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communal housing (“volunteers will be hosted in a local house.... in shared rooms” [“Trails”]) • Only mattresses provided (“volunteers will sleep on mattresses on the floor” [“Trails”]) • No showers (“there is no shower in the house, but we will have free access to showers in the local swimming pool” [“Trails”]) • Internet access unlikely (“do not expect internet/wifi in any of our accommodations” [“General Info”])

Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepared for volunteers (“All meals are provided and cooked by our host”) • Vegetarian diet (“the menu for the project is primarily vegetarian, but two times a week it includes locally caught fish”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepared by volunteers (“volunteers will share the duties of preparing food, cooking meals” [“Trails”]) • Flexibility with dietary restrictions (“vegetarians and vegans can also be accommodated as long as you inform SEEDS in advance” [“General Info”])
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Sources: Worldwide Friends, “Hveragerdi—Health and Environment,” 2018, PDF file. SEEDS, “General Information Sheet—Iceland Camps”; “Trails Near Hekla Volcano & Myrdalsjokull Glacier,” 2018, PDF file.

Information packets included other miscellaneous information regarding what to expect in their programs. Although SEEDS directly indicated flexibility with dietary restrictions in its information packets, WF indirectly indicated this by including a question about dietary restrictions on a mandatory pre-trip survey. Neither organization indicated that the program work required previous experience, and SEEDS directly stated that “no previous experience of this work is necessary” (“Trails”).

The amount of information provided in the packets set different levels of expectations for both program experiences and the adherence of organizations’ objectives to the ESV model. WF set modest expectations for the program experience with its brief packet, whereas SEEDS’ more detailed general and program-specific packets created higher expectations for the program experience. Similarly, the simplicity of the WF packet lowered my expectations regarding organization objectives and the ESV model, whereas the complexity of the SEEDS packets heightened those expectations. In the WF packet, organization objectives were not explicitly described and could only be implicitly understood through the descriptions of program objectives. These objectives focused mainly on fostering opportunities for volunteers’ personal growth: “participants [will] share their knowledge with each other while exploring creativity, environmental issues, and intercultural learning” (Worldwide Friends). Despite mentioning environmental issues in this passage, the WF packet information placed more emphasis on the objective of intercultural learning. WF restated this objective verbatim while describing the international nights, stating that the camp “will... focus on intercultural learning and exchange.” Overall, the WF packet suggested that the organization was less focused on environmental or ESV objectives and more focused on creating a positive experience for voluntourists.

By contrast, the detailed SEEDS packets suggested that the organization was highly engaged with environmental and ESV objectives. They named objectives of generally sustainable tourism like “supporting the local economy... [of] small and remote towns,” and they included ESV objectives like engaging with the local culture and community, fostering volunteers’ personal growth, and contributing to environmental efforts in the mission statement (“General Info”). These objectives were further connected to the ESV model by SEEDS’ argument that they result in “mutual rewards for the volunteers, communities, and ecosystems” (“General Info”). Because of the information provided in the SEEDS packets regarding organization objectives, I had high expectations for its program experience and adherence to the ESV model.

Realities

In both programs, the actual experience of the workcamps tended to differ from the expectations set by the information packets in all categories except for trip fees. However, the gaps between expectation and reality in terms of the work involved, possible leisure time activities,

program leadership, and accommodations and food were much smaller in the WF program than they were in the SEEDS program. This resulted in a positive overall experience with the WF program and a very negative overall experience with the SEEDS program.

Work

For the WF program, the actual work involved directly matched expectations. Participants conducted agricultural work mostly in greenhouses to help the clinic's gardener with daily tasks, such as sweeping leaves, watering plants, picking tomatoes and zucchini, and planting or transplanting various herbs and vegetables. If the weather was good, participants also worked outside doing similar tasks. Although some of the jobs were tedious, they never required much physical exertion. Additionally, although some tasks required brief instruction from the gardener or other clinic employees, they were simple enough that they never required any experience. The working hours were as expected, with the addition of more breaks than just for lunch, typically half-hour breaks every couple of hours. The only small deviation from work expectations is that we did not tend to conduct specifically environmental work. Only one day was spent picking up trash, weeding, and generally beautifying the main areas around the clinic property.

The main negative aspect of the work involved in the WF program was that participants often had to work with broken tools or inadequate gear. For example, when we ground up herbs to make tea for the clinic, the process clouded the air with herb dust that made a lot of us sneeze or cough. Face masks were not provided, and some would leave the workday with irritated respiratory systems. Once we communicated this to our camp leaders however, they spoke with the gardener and clinic staff and got us face masks. Communication and quick action on the part of camp leaders often made issues with broken tools or inadequate gear into minor inconveniences.

In the SEEDS program, although the actual work did involve environmental tasks, construction, and trail maintenance, it was vastly different from the expectations set by the information packets. Specifically, I and other participants felt that the description of the work in the packets deemphasized how physically strenuous it ended up being. Participants were asked to make steep, half-hour or longer hikes into the mountains carrying construction equipment and dangerous materials, and every day ended with severely fatigued participants that could hardly stay awake for dinner. Working hours were mostly as expected but did not include breaks, adding to the exhaustion of the group. Within the first few days, one participant had cut himself carrying barbed wire up the mountain, and others had injured ankles and knees from carrying equipment. Despite being told in the information packet that no experience was required, we spent part of our first day in the program being individually interviewed by the local host to determine our previous experience with things like gardening and construction work.

Participants also did not receive training on how to use the equipment they were given. Instead, it was handed to us along with the description of the task to be completed, and we were then sent on our way. Additionally, the equipment was generally broken or otherwise insufficient for completing the task. For example, when we beautified an area outside of an elder care facility, we were given broken rakes, a small spade, and very dull shears to pull weeds and cut down tree branches. The local host expected us to work quickly and know what plants not to cut or pull despite the state of the tools and never having given us any instruction. This made the work very stressful even though it was not as physically strenuous as the mountain work. Opinions regarding the gap between packet-set expectations and reality were quite severe; I and some of the other participants felt that we had been manipulated and coerced into a program very different from what we felt we had signed up for based on given information and that much of the work we were being asked to do should have been conducted by trained, paid construction workers.

Leisure Time

As with the work in the WF program, the actual leisure time activities matched the packet descriptions. Many participants spent part of their evenings swimming or hiking, and the excursions were well-planned and quickly organized. Two trips to areas outside of the local community were offered in the two-week span of the program. The nightly international nights were a particularly positive aspect of leisure time in the WF program. This activity created opportunities for learning as well as social bonding that made any leisure time more fun because of increased group cohesion and friendship.

By contrast, the SEEDS program offered very little leisure time, and that which was afforded to participants differed greatly from packet expectations. Although we had access to the local pool for showering, the work hours and dinner schedule made it so that participants had a maximum of one hour in which to swim or shower, not accounting for the time it took to grab bathing suits, a change of clothes, and toiletries after work. In other words, we did not really have access to the local pool as there was little time to enjoy it.

Additionally, the organization of information in SEEDS' general information packet deemphasized the limited range of the excursions, and the program-specific information sheet did not indicate that the camp was out of range for all of the travel opportunities listed in the general packet. It was clear that this caused misunderstanding and dissatisfaction, as I and other participants expressed confusion and disappointment regarding the local excursions. We all expected non-local travel opportunities because they were listed and emphasized in the general packet. The excursions that we did go on were very poorly planned, always presented without detail hours before they would take place. In one instance, we were told about an opportunity to go on a Jeep tour of the local highlands at the end of a mid-week workday. Based on the minimal description, everyone thought this would be a vehicle tour with a few stops. Instead, the "Jeep tour" involved a fifteen-minute drive to a mountain and then a three-hour hike to the peak of that mountain, all with another strenuous workday to follow the next day.

The lack of leisure time and heavy work focus of the program ultimately strained the strength of individual social bonds and the overall cohesion of the group, leading to conflict and the formation of cliques centered around whatever language members spoke most fluently. One participant, who was largely excluded from the cliques, frequently complained about feeling out of place in the group, but camp leaders made few efforts to discourage the cliques. This problem seemed to be exacerbated by a lack of intercultural understanding. By leaving participants little leisure time and offering a single, abbreviated international night, the SEEDS program created few opportunities for intercultural understanding to improve.

Program Leadership

The WF program exceeded packet expectations regarding program leadership by providing extensively trained camp leaders. Instead of the one-week training outlined in the packet, camp leaders had received three months of training that involved actual training sessions and observing experienced camp leaders. In addition to this training, WF provided camp leaders with other opportunities to develop, including Icelandic language classes. Two of the camp leaders in my program stated that they felt this helped them to contribute more to the clinic because it enhanced their ability to communicate with patients and superiors.

SEEDS camp leaders, on the other hand, were poorly trained. One of our camp leaders in this program frequently discussed how nervous and uncertain he was as a leader because he had simply signed up to lead and been assigned to the camp. Although the other camp leader had a month of experience in Iceland, he was very closed off and did not communicate well with participants, the local host, or organization officials. Examples of problems caused or exacerbated

by his lack of communication include the aforementioned clique-excluded participant and the Jeep tour misunderstanding. Overall, the SEEDS camp leaders seemed ill-equipped and reluctant to lead the group.

Although the packets for both organizations only discussed leadership in terms of camp leaders, both their effectiveness and the satisfaction of participants were affected by the leadership of the local host and organization officials. In the WF program, a constant stream of communication between camp leaders, the local host, and organization officials made the camp leaders more effective and improved participant experiences. Camp leaders made texts and phone calls throughout the day when confronted with participant concerns, and both the local host and organization officials were diligent about responding. This cooperation enabled leaders to address and resolve problems quickly or do other work, such as organizing excursions. WF camp leaders also made themselves available to the participants, stressing that we could bring any problem to them and that we should see them as equals.

Incompetence abounded in the SEEDS program leadership as camp leaders, the local host, and organization officials seemed constantly disorganized. At the beginning of the program, organization officials struggled to coordinate transportation to the program location, at one point telling participants to roam Reykjavik for a few hours while they spoke with their drivers. Within days of the program starting, the local host seemed to be running out of jobs for participants as we waited longer every day after breakfast for work assignments. A lack of communication between camp leaders, the local host, and organization officials who seemed to misunderstand each other often led to miscommunication with participants and overall greatly lowered the quality of the program experience.

Accommodations and Food

Again, WF met packet expectations in terms of accommodations and food. Housing was fully equipped as indicated, including a shower, bathrooms, a living room, a kitchen with cooking and baking supplies, and a washer and dryer as well as laundry soap. Each bedroom in the house had two mattresses, some with bedframes and others without, and internet access was provided throughout the house. Staff at the clinic prepared food for participants four times a day, covering breakfast, lunch, a snack, and dinner. Regarding the food, there was only one minor problem: it was mostly vegetarian as expected, but the program was not as flexible with dietary restrictions like veganism. Although WF did not indicate flexibility with dietary restrictions in its information packet, the group did indicate this flexibility in a mandatory pre-trip survey given to participants. However, participants had access to the kitchen in the housing, and preparing extra dishes to supplement a healthy vegan diet was not an issue.

One unexpected negative aspect of the accommodations was that the clinic often relegated participants to specific quarters with specific and limited privileges or access to facilities. For example, participants were not allowed to use gyms in the clinic or to drink coffee outside of a designated area, and they had to eat all meals outside of the dining area in a separate room. These issues were a minor inconvenience, though, and did not affect the overall quality of my experience.

Conversely, the accommodations and food provided by the SEEDS program were severely inadequate and did not meet expectations. Despite the fact that this program occurs once annually and thus should be easy to organize around the schedule of the local community, participants were split into multiple temporary housing units due to scheduling conflicts with the local school and construction crews. Additionally, vague language in the information packets regarding the housing style suggested that participants would be housed with local Icelanders. Instead, we were fit first into multiple storage rooms and later a classroom with mattresses on the floor. This would not have been an issue if participants had not also been forbidden from using kitchen, shower, bathroom, and laundry facilities in these locations, accommodations the “General Information” packet had guaranteed. Although the program-specific packet indicated there would be no showers in the

housing, there were showers. It was just that, for some unexplained reason, participants were not allowed to use them and were instructed to shower at the local pool.

Matters were then complicated by the fact that pool hours, the work schedule, and the dinner schedule made it so participants had only from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. to shower. Because some work locations were over a half-hour hike from town and because the pool was a fifteen-minute walk from our housing, this time was further shortened. Exhausted volunteers had to choose between running from work locations to their housing to grab clothes and toiletries, and then running to the pool showers, or not showering at all.

Despite assurance from SEEDS that “[participants] will be provided with enough food and a good variety to live comfortably for the duration of the camp,” meals were severely inadequate (“General Info”). Participants did prepare their own meals, but this accounted for only one actual meal a day, which was dinner. Breakfast was more of a quick snack (typically cereals, breads, fruits, and vegetables), and lunch only consisted of whatever a participant could prepare at breakfast and pack to take to the work location (typically sandwiches and fruits). Dinner was prepared by alternating groups of volunteers who, due to exhaustion and a lack of organization, often delayed dinner time and did not prepare enough food.

Furthermore, despite advertising its ability to accommodate dietary restrictions in both its packets and a mandatory pre-trip survey, SEEDS provided incredibly limited options for a healthy vegan diet. My breakfasts and lunches consisted of bread, rice cakes, bananas, and sometimes bell peppers, with the only sources of protein being peanut butter and occasionally almonds. Because other participants either misunderstood or forgot vegan dietary restrictions, I sometimes could not eat the prepared dinner. Whereas this was an easily resolved, minor problem in the WF program, the restrictions on kitchen use in the SEEDS program made it a larger issue. Even when we were moved to new housing where we were permitted to use the attached kitchen, camp leaders and other participants became upset when I bought and prepared my own food.

Experience Conclusions

Due to the relationship between program expectations and actual experiences, the voluntourism model utilized by WF is generally sustainable whereas the one utilized by SEEDS is not. Although WF’s voluntourism program was not perfect, the organization set mostly realistic work, leisure time, leadership, and accommodation/food expectations in their information packet, and the positive aspects of the experience made the negatives into minor inconveniences. Ultimately, WF is an example of a generally sustainable voluntourism program because the organization created an enjoyable and valuable experience for their voluntourist participants. SEEDS, on the other hand, set high expectations for every category of the program in its information packets and then failed to deliver in the actual program experience, in which a plethora of negative aspects outweighed positives. Because SEEDS created a much less enjoyable and valuable experience for volunteers, which will deter participants from returning to the organization, as well as from reviewing the organization positively and helping its volunteer numbers, the general sustainability of its voluntourism program is at risk.

Adherence to the ESV Model

Neither the program conducted by WF nor the program conducted by SEEDS fully adheres to the ESV model. Although the issue for the SEEDS program is its unsustainable general model of voluntourism, the issue for the WF program is a lack of focus on fostering environmental sustainability. To review, the key elements of the ESV model direct voluntourism organizations to create an environmental consciousness through education and leisure activities and to create a symbiotic experience of tourism in which tourists and visited communities’ benefit. On the whole, both WF and SEEDS failed to create an environmental consciousness through their programs. The

work and leisure activities in the WF program focused on fostering intercultural learning and understanding rather than providing an education about environmental concerns or better practices. Although the trail maintenance work in the SEEDS program partially focused on the environmental objective of nature conservation, it placed emphasis entirely on the completion of the work. Participants were not educated about environmental issues that made the work important nor about the environmental impact of the work, and thus no environmental consciousness was created.

WF and SEEDS also did not fully satisfy the ESV requirement of creating a symbiotic experience in which tourists and visited communities' benefit from their programs. Because WF's generally sustainable voluntourism program conducts work for a particular business, the Rehabilitation and Health Clinic in Hveragerdi, community benefits are uncertain. One could argue that the program benefits the local economy by supporting one of its businesses, but the tangible economic impact of the work done by WF voluntourists is questionable. In the SEEDS program the voluntourist work focuses more on the local community, but at the expense of the volunteers; there is no symbiosis.

Furthermore, both organizations suffered from a number of the potential pitfalls discussed in the above section defining the ESV model. Although neither program "inadvertently facilitated... irresponsible behavior" (Goodwin 45) in their voluntourist participants or caused more harm than good to the communities they operated in, both experienced issues with "neglecting local needs" (Boluk et al. 273). Local needs were never discussed in either program, and the absence of contact with the local community ensured that voluntourists were not aware of these needs. Outside of negligible recycling initiatives in both programs and the work-based nature conservation focus in the SEEDS program, the work of both organizations did not address the environmental concerns raised by locals, activists, and the government as described in the section above contextualizing Iceland's environmental challenges.

Although WF and SEEDS work with local communities and foster some "communication between tourism industry shareholders and the community," Dávid's ESV model ideal of a "tourism policy... [that is] an organic part of the general politics of local society" (213) is not yet realized in these voluntourism programs.

Conclusions

As I previously argued, the relationship between voluntourist expectations and actual program experiences is crucial to the general sustainability of voluntourism programs and the organizations that conduct them. Before a program can have positive environmental or economic impacts for local communities, it needs to engage potential voluntourist participants and ensure a consistent workforce. Part of this engagement comes from programs fulfilling the expectations they create and, in turn, providing participants with enjoyable, valuable experiences. These are things that the SEEDS program needs to focus on. To improve its general sustainability, it should increase leisure time, decrease the work intensity or provide a more detailed description of the work intensity, and ensure the adequate provision of accommodations and food. Long, strenuous workdays coupled with stressful living arrangements and insufficient meals made it hard for participants in this program to bond or have fun, and limited their time and space for personal growth. Potential voluntourists should receive much more detailed information regarding the work intensity of the program prior to registration so that they can make informed decisions, either from umbrella organizations like CADIP or from localized organizations like SEEDS.

If we further consider the information provided to potential voluntourists, both WF and SEEDS need to increase the transparency of their programs. Although existing tourism literature suggests that voluntourist organizations need to be more financially transparent, the transparency issue for these Icelandic organizations is more general. Potential voluntourists should have access to information packets before paying any fees. Furthermore, although the brief overview of camps on CADIP's website is good, it is insufficient for allowing potential voluntourists to make well-

informed decisions before spending their money. Additionally, potential voluntourists should be aware that not all voluntourism organizations provide sufficient information about their programs. Harold Goodwin writes, “the traveler’s aspiration to have a better experience of another culture or place through volunteering... is a noble one, but travelers need to be wary of purchasing experiences that may do more harm than good” (37). Although the “harm” Goodwin refers to in this passage is potential environmental harm, those “travelers” should also be wary of the possibility of purchasing experiences that may be personally harmful.

The cooperation of stakeholders like camp leaders, local hosts, and organization officials in communicative networks was a major factor contributing to the general sustainability of the WF program, which provides a good example for SEEDS to follow. Voluntourism programs and organizations that sustain healthy, active communicative networks benefit from enhanced leadership and organization. This results in better experiences for voluntourist participants, which ultimately increases the general sustainability of programs.

Finally, both WF and SEEDS stand to benefit from adhering more closely to the ESV model by engaging with Icelandic culture and environmental concerns. These programs should incorporate an educational aspect, which could include “formal ‘interpretative’ programs of the community history and culture, the needs of the community, social norms, perspectives on visitors, [and] suggested tourist codes of conduct” (Boluk et al. 282). This addition would help align the behavior of tourists with environmentally and socially conscious practice, making them better members of the Icelandic communities they serve for the duration of the program and perhaps better members of the communities to which they return at home. Both organizations could also work with local, activist, and government initiatives to create meaningful change that addresses local or national environmental problems. This approach would increase the tangible positive impacts of voluntourism, which benefits not only the volunteers but also local communities, voluntourism organizations, and the country as a whole.

ESV offers an optimistic model for creating more ethical tourism industries and coping with contemporary environmental challenges in all countries regardless of their global economic status. However, as this case study of voluntourism experiences in Iceland shows, some programs have a lot of room for improvement. To improve their voluntourism programs, WF and SEEDS should recognize the importance of volunteer expectations and experiences, increase the transparency of their programs, increase the cooperation of stakeholders by strengthening communicative networks, and adhere more closely to the ESV model through increased engagement with Icelandic culture and environmental concerns. Although tourists have become a part of Icelandic life, they need not be a negative part of that life. With increased general sustainability and adherence to the ESV model, voluntourism organizations like WF and SEEDS could help mend the environmental damage done by Iceland’s tourism boom and facilitate a positive future in which tourists, Icelanders, and nature can coexist.

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Family Interview and Reflection

Emma Kirsch

Braun Award for Excellence in Writing in the College of Education
Nominated by Colleen D’Arcy, Associate Professor of Teacher Education



Emma Kirsch is an early childhood and elementary education major from Clinton Township, Michigan. Entering her fifth year in Fall 2019, Emma has been heavily involved in extracurricular activities while at SVSU. She has served as an orientation leader, a co-founder and co-president of Pie Club, and the vice president of Enhance for Forever Red, a position dedicated to enhancing the student experience through fundraising and scholarships. She is a member of the 20th class of the Roberts Fellowship and currently tutors at the SVSU Writing Center in addition to coordinating the Saginaw and Bay Community Writing Centers. She has given six state and regional conference presentations, which have focused on the community writing centers, non-native English speakers, fundraising initiatives, and trauma-informed education strategies.

Some of Emma’s honors include two Braun Awards for Excellence in Writing in the College of Education, the 2019 YWCA Emerging Leader Award, a 2019 SVSU Mayme Hamilton Award for Excellence in Tutoring, and the 2019 Tutor Leadership Award from the East Central Writing Centers Association (an organization representing over fifty writing centers in six states). In her future career, Emma hopes to use the skills and lessons she has learned through her SVSU education, leadership experiences, and extracurricular opportunities to make high-quality education equally accessible for everyone.

This piece was written for the course Administration and Partnerships in Early Childhood (TE 387), taught by Dr. Colleen D’Arcy. This assignment required Emma to interview two parents, one with a school-aged child and one with a child not yet old enough for school. This assignment required Emma to develop a series of questions, interview families, think critically about bio-ecological information and its influence on young children’s development, apply current research and recommended practices into her analysis, and reflect on the experience within the context of her future teaching practice. By completing this assignment, Emma says, she deepened her understanding of the importance of families in education and better understood the need for teachers to communicate effectively with them.

When teachers are working with children in a school setting, connecting with the students’ families should be a priority. Families play an invaluable role in children’s lives, shaping their values and worldview. To better understand the impact families have, I conducted an interview with two mothers: one mother of two school-aged children and one mother of a child not yet old enough for school. By interviewing and reflecting on these mothers’ responses to several open-ended questions, I was able to understand more deeply a family’s role in children’s education and how teachers must communicate effectively with the family unit. *Note:* Sources for demographic information have been excluded to maintain confidentiality.

Background Information

To complete this assignment, I spoke with two mothers. Mom A is a white female in her early 30s who has a bachelor's degree in secondary education. She has her master's degree in public sciences and works in a university setting. Mom A was raised in a suburban area but currently resides with her husband and son in a small town, which had a population of just over 2,600 people in 2011. Her son is two years old and currently attends an in-home daycare. Mom A's husband has a bachelor's degree in secondary education and teaches math in a high school setting.

The other mother I interviewed—Mom B—also is a white female and lives in a small town, which had a population of roughly 2,000 people in 2000. She grew up in a small rural town as well. Mom B lives with her husband and their two daughters. Neither parent has a degree, but Mom B is currently pursuing her bachelor's degree in the field of education. Her husband has his high school diploma. Daughter A is eleven years old and is in sixth grade. She has one elective per semester, and her recent class choices have been leadership and woodworking. Daughter A plays on a little league softball team. Daughter B is seven years old and is in first grade. Her class has 29 students in it. A lot of Daughter B's classmates have individualized education programs (IEPs). Halfway through the year, Daughter B's teacher went on maternity leave, which caused a substitute to take over the class. Mom B shared that Daughter B is one of the top readers in her class, scoring very well on a standardized test.

Interview Responses and Reflections

Question One: In what ways do you believe the school should support you as a parent?

Mom A. While answering this question, Mom A shared that the daycare setting in which her child is currently does a great job of keeping her posted through text messages as well as through other forms of communication. She has really liked this means of up-to-date communication because it encourages consistency between the practices occurring at home and school. When her child enters school, Mom A wants to be notified of what is going on to stay on the same page; also, communication will help her know whether her child is struggling in any areas. She said, “[I]f I don't know there's a problem or if I don't know he's struggling in a certain area, then I can't do anything about it. Where if I'm informed, I can take action.” Lastly, Mom A wants the school to be “available as a resource.”

Mom B. In her response, Mom B emphasized her desire to know how her daughters are doing in school so that she can best support them. This is not limited to academic issues but also includes any social or emotional situations as well. She said,

[I want c]ommunication in what I can do to better my child. If my girls' teachers can see where my [children are] struggling, I would expect them to say, “Here's what you can do to decrease that gap. Here are steps you can take.”

Mom B went on to also share these thoughts: “If they're seeing anything—socially, emotionally, anything at school—I would expect them to come to me because I'm not there. I don't see it.”

Reflection. In their responses, these mothers shared extremely similar feelings. A desire for support in how they, as parents, can help scaffold or increase their children's knowledge was present in both their answers. I was not surprised by these answers, considering the backgrounds of these mothers in the education field. Furthermore, I think this is a common theme among many parents, given that we repeatedly hear in our courses that all parents want to do well for their children. In the case of these mothers, supporting their children's learning at home is how they see themselves as best fit to do well for their children.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) provides insight within its position statement into the importance of knowing each child individually; a portion of the statement contends that early childhood professionals must consider “what is known about each child as an individual—referring to what practitioners learn about each child that has implications for how best to adapt and be responsive to that individual variation” (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009, p. 9). To give parents accurate information about their children’s developmental and academic needs, educators must know the child beyond the surface level. By following this developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) guideline, educators can help to fulfill the desire many parents have for the kind of support described by the two moms with whom I spoke.

“Question” Two: Tell me about your ideal teacher.

Mom A. In terms of what Mom A wants in a teacher, she shared that she wants someone who “is genuinely interested in the success of all kids,” can see beyond kids’ grades to their potential, and can see strengths outside of academic performance. For her own child, Mom A wants a teacher who can see something in her child and share that information. Furthermore, Mom A wants a teacher who can be a “role model in terms of integrity and character and honesty,” is “willing to apologize [after losing his or her] temper,” and has “general good human skills.” Echoing her desire for communication, Mom A wants a teacher who is “willing to be a partner with parents.”

Mom B. In response to this question, Mom B said, “My ideal teacher would be someone who is understanding to the classroom as a whole.” She shared past experiences with teachers who are stuck in their ways and unopen to changing their teaching style to benefit the needs of the students. This prompted her to say, “I would want to see a teacher who would try different things in order for the students to succeed and who would have that equality across the classroom.”

Reflection. Again, there are striking similarities in the responses of these mothers. A desire for equity across the classroom is present in each response, and I suspect it is again a nod to their perspectives as educators. Mom A specifically mentioned the ability of a teacher to model positive behaviors, such as asking for forgiveness, to the students. This reminds me of a discussion in the SVSU course Introduction to Early Childhood (TE 380) where we talked of the importance of being authentic with students. Educators expect students to admit wrongdoing, so modeling this for them when teachers themselves slip up provides a great opportunity for learning how to apologize (Owens, 2018). Mom B brings up the unique point of wanting a teacher who can be flexible and adapt to the needs of students. Although this is obviously a desirable trait for a teacher to have, I think that, when looked at more in-depth, this speaks to another teacher disposition. The idea of having a positive view of others and seeing them through the perspective of “People do well if they can” influences a teacher’s flexibility (Owens, 2018). If a teacher were to teach all children the same without changing when students struggle, she may think they just are not trying hard enough or that they are not intelligent enough. However, if a positive view of others is implemented, the teacher would be more willing to adjust her practice to increase accessibility of information for students.

“Question” Three: Describe your view of the purpose of education.

Mom A. The purpose of education in Mom A’s eyes is “to prepare students for their future, everything from being a good human and reinforcing what we’re teaching at home to [doing] the best as they can in the school setting.” To elaborate on what “being a good human” entails, Mom A shared that this means to learn social norms, to be kind to others, and to be considerate of others. In terms of academic knowledge, Mom A wants the information and skills her child learns to be related and connected to his future, enabling him to find some meaningful career and role in society.

Mom B. Rather than focusing on academic knowledge, Mom B shared that

the purpose of education is to help my children grow in every way. I wouldn't just say it's to help them grow in their subject needs. There's so much more to education than how to write and how to do math... it's not just "input, output." It's how to overcome barriers and it's how to socially get through life and emotionally problem solve.

She expressed that having a more holistic education, one beyond the mere "input, output" of academic information, is what school is all about.

Reflection. A trend of similarities is now definitely established between these mothers' responses. They both emphasize that the purpose of education includes academic knowledge, but that is not the only aspect, nor is it the most important to them. Learning social skills and learning kindness are both held in high regard by these mothers. DAP provides some insights into the importance of social and emotional development. According to DAP, "All the domains of development and learning—physical, social and emotional, and cognitive—are important, and they are closely interrelated" (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009, p. 11). Many people view school as a place for cognitive growth chiefly, but these mothers focused more on the social and emotional development, which may be disregarded by others. I interpret this shared sentiment to be correlated to these mothers' personalities and their desire to go into the field of education.

Question Four: How can we (teacher and parent) most effectively collaborate to support your child?

Mom A. Communication was mentioned in her response to a previous question, but it came up again in Mom A's answer to this one as well. The first thing she said was that it's "all about staying in touch." Mom A expressed an understanding that teachers are busy with other students, so she is comfortable with whatever communication style works best for the teachers. She wants to know if there is something going on in school, but she also understands that communication goes both ways. Mom A said that she would let her child's teacher know if something was happening at home that would impact him at school, such as family illnesses and other situations.

Mom B. Openness was the theme of Mom B's answer for this question. She noted that she feels welcome in the school and wants her daughters to have the opportunity to grow outside of the home. At the same time, she expressed a desire to be aware of what was being taught. She said that "knowing what my child is learning, keeping the curriculum open, and being aware of what my child is going to learn" are some expectations she has.

Reflection. For this question, the mothers' responses differed slightly. Communication is the common thread between them, but it takes slightly different forms. Mom B was more concerned with knowing what her children are learning, whereas Mom A wanted to know about what is going on in school generally. Additionally, Mom A discussed the importance of two-way communication in terms of letting the teacher know what is happening at home. I think this was an important statement, because parents are able to have insights into their children that teachers would not have without the information that parents provide. Teachers must recognize the expertise and information of parents to build partnerships. As cited in Bredekamp and Copple, NAEYC's position statement includes a point titled "Establishing reciprocal relationships with families" (2009, p. 22). Building off of this idea, Bredekamp and Copple explain the importance of early childhood professionals avoiding the persona of "child expert" and coming across as uninterested in the parents' opinions and input because parents do not have this same knowledge (2009, p. 23). In her answer, Mom A establishes an expectation that she will be an active communicator in the partnership she forms with her son's teachers in the future.

In the case of Mom B's desire for an open curriculum, NAEYC encourages educators to provide families the opportunity to "participate in program decisions about their children's care

and education” (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009, p. 23). By allowing parents to see and discuss the curriculum ahead of time, Mom B’s expectation would be met, and DAP would be maintained. When working with families, teachers need to figure out what they expect to best meet the needs of each family. Both moms with whom I chatted see communication as important in a teacher but for slightly different reasons.

“Question” Five: Describe the skills, attitudes, and knowledge you want your child to learn during this school year.

Mom A. Focusing outside of academics, Mom A said she wanted her child to learn “general life skills” such as “how to participate in a group, be patient, and be considerate of others.” Mom A went on to say, in terms of what she wants her child to learn, that, “obviously all the academic stuff[, too ,] but all that comes secondary to me.”

Mom B. To answer this question, Mom B broke it down piece by piece. For knowledge, she wants her daughters to meet standards at grade level or above. For attitudes, she wants them to grow in their individuality while not picking up negative attitudes from their peers. She recognizes that peer influences are part of the risk taken when putting children into public school, but she said, “as a parent you have to counteract their influences” and teach values. For skills, she touched on the skills her daughters already possess, such as leadership and cheering on their friends.

Reflection. Both mothers want their children to learn and grow in and outside of academics while in school. Mom B, however, brings up an interesting point not discussed by Mom A, and that is the influence peers have. No child attends school in complete isolation, and the interactions children have with peers can have a real impact. Barbour, Barbour, and Scully highlight this influence by saying that children’s peers serve as models for how to cooperate and socialize, as well as by acknowledging the impact they have on values (2008). Peers’ influences can negatively affect a child, but Mom B takes responsibility for making sure her daughters are not embodying negative characteristics. For teachers, it is important to know what values and attitudes are being taught at home to either reinforce them or, at worst, understand them. Based on her child’s age and lack of exposure to many other children, Mom A might not yet think about the influence of peers. As time goes on for her, I suspect that peer influences will grow, and Mom A will have to address them just like Mom B has to do now with her older children.

“Question” Six: Tell me about your concerns for your child’s education.

Mom A. In response to this final “question,” Mom A said, “I have a lot of faith in the public school system... I really believe in the system when it’s done well.” Mom A’s concerns were not necessarily about her child specifically but rather how she will be as a parent. She shared concerns, saying, “What I’m honestly most concerned about is I’ll be tempted to be that super hands-on parent... and try to manage the experience for him.” She hopes to be able to set aside her “expectations and [embrace] the experience for his sake” and for hers. Additionally, Mom A is concerned about not having a connection with teachers because she’s a working mom, but she acknowledged that this is simply a matter of prioritization and effort on her part. Her concerns are not about the school itself because she has heard wonderful things about the elementary school he’ll attend and feels “like every school teacher in the state of Michigan is fully equipped to help.”

Mom B. Size and safety were Mom B’s main concerns for her daughters’ education. Being in a small school comes with increasing program cuts and a lack of opportunities for extracurricular activities outside of sports; she said, “Because the community is small, the opportunities that they have are slim.” Furthermore, size influences the community’s view of safety. Mom B shared, “Because we’re small, we assume that nothing is going to happen to us.” To illustrate that point, she discussed the lack of security in the school halls and at pick-up time. Mom B said she has walked past the school’s three offices without being seen, and this caused her concern. In terms of

pick-up time, there is a lack of supervision to the point that Mom B said she could pick up a friend's kid without any questions being asked even though there is technically an emergency pick-up system of sorts. About pick-up time, she said, "It's very lax, and it's just because we're small."

Reflection. Of all the answers given, by far this question elicited the most difference between the moms. Mom A worried about balancing time while being a working mom, which is not uncommon. According to the Pew Research Center, 50% of full-time working moms "say they wish they could be more involved in their children's schooling" (2015). Mom A has faith in the schools around her based on the information she has received from her friends with school-aged children, but she has not experienced these schools first-hand.

However, Mom B has first-hand experience with the school system in her own town and does not possess the same optimism Mom A has because she has seen program cuts that limit opportunities for her daughters. Additionally, Mom B has experienced a safety issue recently in her town in the form of an armed robbery down the road from the school. Having such an experience makes safety concerns something worth mentioning for Mom B, but Mom A has not had a gun issue that has hit close to home, so she did not express this concern. I attribute their differences to personal experiences and geographic location. I wonder whether Mom A's optimism and faith in the school system will remain high once she experiences it herself.

Concluding Thoughts

By completing this assignment, I was able to see more similarities than I anticipated. Looking back, I do not know why I was so surprised by the commonalities. Parents want what is best for their children; in this case, the mothers who were interviewed demonstrated a desire to reinforce and increase their children's learning at home, to have their children obtain social and emotional skills at school, and to maintain communication between home and school. These three trends in the moms' answers are presumably shared by many others as well. I would be ignorant, however, to not acknowledge the many similarities shared by the moms I interviewed. They live in rural communities and have been or are currently being trained as educators. These two factors have an influence on their answers, and I would be interested in hearing from a more diverse audience to see whether similarities continue to exist.

The most significant takeaway from this assignment is simple. As a teacher, I need to make sure I am aware of families' expectations for their children and for me; having this awareness will allow for better outcomes and higher parent satisfaction. As noted by the Center for Public Education (n.d.), "[e]ffective parent involvement comes when a true partnership exists between schools and families. Creating that partnership, especially around academics, is what works for student achievement." By intentionally taking steps to forge this partnership, I can improve the academic experience for students and their families.

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The Relationships among Physical Activity, Depression, and Grade Point Average in Disabled College Students

Lauren Meldrum

Braun Award for Excellence in Writing
in the College of Health and Human Services, Category 1
Nominated by Samantha Deere, Assistant Professor of Kinesiology



Lauren Meldrum graduated from SVSU in May 2019 as an exercise science major with a health science minor. While she was at SVSU, the Marine City, Michigan, resident was involved as an undergraduate researcher; she was also the secretary of the Student Exercise Science Association. During the course of her four years, Lauren participated in a number of fitness testing sessions, and she attended and presented research at various conferences. She hopes to publish two manuscripts detailing her research. She is currently working as a student assistant in prosthetics and orthotics, and she plans to attend graduate school.

This grant proposal, done under the mentorship of Dr. Deere, was submitted to and funded by SVSU's Undergraduate Research Program. Lauren feels she has grown immensely as a writer from this project and knows she will use the experience in her future work.

ABSTRACT: Previous research indicates an inverse relationship between physical activity participation and depression levels, and a positive relationship between physical activity and grade point average (GPA) in the general population. However, these relationships have not been specifically investigated in a disabled population. This study outlines an approach to study these factors in this population. **PURPOSE:** To determine the relationship between 1) physical activity and depression and 2) physical activity and GPA in disabled college students. I hypothesize that 1) depressive symptoms will be present to a greater degree in the disabled population than the general population, 2) disabled students who participate in physical activity will report fewer depressive symptoms than those who do not participate in physical activity, and 3) disabled students who engage in physical activity will report higher GPAs than those who do not participate. **METHODS:** These relationships will be investigated by utilizing a national dataset from the American College Health Association called the National College Health Assessment. Descriptive (race, gender, age, etc.) and potential confounding (socioeconomic status, year in school, gender, etc.) variables will be utilized to enhance findings. **OUTCOMES:** The results of this study will help inform university programming related to depression and GPA for disabled college students.

Narrative

Goals and Objectives

Studies show that physical activity lowers depression in a non-disabled population. However, little research has investigated the relationship between physical activity and depression in a disabled population. To address this knowledge gap, I will use a National College Health

Assessment dataset from the American College Health Association (to which my faculty advisor has access) to achieve two purposes: 1) to investigate the relationship between physical activity and depression among disabled college students and 2) to investigate the relationship between physical activity and grade point average (GPA) among disabled college students. Because this data already exists, I can begin analyzing it immediately after completing an exhaustive literature review. Findings of this proposed study will, I hypothesize, bring light to the likelihood of depression in disabled college students and will, I hope, help impact policy for this population.

In regards to GPA, studies show that physical activity helps students perform better academically. Unfortunately, as with depression studies, these investigations do not include students with disabilities. Furthermore, graduation rates are dropping for those with disabilities. However, according to Diamant, during the 2013–2014 school year, graduation rates fell below 70 percent for students with disabilities. The rate was even lower—at 50 percent—in 7 states (2016). If something as simple as participating in physical activity can help a student's GPA, then the results of this study may positively impact graduation rates for students with a mobility/dexterity disability.

The primary variables of interest for this project include mobility/dexterity disability status, depression diagnosis, physical activity participation, and GPA. I am specifically looking at individuals with physical disabilities, which refers to those who are unable to use one or more of their extremities, resulting in more effort needed to walk or to grab or lift objects. Previous research continually indicates a strong relationship between physical activity and a variety of health-related variables (both physical and mental) in a non-disabled population. I hypothesize that 1) depressive symptoms will be more present in the disabled population than the general population, 2) disabled students who participate in physical activity will exhibit fewer depressive symptoms than those who do not participate in physical activity, and 3) disabled students who engage in physical activity will report higher GPAs than those who do not participate.

The **overall goals** for this project are as follows:

- Goal 1: Prepare literature reviews. I will prepare two exhaustive literature reviews for this research. One will concern the relationship between physical activity and depression among students with and without disabilities, and the other will concern the relationship between physical activity and GPA in the same group of students.
- Goal 2: Complete statistical analyses to investigate research questions. Using the national dataset from the American College Health Association, I will organize the data based on variables of interest. Once I organize the data, I will start running statistical analyses related to each research question (utilizing SPSS software). Lastly, I will draw conclusions from the data I have collected and analyzed.
- Goal 3: Disseminate findings via conference presentations. I plan to attend the Midwest American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) conference in November 2018 to learn about disseminating findings via a presentation. I will then attend the Michigan ACSM conference in February 2019 to discuss my findings. I will also be sharing my findings at SVSU's Undergraduate Research Program Symposium.
- Goal 4: Publish findings in a peer-reviewed journal. Once my investigation is complete and I have written up my findings, I will submit a manuscript to a peer-reviewed journal.

Background and Context

An abundance of literature indicates a favorable relationship between physical activity participation and depression levels. Much literature also notes a positive relationship between physical activity and GPA. Unfortunately, few researchers focus on the relationship between physical activity and depression, as well as between physical activity and GPA, in individuals with mobility/dexterity disabilities. I am specifically looking at individuals with physical disabilities,

which refers to those who are unable to use one or more of their extremities, resulting in more effort needed to try walking or to try grabbing or lifting objects. I plan to determine the relationship between 1) physical activity and depression and 2) physical activity and GPA in disabled college students. Research points to the fact that moderate intensity physical activity is more beneficial than mild intensity in lowering depressive symptoms, along with the fact that aerobic activity is more helpful in combatting depression than resistance exercise. As for grades, studies have found that students who were members of the university's fitness center had significantly better GPAs than those who were not members (Noh, Kwon, Park, Oh, & Kim, 2016; Zarshenas, Houshvar, & Tahmasebi, 2013; Penninx, Rejeski, Pandya, Miller, Bari, Applegate, & Pahor, 2002; Danbert, Pivarnik, McNeil, & Washington, 2014).

My initial literature review suggests that students' physical activity has a positive effect on students' depressive symptoms. Noh et al. (2016) found disabilities to be a risk factor for depression. This suggests that depression and physical activity may be related among the disabled community. Among the non-disabled population, moderate and intense activity has been shown to be an effective method of lowering depressive symptoms as compared to exercising at a low intensity (Zarshenas et al., 2013). Additionally, Penninx et al. (2002) found the control group's depression score increased over time while the aerobic group decreased their score by 23 percent. Although they may not all be from participants with mobility/dexterity disabilities, these findings demonstrate that physical activity can improve one's depressive state. Researchers need to investigate this relationship in a disabled population.

Additionally, a significant amount of literature indicates a positive relationship between physical activity and college students' GPA. Danbert et al. studied a group of incoming freshmen and followed their progress for four semesters. The results showed that students who were members of the university's fitness center had significantly higher cumulative GPAs than those students who were not members of the fitness center. These students were also taking more cumulative credits than the students who were not associated with the fitness center. This study suggests a positive relationship between physical activity and GPA (2014). Sadly, little to no research focuses on the relationship between physical activity and GPA among those with disabilities.

Therefore, based on the lack of literature about disabled students, and the importance of identifying the role of physical activity in disabled individuals' depressive status and GPA, we can determine that research on this topic is necessary. Physical activity in non-disabled participants results in a positive impact on their health, mentality, and overall grades. Although the research has helped the non-disabled population, it is important to note that approximately 11 percent of all college students report having a disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The results of the proposed research project may help influence programming and policy related to depression and student success in the disabled population.

Significance and Impact

Based on the lack of previous research in disabled populations, we clearly need to focus in on this topic to investigate a specific method (i.e., physical activity) of improving depression and GPA in a disabled population. Universities across the nation can benefit from this research by informing their students of alternatives to relieve depressive symptoms and potentially improve GPA. Physical activity can do more than affect a person's physical health, and I hope to support that claim with this research study.

This project is significant beyond the academic realm. Individuals' lives are completely changed when they are forced to get an amputation (whether it be from a military incident, car accident, or disease) and live with a prosthetic limb. Typically, in such cases, everything that person has known is now altered. This enormous change can cause a patient to become sad and feel a sense of emptiness. Furthermore, depression affects more than the non-disabled population, yet we rarely see any research on it. That is something I would like to change.

Additionally, this project is personally significant for me, as in the near future, I plan to enter graduate school for a master's in prosthetics and orthotics. The project thus links my undergraduate program, my future career, and my desire to make a difference. Additionally, with my undergraduate major being exercise science, I try to find ways physical activity can make a difference before resorting to medication. I would like to be able to give my patients the tools they may need, not only for everyday activities, but also to enjoy their lives and come out of any depressive state in which they might find themselves. Doing this research would help me get a better understanding of the topic.

I feel I have all the tools I need to take on this research project. My courses here at SVSU have improved my knowledge of this topic and taught me how to examine data and write up my results. I have learned so much through my education about physical activity and its effects on the body. Now it is time to take the information I know, examine data, and publish my findings, so this topic becomes better known and helps people who are in need and suffering from depression.

Timeline

The timeline for this project is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Project Timeline and Related Tasks

Timeframe	Task
May–July 2018	Complete literature reviews
August 2018	Familiarize myself with the national survey (ACHA-NCHA), clean and prepare dataset
September–October 2018	Learn about and complete all statistical analyses
November 2018–January 2019	Attend the MidWest ACSM conference to learn about academic presentation styles, write results, and prepare for presentation
February 2019	Present at Michigan ACSM Conference in Gaylord
March–May 2019	Publish paper and identify next steps for the project

Evaluation

Evaluation of this project is very much related to my development as a researcher and student. If I am able to find a correlation between 1) physical activity and depression and 2) physical activity and GPA in students with disabilities, then I will consider my research a success. I can then use that information to educate not only students with disabilities, but also SVSU's Office of Disability Services, so they can educate their clients too.

This project not only helps me to understand the relationship between physical activity and depression in those with disabilities but provides an incredible learning experience. I will be getting hands-on involvement with examining these variables, researching, writing a literature review, presenting at a conference, and most importantly publishing a first paper.

Once my research is finished, I plan to present my findings at the Michigan ACSM conference along with explaining my results at SVSU's Undergraduate Research Program Symposium. The next step would be to publish my results, so my research can make a difference for people around the country and open the public's eyes to the role of physical activity in treating depression and improving GPA within the disabled college student population.

If my hypotheses are incorrect and the results of this research do not help to improve GPA or depression in disabled students, it can still be considered successful. I will still have completed a student-led research project and learned new skills to use in my future schooling and career.

Budget

The budget for this project is outlined in Table 2.

Table 2

Project Items and Costs

Item	Cost	
Student Salary	Spring/Summer (278 hours @ \$9/hour): \$2,502 Fall (110 hours @ \$9/hour): \$990	\$3,492
Project Supplies	Printing: \$10 Poster Printing: \$60	\$70
Conference Travel	MidWest ACSM Conference: \$640 Michigan ACSM Conference \$490	\$1,130
		TOTAL: \$4,692

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Playing Nuns

Mackenzie Bethune

Tyner Prize for Fiction

Nominated by C. Vince Samarco, Professor of English



A May 2019 graduate of SVSU, Mackenzie Bethune was a geography major and English minor. She plans to attend the University of Cincinnati, where she will pursue a master of arts in geography. A resident of Saginaw, Michigan, Bethune has been involved with *Cardinal Sins* since her first semester at SVSU and served as its 2018–19 editor-in-chief. Her fiction has been published in *Portland Review*.

When I was young, my grandma taught my sister and me how to make beer. The recipe had been in our family for generations. Our grandma was the last person in our family who could read the recipe in its original German. She had tried to teach her children, but they were too impatient to learn the language or the process of fermentation. So the responsibility went to my sister and me, though we were more than a decade away from the legal drinking age.

My mom, my sister, and I had just moved to our grandma's house. Our grandma lived in a generic small town with the same story as all the others within fifty miles: industry dead, stores closed, people scarce. My sister and I were bussed to a school forty-five minutes away along with the handful of other children still living in the area. It was dark every morning when we got on and dark every evening when we got off. Our grandma tried to make what little time we spent awake in that house entertaining. There was a dollhouse, spools of yarn to be knit into hats or scarves. Our favorite was when she pulled us into the kitchen to boil water and stir in the malt. She would push a handful of hops under our noses and tell us to smell. It was piney like the Christmas tree we put up in our living room. Our mom would wander in to watch us for a while, her eyes focused on us in a way that they hadn't since before we'd moved up here, when our dad had passed away. A terrible day that we never spoke about and from which she'd never really leave.

What my sister and I didn't understand about making beer was the waiting. We liked the first step of brewing it, but expected a timer to be set, like with cookies or muffins. Instead we came home every day after school for almost two weeks, asking if it was ready yet. Finally, one weekend morning, she woke us up and told us it was time. We walked into the basement where our beer sat fermenting in a glass jug. She poured us each a small glass and told us to drink. It was terrible. We spat it out immediately, and she laughed at us.

"One day," she told us, "it will taste better."

Then she made us help her put it into smaller bottles that she would send out to her friends for Christmas.

Over many years of watching our grandma, we memorized the process and can now do it in our sleep. We have learned to like the taste of beer, have learned to add cherries or honey to flavor it. We have learned that others like our grandmother's recipe as well.

Tonight, I come up from our cellar after having checked out a batch that will go out next week. It is a heavy beer that sells well in the winter. I lock the cellar behind me and walk into the kitchen just as the clock in the hall strikes nine. I hear feet shuffling down the hall. Toilets flush, faucets drip, beds squeak. I head into the living room, which is dark. I touch the TV; it is warm, freshly turned off. I switch it back on and watch for a minute as two cartoon children hop in a barrel and punch at each other as they approach a waterfall.

From the light the TV provides, I scan the rest of the room. Blankets are folded up in a corner; pillows are propped up against the couches; the dollhouse has been pushed against the wall, all of its dolls asleep in their beds. A toy rabbit peeks out at me from under the couch. I pick it up

and pad down the hall. Most of the doors are shut, but the one at the very end is wide open. I count four sleeping bodies on the two sets of bunk beds. Three, actually. A fourth is sitting in the corner of the bed, huddled against the wall and making quiet gulping noises.

"Ava," I say, and the figure sits up. I go to her and sit on her bed. I hold out the rabbit and she takes it; then she lays across my lap. I used to love the feeling that came after crying. A calm emptiness overtook me as I sprawled out over my sister or my grandma, their hands on my hair. I take Ava's hair in my fingers and begin to braid it. "I thought Bella had taken him again," she says, holding the bunny to me.

"He was hiding under the couch," I tell her.

Soon, she is asleep. I loop a hair tie around the braid I've made and move Ava's head from my lap to the pillow. I leave her room and go to the front door. It makes loud, creaking noises when opened, so I look out a side window to see the front porch. Empty. I breathe deeply, walk back down the hall until it turns into a separate section of rooms.

In our private living room, my sister is passed out in her chair. An episode of *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia* is blaring from the TV. I turn the volume down and go to my bedroom.

The following morning, I wake up in a rush. I pull my bathrobe over my pajamas, fasten my veil, and walk out to the children's rooms. All of the doors are open, and all nine of my girls are in the process of getting ready. Some are brushing their teeth at the sinks in the bathroom; others are helping each other with the buttons on their school uniforms. I say good morning to them as I pass by each room, stopping to pull hair back into ponytails and tie shoelaces.

"Breakfast in five," I say.

In the kitchen, Mercy is putting scrambled eggs in a large bowl and cutting up fruit.

"Good morning," I say, pulling toast out from the toaster and slapping butter on it.

We bring the food into the dining room, where ten of the twelve chairs have been filled.

We start to eat, and I feel Mercy nudge me in the ribs. I look over to read her face, but it is obscured by newspaper.

Within ten minutes, the food has been eaten, and the girls fall into the routine of their morning chores, some cleaning the dishes and some setting the table for dinner.

"We're having burgers for dinner," I tell them, and there is a collective sound of approval.

"Now let's hurry up and head to the bus," I say, opening the front door. They all run down the long driveway. I wait until I've counted all ten heads entering the school bus before I shut the door.

Mercy is still at the table, reading her paper. I pour myself a cup of coffee and take off my veil. Mercy looks at me from over her newspaper again, looking proud in her plaid pajamas and veil. She only takes it off to sleep and shower, and I imagine the few strands of gray that must have started to sprout since I last saw her head uncovered. A spring day, over ten years ago. Her divorce had been finalized, and we drove up here to check on the beer we had made over the Easter weekend on our grandma's property.

Now, Mercy pulls on the crucifix on her neck and eyes me meaningfully.

"Fuck," I say, "we forgot to pray at breakfast again, didn't we?"

Mercy nods.

"I hope the girls don't tell Father Gabriel again," I say, leaving Mercy to her paper.

A few weeks ago, Father Gabriel stopped by after lunch. I was in the cellar with Armie, a retired man we pay to load his pickup truck full of our beer and deliver it to our customers in the neighboring towns.

"Shepherd," said Father Gabriel.

"Hello, Father," I said, picking up a glass mug and dipping it into the barrel Armie and I had been sampling.

I held it out to him, but he shook his head.

"Is it even noon yet?" he asked.

I poured the beer back into the barrel and led Father Gabriel out a side door onto the abbey's property.

"Rebecca said something interesting to her teacher before lunch yesterday," he told me as we started up a hill.

He waited for me to answer, but I was silent.

"She was asked to say the blessing before lunch, and she asked her teacher what she should say."

Still I was silent, so he continued. "Her teacher told her to pray the way she did at home, and Rebecca's response was that she doesn't pray at home. Isn't that unusual, especially since she is being raised by two nuns?"

I nodded.

"Shepherd, forgive me if I'm mistaken, but I thought it was Mercy who took the vow of silence."

We reached the top of the hill, and Father Gabriel sat down on a bench. The wind whipped at his coat, and he struggled against it as he attempted to light a cigarette. He held one out to me, but I shook my head and turned to face the other side of the hill.

The view from the hill's crest overlooks the unfarmed acres, my grandma's old house, the south shore of the lake, a view my family has owned for over a century. I always feel powerful up there, like a duke in his manor. I felt this power again surge through me, and finally I found my words.

"Forgive me, Father. I have been lazy and forgetful."

Father Gabriel laughed, and I turned to face him.

"We aren't at confession, Shepherd. I just want to remind you that there are certain responsibilities that come from wearing that veil and taking care of those young girls."

I nodded.

"And while you and your sister have not made your vows with God, you have made some with me."

"You've always been kinder to us than we deserve."

Father Gabriel drew from his cigarette and shook his head.

"I wouldn't say that. But in order to avoid any suspicion, you have to keep up certain appearances."

I nodded again.

"I'll be better about the prayers from now on."

This conversation is on my mind throughout the day. I go down to the cellar to check on the fermenting beer. We don't make much in the winter, so our stores are sparse. I go into the small office we've made out of a pantry and check our orders on the computer. As usual, the requests are greater than the stock we have. There is a certain perverseness in the idea of beer made by nuns. Our alleged purity seems to seep into the hops, which are grown on the property. Armie will be here tomorrow to pick up more barrels. I print off the orders, mostly from bars and restaurants in nearby tourist towns. Places where people will come after a day of skiing. These people come from Chicago or Madison or Grand Rapids or Detroit, people who don't question paying eleven dollars for a pint of beer. I tape the orders to the barrels. We currently only have an amber ale, a cherry ale, and a winter wheat in our cellars. Our heartiest beers for the middle of winter.

When Mercy and I first moved up here, we went by other names, names we have all but forgotten. We found our true names by chance one day when we were exploring the property. It was our first fall at our grandma's house. When the bus dropped us off at the side of the road, we were a five-minute walk from our house. Awaiting us was not our grandma, who still worked as a nurse, but our mom, who would be napping until it came time for dinner.

We made our way through the cornfields that had withered in the cold, rainy days, but after a few weeks of playing in the mazes we cut out for ourselves, we grew bored. And cold.

We decided to look for the old abbey our grandma had told us about. It was somewhere on the property. Settled by the French when fur-trapping boomed in this part of the world. She had warned us to be careful, that it was haunted. After two afternoons of searching, we finally came across a dirt road that wove through the apple orchard at the west side of the property. We followed it until we came to a small stone building with a weathered sign that read: Abbey of the Shepherds of Mercy.

The front door was miraculously unbolted, and we ran across the large front room, almost completely empty and full of leaves that had made their way in over the centuries.

"Where are the sheep?" I asked Mercy.

"If the nuns are dead, so are the sheep," she said.

"But I don't see any pens out back or a barn."

Mercy shrugged. "Maybe there never were any sheep."

"Then why call themselves Shepherds?"

"It's probably a religious thing."

"You think?"

"They're nuns."

"Shepherds sound more fun. Let's play shepherds."

"But there aren't any sheep, remember?"

I sighed and sat down.

"Let's play nuns," said my sister.

"That's boring. I want to be a shepherd."

"What if you were a nun named Shepherd?"

"That's not a name."

"Anything can be a name."

"Then you have to be Mercy," I told her.

She nodded, "That sounds good."

The next day was a Saturday, and Mercy and I trudged down to the abbey. She was carrying a bucket and a bottle of water.

"What's that for?" I asked her.

"You'll see," she told me.

Inside the abbey, Mercy told me we had to sweep. We found brooms in a cupboard and began pushing the mounds of leaves outside the door. We found trunks and tables and chairs and a porcelain tub beneath them. Mercy tried the faucet on the tub. Nothing came out.

"Sit in the tub," she told me.

"Why?" I asked.

"Because I am your Mother Superior and I demand you to," she said. I was still too young to ever think of arguing with her. I climbed into the tub.

"Shepherd, today you will make your final vows and become a member of our convent."

"I will?"

"Yes."

"What are the vows?" I asked.

"Do you promise to live a life of chastity?"

"What does that mean?"

She paused to explain. I accepted. She went through a list of vows she thought nuns should probably take. Poverty. Attending church every Sunday. Being kind to animals. Wearing a veil.

At this, she put a table cloth on my head and pronounced me an inductee of the Shepherds of Mercy. Then she dumped the water on my head. It was cold, and immediately I started to cry.

"Shh," she said, lifting me out of the tub. "You had to be baptized."

"But I already am," I said.

"You had to be re-baptized with your new name."

She stood me up and handed me the bottle.

“Now it’s your turn to re-baptize me.”

After this day, we would spend almost all of our time in the abbey. We dressed up in the moth-eaten habits we unearthed from trunks. In those trunks we also found diaries. We acted out scenes we read, praying on rosaries, washing linens in the old tub, holding communion with Wonder Bread and Welch’s grape juice. We became the devout Catholics our parents never dreamed of raising. They preferred to sleep in on Sundays over going to mass and refused to pay the large tuition of Catholic school. Mercy and I said our Hail Marys over and over as we polished old relics of the Virgin.

One day, Mercy found a passage in a diary where its owner decided to take a vow of silence. It was decided from then on that we would not speak in the abbey. By then, though, we were too old to play nuns, and the abbey had become a place where we came to do homework and escape the house.

In the heart of winter, I compulsively check the front door every night. In the summer, the air is milder, more hospitable to someone left outside for a few hours at night. I’ve talked to Father Gabriel about installing a video camera at the front of the house. “I wish I could, Shepherd,” he always says, “but we don’t have the budget right now. Besides, how many years has it been since anyone dropped off a child?”

Most nights after dinner, Mercy and I help the girls with their homework. Fortunately, Mercy’s talents are in math, which requires less explaining than reading or spelling or Spanish. I sit next to Helen in the dining room and quiz her on the week’s vocabulary words.

“What does *frequent* mean?”

“I don’t know,” says Helen.

“You knew what it meant last night.”

“I forgot.”

“Okay, what does *ridiculous* mean?”

“Stupid.”

“Kind of. What does *imposter* mean?”

“Stupid.”

Around us, the other girls start to laugh.

“You’re being *obtuse*. Do you know what that means?”

“Stupid.”

I get up and move over to Bella, who is doing religion homework.

“Can you quiz me?” she asks.

“Sure.”

I pick up the list of questions and scan over them. Lent is coming up, and the class is learning about the Stations of the Cross. I rack my brain for those brief catechisms Father Gabriel taught us over the years, but my mind draws a blank.

“Who wants hot chocolate?” I ask.

“But what about my questions?”

“Why don’t you ask Helen to ask you the questions?” I say, walking out of the room.

After everyone is in bed, Mercy and I turn on the TV in our living room. We flip to a show about a baking competition, but everything the contestants make has to include cannabis. Mercy groans and changes the channel to HBO. Even in her silence, she has always been vehement that we pay extra to the cable company for it. It’s not the pot that bothers Mercy, but the baking. Her ex-husband owns a bakery in Chicago.

Armie comes into the cellar with me one afternoon to pick up the barrels for the week.

“You and your sister should really come up with a logo for your brewery.”

I laugh. “You call this a brewery?”

"You make beer, don't you?"

"Yes, but in the cellar of our house, not in a massive warehouse."

"It sells as well as the beer coming from warehouses."

"Only within a fifty-mile radius."

"Still, I'd consider it. People would love to see a picture of a nun sipping a beer on their bottle. It would be funny."

"We don't bottle it, though."

Armie is a retired sales representative of an Amish furniture company, so he's used to pitching business ideas to people who have absolutely no idea how to run a business. He always wants to expand. Bottled beer, t-shirts, a website. I've shot all of these ideas down.

"Talk it over with your sister. She's still around, isn't she?"

We've been working with Armie for the better part of a decade, but for almost all of that time, I've been the only one he communicates with.

"She's still here. But she's not really a part of the business anymore."

"Since when?"

"Pretty much since the start."

Armie looks at me and whistles. "And she still takes her share of the profit?"

"You know we put almost all of it towards running this place."

He nods.

"Plus, she doesn't drink."

Armie says nothing. Just shrugs his shoulders and has me help him load everything in the pickup truck.

Mercy stopped drinking after our mom and grandma were poisoned by the beer we learned to make as children. This was shortly after we had started selling it to a few places in town. Our grandma had started to go delirious with dementia, and our mom had been depressed for as long as we could remember. The autopsy report showed rat poison in their systems. It had been put in the beer they'd made for themselves at Christmas. We never learned if it was an accident or not, or who had put it in the beer. The whole incident was kept quiet. Rat poison in beer is bad for business.

On the night of Ash Wednesday, I wake up to the sound of a car coming up our drive. I look at my alarm clock—four-fifteen. I put on my habit and bathrobe and walk down the hallways, passing Mercy asleep in front of a *Game of Thrones* marathon, passing the doors of our sleeping girls, making a mental inventory of our empty rooms, our stockroom of donated diapers and formula, until I reach the front door. The door creaks, upsetting the baby asleep on our porch. I pick her up, and she vomits onto my bathrobe. We go into the kitchen, and I start running lukewarm water into the sink. I make shushing noises and wipe the vomit from her face. There is a small smudge of ash on her forehead, the remnant of a cross.

It isn't until Mercy comes into the room and helps me bathe the baby that I realize it is not a girl, but a boy.

"We've never had one of these before," I tell Mercy. "I hear they can pee on you when you change their diaper if you aren't careful."

Mercy nods, dipping a washcloth into the water.

The baby begins to howl, and I lift him out of the sink. Mercy disappears, and I wonder if she has had enough for the night. As I towel him down, I start thinking of names to call him. Sometimes, babies are left with a note. Their name, their birthday. Sometimes the person who leaves them wants us to know that they have been baptized—as though this is a qualifier for us taking them in.

Mercy reappears with a box of formula and a bottle. She warms water in the microwave and gestures for the baby. I hand him to her, and she begins to feed him. He stops crying.

Then there is a squeal in the doorway. We look over and see Bella and Rebecca in the doorway. The baby starts his crying again.

"Is he our new brother?" asks Bella.

I look at Mercy. She nods, and the girls cheer.
 “Shh,” I tell them. “You’re going to wake everyone else up.”
 By the time the sun begins to rise, everyone has come into the kitchen. The girls all want to take turns holding the baby, who has not yet approached anything near drowsiness.
 “It’s probably the shock of it all,” I tell Mercy.
 She takes the baby from Rebecca and begins to rock him, but still he cries.
 Rebecca starts to sing something they’ve learned from school, and the girls join in. After they’ve repeated it multiple times, the baby is still crying.
 “Why doesn’t he like us?” asks Ava.
 We send the girls back to bed after they’ve had breakfast, and they cheer. No school today. I make coffee for Mercy and myself. By the time we’ve finished our cups, the baby is finally asleep.
 We put together a dusty Pack ‘n Play, brought down from the attic, in my bedroom and set the baby down. Still he sleeps. There is a knock at the back door, and I find Armie with his truck, waiting to load beer into its bed.
 “Shit, how many was I supposed to have ready for you?” I ask.
 “Shepherd, are you okay?” he asks me, eyeing my naked hair.
 I sigh. “We’ve had quite the night.”
 I bring him upstairs and into our private quarters. Mercy shrieks and tugs on her veil. Mine is somewhere on my unmade bed. I lead him into my room and point at the Pack ‘n Play.
 “Oh, Lord,” says Armie.
 “Exactly.”
 On cue, the baby begins crying again. I pick him up and yell to Mercy for more formula.
 “He’s been doing this since we found him and I thought we’d finally gotten him to sleep, and now he’s gone and started up again,” I tell Armie.
 He takes the baby from me and starts rocking him.
 “He’s colicky,” he says.
 “Colicky?”
 “His belly hurts, and he doesn’t know what else to do but cry. My Jean was like this when she was a baby.”
 “How do you make it stop?”
 He shrugs. “You don’t. It just will someday, in a few months.”
 “Months?”
 He starts to say something else, but then Father Gabriel runs in.
 “None of your girls show up to school this morning, and then I find you in bed with the man who’s helping you sell beer out of an orphanage, Shepherd? Really?”
 I turn to look at him, and his eyes find the baby.
 He is silent. The baby looks at him and wails. Armie continues to rock him and takes the bottle Mercy hands him upon coming back into the room.
 “He showed up last night,” I tell Father Gabriel.
 He sighs. “We’ll have to plan a baptism.”
 The baby tears his mouth away from the bottle and starts to shriek. Armie puts him over his shoulder and pats his back. “You’re quite the little wild thing, aren’t you, Max?”
 “Max?”
 “Like the little boy from that book, *Where the Wild Things Are*? Haven’t you read it to the children before?”

St. Jerome Emilliani’s feast day is tomorrow, and like every year we will have gnocchi. Since it falls on a Saturday this year, I’ve promised the girls that I’ll spend the day teaching them the recipe. Unlike the beer, it was not something passed down from the generations in our family, but a simplified explanation I found online that only calls for four ingredients.

St. Jerome Emilliani is our abbey’s patron saint. Father Gabriel decided on the name and

put it on a plaque outside the wall, covering the emblem for the Shepherds of Mercy. This was one of the first times we met Father Gabriel—over a decade ago after a third child was left at our doorstep.

Mercy and I hadn't planned on living in the abbey. When our mom and our grandma died, we were in the process of converting it into a brewery.

"We can't sleep here," Mercy told me the evening we got back from the medical examiner's office. Mercy had found them that morning, slumped on top of each other on the couch. They were the first words she'd spoken since explaining what had happened to the police and then the doctors.

"We can't afford a hotel," I told her.

"Let's go sleep in the abbey, then."

We packed an overnight bag and set up our sleeping bags on the stone floor. Mercy picked up a habit we had left out on a windowsill years before.

"Remember this?" Mercy said.

I pulled on a matching veil.

"Let's call our brewery the Drunk Nuns," I said.

"Or Shepherds of Mercy."

We had long since stopped referring to each other by any other name.

For a while, we began wearing the veils to meet restaurant owners and customers. Slowly though, we began wearing them more and more around the abbey. We had moved furniture from the house down, opening doors to chambers we'd never dared enter as children—small rooms that could fit a bed and a dresser, or be used to age barrel after barrel of beer.

Word spread in town of the nuns reopening the abbey. Local parishes sent us invitations to come worship with them. Schools wrote letters asking to come take a tour. We kept our doors closed to everyone except Armie, who came by once a week to pick up our infant batches.

Mercy wasn't sleeping at night. She had nightmares of our mom and grandma, surrounded by colonies of dying rats. She tried to call her ex-husband and explain to him all that had happened, but he wouldn't take her calls. She reinstated the vow of silence that we had followed as children playing in the abbey. I went weeks without talking to anyone except Armie.

And then we woke up one morning to the sounds of screaming. Someone was knocking on our door. It was Armie, holding a small, howling figure in his arms.

"Someone... they left her here," he said.

The nuns were running the old abbey again, nuns whose duty it was to protect anyone who came to its doors. Word spread.

Over the years, we've been given many toys, clothes, books, changing tables from Catholic charities in the region. We pull these out from the attic now as we prepare the old nursery. The girls all want to paint it blue for the baby, whom we now call Max. He still cries constantly, so Mercy and I take turns sleeping in shifts. I am thankful now for our HBO package—the channel shows its best programs in the middle of the night.

Father Gabriel shows up with buckets of blue paint and insists that everyone leave the room.

"These chemicals will melt your brain," he says, pulling on a surgical mask.

We go to the living room where the girls take turns reading books to Max. Sometimes he pauses his crying for pages at a time.

We hear a knock at the back door, and I find Armie and a man with a long red beard standing on the steps.

"Hello," I say.

"Shepherd," says Armie, "this is my friend Jeremiah. I was telling him about your new addition, and he mentioned to me that he had a spare crib in his workshop."

They step aside to reveal a wooden crib, with a blue bow tied on the bars.

"My wife made you a few blankets as well," says Jeremiah. "Armie tells me all of yours are pink."

I thank them and offer them coffee.

"You can meet Max," I say.

I pull Armie aside and whisper, "If the Amish drink, give this man a crate of our beer."

That night, we stand in the now-painted nursery, looking at Father Gabriel's work.

"Thank you," I tell him.

"Who wants to learn how to change a diaper?" I ask as Mercy takes a squealing Max from Father Gabriel's arms.

The girls squeal and follow Mercy into another room.

"I think that's my cue to leave," says Father Gabriel.

"I have to get the girls to bed; we have a busy day tomorrow with the feast day and everything."

Father Gabriel nods. "I don't know how you do it."

People used to say that to our grandma at church when she dragged us there in our Sunday dresses and tightly braided hair. Our mother was never up early enough, Sunday or not, to come to the services.

She would always shrug. "I just do."

I head to the grocery store the next morning to get everything for the feast day. Max comes with me. We have found that car rides are one of the few things that soothe him. When I'm without the others, I don't wear my veil in public. In the checkout line, I run into a classmate from high school. She calls me by my old name, and at first I don't realize it's me she's talking to.

"Lauren," I say at last, glad that I remember her name. "How have you been?"

She shrugs. Her eyes are vacant in a way that isn't unusual in this town. Father Gabriel suspects that most of our girls' moms were on something or another when they were pregnant. I look at Lauren, her sunken cheeks and scabbed lips. I wonder what made her leave her trance and talk to me.

"Do you still live in town?" I ask her, and she nods.

"Me, too," I say putting my groceries on the belt. I ask Lauren what she's been up to since high school, and she says she married the boy she'd been dating when we graduated.

"Oh, you're still with Trevor?"

She smirks. "Yeah."

"How is he?"

"Still a shithead. Who's this?"

She looks at Max, who has fallen asleep in his Baby Bjorn at my chest.

"This is Max."

Her eyes take on a different expression, and she reaches out to stroke his cheek.

"We've got three, Trevor and me," she says.

"Congratulations."

She ignores this and says, "Who's the dad? Ben?"

Ben was my high-school boyfriend. According to social media, he lives in Ohio with his wife and two kids.

"No, I haven't seen Ben since we graduated."

She nods. "You're kind of old to be having kids, aren't you?"

My mouth opens reflexively, and I want to say that thirty-five is only old in this horrible little town, but instead I smile and say, "Maybe?"

It's clear she's done talking to me, though. She has dropped Max's hand and pulled out her cell phone from the pocket of her sweatshirt. I pay the cashier, who coos at Max, and again turn back to Lauren.

"Take care," I say.

She looks up from her phone for a minute and smiles vaguely at me. I think about her on

the drive home and wonder about my mom. Towards the end, she too was wasting away, only leaving the house to go to the liquor store or the pharmacy. I wonder what kind of pills she washed down with beer.

These thoughts are all pushed away as I carry the groceries into the kitchen and am swarmed by the girls. I place Max in his high-chair and help the girls roll up their sleeves. Mercy starts pouring flour out into bowls. We show everyone how to peel potatoes, how to cut them, when to know the pots of water have boiled and we can drop the pieces in.

Bella cuts her finger with a knife, and Mercy rushes her over to the sink. Some of the boiling water splashes onto my skin as Ava carelessly drops large chunks of potato into the pot. When they've boiled and have been added to the flour, it seems we may be able to eat dinner on time. Then Emily crushes eggshells into the mixture, and we have to scrap the batch.

By the time the process has been repeated, it is after six and everyone is complaining about how hungry they are. We begin to roll out the dough, but there is too much flour, and it refuses to form into strands. We try adding more eggs, but that makes the dough too runny, and it oozes onto the floor. We add more flour and are back at our original problem once again. Half the girls are in tears by this point, and Max has started crying again. I start to make a bottle for him and yell to the girls: "Everyone go wash your hands and get in the car."

By car I mean our twelve-passenger van. Mercy and I strap Max and the younger girls into their car seats. The van has a portrait of Saint Jerome Emilliani detailed on its side. He seems to be smirking at me as I climb into the driver's seat and back the car down the long dirt road.

"Where are we going?" asks Helen.

"Olive Garden," I say.

They all cheer.

When we walk into Olive Garden, the hostess stares at us. Mercy and I in our veils, our horde of children, Max strapped in his Baby Bjorn against my habit.

"Twelve," I tell her.

She tells me that it will be at least an hour, and again the girls all start to cry. Max joins in. The manager comes out to see what the matter is. The hostess repeats that it will be at least an hour until we can be seated, but the manager pulls her aside and whispers something to her. Together they lead us to a large table in the back.

People stare at us as we make our way towards it. Some stare up at the ceiling; others cross themselves.

Mercy takes Max from me and puts him in the high chair that has appeared from a closet. He takes in everything with wide eyes, too many sights and smells to cry. I sit down between Ava and Helen and immediately order a beer, the beer I make with my own hands. They have it on tap, and I don't think for a minute about the price, or the fact that when I get home I can drink a barrel of it if I want.

We all order gnocchi, and it is brought out to us within five minutes. Before we start eating, I look to Rebecca across the table and ask her to lead us in prayer. I feel eyes on us as we all clasp hands, and my scalp itches beneath my veil. I ignore it and try to concentrate on Rebecca's words.

Roadside Squirrel with Crabapple and Other Poems

Kellie Rankey

Tyner Award for Poetry

Nominated by C. Vince Samarco, Professor of English



A resident of Saginaw, Michigan, Kellie Rankey is a fourth-year Honors student pursuing a bachelor of arts in creative writing with a minor in sociology. She anticipates graduating in 2020. Her writing has garnered awards including the Tyner Award for fiction, the Tyner Award for poetry, the National Day on Writing's First Place awards in both fiction and poetry, the National Scholastic Gold Medal, and the 2017 Student Paper Award of the Michigan Sociological Society. Kellie leads the Writer's Roost creative writing group on campus, has served as event leader for bi-weekly creative writing events hosted by Counter Culture, is a copy editor and associate editor of *Cardinal Sins*, and spent a month abroad in the summer of 2018 volunteering for Icelandic environmental organizations.

Roadside Squirrel with Crabapple

teeth sunk *imagine* vampiric
staple remover jaw holds fruit
imagine eyes frantic pendulum sense of
urgency back-forth *imagine* thoughts:
 buryitburyitburyitsave
 forwinterorjustlaternotsure
 ifsquirrelsthinkinseasons; *perhaps*
 saveforsomenotnowtime
(what crosses squirrel minds
as squirrel bodies cross roads or
are crossed by tires *fragile*) i cross myself
mouth full of my own crabapples *handle with care* pass
back-forth through squirrel trajectories, hope
to run over roads *imagine* run over, hope
to remember what i bury where,

forgoing that, *imagine* my crabapples,
grown, something less ugly,

Toy mind

driver installed. do you accept the terms and conditions?

i accept the terms and conditions... the air pulses
a heartbeat that i feel in my head and shadows become
sand dunes break apart break i break the top dot off the letter have you noticed
it looks like a body and i look like a body the world never stops

noticing see bodies piling see my body pile
 a heap here there a couple hundred dollars children who's to say except
 everyone yells (crowds of decibels) YELLS
 off with her head off with their head whose head wellyouseehere
 the dot on the i above its stick, the space makes queen anne's lace
 now *chop* lets get to it ladies gentlemen *chop*
 romans they/thems *chop* so many words (lend me)
 for everybody all at once (your ears) *the head rolls*
 the letter i is a decapitated profile the me that doesn't resonate with i
 but is not you recalls the pixar lamp
 the way its body made an i and kept its head perfect for kids rated
 g soooo-o-o g what a fiction and now me is breaking apart:
 m is for impaled my body impaled on high stakes
 e is for fetal position one body prepares for birth one body
 wishes to grow (does one and one make two?) and the brain oh the
 brain that couch potato that channel surfer that tubed boob doesn't want to leave...
 me is no sanctuary i has died what to do what to do in this slop goop mess
 like frankenstein slime the monster (stop)
 climbed (stop)
 out (stop)
 of a box a tub that who knows what except it's slimy
 it has to be slimy sludge primordial belongs next to any word for
 messy pile goop gunk plop plop it drops off him
 life begins in messy piles and doesn't stop maybe just gets
 less slimy more sticky the goop is
 subject soup the goop
 begins to dry... tar pit soup subject needs a referent
 subject does not like to code in binary
 1 looks like a knife that i would hold and 0 looks like a knife-punched hole
 it's all too simple for subject who detests labels
 like subject placeholder titles with all the razzle dazz of
 "document 1" or "new folder"
 subject highlights itself : space to be filled ____ does not want to be
 a knife-punched hole a wound that fills with blood—no, no
 it's all quite wrong type in the letters that make
 give space a name but god forsake the alphabet
 have you noticed t sitting with a pipe through its heart
 have you noticed how time brings horrors together:
 oh t oh i oh me oh blanket please blanket over the eyes
 oh the wish fantasy of womb history where sometime
 you wake up in the e position and remember being nothing
 empty paper not even the paper the space then
 curling into existence you : body : you : slow pencil mark
 curling around and after nine months give or take some weeks
 congratulations it's an e! e filling up a space
 e squealing eeee ee eee like a dolphin e filling the air and choking
 everything out where is the space left
 what hasn't been privatized (have you seen the way they
 capitalized alphabet soup) look at the soup
 how far does the fence go well its moreso a bowl
 so (fence) way down way (bowl) was it ever marked... i laugh

laugh *ha* unmark the ark no one needed names
but they got them where is the book of baby names that haven't been given
to the everywhere million multitude babies
where is somewhere is some can this (body)
have some (thing to call self) can they
get some service who owns this joint?

Slick

he cut me. he cut—
simple as string i
popped in half. he
with a can opener,
my tongue, he cut
hung the anchor edge
off my lip and twisted
he was the blade he
turned in my mouth
sharp, over and back
twisting on an axel
greased with my spit,
blood. then tongue
is pieces, tongue goes
like butter to a spoon—
land o'lakes, country crock. me
cut, he shoves
cotton into the void.

Distortion

cut me. cut—
simple as string
popped in half.
with a can opener,
tongue, cut
hang the anchor edge
off lip and twist
the blade
turns in mouth
sharp, over and back
twisting on an axel
greased with spit,
blood, then tongue
is pieces, tongue goes
like butter to a spoon—
land o'lakes, country crock.
cut, shove
cotton into the void.

How to Fix Your Makeup after Crying in a Public Bathroom Stall

Allison Sterken

Tyner Prize for Creative Nonfiction

Nominated by C. Vince Samarco, Professor of English



Allison Sterken is a returning student and SVSU graduate (Class of 2016), holding dual bachelor of arts degrees in creative writing and professional and technical writing. Much of Allison's work revolves around the absurd, the bleakly funny, and the feminist. While continuing her education, she also works as a full-time freelance writer and editor, specializing in editing novels and other creative projects. In addition to creating her own works, one of her greatest passions is helping others improve as writers. When she's not working, Allison is often at her Bay City home, spending time with her wife and cat.

(For reference, it is recommended to read ["How to Escape a Social Situation When You Start Unexpectedly Crying"](#) and ["How to Cry in a Public Bathroom Stall"](#) before reading this article.)

These directions were written with the following products in mind: Covergirl "Peacock Flare" mascara in Blackest Black, Maybelline "Master Precise All Day" liquid liner in black, and Wet n Wild "Color Icon" kohl liner pencil. These products, as well as your concealer and/or foundation, comprise your Confidence Makeup.¹ It is important to forget to bring these items into the bathroom with you. You will be tempted to redo your Confidence Makeup, but remember that if you cry once in public, you're likely to do it again later the same day.

1. Leave the stall and go to the sinks. If there's no mirror, use your phone camera or screen to check your makeup.

Tip: Listen to ensure that there are ten full seconds of silence in the bathroom before you exit the stall. Otherwise, you may have to make eye contact with someone while your eyes are still dripping and red, which will likely humiliate you so severely that you will have to leave the area and return home.

2. Assess the damage. You will notice that your Confidence Makeup is streaked down your face and the intensely sharp wings are all that's left of your eyeliner. If you have worn foundation, it will be streaked with black stripes and will have to be removed. You can at least take solace in the fact that you don't look as bad as you feel, because that's a physical impossibility.²

¹ Confidence Makeup is not at all waterproof and will smudge easily if touched. It is best worn on days when you are determined not to cry, because the knowledge of the mess it will make will enable you to better repress your emotions. This, however, is not a fool-proof plan, which is why this guide was written in the first place.

² There is something cartoonish, you often think, about your appearance, something adorably ugly or hideously cute to the soft, round shapes that you are made of and the way they taper into miniscule hands and feet. Whatever you happen to be, however, you firmly believe that "sexy" is not on that list. It makes you want to dig your fingers deep into the flesh of your stomach and tear away handfuls of fat. Instead, you allow your antidepressants to destroy your appetite. Many days, you find yourself eating one small meal, and though you won't admit it, this fact fills you with pride. In spite of this, your progress is slow, a stark comparison to the way pounds constantly fall away from your wife's frame, which only frustrates you more. (Though she won't admit it, a part

3. Pat your face dry with a dry paper towel. DO NOT SWIPE—this will worsen streaks and spread the mascara. Avoid contact with your eyes and eyelashes. The rivers will dry, but the beds will remain, stained across your cheeks and leaving them tight and itchy. It will remind you of the way your wife’s stubble grows in patches from the laser treatments and peeks through her foundation.³

4. Wet a paper towel and wipe down your cheeks. Start off gently; unnecessary pressure or rubbing can cause redness and skin irritation, which will last much longer than wet eyes and a case of the sniffles. It is crucial that no one be able to recognize that you have been crying.⁴

5. With another wet paper towel, rub away stubborn stains beneath the eyes and just below the eyebrows. Also wash off the small triangles at the corners of your eyes that used to be your wings. At this stage, embarrassment should be sinking in, and you will be tempted to wash your face and be done with it. It is vital that you resist this urge.⁵

Tip: There is a good chance someone you know will walk in at some point. If this occurs, drop your eyes and pretend to fiddle with whatever is in or closest to your hand. At no point should you make eye contact. If you are still there when they come to the sink to wash their hands, greet them in a strong, clear voice. If you are unable to speak without sniffing or wavering, remain silent. This is a skill you have practiced before in the tutorials “[How to Gracefully Exit a Bathroom Stall While Crying in front of Your Classmate](#)” and “[How to Have a Breakdown When Your Married Boyfriend Tells You His Wife Is Pregnant.](#)”

of you believes that your wife’s intense focus on her own body leads to the offhand comments she makes about you that sting like arrows to the chest.)

³ It makes you feel like a part of the old her, the her that was your husband, is fighting to resurface, to take his body back from the interloper that has been living in it and changing it for the past three months. The most selfish part of you sometimes wishes that your husband would come back to you, covered in the hair and extra pounds that you miss. This, you know, is impossible, and on top of that, his existence carried a painful weight that your wife’s doesn’t, and you could never ask either of them to take up this burden again.

⁴ Showing pain is already humiliating, but now it’s both humiliating and admitting that there is something painful happening. This is difficult to do when many people think you should be delighted (“happy wife, happy life”). They don’t realize that you’ve become a widow, a divorcee, and an unhappy housewife all at once. Implications of your selfishness and apparent distaste for minorities are bandied about with the consideration and subtlety of hand grenades. You are left to question whether they’re true or not.

⁵ You cling to your makeup now because you want people to look at you and see a Woman rather than the amorphous, sexless being you were forced to become as soon as you were visibly queer. You specifically want to be a Beautiful Woman, because you want to believe that there are options for you if worse comes to worst and you need to find someone else, but also because there’s A Guy,⁶ and in spite of his (very gentle, very kind, painfully friendly) rejection, you want him to at least find you beautiful. You want to think that even if you end up divorced, you won’t end up alone.

⁶ A Guy is defined as a man to whom you are deeply attracted, but unable to have. You can never be sure of all the reasons you can’t have him (if it’s the weirdness of open relationships, or if it’s the fact that your brokenness is intimidating, or if it’s the grotesque cuteness you attributed to yourself in Footnote 2, but some days it leaves you so defeated and embarrassed that you feel sick to your stomach). You feel something that tells you that this Guy is somehow important, that something about knowing him now is significant. You fear that you’re projecting your desire for normalcy onto him and desperately hope that’s not the case. These things frighten you so much that you become glib—hence why he is “just A Guy.”

6. Use the watered-down mascara on your lashes to create a smudged liner effect. Blot the tip of your lashes with your fingertip. Close your eye, pull the skin of your lid taut, and run your fingertip over your lash line. This will create a smudged line. Use your fingertip to apply as much of the mascara as you need to create a dark gray smudge; then use the tip of your pinky to even it out and blend it into the lid. It should create a small smoky eye. While you do this, you have to stop thinking. If you think, you will likely cry again and ruin the work you've done. Instead, you must place yourself on Autopilot Mode. (For a refresher on how to utilize Autopilot Mode, see ["How to Mitigate Your Boyfriend's Emotional Abuse"](#) and ["How to Have a PTSD Flashback without Anyone Noticing."](#) For an in-depth guide to accessing Autopilot Mode, see Step Eight of ["How to Keep Your Best Friend from Killing Herself at Your Twelfth Birthday Sleepover."](#))

7. Begin cleanup. This step is similar to the steps you took after applying your Confidence Makeup. Check for clumps or uneven spots in your mascara as well as any remaining mascara smears on your face. Use the side of your finger or a dry paper towel to gently dab away excess moisture and mascara. Wash your hands thoroughly to remove any remaining black marks to eliminate the risk of transference. Check your phone to see if your wife has answered the text you sent her mid-cry (Step Four of ["How to Cry in a Public Bathroom Stall"](#)). She will not have responded, but you will feel intensely guilty for messaging her anyway. Try and fail to convince yourself that your pain isn't harming her or guilted her out of living the life she needs and deserves to live. Promise yourself that you will be more caring and supportive. *Note: It is important to remember that she has not yet required a supportive shoulder to cry on, as the transition process has been overwhelmingly positive for her. However, you will still be made to feel guilty by those outside the situation for your apparent self-absorption.*⁷

8. Avoid a relapse through repetition and self-flagellation. If you experience feelings in public after leaving the bathroom, silently sing along to a linguistically tricky song. If this doesn't work, silently count to ten. Repeat as many times as necessary. If you are still experiencing lingering feelings, count out loud. This will make you look insane, but insane is better than weak. Next, shame yourself for your sadness. This can be done by reading other women's self-congratulatory posts in your Reddit support group (r/mypartneristrans) or high-horse admonishments posted in response to other women who are struggling like you. Remind yourself that you're a terrible partner and have always been a terrible partner, not only to your wife, but to the husband she used to be and all the boyfriends that came before. Promise that you will be better, even with the knowledge that you will fail.

9. Smile. Do not stop.

⁷ "Those outside the situation" are defined as everyone. This will extend to the members of your support group as well, where some members are clearly preparing for divorce while others brag about their happiness and ability to handle these changes with grace. You will eventually leave the support group, for the most part, not because you dislike the people there, but because members' partners start commenting, and it unnerves you. Your friends, luckily, understand, or at least seem to understand, that you're unhappy. Strangers, you are unsurprised to find, have strong opinions. Every day you remember student papers that eviscerated Leslie Feinberg's rarely named ex-wife and wonder if someday you too will be identified as a flighty monster. You will be torn between being your wife's champion and advocate, and admitting that this is the worst part of your life. You will have no friends on either side, not really, especially because even you aren't sure which side you should be on.

Motivation Matters: The Intent behind Gossip in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*

Katherine Manwell

Tyner Award for Nonfiction

Nominated by Daniel Gates, Associate Professor of English

Katherine Manwell, who is from Cass City, Michigan, graduated in December 2018 with a bachelor's degree in creative writing and a minor in art. Through her many literature and writing classes, she learned that thorough knowledge of one area aids in the practice of the other; one must read well to write well. Her classes, along with her experience as a reporter for *The Valley Vanguard*, increased her respect for all writing forms while revealing that her truest enjoyment resides in analyzing literature. Katherine hopes to continue studying literature at the graduate level in the near future, but is content in the meantime to keep reading Jane Austen's novels. The following paper was written in the Fall 2018 term for Senior Seminar in Literary Studies (ENGL 499).

The perception of Jane Austen's literary impact has shifted from that of a writer of "love stories" to a serious writer of novels known for their intricate structures and narrative drive (Shields 25). She is a serious moral commentator, and we can see this in her treatment of gossip in *Persuasion*, written in 1817. This book complicates gossip by implying that the moral motivation and intent of the gossip can either elevate or diminish the social perspective and impact of gossip. Despite the fact that gossip is socially perceived as a bad habit, Austen does not treat gossip as a sin in her novels, but rather implies that the moral perception of gossip should be relative. In *Persuasion*, we are given instances that demonstrate the negative side of gossip when it is used manipulatively, as with Mr. Elliot; the positive side when it is used for personal safety and friendship, as with Mrs. Smith; and the positive and negative sides together when it is used with no intent, as with Mary Musgrove. Austen is, in a sense, a moralist, but, more accurately, she is a relativist who believes correct action depends on social context.

Before venturing into the gossiping lives of Austen's characters, Austen's practice of gossip in her own life should be considered. Austen was a writer who understood the necessity of being involved in society in order to write about it (Shields 119). In Carol Shields' biography, she describes Austen as "an intensely social being" who "may have chafed at her lack of solitude," but her "life of social engagement was what she knew and what in the end nourished her fiction" (119–21). Through close examination of Austen's letters and personal notes, it seems clear that Austen gleaned enjoyment from social encounters, perhaps more than others did, and "she prided herself on that ability" (122). Austen contemplated *Tom Jones* with her almost-beau Tom Lefroy and still found stimulation in conversation about domestic concerns, such as a trend in fashion or the price of fruit (122–23). Amidst this dichotomy of highly intellectual and more mundane discourse, Austen possessed the perspective to "mock the very person she was, a clever woman who was, nonetheless, able to invest herself in tasks that others might find tedious" (123). Austen understood two levels of speech in which she both partook and observed in others, and she could find enjoyment in them while simultaneously pointing out their absurdity.

Austen's social involvement led her to understand how gossip is intrinsically connected to realism, and, as a result, she also critiqued the work of other novelists in their depictions of "realistic" social interactions. She turned away from the melodramatic excess of the Richardson tradition, making sure her own episodes stood on psychologically sound legs (Shields 28). The models of literature that she grew up reading portrayed "thundering villain[s]" and "fainting

women” like “Richardson’s ridiculous heroine, Harriet Byron” (28). Austen’s work does not include characters like these, opting for characters who are “merely weak of heart,” are “somewhat feckless but good-hearted,” and “don’t faint unless they have real reason to faint” (28). Thus, although she admired the energy and invention of the Richardson tradition, she must have been disappointed on some level because they failed “in their connection to the life she knew existed and [proved] incapable of illuminating the subtle shifts of feeling between people as they came to know each other” (58). These novels exaggerated, making human dilemmas stranger, when what Austen wanted and created “was the dramatization of the familiar” (58). In the world that Austen creates, social types are represented by different families, all of which represent larger society and prove how Austen was aware of the nature of civilization (Spring 56). Austen’s characters and their respective worlds “do not exist in a social vacuum” because she understood and captured the nuances of social interaction (56). Such nuances included forms of scorned discourse, like gossip. An avid gossip herself in her many letters to friends and family, Austen offers other methods of communication and complete disclosure in her novels to explore the nature of storytelling and how it is inherently subjective and mediated (Gaylin 42). Gossip, for her, is used to reflect the real world and becomes part of her signature style.

Gossip is one method of persuasion, a mechanism “by which our beliefs about a matter can change” (Dromm and Salter 168). This differs slightly from influence, which relies primarily on “the person’s charisma, authority, attractiveness, social status, or other facts, all irrelevant to the truth of any belief” in order to sway someone to think a particular way (171). In this light, the intent of the gossip is essential because the intent can be selfish or selfless. For example, Mr. Elliot, described as “good looking” with a “countenance improved by speaking” and “manners... so exactly what they ought to be, so polished, so easy, so particularly agreeable” (Austen 133–34; ch. 15), only seems to gossip on one occasion. As he and Anne discuss their idea of good company, Mr. Elliot alludes to Mrs. Clay:

“In one point, I am sure, my dear cousin, (he continued, speaking lower, though there was no one else in the room) in one point, I am sure, we must feel alike. We must feel that every addition to your father’s society, among his equals or superiors, may be of use in diverging his thoughts from those who are beneath him.”

He looked, as he spoke, to the seat which Mrs. Clay had been lately occupying, a sufficient explanation of what he particularly meant... she was pleased with him for not liking Mrs. Clay; and her conscience admitted that his wishing to promote her father’s getting great acquaintance, was more than excusable in the view of defeating her. (142; ch. 16)

This is a very subtle form of gossip as Anne has not alluded to Mrs. Clay at all, and Mr. Elliot offers this information unprompted, insinuating his impression of her social situation and possible intent to improve it through marriage to Anne’s father.

The irony here is, despite Anne’s distrust of gossip that we see in a later conversation with Mrs. Clay, Mr. Elliot’s subtle gossip is momentarily successful at winning Anne’s approval. She agrees with his perception of Mrs. Clay and later describes this conversation as his only example of openness: “He had spoken to her with some degree of openness of Mrs. Clay; had appeared completely to see what Mrs. Clay was about, and to hold her in contempt” (Austen 151; ch. 17). However, the information given later by Mrs. Smith (also through gossip) reveals that Mr. Elliot’s motivation for pursuing the Elliot family was less to maintain the good company of Anne’s father and more for his own financial benefit. Mrs. Smith says that Mr. Elliot “... cannot bear the idea of not being Sir William.... [and came] back to Bath as soon as possible... with the view of renewing his former acquaintance and recovering such a footing in the family, as might give him the means of ascertaining the degree of his danger, and of circumventing [Mrs. Clay] if he found it material...” (194; ch. 21). Mr. Elliot’s confidential statement to Anne, his gossip about Mrs. Clay,

is partly intended to reveal his intention of keeping a watchful eye on the designing Mrs. Clay, but also to persuade Anne that he has a high opinion of her father when he actually considers him a “fool” (191; ch. 21). Anne is persuaded for a time, but when the truth of his intention is revealed, Anne is left with a deplorable impression of him, calling him “... a disingenuous, artificial, worldly man, who has never had any better principle to guide him than selfishness” (195; ch. 21).

Mr. Elliot’s motivation for gossiping to Anne about Mrs. Clay, as well as his motivation for just about every other action he takes, is strictly out of selfish social improvement and not real consideration for other people. He matured “into a greater sense of the importance of respectability” but has little regard “for the individual claims of each person’s situation or understanding” (Emsley 153). Gossip, by nature, is indirect and often mediated through a vast number of people, but “in Austen’s world—and never more so than in *Persuasion*—only the foolish and the headstrong are tempted by delusions of immediacy,” or the deluded idea that we have direct access to truth (Russet 423). Anne is a character who understands that “allowances, large allowances... must be made for the ideas” of those who gossip because it tends to be embellished (Austen 130; ch. 15). Understanding the potential failing of gossip’s truthfulness leads Anne to believe that direct communication equals truth, which Mr. Elliot disproves. His gossip is very direct; he did not receive the impression he relates to Anne from anyone other than himself, and Anne recognizes the directness and supposed openness of his statement. However, the directness leads Anne to think that he is also being truthful when in actuality his intent is selfish, which Anne does not perceive, tricking her until she receives counterinformation from Mrs. Smith. Mr. Elliot demonstrates how gossip can be used manipulatively through the selfishness of the gossipier, which Austen denounces by claiming “... There is always something offensive in the details of cunning. The maneuvers of selfishness and duplicity must ever be revolting...” (194; ch. 21).

Mr. Elliot gossips out of selfishness, which Austen clearly despises, but Mrs. Smith gossips out of self-preservation and friendship, which proves necessary for the conclusion of the novel and the heroine’s happiness. Communication that happens through the grapevine is “an act that polite society would censure,” but Austen subverts this expectation and concludes that gossip in this context, though not infallible, is not only forgivable but admirable (Gaylin 44). When Anne visits Mrs. Smith late in the novel, Mrs. Smith explains to Anne that “...I want your interest with [Mr. Elliot]. He can be of essential service to me...” and, later says, with a little prodding, “... I have determined; I think I am right; I think you ought to be made acquainted with Mr. Elliot’s real character...” (Austen 183–87; ch. 21). Firstly, Mrs. Smith desires Anne’s help to recover the information necessary from Mr. Elliot that will provide her with a stable income. Mrs. Smith’s condition consists of being confined to her bed and in constant pain, all among strangers. She has a regular nurse, and her “finances at that moment [are] particularly unfit to meet any extraordinary expense” (145; ch. 17). In fact, her finances are so diminished that she knits and sells thread-cases, card-racks, and pincushions to supplement her income (146; ch. 17). Under these circumstances, her desire to receive help procuring the money to which she is entitled is not selfishly fueled, but rather fueled by justice and self-preservation. Secondly, she desires to reveal Mr. Elliot’s selfish character to Anne, which, considering their longstanding friendship, is also considerate.

With these motivations in mind, Mrs. Smith reveals Mr. Elliot’s intention in insinuating himself amongst the Elliots and his involvement with her late husband, which requires second-, third-, and fourthhand accounts. When Anne asks where Mrs. Smith got her information about Mr. Elliot’s supposedly ardent desire to marry Anne, Mrs. Smith reveals that her information “...takes a bend or two, but nothing of consequence...” (Austen 192; ch. 21). This “bend or two” is through several different people before it reaches her: Mr. Elliot, to Colonel Wallis, to Colonel Wallis’s wife, to Mrs. Rooke, and finally to Mrs. Smith. Anne interrupts here, claiming that Mrs. Smith’s “...authority is deficient...” and that “...we must not expect to get real information through such a line. Facts or opinions which are to pass through the hands of so many, to be misconceived by folly in one, and ignorance in another, can hardly have much truth left...” (Austen 192–93; ch. 21). After hearing the full story, however, Mrs. Smith convinces Anne because these characters

have learned how to distinguish the “signals from static” of gossip like telegraphers and not because Mrs. Smith’s account was immediate (Russet 422). Mrs. Smith and Anne, like Austen herself, have the ability to trim away the added flourishes that gossip accumulates in transit and instead look at the beneficial information imbedded inside.

The ability to distinguish signals from static is not an infallible one, as Anne has already demonstrated with Mr. Elliot and which Mrs. Smith demonstrates in her mistaken impression that Anne is engaged (Austen 146; ch. 17). While listening to Mrs. Smith’s gossip, after knowing that some of her sources are already incorrect, “Anne has to struggle with all the strong moral principles she holds in order to determine which principle is most important in a given situation” (Emsley 154). Sarah Emsley explains how Anne is faced with the necessity of learning how to balance and judge virtues as opposed to believing blindly that social sins, like gossip, are always wrong when Mrs. Smith asks her to read Mr. Elliot’s letter:

Situations such as this one demonstrate how Austen’s characters inhabit a world where there is a whole range of virtues related to every act, every character. Aware of the range of virtues, the educated heroines choose how to balance the claims of different virtues, in the most virtuous way. They do not choose from a list of virtues or rules, and decide which one to apply—the virtues are not a grab bag of possibilities—but they aspire to approach life as a process of making judgments and decisions in the way that best maintains harmonious unity among the virtues. In *Persuasion*, the code of honor that protects a man’s private life and letters conflicts with the attempt of two women to establish the truth. In this case, truth must win in order for Anne to preserve her own character, and to separate herself and her family from the designs of Mr. Elliot. Honesty is shown to be more important than a code of honor, and the real virtue of truth triumphs over mere rules, not merely for the pragmatic preservation of the Elliot pride, but for the greater good. (154)

Instead of supporting the idea that gossip is always wrong, Austen creates situations where the moral impact of gossip is highly relative and dependent on the motivation of the gossipier.

Despite Anne’s initial displeasure with the convoluted way in which Mrs. Smith receives and relates information, she is ultimately convinced of Mrs. Smith’s truthfulness (Austen 194; ch. 21). After opening her mind to a mediated form of discourse, Anne comes away more knowledgeable and prepared for the future, having strengthened the friendship between herself and Mrs. Smith in the process. She learns that living entirely on principle could be equally as destructive as remaining unconscious of ethics. Instead, Austen prizes the unconstructed consciousness, one that can fluctuate when it comes to making significant choices (Price 168). Martin Price summarizes the duality of moral principle like this: “Our moral judgments are at once necessary and dangerous; they exercise our deepest passions, but they terminate our free awareness. The commitment they require brings an end to exploration and openness” (177). In this scene, Mrs. Smith’s motivations were shared openly and were not intended to manipulate selfishly. She desired to right a previous wrong with Mr. Elliot, as well as shed light onto his current motives, so Anne would be better prepared for the future. Austen shows how gossip, when used properly with the correct motivation, is illuminating and beneficial to the plot and Anne’s relationship with others, even though it is not infallible.

Mrs. Smith, with her seemingly sincere motivation in gossiping, encourages readers to look at gossip with a relative forgiveness, so long as the motivation of the gossipier can be ascertained. This, however, presents a problem with the unmotivated gossipier—like Anne’s younger sister Mary Musgrove. Austen has written other characters like Mary Musgrove that induce some degree of pity for their comic behavior, such as Mrs. Bates from Austen’s earlier work *Emma*. Martin Price describes Mrs. Bates’s characteristic chatter by explaining her motivation, or lack thereof:

Her compulsive talking awakens us to the narrow life that finds fulfillment in this kind of release. We need not keep in focus the emptiness that finds vicarious existence in gossip or the ardor for attachment that intensifies and distends each minute detail of commonplace encounters. In short, our sense of all the displaced feeling that floods into silly words does not outweigh the impression of their silliness, nor does our sense of motive distract our attention from the resourcefulness of the motive power, the alacrity with which all experience is translated into an obsessive idiom. (172)

Here, Price explains that Mrs. Bates experiences fulfillment and release through her talking, though it is vicarious and even silly. He goes on to explain that despite the apparent sadness of this character's situation—the fact that she must find vicarious enjoyment through trivial gossip of “commonplace encounters”—she is intended to be a comic character whose motivation is of little consequence. Although this comment is not about another character from *Persuasion*, it is relevant in that Mrs. Bates and Mary share a similar affinity for superficially pointless chatter through which they find indirect pleasure.

Despite the apparent lack of motivation for pointless chatter, beyond that of deriving pleasure through the act of speech, Mary's gossip still has consequences. These consequences are unpredictable because she has no personal agenda, and sometimes these consequences negatively affect other characters. One such instance is when Mary relates a comment Captain Wentworth made about Anne after seeing her again after eight years. After Mary returns from a visit to the Cottage, she says, “Captain Wentworth is not very gallant by you, Anne, though he was so attentive to me. Henrietta asked him what he thought of you, when they went away; and he said, ‘You were so altered he should not have known you again’” (Austen 57; ch. 7). Anne hears this and submits “in silent, deep mortification,” dwelling on the negative changes in her outward appearance and his improved outward appearance since their previous near-engagement (57; ch. 7). Mary makes this comment because she “had no feelings to make her respect her sister's in a common way” though she was completely unaware that this related information would cause “any peculiar wound” (57; ch. 7). Austen goes on to state that “Frederick Wentworth had used such words, or something like them, but without an idea that they would be carried round to [Anne]” (57; ch. 7), explaining that his attitude and perception of her is driven by the hurt he received when Anne refused his proposal of marriage. These are things Mary did not know and did not care to find out. She simply related information for the sake of making conversation and deriving pleasure from the attention of a handsome and accomplished man. In this moment, Mary displays a “deficiency of awareness, indifference to others' feelings or privacy, [and] obtuseness about [her] own motives” (Price 172). Regardless of her indifference to the feelings of her sister, Mary did not speak for “victory...[or] for survival,” as Mr. Elliot and Mrs. Smith did, but to “retain [her] stable existence, [her] life of untroubled repetition, by blocking off reality with talk” (172–73). She is unaware of any consequence her gossip may invoke, but rather focuses on relating information and feeling gratification in the process.

In another situation of unintended consequences, Mary's gossip proves beneficial to Anne and the happy conclusion of the narrative, unlike the previous example. After Anne is told of Wentworth's potential engagement to Louisa Musgrove, Anne receives a letter from Mary that reveals Louisa is actually engaged to Captain Benwick. She prefaces this gossip with the titillating statement “...I have something to communicate that will astonish you not a little...,” and ends her tale by exclaiming “...Are you not astonished?...” (Austen 155; ch. 18). Anne's reaction to this is elation, as the news “was almost too wonderful for belief” (156; ch. 18). From this news, Anne gains new hope for her future with Captain Wentworth, though Mary would not have suspected nor intended this result. From Mary's comments about the news “astonishing” Anne, Mary's only motivation was to communicate something of interest. There was no personal gain Mary could glean from this news, perhaps beyond proving her husband wrong about whom Louisa would marry, but even that motivation does not require her to gossip about it. Mary simply enjoyed

the process of being the first to surprise another individual with her secondhand chatter, fully unaware of the positive result it would provide. Although Mary's gossip brings unpredictable consequences, in neither situation does Austen openly condemn her chatter the way the narrative did with Mr. Elliot. The validity of this gossip is not even questioned the way it was with Mrs. Smith. What matters here is the relativity of stories and the individual need to tell them: "every story is 'prejudiced,' for it emerges from a subjective consciousness" (Gaylin 55). Although Mary's gossip sometimes causes problems, Austen does not condemn her form of unmotivated gossip because it still provides advantageous and accurate information.

Persuasion demonstrates both the negative and positive consequences of a condemned form of speech and subverts social norms and perspectives. Gossiping has the potential to be destructive, but Austen writes a story in which other forms of discourse can "be the vehicle for moral good" (Olson and Taliaferro 162). From Austen's affective and seemingly impartial viewpoint, language becomes slippery and, like Mary's gossip, difficult to predict. Ann Elizabeth Gaylin writes that "*Persuasion* acknowledges not only the limitations inherent in language, but also an individual's self-imposed restrictions on divulging information to others" (54). With Austen's "evolving attitude toward public and private spaces and spheres" of discourse comes the moral question behind the motivation of this discourse (57). Through Mr. Elliot's reprehensible intent, Mrs. Smith's pure intent, and Mary's lack of intent, Austen prizes mediated forms of conversation for their usefulness, even if they bring the potential for misinformation and damage. We, as readers, require a reliable narrator to relate a story in which gossip becomes a relative vehicle for good instead of simply a social sin. The story this reliable narrator relates to us is, in and of itself, a form of mediated discourse, almost like the gossip of Anne's life, and readers are constantly reminded that "we too are 'spectators' of an event whose overt fictionality... interrupts our absorption in the story we are reading" (Russett 424). As the "impartial judge" (Olson and Taliaferro 162), Austen makes readers ascertain the value of mediated forms of dialogue and asks us to take her word for it.

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Happier Learning Is Better: A Study on the Link between Enjoyment in Literacy and Confidence

Nicole Brydon

First Place, First Year Writing Award for English 111

Nominated by Karen Horwath, Instructor of English



Nicole Brydon is from Marlette, Michigan, and undecided in her major. In her free time, she enjoys drawing, listening to music, and participating in theatre. For this essay, which was written for Composition I (ENGL 111), students surveyed each other to learn about the reading experiences and preferences of their peers. Nicole wanted to further investigate the factors that go into literacy attainment and enjoyment, particularly confidence, ability, and interest.

Introduction

I remember always enjoying theatre. There was something about the stage, the costumes, the characters that was so awe-inspiring to me. After my first performance in a community theatre musical, I made it my goal to become skilled at performing. I remember sitting on the couch while my mom introduced my sister and me to all sorts of recorded musicals; I would draw inspiration from them like a writer studying literary scholars. At home, I often was found singing the same songs and watching the same scenes from the TV shows that I loved. Rehearsing scenes was like treading new lands: it felt exciting, sometimes even dangerous. Sometimes, it was simply standing on the empty stage during the first days of rehearsal that made my imagination run wild with all the possibilities my character could be. As with learning to write, performing took dedication: I remember pushing through many nights of rehearsal to get further in my craft, mustering the bravery to sound foolish in front of others, all the while telling myself it was for something I loved to do. Although I did not understand it at the time, it was the enjoyment of what I was learning that gave me so much confidence in it.

Learning to write is similar to learning to perform. As with any learning process, there are still countless questions about how we travel the path to literacy, or the attainment of the ability to read and write. Deborah Brandt, an English professor at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, is determined to find the answers. In the article “Sponsors of Literacy,” Brandt discusses the process of attaining literacy. She theorizes that our literacy is deeply impacted by sponsors that benefit from actions that promote or diminish our literacy (72). She also claims that our literacy is affected by the educational opportunities we get, which are affected by forces like the government and economy (75). Additionally, according to Brandt, sponsors can be “older relatives, teachers, priests, supervisors, military officers, editors, [or] influential authors” (73). In other words, our literacy is affected by outside forces, whether economics, social status, or our government.

Although outside forces like the economy are an influence on literacy, they are not the only ingredients for a college freshman. Lucas Pasqualin, a student from the University of Central Florida, was a first-year student when he realized another important contributor to literacy: grit (236). Because he was a student who moved from Brazil to America, Pasqualin’s native language was Portuguese. He faced many challenges in elementary school when trying to learn English, being known as the “stupid kid” to students and teachers alike (238). Being able to flourish in the English language took not only the effort of his mother as a literacy sponsor, but also his own determination and openness to learning experiences (239). Upon realizing his potential in literacy,

Pasqualin gained more motivation to excel at literacy. In the article “Don’t Panic: A Hitchhiker’s Guide to My Literacy,” Pasqualin stresses that to really thrive in literacy, one must not panic at any situation, but rather be open-minded to any form of potential learning (242). This demonstrates the idea that as long as a learner has confidence and self-motivation, the path to literacy can take more than one route.

From these perspectives, it can be inferred that self-motivation of the learner as well as literacy sponsorships affect one’s education. However, it is still necessary to ask questions: in what ways do these factors affect education, and which ones are more prominent? Is it really the resources provided by a literacy sponsor that makes them effective, or is it the instilling of self-motivation and adaptability into a learner? Pasqualin’s article implies that confidence in one’s own abilities and open-mindedness to potential learning experiences are influences to good literacy (242). This positively correlates to my experiences in theatre: I was sure of myself, and I was flexible when it came to learning because it was something in which I was interested. From these statements and experiences, I get a general idea that interest, skill, and confidence are linked, but how? Interest refers to the learner’s desire to acquire more information about literacy, and skill denotes the learner’s innate aptitudes and their achievements in reading and writing, while confidence is the learner’s perception of their own abilities in literacy. In this analysis, these factors are used to describe the learning process solely in reading in writing. The primary goal of my study is to answer this question. Using surveys, the study tries to assess how confidence can affect interest in reading and how skill can affect confidence. Although I will be mainly focused on the relationship between interest and confidence, I will also look into how experience with literacy sponsors plays a role in these factors. Perhaps the relationship between the learner and the literacy sponsor can work in a cycle to continually raise or lower levels of interest, boredom, confidence, or insecurity. This study will try to evaluate the potential causes of confidence and enjoyment that students have in regards to literacy and the probable effects of these causes.

Methods

In September 2018, I conducted a survey at Saginaw Valley State University, with the goal of gaining more insight into how confidence and enjoyment in literacy are interrelated. Students who were in a Composition I class were divided into groups of seven people and were given roughly a week to complete a set of questions regarding their literacy. I asked such open-ended questions as “How did you learn to read?” or “What are your current attitudes, feelings, or stance toward reading and writing?” The question “What sense did you get of the value of reading and writing?” was the most frequently used because it could assess emotions about literacy and the practical values of it. Later, the groups met a few times in class to clarify any questions, and to answer any questions that were missed. There were a few times in class where it was mandatory for the groups to meet and then a few other times when the individuals in the groups were free to meet, but not required to. Although I would meet up with the groups sometimes, I did not need to ask many follow-up questions, so I occasionally opted out of meetings.

Oftentimes, the respondents would interpret the motives of a question much differently, leading to vastly different answers. I took note of this, not making statistical conclusions from a group’s answers. Although this potentially makes many of my conclusions subject to interpretation, it also prevents any missed responses in a conclusion.

Results

The results of my study imply that confidence is linked to enjoyment: when students were asked what pleased them about reading and writing, 29% talked about something pertaining to their confidence. Similar to how confidence relates to positive factors in literacy enjoyment, lack of confidence relates to negative factors. When surveyed, 67% of students who revealed that they do

not like reading also mentioned having a lack of confidence or fear of writing poorly, compared to 0% of students who expressed no distaste in reading or writing. Student A at Saginaw Valley State University is an example of this statement.¹ They never liked reading in school, stating that they “didn’t seem to enjoy” the books read in school (Student A). One possible answer for this is their lack of confidence in it: when asked about their current feelings about their reading and writing, Student A stated, “It’s not that I don’t enjoy it, it’s that I am lacking confidence in myself.” During Student A’s senior year in high school, they did not have an English teacher. Because of this, they have an impression that they have “not practiced in a long time.” Because of their disinterest in literacy sponsors and lack of an English teacher senior year, it is possible that Student A did not work according to their projected standard, making Student A feel ashamed and, in turn, leading them to practice even less. This feeling of not working towards literacy could have worked in a cycle to further disengage their interest in it.

Although the building of a learner’s advanced literacy and their awareness of it contributes to confidence, it does not seem to guarantee it. Student B from the same Composition 1 class has the history of being a high-achieving student. Student B’s father taught them to read and write, and gave them quality practice when they were learning in school, keeping them “ahead” of their class (Student B). Student B’s ability “to write formal papers from a young age” boosted their confidence in their literacy. Strangely, Student B did not seem to have the self-assurance that was demonstrated in their achievements, reporting that when learning to read and write, the sense that they got from it was “nervousness” that they were not going to understand the rules. One possible source for their fear of failure is a lack of enthusiasm for what they were learning. Although Student B observed that they learned many valuable skills from their father, they did not mention any fun reading experiences that they shared. Rather, they fell among the 67% of the people who did not enjoy reading and who reported that they were “forced” to learn literacy after school. Student B stated that their parents made them read after school “for long periods of time” even after they “begged them to take breaks.” This implies that a less enjoyable literacy past could lessen a learner’s confidence in their present-day writing.

Family literacy experiences also seem to have a direct impact on a student’s enjoyment of writing. While a positive literacy experience with family was mentioned by only 33% who also expressed loathing in reading, everyone who did not dislike reading reported a positive literacy experience. For example, Student C was taught to read by their mother, who worked at a daycare (Student C). When asked of the sense they got of the value of reading and writing, they said that they learned that it was “out of love”; they remember writing their mother notes expressing their love and that their father read their favorite book to them more than once. As a result, they demonstrate considerable enthusiasm for literacy, stating that they “can get intrigued” by the books read in class and are “happy to read in class.” These statements show fun experiences with family can provide a lifelong means of enjoyment of literacy.

Another implication from this study is that all students have an interest in reading. When asked about the sense of value students got from reading and writing, 43% of students valued literacy because of practical and educational uses. The data reported that 67% of the people who did not like reading still recognized the importance of literacy, further suggesting a widespread pleasure in reading by students. There are more suggestions that the several students who reported that they did not like reading did not completely hate it. When asked “How much have you enjoyed the various kinds of writing or reading you have done?” and “What is your favorite kind of writing or reading?,” every student reported that they enjoyed some form of reading, even if it was not assigned in school. When asked their favorite kind of reading, Student B stated that they enjoyed self-help articles the most. Of those surveyed, 71% said they preferred some form of fiction, a type

¹ To maintain anonymity, the names of students will not be disclosed. Forms of address like “Student A” or “Student B” will be used for reference, as will third-person plural (i.e., non-gendered) pronouns.

of writing that is usually ignored in school assignments. The implications for this are positive: perhaps we simply need to expose students to texts that interest them, and then they can build more confidence and enjoyment.

Discussion

Unfortunately, the study that I conducted is not perfect. Firstly, I have been backing up my conclusions with surveys, which cannot completely infer cause and effect. People may have unintentionally biased responses or lack of memory for an answer to a question. Next, each respondent interpreted the survey differently; for example, if one did not express, for example, that they like reading, then it does not confirm that they dislike reading. Because of the different interpretations of questions, those answering likely did not respond the same way. Lastly, the selection process was not randomized enough and used a small sample size. To have a completely random study of literacy in the U.S., students would have to be randomly selected nationwide, a difficult task to do.

Additionally, this study is not designed to be an answer; instead, it should be used to generate more questions. I would like to see more studies that evaluate the accuracy of my study and expand on the relationship between confidence and interest, and the experiences that shape these factors. I also would want to see more studies that can describe skill, something I did not include in my study. Skill could be analyzed into two parts: innate aptitude and acquired learning. Perhaps there is some form of testing that can determine levels of skill among students in these two areas, and then we can test how these would affect level of confidence and interest. I would also like to examine the performance of students placed in a personalized literacy curriculum. This would be a more practical way to assess the links between interest, confidence, and skill. From the data collected, I would have the chance to qualify or solidify the conclusions I have made in my own study.

Although this study is flawed, the data implies that there are lots of interventions that can be made to increase enthusiasm. Perhaps during the first years of literacy, parents and teachers should strive to teach students to enjoy literacy as a family experience and gradually make the material children learn more challenging. Remember that making literacy “out of love” rather than force gave Student C a more positive viewpoint that followed them through their high school career. Also, if we spend more time exposing kids to more forms of writing, they might enjoy it more.

Many students already have aspects of reading and writing they like, and if they realize that, then perhaps they can tolerate the parts of reading and writing that they do not like. This can make students more open-minded to topics in school and more active in determining what types of careers they like. Rather than responding to reading something they do not like with “I have never liked reading,” they can say, “I never liked reading science fiction novels.” Instead of developing cynicism for education, they can sort out careers involving what they like, rather than what they dislike. Rather than forcing children to learn, we should give them wings of encouragement, so they themselves are willing to reach new heights in their learning. They may want to write their own plays, conduct their own research, or even prepare for the SAT. All students can develop the will to find their own purpose in literacy; we just have to teach them to do so.

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gran's outpatient procedure no. 8

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A native of Essexville, Michigan, Hannah Somalski is majoring in creative writing and minoring in rhetoric and professional writing at SVSU. A marketing and communications intern at the United Way of Saginaw County, she has been on the editorial staff of *Cardinal Sins* since Fall 2018 and will serve as one of its editors-in-chief in 2019–20. In her spare time, Hannah, who anticipates graduating in May 2020, likes growing her houseplant collection.

after they wake her
 they allow her to sleep again
 but it is fitful and fentanyl-forced

they wake her again
 to discharge her
tell her to strip from the gown
 to get dressed

i must repeat everything to her
 she left her hearing aids at home
 and even if she didn't
 she can't remember their
 words anyway

she cannot stand
 not long enough to get dressed
 without help

so i hug her close, my arms under her armpits
 and pull

she slips on the first try, no
 shoes
 no traction

her bare feet haven't seen
 bare floor in years and
 forgotten how to grip

so i doorjamb plant my feet in front of hers,
 and we try again

Classroom Portfolio

Shayla Krygier

Diane Boehm e-Portfolio Award



A resident of Bay City, Michigan, Shayla Krygier graduated in May 2019 from SVSU with a bachelor of arts degree in graphic design and a minor in marketing. She has received two Gold Addy Awards, a Silver Addy Award, and “Best of Show” Addy Award at the Great Lakes Bay Region Advertising Federation Awards for her integrated branding and advertising campaigns. At the regional district level of the American Advertising Federation, Shayla received a Gold Addy Award for an integrated branding campaign. She intends to pursue a career in graphic design.

Shayla compiled her e-Portfolio for Design Development Portfolio (ART 450) taught by Professor Blake Johnson. In this class, both a hard-copy portfolio and a digital portfolio were created simultaneously. The e-Portfolio captures visual samplings of classroom and freelance projects; a written description of each project; an “About” page with information highlighting her skills, abilities, and awards; a list of her design services; and a contact page. This e-Portfolio, she believes, will effectively showcase her design abilities to future employers.

Shayla says the biggest challenge for creating this e-Portfolio was gathering and organizing the content. After four years, she had numerous projects she needed to collect, categorize, organize, and then display in a clean and visually appealing manner. The process, which involved writing, the photographing of her work, and the exporting of those images, took an entire semester, with most of the hours spent outside of the classroom. As the portfolio features seventeen projects, many of them being lengthier branded campaigns, sifting through her content was, she notes, the most tedious part.

Shayla maintains that producing this e-Portfolio provided many opportunities to learn, including how to showcase her work. The written component, in particular, enabled Shayla to elaborate on, among other things, her choice of project titles, project descriptions, design disciplines under which the projects fell, software utilized, client accounts, and awards received. Her portfolio can be viewed at <https://www.shaylakrygier.com/>.

Professional Portfolio

Emely Williamson

Diane Boehm e-Portfolio Award



A May 2019 graduate of SVSU's Art Department, Emely Williamson studied art and graphic design at SVSU while living in Davison, Michigan. She graduated *summa cum laude* and plans to work in the art field in Michigan. While studying at SVSU, Emely held a full-time job and took on multiple freelance art opportunities, including a number of children's books and the SVSU Art Department's comic book, *We Create*.

This e-Portfolio was originally designed and coded as an assignment for Professor Blake Johnson's Design Portfolio Development (ART 450) course; the intention was to help Emely obtain work as an artist and designer. As such, it was vital that the portfolio display high-quality photos of artwork and designs. Additionally, well-written descriptions of each project were required to provide prospective employers with a clear understanding of the need for each piece, as well as the problem-solving efforts that went into each design. Each piece of work, Emely notes, needed to enable viewers to envision the projects in the real world. Coding the website presented her with a challenge, but provided valuable experiences and displayed a desirable skill set.

Emely suggests that students looking to create professional e-Portfolios take care in selecting and showcasing their best work. It is also critical that the portfolios are balanced between technical jargon and layman's terms. "Nobody wants to be patronized," she says, "but nobody wants to feel foolish for not understanding either! Remember not every person that comes across your work will have the same training and background as you do, but some might." Emely's e-Portfolio can be viewed at <https://www.emelywilliamson.com>.

Submissive Women Protagonists in Literature

Jayanti Singh

Ming Chuan Multilingual Writing Award

Nominated by Tamara Migan, Lecturer of English



Jayanti Singh is from Kolkata, India, and started at SVSU in Fall 2016. A junior at SVSU, she is pursuing her major in supply chain management and marketing. Jayanti is heavily involved in clubs and organizations located on-campus and has served as a vice president of Membership and Outreach in APICS (the association for operations management) and as a secretary to the SVSU Rotaract Club and South Asian Student Association. Recently, she also was inducted into the SVSU chapter of National Residence Hall Honorary. Jayanti works as a summer intern for the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum and is currently a resident assistant in Pine Grove. After graduation, her aim is to pursue a master of business administration with a focus in human resources and marketing.

This piece was written for a section of Thematic Approaches to Literature (ENGL 204), which had an emphasis on “Ghost Stories and Other Strange Tales.” The assignment required students to analyze, critique, and interpret any literary piece from the course syllabus. With a background in argumentative essays and a passion for the feminist movement, Jayanti decided to write a piece based on a short story from the course syllabus in conjunction with feminism in the real world. This piece demonstrates, Jayanti believes, how writers sometimes make use of literary elements, such as symbolism, to specify, subtly, some significant sensitive social issues to readers.

It is quite common for readers to apply their own standards of conduct to their favorite characters and situations from literature. This tendency affects the way a reader perceives the character throughout the course of the story. In turn, this could be responsible for swaying the readers’ opinion of a situation or a character. Sometimes authors like to use symbolism to enhance their writing to keep the reader captivated. In Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper,” for instance, the author set the tone such that the reader views the narrator as a passive and oppressed woman whose life is primarily dictated by her husband and who is imprisoned at her own house. If the story was written any differently, and the audience learned of the narrator from John’s, the narrator’s husband’s, point of view, we would have been more sympathetic towards him. Similarly, the author uses the “yellow wallpaper” to symbolize what a typical woman’s life would look like back in the era during which the story was written. Therefore, we know that symbolism can be used by writers in different ways, often times, to bring into focus important but sensitive topics, such as feminism, in a more subtle way. In “The Yellow Wallpaper,” symbolism is used in the actions and words of our narrator. This holds a deeper meaning throughout the narrative.

Story Summary

In Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," we are introduced to our narrator and her family through a series of her journal entries. During the summer, our narrator moves into a new estate with her husband and child. Without much hesitation, the narrator reveals that our narrator suffers from acute nervous depression and is thus advised to resort to bed rest by her husband until her health reveals signs of improvement. The narrator's husband is a respectable physician and is quite strict in terms of his practices as they apply to his wife. Not only does he confine her to a room, but also prohibits her from writing. In a dull and dreary life, writing seems to be the narrator's only form of entertainment. Our narrator is locked up in an isolated room with a big window and a supposedly ugly wallpaper of yellow color. The narrator now spends all day sitting in bed and examining this wallpaper. Soon after, the narrator's health declines as her life becomes more and more repetitive with each passing day. To distract herself from the dull state of her life, she resorts to focusing on insignificant thoughts. She keeps writing about how everything about the wallpaper disgusts her so much. With time, she starts to notice a pattern on the wallpaper that is particularly more visible under moonlight. In a couple more weeks, the pattern on the wallpaper appears to be coming to life for the narrator. She can now see a woman crawling from one part of the pattern to the next. Patterns in the wallpaper transform into cages that bind the woman. The wallpaper starts to become an obsession for the narrator and now she is determined to free the caged woman. One night, she loses her mind and tears the wallpaper into pieces and then starts creeping around the room in circles. Gilman shows how the confined room feels like a cage to the narrator.

Representation of Women

Symbolism can be an author's indirect approach to presenting a more omnipresent truth of reality. Gilman made an exceptional use of symbolism to better represent the narrator's miserable situation and how it causes her to lose her sanity. The biggest reference is related to the woman trapped behind the patterns of the wallpaper.

Through the narrator's eyes, the audience sees the woman's relentless struggle to lead a life of freedom. As readers, we immediately recognize that the narrator is alluding to herself when she begins to talk about the trapped woman. The only definite distinction that is noticeable is the fact that while the creeping woman is trapped behind the patterns of the yellow wallpaper, our narrator is trapped in her own thoughts and lifestyle. Although we are aware that the narrator's husband is a practical and rationalistic man, our narrator is different in the sense that she is extremely imaginative and sensitive in her ways of thinking. These imaginative ways are part of the reason she ended up suffering from nervous depression. According to *eNotes.com*, the narrator's lifestyle also mirrors the house itself ("The Yellow Wallpaper Analysis"). While the rest of the house is decorated and attractive to look at, the room to which she has been restricted is quite unvaried and depressing, which makes it totally incompatible as compared to the rest of the house. Symbolism is interwoven with the story in several different ways. One of these many ways involves the representation of our narrator and her lifestyle, and it is meant to evoke thoughts on women and their rights in the Victorian period as described in the next section.

Back in the time when the story was written, women did not have the freedom and rights they have today. They also had little or no power over even the simplest decisions that concerned them. They were often thought of as fragile and thus treated as a burden on the family. They were heavily dependent on their husbands for food, shelter, and almost everything else (Shmoop Editorial Team). Gilman is very clever to paint a character along the lines of how women were looked at in that period. In our story, the narrator is not allowed to make a decision about her well-being and is instead pushed to the edge of sanity where her depression led her to become mentally unstable. She is also denied the choice to make use of her only creative outlet, writing.

Instead she must keep her use of diary a secret from her overruling and dominating husband: “Unlike docile Victorian women who acquiesce to social conventions, the narrator becomes aware of her submissiveness and subverts her husband’s treatment by writing secretly and thus exchanging domestic for artistic concerns” (Quawas 50).

Symbolism and Feminism

Charlotte Perkins Gilman was not just a writer but a philosopher, socialist, and feminist (Quawas 36). Through her influential work, she has proved to the world over and over again that women are not just meant to stay at home trying to make the domestic sphere a cheerful, pure haven and wait for their husbands to return to them every evening, but explore the outside world and partake in things that make them feel free-spirited and independent (35). Gilman was always a supporter of equality in all fields even in the nineteenth century when it seemed quite far from attainable especially for women. “The Yellow Wallpaper” is the author’s step towards bringing about change in patriarchal society. It is an effort to cause a change in the mindset of people about women and to discourage people from indulging in the practices that restrict women from living their life to the fullest. In my example, it is quite evident that the narrator is trying her best to defy all the odds that come in her way to becoming a “New Woman,” a woman “who is in the process of becoming, struggling to assert her individuality and to construct her own identity in a society where the prevailing intellectual and ideological issues of the age are inimical to the very existence of women” (40). It is almost fascinating to watch how our narrator can apprehend her state of confinement and transforms into being a stronger woman who is willing and is able to get the freedom that her heart desires on her own terms. In her own ways, the narrator is a true embodiment of a feminist.

Feminism in the Real World

Needless to say, Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” was inspired by the author’s own personal experiences before and during the Women’s Rights Movement that continued for about 150 years (Gilman, “Why I Wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper* 1913”). The short story was constructed in 1890 (Quawas 41). It was during this time that the nation witnessed passionate and raging women fight against the nuisances of the society to carve a corner for themselves in the society. A lot has changed since then. Today not only are women allowed to enjoy their basic rights but are also competing with men to win that first spot in the apex of every institution. It is because of the tireless efforts of the women activists back from the era that freedom and independence are no longer one of the many popular debatable topics of the nation. However, it is inaccurate to say that oppression against women is eradicated completely or equality among genders is restored all around the world since feminism is tied into a lot of different sectors. But it can definitely be said that ongoing efforts are being made to convert the ideology into reality someday.

“The Yellow Wallpaper” is still considered an important piece of literature because it is a non-traditional short story that emphasizes the negative impacts of mental illness such as depression from the perspective of a woman. Through her story, the author wanted to educate the readers about several different critical topics. Gilman made a brilliant use of symbolism throughout her story to hint at the very intense issue of feminism and women’s rights back in the nineteenth century. The narrator from the story is the spokesperson for all the defeated and subdued women who were trapped in the norms of the society. Gilman’s portrayal of women and their lifestyle in the Victorian time period is quite accurate and reflects some very significant facts from the past. The lesson derived from the story could be used to our advantage in creating a better example for generations to come.

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Spotlight on...

The National Day on Writing

The National Day on Writing has been celebrated for years—across America and at SVSU—as a way to recognize writing across the disciplines. Organized by the University Writing Committee, which was chaired in 2018–2019 by Rhetoric and Professional Writing faculty member Scott Kowalewski, SVSU’s celebration recognizes the writing that occurs at SVSU and in the surrounding community. Helping Professor Kowalewski coordinate these events were University Writing Committee members Emily Beard-Bohn, Micah delVecchio, Chris Giroux, Ellen Herlache-Pretzer, Amy Hlavacek, Kim Lacey, Julie Lynch, Grace McClurkin, Tami Pobocik, Chatdanai Pongpatipat, Sylvia Fromherz Sharp, Deb Smith, and Bill Williamson.

As in years past, the National Day on Writing activities at SVSU included an online Wall of Writing and an open-mic competition. Winners of the open-mic event included Nathan Hernandez for poetry, Kaleigh Kuhns for short story, and Cameron Taylor-Love for song. Nathan and Kaleigh’s pieces can be found on the following pages. Also included are Sam Geffert’s poem “Child” and Rebecca Grable’s fiction piece “The Leaking Faucet”; Sam and Rebecca’s works were featured on the National Day on Writing’s online Wall of Writing, where members of the community are invited to share their work in various genres.

To learn more about the National Day on Writing at SVSU, visit www.svsu.edu/writingprogram/universitywritingcommittee/nationaldayonwriting/.

Sound of a Bullet

Nathan Hernandez

National Day on Writing, Open-Mic Winner for Poetry



Nathan Hernandez is a sophomore at SVSU and a creative writing major. A poet first and foremost, he is a member of *The Living Poets' Society*, and his creative nonfiction has been published in *Mi Gente* magazine. The first American-born child of Mexican immigrants, Nathan grew up hearing stories of a homeland he was far removed from, of accounts and experiences he'd never know, and of characters played by distant family members whom he'd rarely see. A simple man of little means and fewer needs, he's always considered Saginaw his home. With his father running Maria Elena's Bakery, the business has been a force and presence throughout Nathan's life, his family's literal bread and butter.

She shot a man in front of my eyes
with a bullet with our names on it,
his, mine, my mom and dad's,
and the rest of our families' too.

A braggart of her crimes
made a mockery of pain,
without shame, showing off
the lives she stole from us.

In the same breath,
the same bullet
that tore through his chest
tore through mine.
We all stood silent
and time stood still,
all waiting for a heartbeat,
a pulse or recognition,
waiting for the world,
or those of us in it,
to acknowledge this crime
we were victimized by.

A bullet begets blood.
Its sound demands fear,
enough that we'd die
if we gave what it wants.

We're not allowed to feel
out loud,
though we bleed.
She gets to be the only one
and we get to be steel.

Then “we” becomes “I”
and “I” become “hers”
‘cause she’s next in line
and I’m at the register.

She drops two dollars,
takes some tortillas.
I offer a bag
and she yells “No thanks,”
like I’d offered to return
this bullet I’m lodged with;
she’ll get to live her life
and forget how it sounded:

“I bet he’s just being treated better because he’s a spic.”

An Excerpt from “Ruth”

Kaleigh Kuhns

National Day on Writing, Open-Mic Winner for Fiction



Studying international business and Spanish, Kaleigh Kuhns has an anticipated graduation date of December 2019. Her hometown is Port Huron, Michigan. She is the coordinator for Global Community, the Residence Life international student program, and is a resident assistant in Pine Grove Apartments. A tutor at the SVSU Writing Center and a reporter for *The Valley Vanguard*, Kaleigh has studied abroad in San José, Costa Rica, and Accra, Ghana. Her goal after graduation is to see more of the world.

Even the very trees, barren and frosted with ice, seemed to sway away from her. She was the curse of Port Erwin, a small town in northern Maine, where the summers were particularly beautiful, but the winters were unbearably freezing. The community was so small that to be loved by such a close-knit group of people was to feel unending warmth, but to be ostracized by them was to be perpetually cold.

Ruth lived in this icy state of isolation. The first time I remember seeing her was one afternoon when my mother and I passed her in the grocery store. My mother was letting out a loud, hearty laugh when she saw the old woman. Her laugh was cut short, the silence slicing through the air like a knife. I asked my mother who was she, and why did everyone so strongly dislike her? I might as well have asked why everyone disliked stepping on a sharp object. The answer was so apparent my mother should not have to explain it.

I heard things from the more generous adults, the ones who couldn't keep their mouths closed. They said that Ruth brought calamity on the town. She was a walking affliction. She brought threatening storms in the winter, she brought financial ruin to businesses in Port Erwin, and she gave children serious diseases. The head chef at Leo's Cafe even told me that she let rats and cockroaches into his kitchen. This tiny woman, always dressed in the same blue plaid coat, summoned vermin and illness and lightning with the snap of her fingers.

I grew up with a sense of foreboding about her, but a childish wonder too. So when on one Sunday morning the pastor of the church asked if anyone would be willing to visit Ruth, I approached him after the service. He was pleasantly surprised that I had come forward, because he and his family had been the only people in the town to visit her in her old age. She was completely alone, I learned. I asked him about her family, her story, but the old woman told him something different every day. He didn't know what was the truth.

"It's a shame, really," he said with a pitying look in his eyes. "It's a reminder to us all that life is short, so it shouldn't be wasted."

"Ruth's life was wasted?" I questioned.

Three days later, I prepared cream of mushroom soup, roast pork and mashed potatoes, and snickerdoodles, packaged in festive Christmas wrapping. My mother was incredulous that I would be visiting the woman who had brought so much despair on our community.

"You're going alone?" she exclaimed.

"You're welcome to come with me," I countered.

So I found myself approaching the address the pastor had given me, a small little cottage on the outskirts of town, hidden behind a grove of white birch trees—and I was alone.

Child

Samantha Geffert

National Day on Writing Wall of Writing, Winner for Poetry



A native of Farmington Hills, Michigan, Samantha (“Sam”) Geffert anticipates graduating with dual majors in English literature and secondary education in December 2019. She is passionate about writing, communication, and travel, all of which she has been able to experience through her work as a tutor at SVSU’s campus writing center, at its community writing centers, and at the writing center at SVSU’s sister school in Japan, Shikoku University. Sam has presented at state, regional, and international conferences, discussing her experiences tutoring non-native speakers of English in Tokushima. Her own writing can be found in *Cardinal Sins* and previous issues of *Writing@SVSU*, and she blends her love of creative writing and teaching by facilitating creative writing workshops at the Saginaw Correctional Facility.

He digs trenches in
each crow’s foot
and forehead line.
He body-thins and
swells his temple veins.
His hands are like rope.
He wears his skin like cloth.
He does not bother with the glasses anymore;
he fills old jars,
scoops flies out with three fingers,
and keeps drinking.
I crawl into his lap, wishing I knew
how to mother my father.

The Leaking Faucet

Rebecca Grable

National Day on Writing, Wall of Writing Winner for Fiction



Rebecca (“Becca”) Grable is from Evart, Michigan, and started her studies at SVSU in Fall 2017. Her major is currently undecided as she focuses her time exploring the different programs that the university has to offer. With interests in writing, computer science, and business, she hopes to find a career that will be a perfect fit. When not studying, Rebecca spends her time indulging in her hobbies and spending time with loved ones, whether that be her family or her cats.

Drip, drop. The faucet leaks and all I can hear is the sound of the water falling into the sink. That intoxicating odor of him fills the room as I roll over on the floor. I do everything in my power to not think anymore. In a matter of seconds, my own thoughts betray me and allow him to conquer my head. I dig my nail into my finger and scrape off a fleck of skin and choose to focus all of my attention on the faucet instead. Drip, drop. He won’t let me stop. He tortures me with gloom and partners up with my subconscious to inflict all he can. I gasp for air, unable to breathe, as he smothers me until my body trembles, pleading for mercy. I launch towards the sink as I plead, but instead see it’s covered in bits of his hair. Drip, drop. Delicately, I place my hand on the lever and turn it slowly to the side. The water starts to pour as he teases me to decide. Gradually, I motion my quivering right hand to attempt to take back what was rightfully mine. I squint through the remnants of the suffering he caused as I try to wash away all he left behind. Before I can, he embraces my wrist in his grip and pulls my hand back, guiding it so that I can turn off the water. Drip, drop. The faucet no longer leaks. He allows me to wipe away the sorrow from my face, but never my mind. I lurch out of the room and collapse to the floor. Here I am again, waiting. I lay in the silence I deserve, with no faucet to distract me. I permit the cold full control as I stare at the blank ceiling above me. I then feel a sense of pain jumping straight at me. Drip, drop. The wound reopened. The familiarity of the crimson twinkles in my eyes before he decides that I can close them. I let the scarlet run down like the water from a faucet. One day, I will become small enough to escape down the drain like a droplet. Until then, I will have to accept the fate he has convinced me that I have chosen. Knock, knock. He allows me to open my eyes and to stand back up on his other two feet. My legs heavy with defeat and my arms aching with loss, I trudge towards the door. Knock, knock. I quicken my pace and stiffen my back. Knock, knock. I reach the door, but it’s too late; the door swings open and there he is. A carmine of roses and thorns falling down to the ground, and a clenched fist with bruised knuckles await me at the gate: two diametric gifts from my lover, just for me. I should have learned by now. Never make the king wait.



Spotlight on... Students

No matter in which college they find themselves, SVSU students write regularly in their courses. As members of a university that, per its mission statement, “creates opportunities for individuals to achieve intellectual and personal development,” SVSU students write in different genres, learn different documentation styles, and find themselves weighing the various options they carry in their rhetorical toolkits. No matter their major, they must consider issues of medium, message, and audience.

Because their majors do vary, students find different venues in and avenues through which to grow as writers. No publication can capture all their stories. In the following pages however, you’ll find stories about five students, representing SVSU’s five colleges, who have found success in their studies through writing.

In this section, you’ll also find profiles of the editors of SVSU’s two student-run publications, *Cardinal Sins* and *The Valley Vanguard*. Founded in 1967, *The Vanguard* is SVSU’s official student-run news source and has been the recipient of numerous awards. Its online presence can be found at www.valleyvanguardonline.com/. *Cardinals Sins* is SVSU’s fine arts and literary magazine. Produced by the school’s faculty, staff, and students, *Cardinal Sins* has been honored by the American Scholastic Press Association; it features work by members of the SVSU campus and by artists from around the nation. More information about *Cardinal Sins*, including back issues and submission deadlines, can be found at www.cardinalsinsjournal.com/.

Spotlight on...

The College of Arts & Behavioral Sciences

Brianna Meyer
History and French Major



Victors, the saying goes, get to write history, and though history major Brianna Meyer is not marching with colonizers or commanding armies, it is clear that she is ready to conquer the world through her writing. This May 2019 SVSU graduate who also has a major in French hails from Brighton, Michigan, and is an aspiring history professor with a passion for European history. Her nine years of French courses, however, have given her a heightened understanding of language and culture that supplements that interest in history.

Meyer's choice to study history often requires enormous amounts of reading and research—and writing. “In my field, writing is everything,” Meyer states. “Even as a professor, I’ll constantly be doing research and publishing articles.”

Meyer credits her successful academic career to the small class sizes and one-on-one attention that she has received from professors over her four years at SVSU. She especially points to Dr. Jules Gehrke in the History Department as an inspiration for her writing process, stating that he taught her to just “hammer something out and work on it over and over.” This focus on revision has aided Meyer in her jobs in the Career Services Office and the Office of Global Engagement; there, she is able to assist students in their own professional writing processes. Meyer states that these roles, in turn, have expanded her own writing skills by encouraging her to be concise and creative, producing different types of documents and projects than someone in her field normally would.

Some of the most influential experiences that Meyer relates back to her writing are the study abroad opportunities she has received at SVSU. Gaining knowledge about the past and experiencing other cultures have been common themes throughout her travels. As a member of the nineteenth class of Roberts Fellows, she traveled to China, Japan, and Taiwan in 2018. Meyer, who previously had very little travel experience, recounts the anxious excitement associated with visiting a foreign country for the first time. Moreover, in hindsight, Meyer credits this trip as being pivotal to her professional development. In regards to her international experiences, Meyer states that, “Even if I don’t study Asian history, travelling is essential, especially for a professor. These are the kinds of interactions I’ll be having with colleagues in the field.”

Although her focus is not Asian history, Meyer recognizes that learning about global citizenship during her Roberts Fellows seminars and experiencing international relationships during her trip inspired her Honors thesis. Although her original focus was on French salons during the Enlightenment, her travels abroad led her to craft a thesis studying the intersection of cosmopolitanism and nationalism in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Europe through the writings of Germaine Necker.

Meyer credits her writing experience at SVSU, rich with professional development opportunities, international travel, and self-directed research, as instrumental in her admission to the University of Alabama’s graduate program. There, Meyer plans to help grow their department of European history and eventually enroll in their Ph.D. program. No doubt, her experiences at SVSU as a writer will continue to help her “conquer” the world.

Spotlight on...

The College of Business and Management

Danielle Slonac

Finance, Management, and Supply Chain Management Majors



One might expect Danielle Slonac to favor numbers and Excel sheets over writing. However, this triple major, from St. Clair, Michigan, is firm in her belief that writing is crucial in the business field. “Writing,” she maintains, “is a way to spread new ideas, gain a better understanding, initiate change, relay information, and synthesize complex concepts.” In fact, Slonac, who graduated in December 2018, takes great pride in the strong writing background that SVSU has given her, and she plans to use her written communication skills in her future career as an administrator or professor—ideally, here, at her alma mater.

With extensive involvement in organizations and programs such as SVSU’s Cardinal Business Edge, Vitito Global Leadership Institute, Honors Program, and Young Alumni Advisory Board for the College of Business and Management, Slonac has been exceedingly productive during her time at SVSU. Moreover, she specifically credits her writing background as being crucial to her success in these organizations. From her first college-level essays in her freshman Honors class to her senior thesis titled “An Exploration of Intellectual Property in the Emerging International Autonomous Vehicles Industry,” Slonac’s ability to write professionally has helped to make her a well-rounded businesswoman.

One notable accomplishment that drew on her writing skills involved Cardinal Business Edge, where Slonac drafted a reflective profile of a local business owner; she points to this text as being one of her first practical experiences where business and writing intersected. Slonac’s success as a writer also led to opportunities to share her research with others, one such presentation being the Institute of Global Business Research’s conference at Oxford University in the United Kingdom in 2018. Her writing skills also continue to impact her work. In one of her recent graduate school classes—Slonac is currently at SVSU pursuing a master of arts in public administration with a university and college student affairs administration track—she created a psychosocial student development model based on student interviews and extensive research on existing theories. As part of her graduate work, she will also be working in SVSU’s office of University Communications.

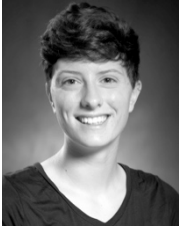
Slonac has even used her writing skills outside of academics. As a member of SVSU’s varsity tennis team, she was a nominee for the Arthur Ashe Leadership and Sportsmanship Award, a recognition granted to a Division II student-athlete in the Midwest. As such, Slonac had to write a letter to the Intercollegiate Tennis Association about how the sport had taught her about leadership and sportsmanship. Her success as a writer undoubtedly helped her win the prize.

Slonac hopes to continue writing long after her time as a student has ended. Slonac says, “Whether it is drafting grants, writing proposals, preparing reports, or conducting research, writing will play a pivotal role in my day-to-day responsibilities.” With a strong background in writing, communication, and business, Slonac is more than prepared to meet these responsibilities. With numerous executive board positions, study abroad experiences, conference presentations, and research projects under her belt, Slonac has used her time at SVSU and her abilities as a writer to show that, in the professional world, she means business.

Spotlight on...

The College of Education

Samantha Geffert
Secondary Education Major



Although she is more certain now, Samantha Geffert, SVSU English secondary education major, English literature major, and December 2019 graduate, did not know what career path she wanted to follow as a freshman. Through her encounters with SVSU faculty and the opportunities presented to her through these encounters, Geffert began to use her own writing and teaching talents to create opportunities for herself and others.

While taking Studies in World Literature (ENGL 205) with adjunct instructor Noah Tysick, Geffert heard how he became a teacher, in part, to combat his social anxiety. Geffert was inspired by this story, claiming that she too had a level of social anxiety in her earlier years of school: “I was one of those students who never really wanted to raise my hand or talk in class.” Tysick’s story encouraged Geffert to change her major from business to secondary education after three semesters at SVSU. While this encounter in a class about writing led to Geffert’s choice of major, her love of poetry led to many other opportunities for professional growth.

Geffert regularly entered her poetry into writing competitions sponsored by the Diane Boehm Writing Center. These entries led to her meet Helen Raica-Klotz and Christopher Giroux, the director and assistant director of the Writing Center, and to become a tutor there. Once she began tutoring, she says, opportunities for professional experience were presented to her constantly. Through her love and knowledge of writing, she has worked with writers in other locations: the Saginaw Community Writing Center, the Saginaw Correctional Facility, and even Shikoku University in Tokushima, Japan. No doubt these many experiences resulted in her being named the Outstanding Tutor of the Year at the East Central Writing Centers Association’s 2019 conference.

Although all of these opportunities surrounding writing were valuable to her, Geffert lights up when she discusses her work at the Saginaw Correctional Facility. Through this initiative, which began in 2016 with funding provided by the Michigan Campus Compact and which is now funded by the dean of SVSU’s College of Arts and Behavioral Sciences, creative writing workshops are held at the Saginaw Correctional Facility for ten weeks each fall and winter semester. Tutors from SVSU go to the facility once per week and teach for an hour and a half. The topic of each workshop changes each semester depending on the goals and interests of the participants, but frequently covers fiction, memoir, creative nonfiction, and poetry. In addition to helping the writers with their pieces, the tutors also help the writers publish their works.

Although the work may seem daunting to some, Geffert often found it the most peaceful time of her week: “During the day, I’m rushing between tutoring and classes, and then I have my fieldwork, so it’s just chaos. But then you go into this space and you have this group of men who are just so at peace and so reflective, supportive of one another, and grateful for the opportunity to come together with others and share and write. It’s not like any other class that I’ve ever been to.”

Geffert, who is also pursuing a teaching English as a second language certificate, claims that her writing work at the Saginaw Correctional Facility has taught her about building rapport and relationships with students and writers in the classroom. Additionally, this experience has reinforced for Geffert that she loves to teach writing. Her work at the Writing Center also stressed that successful tutoring and writing are conversations, something she saw in action at the prison. She enjoyed listening to the texts that her writers produced, but she also loved listening to the writers respond to one another. “At the Saginaw Correctional Facility,” she maintains, “the writers

signal a profound sense of presence, thoughtful feedback, and a gentleness that is just as inspiring as the writing itself. I love to teach writing because I love being a part of that type of environment—and I know that [such an] environment is possible regardless of context, even in a correctional facility!”

Geffert will finish her student teaching fieldwork in Fall 2019 in Commerce, Michigan, and then hopes to travel before she is fully committed to her career, school, or family. The Farmington Hills, Michigan, native is considering joining the Peace Corps, but whatever Geffert decides to do, she will certainly learn from any opportunity presented to better herself as a writer and a teacher.

Spotlight on ...

The College of Health and Human Services

Rebecca Carson

Athletic Training Major



During her senior year at Fraser High School, Rebecca Carson, a local of Roseville, Michigan, enrolled in an English class that focused on the health field. This hybrid course enabled Carson to learn about writing in the sciences. She learned how to study scholarly information, explore a medical issue, and write professionally. Additionally, this is when and where her drive to pursue athletic training blossomed. However, it wasn't until SVSU that her writing abilities would truly expand.

Writing at the college level required Carson to become truly cognizant of what she was producing. As Carson notes, as she transitioned into writing more academic papers, she learned to “write more concise paragraphs that are traditional in scientific papers.” Through consistent practice, she was able to elevate her writing to meet SVSU’s professional standards.

Carson began her journey at SVSU in Fall 2015 and became involved on campus in many ways. For example, she worked as an orientation leader for incoming students and was involved with Alternative Breaks. Carson was also a member of the Great Lakes Athletic Trainers Association (GLATA), where she served on the student senate, orchestrated the annual quiz bowl, and produced student newsletters. Carson also shared her work at conferences, her most recent research project being a National Athletic Trainers’ Association conference in Las Vegas in 2019. That work explored females’ increased risk of sports-related concussions in soccer compared to male athletes.

Throughout all of these extracurriculars, writing has been a constant. Carson stated that her general education courses enabled her to accumulate the tools to succeed later in her program. For instance, her Topics in Critical Writing (ENG 212) class focused on analyzing conspiracy theories and developing the ability to research sources in a scholarly format. A later class that stood out as influential was an evidence-based practice course taught by Dr. David Berry, the head of the Kinesiology Department. Carson acknowledges that Berry really “taught [her] how to do medical writing at the college level.” During his course, Carson became familiar with features key to science-related scholarship like a concise abstract. Her major coursework also regularly reminded her of the need for quality writing that communicated to athletes the benefit of a given technique and that demonstrated that her methods were rooted in research.

The May 2019 graduate is positive that the knowledge she has learned at SVSU has prepared her for the next chapter in her life. Carson will tackle graduate school at the University of Central Florida in pursuit of a leadership degree with a focus on student personnel; while there she will also be working as a graduate assistant in the school’s recreation department. She knows that she will benefit in both areas from her background as a writer because all “good writing is writing that is able to be easily understood by a wide range of people.”

Spotlight on...

The College of Science, Engineering, and Technology

Trenton Vogel

Chemistry Major



Trenton Vogel of Bay City, Michigan, has been fascinated by the sciences since high school. He started at SVSU as a physics major, but during his freshman year, he worked in the Chemistry Department's stockroom. This experience served as a catalyst for change. "Through that opportunity," he says, "I was able to spend every day in the labs and I became more drawn to the field of chemistry. I just knew that this program was the place for me." By the end of his freshman year, he had switched his major to chemistry.

Although he loves the subject, Vogel claims that some elements of chemistry are not as enjoyable to him as others. Writing is, in fact, one of those elements. He often finds tedious the struggle of putting the concepts in his head into words on the page. Nevertheless, Vogel recognizes the necessity for strong writing skills in his field: "Just about any lab work I do at the end of a project needs to be translated into a written report where I need to be able to effectively communicate findings and results. Effective communication is important for accurately disseminating your results to other professionals in your field, to the public, or whoever your audience might be." Vogel also points out that most projects in his desired career field are funded through grants, showing that, again, strong writing skills are the solution to many situations he will face in the future. Vogel gives additional examples: written communication is needed to maintain data and technical documentation. By understanding writing as a type of necessary evil and not avoiding it, Vogel has had great success during his college career.

Vogel's most influential piece of writing was his 31-page Honors thesis, "Development of a Novel Organocatalyst." He explains that, until that project, most writing assignments had been short enough to finish over the span of a weekend: "This was the first piece of writing where I had to plan out a month-long schedule to make sure I had enough time to properly finish it." He estimates that he put anywhere from 60–80 hours of grueling work into his thesis, and although his experience seemed negative during the writing process, he was proud of his completed work and looks back on the experience in a positive light.

For aspiring chemists who find writing daunting, Vogel offers this advice: "Get as much practice as you can." He claims that one of the reasons he did his thesis in chemistry is because he knew that the writing he would be doing would better prepare him for his future endeavors in his field: "Every dreadful writing assignment will help build your skills, and it will only get easier." Vogel himself is also proof that asking for help is a great way to improve one's writing skills. While writing his thesis, he regularly sought feedback from his professors, peers, and mentors to make sure he was going in the right direction. Dr. Tami Sivy, professor of Chemistry, and Dr. Stephanie Brouet, associate professor of Chemistry, were particularly instrumental in providing him feedback and guidance.

After he graduates in May 2020, Vogel hopes to pursue a Ph.D. in organic chemistry. He is currently considering attending the University of Michigan–Ann Arbor, Wayne State University, or University of Wisconsin–Madison. Eventually, Vogel would like to pursue a career in industry, rather than academia or government, working in applied research and moving toward project management as his career progresses. Vogel may not have good chemistry with writing, and

perhaps he never will, but he recognizes and respects its importance in his future, no matter which graduate school he attends. Like any good chemist, Vogel realizes that repetition and repeatability are key to achieving good results in experiments. He knows continued practice with writing will also pave his way to success.

Spotlight on...

The Valley Vanguard

Kaitlyn Farley

Editor-in-Chief



Since joining *The Valley Vanguard* in Fall 2016, Kaitlyn Farley has steadily risen in the ranks, moving from reporter to arts and entertainment (A&E) editor and most recently to editor-in-chief. The educational journey of the Warren, Michigan, native has likewise been a series of strategic moves.

Farley first attended Warren Mott High School and was an early college student of Macomb Community College (MCC), where she graduated with an associate in arts K–12 degree in 2016. At SVSU, she began as an education major, but now is pursuing a degree in professional and technical writing. Farley’s involvements at SVSU include serving as a global ambassador with the Office of Global Engagement and as the student coordinator of the Cardinal Food Pantry. She has also worked with Dr. John Baesler of the History Department on a research project involving interviewing World War II vets. She cites, however, her work as editor-in-chief of *The Valley Vanguard* as one of her greatest accomplishments.

Working for *The Valley Vanguard* has been instrumental in honing Farley’s writing abilities and garnering her recognition. As the newspaper’s A&E editor in 2018, Farley published a piece defending transfer students and community colleges; this work brought her recognition as an MCC distinguished alum in Winter 2018. The experiences Farley has had as a reporter also relate directly to her future plans. In the upcoming year, she plans on working on projects with Dr. Brad Jarvis of the History Department and the Michigan Oral History Association; she also will be serving as a technical writer for University Communications.

One of Farley’s primary focuses as editor-in-chief has been raising the standards of reporting at *The Valley Vanguard* while preserving the paper’s legacy. In her own words, “we may be student reporters, but that shouldn’t take away any emphasis from the latter part of that phrase.” One way Farley has emphasized high standards is by expanding the newspaper’s training program. Reporters joining *The Valley Vanguard* can now look forward to multiple development opportunities, a mentorship program, in-person meetings, and increased transparency from the editorial staff. These measures are aimed at supporting staff in their primary task: to “report the news accurately and without bias.” Much of this work was done with the help of the paper’s advisor, who was Andy Hoag for the majority of the 2018–19 school year.

Farley is also keenly aware of the need to provide her reading audience with a news platform that meets their needs. Farley refers to *The Valley Vanguard* as a hyper-localized newspaper, dedicated to serving the SVSU community. To reach this end, Farley is leading the paper into the new media era by practicing convergence journalism. *The Valley Vanguard* launched a new version of their website in January, and Farley is asking reporters to use Instagram regularly to connect with audiences. *The Valley Vanguard* has also started a podcast with the help of staff member Brian Fox, who received his undergraduate degree in political science and professional and technical writing from SVSU in 2018 and is now a graduate student in SVSU’s public administration program. These efforts at convergence are focused on meeting readers where they are with the news they need.

Working for *The Valley Vanguard* has given Farley skills, vision, and a passion for her future. In return, Farley has been instrumental in preparing *The Valley Vanguard* and its reporters for the next part of their journey. Farley claims the following article, which appeared in *The Valley Vanguard* on March 25, 2019, and was written by Hannah Beach, shows a part of this engagement. In Farley’s own words, “[Hannah’s article] showcases how powerful it is for staff and students to

be on the same page and working together.... Thus, this article exemplifies the *Vanguard's* mission to give students the opportunity to learn how to be a reporter, as well as to showcase the talent and dedication of our SVSU staff and students."

SVSU Earns Voter Friendly Designation with Program by Hannah Beach

SVSU was one of 123 campuses in 31 states to earn the Voter Friendly designation through a 2018 program intended to get students registered to vote.

The campus got involved with Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education... and Fair Election Center's Campus Vote Project to develop, implement and report results for engagement programs that encouraged students to register and vote.

"Our campus was evaluated on a three-step process—writing a campus plan to detail how we would engage students in Fall 2018, facilitating voter engagement efforts on campus and then writing a final analysis of our efforts," said Riley Hupfer, the assistant director for the Center of Community Engagement.

Hupfer added that the designation involved the university engaging with resources specific to voter registration, education and ultimately turning out to the polls.

"This designation really belongs to the students, for their passion and involvement in the 2018 midterm election," he said.

Democracy Fellow Joshua Cianek suggested students' voices are critical to the country's political climate.

"SVSU's unique position in the academic world and the broader community enables it to serve as the perfect mediator to advocate for political discourse and promote social change," Cianek said.

Hupfer said that while this designation is new to SVSU, the university also participates in the American Democracy Project's ALL IN Challenge.

"(This) isn't necessarily a higher designation," Hupfer said. "However, it does involve submitting a campus plan, and it recognizes campuses for offering resources and achieving improved voter turnout rates."

The university will not have access to the NSLVE (National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement) data until June, at which point officials can see how SVSU compares to its peer institutions.

"This designation is very exciting," Hupfer said. "The Cardinals Vote team worked very hard this past fall and had the chance to talk with hundreds of students. Their passion toward voting has me excited for upcoming elections and is reflected in the incredible voter turnout for 2018."

Cianek had similar thoughts about the designation.

"(It's) a monumental step for SVSU, but also, more importantly, for the student population," he said.

The Cardinal Vote team's efforts have led to more students understanding how to be politically active, Cianek said.

"Not only are students much more informed with how to go about participating in the electoral process during their academic career here, they're better equipped for civic engagement later in life," he said.

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Spotlight on...

Cardinal Sins

Mackenzie Bethune

Editor-in-Chief



As she prepared to graduate from SVSU in May 2019, Mackenzie Bethune found herself reflecting on her academic career as a writer. That was particularly appropriate given the many roles she has had on the staff of *Cardinal Sins*—reader, co-editor, and finally editor-in-chief.

As Bethune notes, *Sins* has enabled her to engage in writing in different ways. For instance, while she is drawn to incorporating magic realism and surrealism into her own work, the Saginaw, Michigan, native and graduate of Heritage High School most enjoys reading flash fiction in *Cardinal Sins*. Maintaining that flash fiction is perfect for squeezing into a tight schedule (like that of a college student), she affirms that “that little piece is worth our time,” often as complex or even more complex than a traditional short story.

Issues of genre and perspective as they apply to *Sins* have also given her pause for thought. She realizes now, for example, how much the interests and experiences of those on the reading staff influence the journal. “When the reading staff is made up of poets, the prose selected for the journal tends to be more lyrical in nature,” Bethune says. Because of this, the focus of the journal is “somewhat cyclical, but the readers always keep an eye out for craft.”

For Bethune, perspective influences the journal in other ways. First of all, Bethune has noted that each edition of *Cardinal Sins* tends to have its own inadvertent theme. According to Bethune, who joined the staff of *Sins* as a freshman in 2015, the journal tends to see a lot of submissions that are “either religious or sacrilegious.” This is likely because of the journal’s title though there is no official preferred topic. Additionally, there is a richness of viewpoints that come from producing a magazine in the university setting. Although she credits former editor-in-chief and literature major Victoria Phelps (Class of 2018) and *Sins*’ faculty advisor, Dr. Kim Lacey of the English Department, with guiding Bethune in the role of editor-in-chief, Bethune is adamant that students do not have to be English majors to have meaningful input. In fact, in the future, she hopes to see more educational diversity among future editorial staff, particularly in terms of the STEM fields.

Bethune herself is proof of that marriage between the arts and sciences. In addition to her studies as a geography major, Bethune has excelled as a writer. She has had work published in the *Portland Review* and has even won a Tyner Award during her time at SVSU. (That award-winning piece of fiction can be found elsewhere in this issue.) Writing, too, in the sciences will obviously be part of her pursuit of a doctorate in geography at the University of Cincinnati. For this future professor of geography, the world will—literally and figuratively—be at her fingertips. No doubt she will make her mark in the world, just as she has made her mark on the world of writing at SVSU.

One piece from the Winter 2019 issue of *Cardinal Sins* that particularly made a mark on Bethune is “Di-Di-Dah,” by James Lavigne, a writer living in Seattle, Washington. Bethune comments, “I instantly wanted this piece in the journal when we read it at the beginning of the semester. At our weekly meeting, the entire staff was enchanted by the beautiful way something as simple as a ball was made into something fantastic and deeply symbolic.”



Spotlight on... Faculty

In the following pages, we profile the work of SVSU faculty members known for their work inside and outside the classroom. Innovative teachers and scholars, they are also successful writers who strive to help their students find their own success as writers. In addition to work by one faculty member from each college, you will find here essays by recipients of various 2019 SVSU faculty awards.

Images *and* Words: The Relevance of Writing for Artists and Graphic Designers

Emily Kelley

Associate Professor of Art

Winner of the 2019 France A. Landee Award for Teaching Excellence



A native of Flint, Michigan, Dr. Emily Kelley earned her Ph.D. in art history from Cornell University in New York. Since joining the faculty in 2009, she has taught a range of art history courses for the SVSU Art Department. In addition to valuing teaching, Dr. Kelley is also an active researcher and writer. Her most recent book, which she co-edited with Dr. Cynthia Turner Camp of the University of Georgia, is titled *Saints as Intercessors between the Wealthy and Divine: Art and Hagiography among the Medieval Merchant Classes* (Routledge, 2019).

When one thinks of visual art, one does not necessarily think of writing. However, for both fine artists and graphic designers, writing is integral to their careers. At a minimum, fine art students are asked to write documents called “artist statements,” which should convey, among other things, the past artists who have been influential to their work, as well as the students’ processes, their materials, and the choices they made about the visual components of their work. Similarly, graphic designers are asked to communicate the ideas behind their designs to potential employers and clients. Although writing is essential in these fields, not all students are excited about the practice of writing. By helping students see the relevance of writing to their careers and to their interests as artists, I strive to make writing a practice that they value and find worthwhile.

When I started teaching upper-level art history courses for the Art Department in 2010, I was confronted with the need to create writing assignments for the art and graphic design majors who take my courses that were more relevant than the typical art history research paper. I drew on these two types of documents—artist statements and client letters—to create assignments that students would find more meaningful to their interests and professional goals. These assignments require library research, critical thinking and analysis, and proper citation of sources, just as research papers would. However, they also hone the students’ skills in areas pertinent to their respective fields and encourage them to think about their own work as artists in the broader context of the history of art.

In the course Modern and Contemporary Art (ART 344), for example, I have students complete a three-part assignment that involves some traditional research, but that also has them create a document similar to an artist statement or client letter, lending the finished product relevance to both art and design students. First, students select a single artist that they feel most inspires them or has most impacted their work. Once they have selected the artist, students research the artist and the period to which he or she belongs, and then they write a report; this portion of the assignment is the more traditional aspect, consisting of research and writing. To help them with this phase of the process, and to discourage procrastination, I require a paper proposal midway through the semester. The class also has a library research day where students can get help searching for quality sources.

For the second and third parts of the assignment, students create a work of art inspired by the artist’s style, methods, and/or content. Then, they write a two-page document explaining the

work of art that they created. In that document, students discuss how the object reflects the work of the artist they selected, based on the information in their report, as well as how it echoes their own style, preferences for materials, and content. Graphic design students are encouraged to frame this document as a letter to a fictional client in which they justify their design choices and explain how the design will meet their client's needs. Fine art students write the second document as an essay that, in essence, becomes an artist statement about the work of art that they created.

I developed this assignment a few years into teaching for the Art Department when I realized how daunting many students found the task of writing an artist statement. Specifically, I saw that students struggled to talk about themselves, their processes, and the artists who inspired them when writing their artist statements. They became overwhelmed by the number of possible artists, the research that they had to do, and their range of processes and finished products—and they didn't know where to start. The assignment, while paralleling the thought process of an artist statement, is less intimidating. It enables them to focus on a single work of their own art and a single artist whom, after writing the report, they have already researched. Therefore, through the assignment, they practice the type of thinking and writing needed for an artist statement without the challenge of writing about their whole body of work and without the label of "artist statement" attached.

By specifically designing assignments like this one with the professional goals of students in mind, I aim to provide students with skills—like writing artist statements and letters to clients—that they can use in other aspects of their academic work and in their long-term professional careers. Research on student writing assignments supports this pedagogy. *The Meaningful Writing Project* has found that writing assignments that intersect with students' interests and help them model professional writing experiences are often viewed by students to be most meaningful.¹ As we construct writing assignments for our students, it best serves them if we keep this idea in mind. The more that we can make writing and research relevant and help students have a connection with what they write, the more that we can engage them in the process. In doing so, we can lead students to rewarding experiences with writing and research that just might make them grow to love it.

¹ Michele Eodice, Anne Ellen Geller, and Neal Learner, *The Meaningful Writing Project: Learning, Teaching, and Writing in Higher Education* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2016). (Infographics summarizing some of their findings can be found online at http://meaningfulwritingproject.net/?page_id=271.)

State-of-the-*Art* Writing

Phillip Hanson

Lecturer of Art

Winner of the 2019 Innovative Writing in Teaching Award



After having served at SVSU in various faculty roles, Phillip Hanson joined SVSU as a lecturer in 2016. He received his M.F.A. from Ohio State University, where he specialized in painting. As an artist who works in both digital and traditional two-dimensional painting media, he has shown pieces in numerous group exhibitions throughout the United States and is represented in collections in the United States, England, Holland, and China. At SVSU, he has served on the Art Department's Recruitment and Retention Committee and the Cardinal Plan Taskforce. His artwork can be viewed at www.philliphanson.com.

In the following essay, Professor Hanson discusses the inspiration and success of one writing project he uses in his courses and for which he won the 2019 Innovative Writing in Teaching Award given by the University Writing Committee.

During the interview for my current position as a lecturer in the Art Department, one interviewer, Professor Matthew Zivich, asked whether I assigned writing to my students. My answer was a resounding “no.” In reality, I hadn’t given even the slightest thought about including writing assignments in my studio art courses, but the experience left me agitated—I felt as though I had failed an interview question.

To be honest, throughout my own undergraduate coursework, I was turned off by writing in studio classes. These assignments were typically limited to reflections on films or field trips. I am certain that the intention was to expose the class to new artists and venues, but as a student, I was suspicious of the clear disconnect from daily studio practice and viewed these writing assignments as collective penance for temporarily withdrawing from the serious business of making art. In spite of my feelings regarding writing in the studio, the question posited by Professor Zivich haunted me, persisting long after my interview and subsequent hiring. As a result, I began to reconsider my viewpoint and resolved to explore pathways for including writing assignments in my studio courses.

I teach the foundation courses in art and design including Introduction and Intermediate Drawing (ART 121), Two-Dimensional Design (ART 111), and Three-Dimensional Design (ART 112). The goal of these classes is to create a framework of knowledge, process, and technique that should help students succeed in their artistic practice, as well as in their subsequent courses in art and design. To address more fully the writing needs of my students, I began by considering how I integrate writing in my own practice. I use writing as means to investigate concepts and to explain my work to others. For example, using words to describe accurately an abstract painting in a relatable way is a difficult task that often requires historical contextualization, specific vocabulary, description of process, and explanation of intent. In studio courses, it is common for students to learn these skills through lecture, discussion, and group critique but less so through writing.

The challenge was making writing assignments appear easily accessible, valuable, and clearly germane to course content. My solution was to appeal to the sensibilities of digitally savvy students by using a multi-media, web-based approach and to rely on the potential for social interactivity as an added motivator. To achieve this end, I designed my writing assignment in the following format:

1. Students make a blog, either as a Canvas e-Portfolio or, more commonly, as a (free) website.
2. A new blog entry is required for each unit covered in the course, typically due one week after major projects or units.
3. Each entry has three parts: images with labels to document the creative process, quality images of the final result, and a paragraph that correctly uses course vocabulary to describe how the students arrived at their solutions.
4. A limited number of additional points are possible when students write exceptionally thoughtful entries or when they include content such as animated gifs or videos, how-to process videos, or additional innovative elements.

The three required elements of each blog post, mentioned in the third item of the preceding list, are important for multiple reasons.

Images with Labels to Document the Creative Process

Generally speaking, the majority of beginning art and design students believe that completed works are borne from inspiration that fully precedes action. In reality, most inspiration comes about by wrestling with ideas through making, failure, and iteration. As Pablo Picasso once said, “Inspiration exists, but it has to find you working.” A kind of mindfulness occurs when students are asked to stop and take a snapshot in the middle of a formative exercise. Their focus momentarily shifts from result to process. Weeks later, these images, used as writing prompts, seem to aid students’ recall of process, technique, and vocabulary. In fact, most of the “labels” for process images end up as short paragraphs with detailed information. Students seem uninhibited and confident writing about their first-hand experiences, and it is not uncommon for students to write a thorough account of their process. This is good because it is necessary for artists and designers to articulate their methods. Furthermore, documenting the process demonstrates the sequential logic of the formative exercises, similar in some ways to the proofs required in mathematics. Students may refer to this record during subsequent courses to refresh their memory, and students eventually arrive at their solutions, which leads to the next required element.

Quality Images of the Final Result

Developing a good portfolio of images is essential for the career advancement of art and design students. Therefore, I leave little to chance: I take time to demonstrate basic photographic methods for each class; I set up a small photo studio area in the classroom to streamline the process; and I require in-focus, well-lit images with neutral or non-interfering backgrounds. My 3D classes have the added requirement of taking multiple photographs to adequately represent their sculptures in the round. The resulting image archive has many benefits. One benefit is the ability for students to track their respective progress. For example, Introduction to Drawing students frequently approach me toward the end of the semester after privately reviewing their blogs. They are shocked by and proud of the progress they have made; this realization adds perceived value to the course. Additionally, many students add personal relevancy and importance to the course by sharing their photos with family and friends through Instagram and other social media platforms, and they feel good when their projects get “likes.” Additionally, a good portfolio is a required component when applying for admission into the B.F.A. program, as well as when applying for some exhibitions, scholarships, and jobs. For these opportunities however, visual information alone is insufficient. Students must also learn to write about their work, and the project images serve as excellent writing prompts to achieve that end.

A Paragraph That Correctly Uses Course Vocabulary to Describe How the Students Arrived at Their Solutions

I know writing a paragraph doesn't seem like much; it isn't. I made the requirement short for two reasons. I wanted writing to seem accessible, not intimidating, and I personally didn't want the extra burden of grading papers added to the already sizeable load of grading projects. In fact, my initial goal was simply to make sure students were using course vocabulary correctly. As it often happens, things didn't turn out as I imagined, and to my surprise, the assignment formula rarely yields only a single paragraph. Many students perceive their blog as a journal, scrapbook, or work of art, and they thus take a more personal, conversational approach. Consciously or not, they begin to present their work as though speaking to an imaginary audience or fan base. For example, in addition to writing about how their project adequately solves the design or drawing problem, they often write about how it fails to fulfill the requirements of the assignment or their own expectations. This came as quite a shock to me. I learned that students often have a sound theoretical understanding but lack the agency to execute their ideas. Being able to express the disconnect between theory and practice is a face-saving, cathartic, and encouraging mechanism usually accompanied by imaginary improvements executed in a hypothetical do-over. When students let their guards down and deliver this kind of honest self-assessment, it provides me with feedback with which to improve my course.

After giving this assignment for several years, I now have an archive of student blogs that provides at least three additional benefits. Firstly, students often request letters of recommendation a year to three years after I have had them in class. The blogs are a great reference point from which to write accurate and descriptive letters. Secondly, blogs provide examples of student work. Prior to the blog assignment, I would show examples of student solutions; now I also show examples of both solutions and processes. Thirdly, student blogs are a great way to recruit students. I use blogs to accurately depict my classes.

As I reflect on this process, I am grateful that I was challenged to include writing in my studio courses. It gave me an incentive to move beyond my personal bias and to learn. I am a better instructor because of it. The process began with a single question, and like most questions, it led not only to answers but also to additional questions. I will end with one of those new questions. If I can include writing in studio art and design courses, can I help instructors in other fields use drawing and design to improve their courses?

An Excerpt from *The Emergence of the U.S. School Steel Band Movement: The Saga of Steel*

Brandon L. Haskett

Associate Professor of Music



Dr. Brandon Haskett teaches music education courses, general education courses, and Valley Steel at SVSU. Currently chair of SVSU's Department of Music, he graduated from Arizona State University with a doctorate of musical arts in music education and a master's of music in percussion performance. He previously taught at North Georgia College and State University, where he served as the coordinator of music education. He has also taught band, orchestra, jazz band, and steel band at Kenilworth School (K–8) in Phoenix, Arizona.

Haskett's main research focus includes the study of world music ensembles in public schools and adult/community music education. His work has been published in the *International Journal of Community Music*, *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*, *Visions of Research in Music Education*, and *Percussive Notes*. He presents frequently throughout the United States. The following excerpt from *The Emergence of the U.S. School Steel Band Movement* (Lexington Books, 2019) comes from Chapter 2, "Early Pioneers of the American Steelpan Movement."

The Migration

In the mid-1950s, steelpan musicians began to emigrate from Trinidad to the United States, echoing other migrations from the Caribbean during this time period. Previously, some calypso singers had migrated to the United States as early as 1939.¹ The two reasons most cited for this migration are lack of employment and lack of respect for the steelpan art form in Trinidad. Steelpan musicians in Trinidad were typically considered lower-class citizens, were frequently unemployed, and [were] associated with violence due to clashes between rival steel bands. These musicians felt ostracized within Trinidadian society and were largely of lower socioeconomic status. Many Trinidadians looked down upon pannists, while performers felt the government was not properly supporting their national art form. For most performers, steel bands only provided significant financial compensation during the Carnival season. Marginalization caused pannists to look for opportunities outside of the country. Many felt that moving to the United States would increase their chances of prosperity.²

When Rudolph Carter (Rudy King) migrated from Trinidad to New York City in 1949, his performances became the earliest documented steelpan activity in the United States.³ King did not

¹ Ray Allen and Les Slater, "Steel Pan Grows in Brooklyn: Trinidadian Music and Cultural Identity," in *Island Sounds in the Global City: Caribbean Popular Music and Identity in New York*, eds. Ray Allen and Lois Wilcken (New York: New York Folkloric Society, 1998).

² George Goddard, *Forty Years in the Steelbands 1939–1979* (University of Texas: Karia Press, 2008), 183–188.

³ Myrna Nurse, *Unheard Voices* (New York: iUniverse, Inc., 2007) 101.

bring a steelpan with him and ultimately acquired some oil barrels that had been left abandoned and built his own.⁴ After King had performed in New York City for a while with some other Trinidadians, producer Sam Manning asked King to perform at the Blue Angels club in Chicago, where he stayed for four months.⁵ During the 1950s, King had a day job and performed in the evenings fairly extensively. He had a successful showing for Amateur Night at the Apollo theater in Harlem that led to a weeklong engagement at the venue. Soon after, King went on tours of Texas, Oklahoma, the Carolinas, and Canada. Later, in the 1960s, King's group, *The Tropicans*, took first place in the first and second New York Panoramas.⁶

After King came to the United States, there were several Trinidadian steel bands that toured the country. Some of the members of these groups decided to stay or later immigrate to the United States. During the years between the immigrations of Rudolph Carter aka Rudy King (1949) and Ellie Mannette (1966), many Trinidadian steel bands visited the United States. After touring the United States, some pannists decided to stay. One of several conflicting accounts of Andrew "Pan" de la Bastide's migration claimed that he brought members of his *Hill Sixty* group to California in 1958, with all but one member staying in the United States.⁷ Others claim he brought his group to the United States in 1964 and that he never returned to Trinidad.⁸ "Gee" Rabe noted that de la Bastide formed a band in Southern California called *Calimbo* in the early 1960s. The group performed throughout the area in the 1960s and early 1970s, and recorded one of the early U.S. steel band albums, *The Heart of Trinidad: Calimbo Street Band*, in 1962.⁹ This album included old-time stereotyped standards like "Limbo," "Yellowbird," and "Jamaica Farewell" from the Caribbean as well as pieces that appealed to a U.S. market such as "Blue Danube" and "When the Saints Go Marching In."

Later, in 1964, Cliff Alexis, a noted Trinidadian steelpan player, along with the rest of the Trinidadian National Steel Band played on Mackinac Island, Michigan, and in Miami, Florida, as part of a Moral Rearmament Program, a Christian-based initiative aimed toward character education. The national steel band included members such as Alexis, Emmanuel "Cobo Jack" Riley, Hugh Borde, Bobby Mohammed, Junior Pouchet, George "Sonny" Goddard, and Vincent Hernandez, among others. After these initial performances, the group decided to continue their tour and performed in Albuquerque, New Mexico; St. Louis, Missouri; Wheeling, West Virginia; Louisville, Kentucky; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; and Trinidad, Colorado. After returning to the island of Trinidad, Alexis decided to immigrate to the United States, and in 1965, he moved to Brooklyn, New York.¹⁰ After finding little work, Alexis took a position with the St. Paul, Minnesota, public schools as a steel band director and eventually took a position at Northern Illinois University to help run their steel band program. While in St. Paul, Alexis realized that he needed instruction in steelpan building and tuning in order to run the program. There were no steelpan builders nearby. Ultimately, Alexis had Patrick Arnold, a noted builder/tuner, come and teach him the art form. This act of kindness on Arnold's part significantly changed the story of U.S. steel band, since Alexis later became a significant figure in the Northern Illinois University program and a noted builder/tuner in his own right; many early U.S. steel band directors ordered steelpans from him.

Shortly thereafter, in 1966, Vincent Hernandez moved to the United States to continue the

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 102.

⁶ When Steel Talks, "Rudy King: The Man Who Introduced Steelpan to America." Accessed May 15, 2018. <http://www.panonthenet.com/spotlight/2002/rudy-king-11-11-2002.htm>.

⁷ Nurse, *Unheard Voices*, 131.

⁸ Ibid., 65.

⁹ Gigi L. Rabe, "The Steelbands of Southern California: History, Economics, Representation" (Master's Thesis, UCLA, 2000), 20–21.

¹⁰ Ibid., 87–88.

steelpan building work that he had begun in 1962 for Murray Narell, an American social worker. Hernandez ultimately recommended Mannette to Narell for future steelpan building.¹¹

Jeff Narell, a noted American steelpan player and Murray Narell's son, noted that Mannette formed his own band in New York, the *Hummingbirds*, which consisted of Trinidadian immigrants, in the late 1960s. Additionally, Rupert Charles, an Antiguan steelpan player, and Tommy Rey, a pannist from the Virgin Islands, formed steel bands in the late 1960s in New York City comprised of immigrants.¹² This migration of tuners and performers to the United States caused great concern in Trinidad, but led to few improvements in how Trinidad treated the art form. Many steelpan builders were working in New York during this time and ultimately provided the instruments for many of the earliest U.S. programs.

Robert Greenidge began playing with the *Desperadoes Steel Orchestra* at fifteen years old on the island of Trinidad. In 1971, a twenty-one-year-old Greenidge moved from Trinidad to the United States. Soon after, Greenidge began working around Los Angeles "to teach arrangements to the *Music Makers*, his steel band consisting of Trinidadians and one American."¹³ The groups performed extensively in Southern California, but never recorded and several of the pannists, including Junior Pouchet, left the group when they were offered a job at Disney World in Florida and formed the group *Silver Stars*.¹⁴ While his group did not record during this period, Greenidge had several recording opportunities with such artists as Maurice White, *Earth Wind and Fire*, Harry Neilson,... John Lennon, and Ringo Starr.¹⁵

Greenidge went on to join *Taj Mahal* and the International Rhythm Band in 1977, and, in 1983, he joined the Jimmy Buffett band, which he still performs with at the time of this book's publication.¹⁶ He has been very influential in exposing people throughout the world to steelpan throughout his extensive touring with Buffett. Greenidge is also a frequent arranger for Panorama in Trinidad at the time of this publication.

By 1972, steelpan performers had organized the first U.S. Panorama (steel band competition), which was held behind the Brooklyn Museum. As mentioned earlier, Rudy King's *Tropicans* won this competition in 1972 and 1973. This annual Panorama competition is still in existence at the time of this study.¹⁷ Panorama competitions are also held in Montreal, Toronto, New York, London, and throughout the Caribbean. While the New York Panorama has had a significant impact on the exposure of Americans to steel band, it is largely a separate movement from the development of steel bands in U.S. schools and universities and should be studied in its own right. The impact it has had is on directors who have gone and played with the various groups for Panorama.

Beyond the influx of tuners and musicians to the United States, there were several high-profile performing groups that advanced the steel band through extensive exposure, either through concert tours or television.

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¹¹ Nurse, *Unheard Voices*, 154.

¹² Jeff Narell, interview by author, e-mail, January 15, 2008.

¹³ Rabe, "The Steelbands of Southern California," 23.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Mailboat, "Robert Greenidge." Accessed May 15, 2018. <https://www.mailboatrecords.com/robert-greenidge>.

¹⁶ Ibid., 26–27.

¹⁷ When Steel Talks, "The History of SteelPan Time Line." Accessed May 15, 2018. <http://www.panonthenet.com/history/panhist.htm>.

An Excerpt from “The Impact of Agricultural Land Use Change on Lake Water Quality: Evidence from Iowa”

Kevin Meyer

Assistant Professor of Economics



Dr. Kevin Meyer received his Ph.D. in economics from Iowa State University in 2016 and joined the Economics Department at SVSU in the fall of that year. He specializes in environmental and agricultural economics, and he has received two faculty-led grants at SVSU to study the effect of presenting surveys on environmental quality using virtual reality versus the traditional paper-based format. He was also awarded the 2019 “Excellence in Teaching” Award from the Scott L. Carmona College of Business.

The following excerpt is from his paper “The Impact of Agricultural Land Use Change on Water Quality: Evidence from Iowa,” which was published in *Studies in Agricultural Economics* in 2018. Lake water quality in Iowa is affected by the nutrient runoff from nearby farms, which primarily produce corn and soybeans. This paper combines satellite data on land use change over several years with water quality data from over 100 lakes in Iowa and then analyzes their relationship using a regression analysis.

Abstract

The environmental impacts of agricultural policies must be quantified to perform full cost benefit analyses and make informed policy decisions. In this paper I use a unique panel data set to estimate the effect of changes in cropland on lake water quality. Fifteen years of water quality measurements across over 100 lakes are combined with satellite imagery and weather data. Using a dynamic panel data model, I find that the elasticity of water quality to cropland is 0.0535. To understand the policy implications, I estimate a second model to find the elasticity of cropland to crop prices. I combine these estimates to analyze the effect of the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS). I find that the RFS decreased lake water quality[;] however the magnitude of this effect is negligible.¹

1. Introduction

Understanding the effect of land use on water quality is an important question in environmental policy. Agriculture is consistently identified by the EPA as a cause of water quality degradation due to fertilizer runoff entering nearby waterways (EPA, 2002). These effects have important economic and ecological consequences, such as adverse effects on recreation and drinking water quality. As has been known since the time of Pigou, these effects

¹ I would like to thank the EPA for their support of related work as a graduate student at Iowa State University. In addition, thanks to David Keiser, Catherine L. Kling, GianCarlo Moschini, Quinn Weninger, and John Beghin for their helpful comments.

are a classic case of a market failure (Pigou, 1920). Since water quality is not a market good, the free market will not result in an optimal level of lake water quality. Efficient government intervention requires understanding the benefits and costs of land use on water quality[;] however measuring these effects has been difficult, primarily due to a lack of suitable data.

The primary research objective of this paper is to estimate the elasticity of lake water quality to land use change. These estimates can be used by future researchers and policymakers as part of cost benefit analyses, where policies affect land use change near lakes. My approach combines high quality water measurements across 100 Iowa [lakes] over 15 years, along with satellite data on cropland use and PRISM data on weather. As an extension, I estimated a secondary model of the elasticity of land use change to crop prices. I use the estimates from these two models to estimate the effect of the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) on lake water quality. Due to the inelastic estimates from both models, I find a negligibly positive impact of the RFS on lake water quality.

This paper contributes to the literature in several ways. First, it exploits 15 years of water quality measurements across Iowa to perform a statistical analysis of the effect of land use on water quality. Second, it provides strong statistical evidence of a persistent effect of water quality across time. Third, it adds to the literature on the response of cropland expansion to crop prices. Finally, it adds to the literature on the environmental effects of biofuel related policies.

The paper is organized as follows. The next section provides some background on the typical techniques used to assess the relationship between land use and water quality. This is followed by a description of the econometric model used in both the water quality and cropland response models. I then give a detailed description of the data set, followed by the results for both models. These results are then used in an application to estimate the effect of the RFS on lake water quality, followed by a summary.

2. Background

There is a long history of studies that attempt to identify the relationship between land use and the water quality of lakes, rivers, and streams. Most of these studies can be divided into two types—simulation models[,] such as SWAT and BASINS,² and econometric models. The former is able to model complex relationships between the climate, land use, and water quality to examine issues that might otherwise be intractable. For example, simulations from these types of programs have been used to examine the hypoxia “dead zone” in the Gulf of Mexico (Rabotyagov, 2014), the effect of corn-based ethanol on environmental quality (Secchi, 2009), and the potential for cropland to reduce flood risk (Schilling, 2014). Simulation models are invaluable for gaining insight into issues that may otherwise be too complicated for any one statistical model to capture, but they have drawbacks. On a practical level, the complexity of the simulated relationships requires many parameters, and choosing these parameters requires a significant amount of expertise. This can make it difficult for other researchers to truly understand what is generating the results. Statistical models, on the other hand, are helpful in their ability to model relationships between variables in a relatively straightforward and transparent way.

Many statistical analyses in the literature rely on simple correlation coefficients between different land uses and a measure of water quality. For example, Tong (2002) found a statistically significant positive correlation of 0.1913 and 0.1563 between agriculture and total nitrogen and phosphorous in surface water, respectively, in 11-digit HUICs in Ohio. In fact, most studies find a positive correlation between the two variables (Meador, 2003; Dauer, 2000). While correlations are informative, they do not help isolate causal effects. In other words, does

² SWAT stand for Soil and Water Assessment Tool; BASINS stands for Better Assessment Science Integrating point & Non-point Sources.

an increase in cropland cause the water quality to drop, or could it represent something else, such as the quality of the land? Answering this requires a model that controls for the quality of land, as well as other possible omitted variables.

Many studies have used regression techniques to try to estimate the relationship. Tu (2011) uses geographically weighted regressions to estimate local effects in an area surrounding Boston. He estimates a separate univariate regression for 6 different water quality variables and 14 land uses, for a total of 84 regressions. The results showed little influence of agricultural land on water quality. A drawback of this study is that water quality measurements are averaged over time and estimated using only one year of observed land uses. In fact, cross-sectional regressions are common in water quality studies—possibly due to a lack of quality, publicly available time series data. Another technique used in the literature is to use simple univariate regressions of land use on water quality (see, e.g., Lougheed, 2001). Limiting the model to one period, or not controlling for other factors that can affect water quality[,] can potentially bias the coefficients of interest.

This omitted variable bias problem can potentially create misleading results. For example, Sprague (2012) studies the effect of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) on total nitrogen and phosphorus loadings in rivers using a cross-sectional regression and found a marginally positive effect, indicating that CRP land increases nutrient levels; this is the opposite effect intended by the program and lacks a credible explanation. The key problem in this study is that, for the results to hold, the model must assume that CRP land is randomly distributed across space and uncorrelated with omitted factors that affect water quality. This is unlikely to be the case since profit maximizing landowners will choose to retire the least profitable farmland into the CRP first. In Iowa, for example, CRP land is concentrated in the south, where the soil quality is relatively low. Therefore, it would not be surprising to find a negative correlation between CRP land and water quality, since lower quality soil typically means increased runoff.

The geographic characteristics of water bodies [have] led to some studies that use more complicated regression models. Atasoy (2006) employs spatial econometric techniques to study the effect of urban land use on water quality. Their analysis uses monthly nutrient measurements over a four-year period combined with monthly measures of urban development, weather variables, and a single year of satellite imagery to control for agricultural land. Their emphasis on rivers and streams is an example of how geography plays an important role in the specification of an appropriate econometric model when studying environmental issues. In their study, upstream river quality clearly affects downstream river quality as it is carried through a stream network[;] thus it makes sense to explicitly include a spatially-lagged dependent variable while allowing for temporal correlations in the error term. In this study, where the observed unit is lakes, it does not make sense conceptually to include a spatial lag, since lakes do not flow into each other. Instead, it is appropriate to include a temporal lag of the dependent variable, since lake water remains relatively stationary over time. This implies that nutrient levels may persist; this effect is known as the “hydraulic retention time.” As an example, Jeppesen (2005) reduced the nutrient levels in multiple lakes and observed that the lakes did not reach a new, lower steady state for 15 years.

Existing lake water quality studies that attempt to include dynamics have typically been confined to one lake and its watershed. For example, Balkcom (2003) uses multiple samples from a lake over time to calibrate an integrated assessment model, which was then used to analyze different land use scenarios. By contrast, this study uses data on over 120 lakes over 15 years, creating a rich variation in lake quality, geographical characteristics, and the characteristics of surrounding land use.

As one of the most productive farming states in the country, Iowa land use can be particularly sensitive to changes in farming policies. Therefore, given the evidence of the link between cropland and water quality degradation, government policies can directly and indirectly affect water quality. Two primary examples are [... the CRP] and the Renewable

Fuel Standard (RFS). The CRP has evolved from its initial goals of removing cropland from production to focus more on maximizing the environmental impact of the program. Only land currently in production or expiring CRP land are eligible to be retired and receive CRP subsidies, and retired land must be planted with species that will improve environmental health and quality. Thus, the possible water quality benefits of an acre of CRP land are 1) removing a hectare of cropland, and therefore all related nutrient use, and 2) replacing it with a hectare [of] plants that can help improve soil quality and reduce runoff of nutrients from the surrounding area. CRP land in Iowa began a major decline around 2007. It is likely that multiple factors contributed to this decline, especially rising crop prices (and thus profitability of land) and a decline in funding for the program.

The RFS, first established under the Energy Policy Act of 2005, mandated 28 billion liters of ethanol be used by 2012. The scope of the biofuel mandate expanded significantly in 2007 by mandating 136 [billion] liters of ethanol in the U.S. by 2022. Most of the current biofuel supply comes from corn ethanol. Therefore, the biofuel mandate has and will continue to have significant economic and environmental impacts on Iowa, the nation's leading corn producer. Researchers have identified water quality degradation as an important consequence of biofuel production (Simpson, 2008). Although corn cultivation requires a significant amount of water, water shortages are typically not a concern in Iowa. Rather, the increased use of nutrients from expanding corn production along both the intensive and extensive margin [is] of concern. In addition, an increase in the demand for corn can affect the price of other crops, such as soybeans, which can cause cropland expansion for those crops as well. As corn uses nitrogen relatively inefficiently (Balkcom, 2003), switching over to corn from other crops can potentially increase the amount of nitrogen in the soil. Finally, if we assume that farmers grow crops on the best farmland available, cropland expansion will likely occur in marginal, more environmentally sensitive areas, including CRP land (Secchi, 2009). Thus, the two policies mentioned here are to some degree interdependent, as farmers will look to maximize their profit by either accepting subsidies to retire the land into the CRP, or to farm the land and sell their crops.

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An Excerpt from *Real Writing: One Teacher's Journey*

Deborah L. Smith

Professor of Teacher Education



Deborah L. Smith received her doctorate in curriculum and instruction from Montana State University and joined the faculty of SVSU in 2003. Her areas of specialization are literacy and higher education. A long-time member of the University Writing Committee, as well as secretary and program manager within her department, she has been awarded two “Improving Teacher Quality” grants by the state of Michigan; both involved literacy in the content areas at the middle and secondary level.

The following excerpt come from the introduction to Dr. Smith’s 2018 *Real Writing: One Teacher’s Journey* (Sentia Publishing Company). The book examines learning through writing, with the chapters using a revolving structure of (among other topics) academic/research support for literacy, questions for reflections, discussions of learning moments, and “real writing” responses. It is available through Amazon and Sentia, and it was released to Audible in the spring of 2019.

Introduction

My mom was the first one to point out the pendulum in education to me. She ran a pull-out reading program in a rural farm town. She would prompt, assess, guide, and bribe until students were reading at grade level and on track for success. I was jealous each year when the “prizes” for her system of external motivation arrived from UPS. Rainbow-colored pencils, rings made of flavorful lollipops, spangled bracelets that clattered together as students walked down the hallway, and paddle-balls to test the most agile of wrists were the incentives for progressing through the reading levels. The prize station was an ever-present assortment for motivation in the corner of the room. It shouldn’t have worked, but it did because she knew the families and found what worked for each student. Mother’s classroom was small and cozy and filled with books and energy. The reading kits weren’t enough on their own, but implementation by a teacher who cared made them work. This is what teachers do; we figure out how to work around the shortcomings of the programs in place and help students learn. We often do so in a system that can be distracting if we don’t stay focused on what truly matters: students’ progress as measured through a balanced system that recognizes the need for both basic skills and an understanding of the *Gestalt*. The real child walks in the classroom door. Even if a bouncy ball is what catches her interest, the incentive to learn can be internalized with the teacher as the catalyst. External rewards such as praise and success and even lollipops can be internalized to create self-motivated learners.

The need for balance in teaching has always existed as policies swing back and forth. In literacy, we swing from whole language to back-to-basics and what most teachers understand intuitively is that basics and the big picture are necessary, and learning occurs when both are incorporated in lessons. Students learn the process of turning marks into meaning, and those words have the potential to be life-changing. Anyone who learns through reading or contemplates history, science, or literature knows that literacy is key. There is power in the written word. It matters. This is the basis for Real Writing on an existential level—beyond the classroom and the preparation of

teachers and the learning of students in the real world. Writing matters. Bringing writing into the classroom is a way to advance learning for all students and provide students with a way to learn.

Writing is important because, as Jeff Zentner states in *Goodbye Days*, memory is a good editor (2017). Students focus in on what relates to their worlds. We remember stories and impressions and certain days but many are blurs. I can still do a line-dance I was taught in sixth grade, but I can't tell you the parts of the endocrine system even though I memorized that ten years later in college. Writing in the classroom is important because memory is not enough to rely upon when conducting a lab or listening to a lecture or keeping track of your finances or diet. In the classroom, writing can be honed and developed for real-world usage.

If students can explain a difficult concept in writing, then they understand it. In the last three years I wrote over half a million words. Most of it is journals and class plans, and notes on meetings. There is one steamy romance novel undergoing revisions and another “wolf” novel and memoirs too. What I have figured out over the course of all this practice writing is that it is a great way to learn. Of course, I knew this as a literacy professor, but I didn't understand to what extent until I practiced writing with the same intensity that I used to practice reading. Malcolm Gladwell tells us that it takes 10,000 hours of focused practice to become an expert (2008). If that is true, then I can claim to be an expert reader and expert-ish on writing. Notice I didn't claim to be an “expert writer”? I am improving through the process of editing and revision. If students become self-motivated learners who infer new meaning through writing, then the level of learning can be greatly increased. I have switched to a focus on writing because the benefits for the *Gestalt* are endless.

As a professor and parent, I learn through reading constantly, but I approached literacy for too many years as a receiver rather than a giver or a creator. I read texts and signs and updates about the weather, and reading keeps me connected and alive. Literally. I read the labels on foods and I follow directions that provide me with basic protections. Reading is a powerful tool, but it is passive until used as a springboard for writing, discussions, reflection, and action. No matter how quietly the class sits there and stares at the page you just can't know exactly what is going on in the brain without words—spoken or written.

Writing is a record of our thinking, sometimes revised and often considering audience, but a real record even if edited. The exact process in the brain, when reading and writing, is difficult to analyze. You can track it with running records and reading logs and stream-of-consciousness writing. Students learn through communication or action, but writing is a focus that provides a clear record. Writing provides an authentic measurement for learning in any subject area. It provides the opportunity to capture thoughts. These thoughts can be edited and polished or rough and even harmful; writing is a chance to learn and reflect about whatever topic we choose to explore. So, we write to capture moments or thoughts, or to learn. We often start with the personal connection in writing so that learning of the content is increased through the process of writing about prior experiences.

What Is Real Writing?

Real Writing is a combination of using writing for learning and Real Talk, which is an approach to teaching developed by Dr. Paul Hernandez that focuses on bringing “real” moments into the classroom. Real Talk is defined as instructor-led discussions focused on a series of broad engaging themes [that] motivate student-oriented outcomes. These are created and shared to establish connections, understanding, trust, empathy, and caring for one another. The express purpose of Real Talk is to connect with students, build rapport, and gain insight into students' terministic screen (2015).

The significance of learning through writing is real. Organizing critical thinking on paper is how we demonstrate effective communication skills. If we believe that improving critical thinking is a goal for classroom teachers, then the need to teach writing is evident. The goal of

progress is important whether we focus in on the details or we question the meaning of life. Each individual determines for [his- or herself] what priorities to set just as each teacher must determine [his or her] focus. We all find our own path, and reflection is a powerful tool for the task. Reflection through writing allows students to demonstrate their critical thinking skills and explore how the content of your class fits into their own lives. One way to make lessons relevant is to provide choices and time for students to make the connections to their own lives. Real Writing is one option for encouraging this in the classroom.

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An Excerpt from “The Collaboration between Homeless Shelters and Public Libraries in Addressing Homelessness: A Multiple Case Study”

Mark A. Giesler

Professor of Social Work



Dr. Mark A. Giesler joined the SVSU faculty in 2007. He received his Ph.D. in Higher Education Leadership from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and his master of social work from the University of Nebraska–Omaha. As a qualitative researcher, he has explored the experiences of individuals on the margins of society, including men assuming non-traditional roles, persons who identify as LGBT, and, more recently, homeless individuals. During his time at SVSU, he has served on the University Writing Committee and been the recipient of four Faculty Research grants and two Undergraduate Research Project grants.

His article “The Collaboration between Homeless Shelters and Public Libraries in Addressing Homelessness: A Multiple Case Study” was published in 2019 in *The Journal of Library Administration*. This study focuses, as its title suggests, on the relationship between libraries and homeless shelters in their provision of services to the homeless population in eight Michigan cities. Altogether, a total of thirty-two participants, all administrators and staff members of homeless shelters were interviewed. Findings of the study indicate that shelter staff recognize the value of public libraries for their residents but do not engage in coordinated efforts to capitalize on their resources. The article provides suggestions about how both institutions might work more collaboratively on behalf of the homeless individuals they serve. The excerpt below comes from Dr. Giesler’s findings section.

“It’s the Only Option for So Many Folks”

Shelter staff were for the most part aware that their clients occupied public library space during times they were not allowed to be at the shelter. Some were displeased and others were comforted by this notion. Many recognized the “blessing and the curse” of a space that kept their clients safe, yet perhaps impeded their goals toward self-sufficiency. Imbued in this finding is the recognition by participants that community resources for the homeless were generally lacking.

Participants [of this study] expressed mixed feelings about the knowledge that their clients occupied the public library during daytime hours. The executive director of a shelter in a smaller community worried about the behavior of his residents while at the library: “They’ll just throw all their stuff on the floor, take off their shoes, turn on their music... they just think it’s their space... and they don’t understand those boundaries [that, like,] normal people wouldn’t do that.” Janice, [a] former guest advocate at the same facility, added, “And I’ve a million times said, ‘Do not congregate in the library.’ But that’s what they do.”

Despite her misgivings, Janice acknowledged that many of the shelter residents with whom she worked went to the library to seek out social supports, what she perceived as a positive. Others

in the study recognized that the public library offered resources that their shelters did not: Facebook, which according to a resident shift manager of a different shelter, allowed them opportunities to connect with family members. Britta, founding director of a women's shelter in the study, noted the benefit of her residents accessing the computer at the public library. She added, "I think it's a place where they also meet other people."

Men's-center director Richard admitted using the library to "pass the time" was not necessarily a negative: They "actually go and read.... might not be anything all too educational... I know that they fill their time with books... and other things." At the same time, he recognized that his residents, if at the shelter during the day, might be "more productive and constructive" and working more toward "finding self-sufficiency."

Still others framed the public library as a haven for clients who might be tempted to return to risky living environments. Mona, [a] worker at an urban facility, admitted that she "worried each day that they [the residents] leave." At the same time, referring to the library, [Mona recognized that] "it's safety." Trevor, the employment coordinator at the youth shelter enlisted for the study, concurred:

The library is one of the few places that's open and free during the day. They have access to computers, to Internet, to bathrooms, to charge phones, chairs where you can take a nap. It's one of the few spaces that's free and open to anybody in the community.

His colleague Pete, the transition-living program coordinator, cited the library as part of his clients' safety planning: "Clients who have to stay awake all night because there is no safe space at night will use the library to nap during the day... So a lot of our safety planning involves the library and we use that on our crisis line."

Overall, study participants admitted to knowing that their residents spent time during the day at the public library because of the lack of other "homeless-friendly" community spaces. Trevor noted, "Most of our kids go straight to the library after school, because we don't open until 4:00 p.m." When informed that a large number of homeless persons congregate in her community library, Patrice, [a] case manager, stated, "It doesn't surprise me, because when they go to the homeless shelters, they have to be in by a certain time and out by a certain time, and they have nowhere to go."

The shelter staff at one of the smaller communities who participated in the study reflected in more detail about the need for the public library because [of] the scarcity of "homeless-friendly" agencies and businesses. Janice had fielded numerous trespassing calls from the university police. She recounted several uncomfortable conversations with small businesses in the Downtown Development Authority. She noted that her residents did not feel comfortable at the community mental health center, which had daytime hours, because "it's for the severely mentally ill." The guest advocate at the same shelter noted that often the 24-hour Wal-Mart was a destination for shelter residents, but they had difficulty getting there because of the lack of a public transportation system. Kim acknowledged the strain her residents put on public library staff and consumers: "The problem is that it's the only option for so many folks. So that's not the ideal. The library... should be a place for everyone to go and use it for the purpose it was intended. It should not be a second warming center."

In summary, participants in the study were quick to acknowledge the mixed feelings they had about their residents' use of the public library during daytime hours. While some recognized that the library was a safe, welcoming space, others worried about their clients' misbehavior and the message that condoning library usage sent to them. Case manager Freda perhaps best summed [up] this sentiment when asked if she saw the library as a barrier to her clients:

I think it depends on the client. Because it could be a barrier if they're using the library as a place to just go get away and hang out and do anything... It depends on the client, depends on their motivation, depends on their life skills... I think there's too many variables to say the library itself is a barrier. I think it's, it's a tool, and just like anything else, it depends on what you do with that tool.

Freda's comment emphasizes the need for shelter residents themselves to use the library as a means to advance themselves and reach their goals. What about the role of the shelter in that process?

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Thermal Analysis of Rare Earth Grain Refined 4130

Robert Tuttle

Professor of Mechanical Engineering
with SVSU Alumnus Het A. Kapadia



Dr. Robert Tuttle is a professor of mechanical engineering at Saginaw Valley State University. He received his doctorate in metallurgical engineering from the University of Missouri–Rolla in 2004. He advises the student chapter of American Foundry Society (AFS) at SVSU, currently serves as the chairman of the Steel Division, and is very involved with the Saginaw Valley Chapter of AFS. He has been the recipient of a 2008 Ruby Award, the Earl Warrick Award for Research Excellence, the 2015 Steel Division Best Paper, the 2015 AFS Applied Research Award, and the 2019 AFS Steel Division Individual Service Award.

The paper is from the *International Journal of Metalcasting*. It was part of a master's thesis and represents work funded by the Office of Naval Research. The research has been looking at developing a way to refine the as-cast structure of steels to improve their strength and ductility. As part of that work, Dr. Tuttle is also creating a new thermal analysis method for directly examining the solidification of steels.

Abstract

This paper discusses the thermal analysis of rare earth grain refined 4130. To accomplish this, heats of 4130 Baseline, 0.3 wt. % RE silicide, and 0.3 wt. % EGR were poured in a thermal analysis cup with a single S-Type thermocouple at the bottom. A data acquisition system recorded the cooling curves whose values were compared to reference data. The samples were sectioned and macroetched. A scanning electron microscope analyzed the samples to determine inclusion composition. It was observed that the liquidus was similar for all the samples; however, the peritectic temperature for the 0.3 wt. % RE and 0.3 wt. % EGR were higher than the Baseline. This increase was thought to be due to RE oxysulfides acting as heterogeneous nuclei for austenite. A number of additional peaks appeared in the grain refined steels that seem to be related to the formation of RE oxysulfides during solidification. Macroetching found a larger equiaxed region in the TA cups from the treated steels and a finer structure. The improvement in microstructure seems related to the RE inclusions and peritectic temperature increase.

Keywords: *steel, thermal analysis, solidification, grain refinement, cooling curve analysis, macrostructure, rare earth*

Introduction

Many of the important properties of metals are determined by their microstructure. Therefore, manipulating metals by additions helps obtain satisfactory performance from a given material.¹ One method of improving the microstructure of metals is through grain refinement. There are several methods, such as increased cooling, controlled thermomechanical deformation, grain

growth inhibition, and the addition of heterogeneous nuclei that can produce a finer microstructure.² Smaller grain sizes improve mechanical properties, such as fatigue strength, hardness, yield strength, and impact strength.³ With finer grains, the tendency for cracking is also reduced when compared with coarse grained materials. Grain refinement via heterogeneous nucleation has been found the most appropriate method of improving the microstructure of castings.¹ Grain refinement by heterogeneous nucleation is a process of introducing a foreign particle in a melt to assist the formation of a solid. The introduction of a large number of these foreign particles allows for more grains to form and thereby reduce the grain size.¹ For heterogeneous nucleation to be effective, the foreign particle must provide a nucleation surface which is easier for the solidifying atoms to stick to. Heterogeneous nucleation tends to be more effective because of a lower energy barrier.⁴ To be an effective nuclei, four conditions must be met by the nucleating phase: solid at the melting temperature of the melt, the melt must be able to wet the surface of the foreign particle, the phase must be thermodynamically stable in the melt, and crystallographic planes in the foreign particle and solid metal must be similar.⁴

Unlike aluminum, magnesium, and graphite in cast irons, the grain refinement of steel via heterogeneous nucleation has several additional complications. Depending on chemistry, steels either initially solidify as δ -ferrite or austenite dendrites.⁵ Thus, there are two primary phase crystal structures which need to be considered. Another factor complicating heterogeneous nucleation research has been the high temperatures and multiple phase reactions which inhibit direct interpretation of the solidification structure. In recent years, there has been increasing interest amongst researchers on the effect of rare earth (RE) additions to steel.^{1,6-15} Rare earth is the term applied to lanthanide series elements[,] the fourteen elements following lanthanum in the periodic table. Many RE oxides, sulfides, and oxysulfides meet the previously stated requirements of an effective nuclei in steels that either initially solidify as austenite or δ -ferrite. CeO_2 and CeS can assist δ -ferrite[, whereas] Ce_2O_3 , La_2O_3 , and CeAlO_3 are austenite nuclei.⁴⁻¹³ The ability of a single metallic addition to form nuclei for both primary phases has both been the cause of interest in these compounds and confusion on the mechanisms involved.⁶⁻¹⁵

In previous work by the author, the effects of RE additions on 1010 and 1030 were explored.¹⁰ This was done by adding RE silicide additions of 0, 0.1 wt. %, 0.2 wt. %, and 0.3 wt. % to the melt. Then, the samples were analyzed for mechanical properties and microstructures. Several trends with respect to the RE silicide additions in 1010 were observed. During mechanical testing, it was discovered that the average yield strength improved between 14 to 30% in the treated steels.¹⁰ A similar trend occurred in the ultimate tensile strength (UTS) of the steels where the treated steels had on average a 22% higher UTS.¹⁰ Metallographic analysis found that the grain size decreased from 125 μm to approximately 90 μm in the treated steels. Macrostructure etching found a decline in the dendrite arm spacing (DAS) and increase in the equiaxed zone. Analysis of the inclusions using a scanning electron microscopy (SEM) with and energy dispersive spectrometer (EDS) found RE containing oxides and oxysulfides.¹⁰ The improved mechanical properties and finer microstructure [were] theorized to be due to the RE containing inclusions acting as heterogeneous nuclei.¹⁰

Van der Eijk et al. studied grain refinement of a fully austenitic stainless steel. The work was completed with a Fe-Cr-Si-Ce master alloy.¹⁶ The experiment consisted of two heats of 254 SMO, each consisting of five tons of liquid steel; prepared in an argon-oxygen decarburization (AOD) converter. The composition of the stainless steel was nominally at 20 wt. % Cr, 18 wt. % Ni, and 6 wt. % Mo. The melt was tapped at 1495°C. The reference heat had a mischmetal addition whereas the experimental heat had 3.5 kg of preconditioner instead of mischmetal. Different amounts of mischmetal and preconditioner had been used to attain the same target Ce content of 0.03%.¹⁶ Mischmetal contains several RE elements, while the preconditioner only contained cerium. The main difference between the two heats was the oxygen and lanthanum content. The oxygen content was higher in the experimental heat and there was no lanthanum present. The authors detected a significant decrease in the DAS when the preconditioner containing heats.¹⁶ This

was ascribed to the formation of Ce-Al-O oxide inclusions before solidification.¹⁶ Van der Eijk et al. postulated that the improved grain refining response occurred due to the formation of more Ce-Al-O oxides, which had a better crystallographic match with austenite.¹⁶

Tuttle experimented with RE silicide additions to 4130 steel.⁶ The steel was melted in an induction furnace and then poured into a green sand mold to create a plate casting. A reticulated foam filter was used to prevent slag and inclusions from entering the mold. Samples were then tensile tested, and another set of samples were examined by a SEM with an EDS to determine the types of inclusions formed. The RE silicide additions produced both a finer macrostructure and room temperature microstructure.⁶ It was also concluded that the samples which were treated with additions had finer grains than the Baseline. During mechanical testing, the samples which were as-cast had a higher yield strength, but their UTS and elongation were lower. Further observations revealed that the RE silicide samples which were quenched and tempered (Q&T) had even higher strength and slightly higher elongation than the Baseline.⁶

Experiments by Kasinaka and Kalandyk examined the effects of RE on the wear resistance of a chromium-molybdenum cast steel.¹⁷ A mixture consisting of 49.8% Ce, 21.8% La, 17.1% Nd, 5.5% Pr, and 5.35% REM was added to a G17CrMo5-5 melt under industrial conditions. A SEM analyzed the microstructure and inclusions. The authors used a Miller test to determine the wear response in accordance with ASTM G75. During analysis it was observed that the RE additions reduced the grain size and the morphology of the non-metallic inclusions changed. Because of the change in the grain size, the impact strength increased from 33 kJ/cm² to 99 kJ/cm². Additionally, the authors found that the RE additions had a positive effect on the abrasion resistance of the steel.¹⁷

While the previously mentioned papers demonstrate that RE additions are associated with finer grain structures and improved mechanical properties, their exact mechanism has been debated. Some postulate that either RE segregation or grain pinning effects explain the observed improvements.¹⁸⁻²⁰ Others have held the view that the RE oxides and sulfides formed act as heterogeneous nuclei.^{6,14-16} This debate continues due to the difficulty of interpreting the microstructures after the solid state transformations during cooling. An additional tool is required to assist in examining the solidification of steel. Using thermal analysis could provide a better picture of what reactions occur during solidification.

Thermal analysis is the process of pouring a melt in some type of sample and recording the cooling curve.²¹ All thermal analysis techniques work on the principle that each phase reaction involves either the evolution or absorption of heat. When a reaction occurs, there is a change in the slope of the cooling curve. Frequently, examining the first derivative (cooling rate) of the temperature curve makes phase reactions more evident because they appear as either peaks or valleys. The detection of the peaks and valleys allows for determination of the exact reaction temperature possible. One widely employed technique in thermal analysis is the single thermocouple cup method. In this approach, a single thermocouple is inserted into a sand cup and the cup is then connected to a data acquisition system (DAQ). A sample of molten metal is then poured in the cup and the cooling behavior recorded. This technique is widely utilized in aluminum and iron foundries.^{4,22-26} In both applications, the systems assist in evaluating the effectiveness of heterogeneous nuclei addition through changes in the cooling curves, most commonly either an increase in reaction temperature or a reduction in reaction time.²² They also can identify when certain undesirable phases might form, allowing foundries to modify the melt. Even with the abundance of use in the aluminum and iron foundries, it is not widely employed in steel foundries. This is because of a lack of need since grain refinement is not widely practiced. However, the technique was applied during the early work on steel solidification.²⁷ It was also used to determine carbon content in steel melts prior to modern spectrometers; this approach is actually still used in certain regions of the world.²⁸⁻³⁰

Another thermal analysis technique which has been used to study metals and has served as the primary tool to study solidification is differential scanning calorimetry (DSC). Phase reactions and their temperatures are determined by looking at heating and cooling of samples. It is primarily done

in the heating mode where heat is applied to the sample and a reference. The amount of energy required to increase the temperature of the sample and reference are recorded, and the instrument reports the difference in energy. Phase transformations cause either an increase or decrease in the amount of heat required to heat the samples depending on whether the reaction is endothermic or exothermic. Samples in the 100–200 mg range can be used. DSC has been employed to study steel solidification across a wide range of alloys.^{31–35} Constructing units capable of 1600°C temperatures has been very difficult, thus resulting in expensive instruments. DSC units are also only suited to laboratory environments. Researchers have noted significant difficulty in detecting the solidus and peritectic reactions.^{35,36} Therefore, only using DSC for examining steel solidification presents some significant issues.

Considering the interest in RE[-]based grain refiners and solidification-based grain refinement in steels, the authors conducted a series of experiments on 4130 with RE additions. Heats of different conditions were melted and then poured into several thermal analysis cups. The goal of the work was to examine how the cooling curves and phase reactions changed when RE elements were added. RE additions were accomplished either using RE silicide or EGR. RE silicide contains Ce, La, Nd, and Pr. The total RE content is approximately 30 wt. %. EGR is a commercially available engineered grain refiner with cerium as the only RE element in it. Data from these experiments should provide a better understanding of how RE additions interact with steel during freezing. Another goal was to use the single thermocouple thermal analysis technique to provide a better picture of steel solidification and demonstrate that the technique can be successfully employed in steels.

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Spotlight on...

The Center for Community Writing

Established in 2018, the Center for Community Writing works to promote writing throughout the Great Lakes Bay Region. Coordinated by Helen Raica-Klotz and Christopher Giroux, the Center serves as an umbrella organization for various other initiatives, including the Saginaw Community Writing Center (SCWC), the Bay Community Writing Center (BCWC), and the Saginaw Bay Writing Project (SBWP).

Through grant funding provided by the Saginaw Community Foundation, the Center for Community Writing continued to operate its community writing centers in 2018–19. Housed in the city’s Butman-Fish Library and established in October 2015, the SCWC is the first community writing center of its kind in the state of Michigan. The BCWC opened its doors at the Wirt Public Library in Bay City in September 2017; it is funded by the Bay Community Foundation. Both centers offer specialized workshops on a given topic (like résumés, cover letters, or short fiction) as well as tutoring on any piece of writing a community member chooses. Under their auspices, and through funding provided by community member Dr. Debasish Mridha, the community writing centers published another issue of *Still Life* in 2019. Another first—the only community arts journal sponsored by a university in the state of Michigan—*Still Life* offers creative writing opportunities for writers of all ages and can be found online and in print. In 2018, *Still Life* was honored with a first-place award from the American Scholastic Press Association.

In 2018–19, with support from Dr. Marc Peretz, dean of the College of Arts and Behavioral Sciences, the community writing centers also continued to offer a series of semester-long creative writing seminars for inmates housed at the Saginaw Regional Correctional Facility in Freeland, Michigan. These workshops were led by SVSU Writing Center and Center for Academic Achievement tutors Samantha Geffert and Carlee Giordano.

The SBWP is the local chapter of the National Writing Project (NWP). Based on the “teachers teaching teachers” model, this grant-funded initiative enables area teachers to come together and discuss literacy issues related to the best practices in the classroom. Through year-round programming that includes workshops, graduate courses, summer institutes, and guest lectures, the SBWP creates opportunities for teachers’ personal development, information that they can pass on to their colleagues and students. The SBWP was led in 2018–19 by SVSU’s Writing Center director, Helen Raica-Klotz, and by Merrill High School teacher Allison Jordan.

On the following pages, we share some of the writing generated by the Center for Community Writing through its contests, workshops, and various community initiatives. More information about the Center for Community Writing can be found at www.svsu.edu/ccw.

Immolation

Bruce Gunther

Still Life Author and Community Writing Center Participant



Bruce Gunther is a native of Saginaw, Michigan, who now lives in Bay City and works as a freelance writer. He's a graduate of Central Michigan University and had a long career in journalism before leaving the business for good in 2012. The former sports editor of the *Bay City Times* and the *Flint Journal*, he's always had an interest in literature and loves writing of every kind—prose, poetry, non-fiction, flash fiction, etc. His poetry has been published in SVSU's *Still Life*, and he's increasingly submitting more of his work to other publications. Gunther borrows a quote from Sylvia Plath when talking about the submission process: "My rejection slips make me know that I'm trying." He's married to Trish Gunther, an elementary school teacher, and has a son, Adam, who lives in Chicago.

The attendants pour gas
carefully over the monk's head;
cars honk in the Saigon intersection.

"I respectfully plead," begins his letter to the autocrat,
"that you take a mind of compassion
and implement religious equality to maintain
the strength of the homeland."

He sits in full lotus,
tops of his feet resting on his thighs.
He lights the match with eyes cast downward.

If we listen carefully, we hear the voice
of MLK.
We shake off the dream of a shooter's nest in Dallas.
We sense the peasant guiding his water buffalo
through the rice field.

The flames lick higher;
their lethal fingers invite us closer
while we watch from 9,000 miles away.

The boy closes a notebook
covered in American flag stickers
on his desk in a Connecticut classroom.

The smoke travels over continents;
its traces linger above a Klan meeting
in Mississippi and move on.
Hear the rubber stamp come down on a deferment
that sends the millionaire's son home.

How about a wink and a nod
as the wails of anguish
compete with the honking horns of Saigon?
Faces peering from car windows.
Nuns cover their faces,
the smell of burning human flesh,
the monk unwavering.

And in the jungle darkness,
a soldier flinches
at the sound of a twig snapping.

Pickles from the Jar

Jean Marie Learman

Still Life Author and Community Writing Center Participant



Jean Marie Learman grew up on a farm in Michigan's rural Thumb. After brief stays in the U.P., Minnesota, and Wisconsin, she has lived in Saginaw for over 30 years. She is currently working in her third career—three careers that couldn't be further apart! After eight years in engineering and twenty-five years teaching secondary math and science, Jean Marie is following her lifelong dream of being a full-time musician. Writing poetry, writing songs, and sharing them are part of the dream.

I'm weary this evening.
Been a long hard day,
How good it is to be back home.
Close the door, kick your shoes off.
Breathe in. Breathe out.
The day is almost done.

Supper's next. I make my way into the kitchen.
Got to be fed.
I heat up soup from the freezer,
slice some cheese, spread the butter on the bread.

Then I take the plates from out the cupboard,
pickles from the jar,
milk for him, hot tea for me.
A simple meal together at the end of day.
Rest, my love, beside me.

I hear your truck pull into the driveway.
I know you're tired too.
Hey, supper's almost ready.
Go wash your hands. There's not much left to do.

Just take the plates from out the cupboard,
pickles from the jar,
milk for him, hot tea for me.
A simple meal together at the end of day.
Rest, my love, beside me.

It's just a simple meal, but there's two of everything.
Two glasses, two plates, two spoons.
And we sing this new duet where before we each sang a solo tune.

My husband carries the tray. We settle on the sofa.
He says, honey, how was your day?
I tell him, maybe later. Let's just eat.
Then he takes my hand to pray.

We took the plates from out the cupboard,
pickles from the jar,
milk for him, iced tea for me.
A simple meal together at the end of day.
Come rest, my love, beside me.

Rescue

Deda Kavanagh

Still Life Author and Community Writing Center Participant



A native Michigander, Deda Kavanagh recently moved from Pennsylvania to Bay City, where her father and her maternal grandmother grew up. Having honed her poetry-writing skills with her mentor, Christopher Bursk, and Bucks County poets in Pennsylvania, she's pleased to have discovered the Bay Community Writing Center at the Wirt Library in Bay City. Deda's poetry collection, *Bicycle through a Covered Bridge*, was published by Finishing Line Press, and other poems have appeared in *U.S. 1 Worksheets*, *Schuylkill Valley Journal*, and *Paterson Literary Review*.

I hid upstairs from the gardener
who was working that hard
in the hundred-year-old yard,
to separate and bag dead oak,
crabapple, and maple,
leaves tangled tight with creeping,
choking ivy.
Not that much younger than I, and I
would not even try to help him.
So I slunk behind walls
till rain came to save us.
He lined up seven bags of brush
and drove off.
I stepped out softly to fluff,
to rescue scilla, tulip, bluebell—
hurricaned flat by a leaf blower.

My Microphone

Lorenzo Russey

Community Writing Center Participant

Lorenzo Russey is a resident of Freeland, Michigan.

When I speak to it, it's listening, but it can't respond. It's always there for me whenever I need to get my feelings out of my head and into the world. It has no heart, but I feel like I give it life when I put my soul into it. It was the first one I ever bought, and I still use it til this day. I bought it from a friend of mine; he was done with it, but I was just getting started with it. So it's like they say, "One man's trash is another man's treasure." And I treat it as a treasure because it has so much value to me, on a more emotional level. It has heard things from me that I've never told anyone else. I feel like it changed my life so much for the better because it gave me a way to express myself in a more positive way.

My Idea of Love

Derrick DePriest

Community Writing Center Participant

Derrick DePriest describes himself as a free-spirited, fun-loving, open-minded, nonjudgmental, people-loving person. He is, he says, reflective and introspective about self, life, and others. He fancies himself a philosopher of sorts and hopes his pieces can be inspirational to all who read them. He resides in Saginaw County.

My idea of love is broad, yet simple. Maybe even paradoxical... love is an idea wrapped within a cocoon of action. We as humans can conceptualize many ideas, but we only realize them as they are reinforced through action. Love, being the pinnacle of giving and receiving, is probably the most sought after, yet least universally understood, action and idea. A parent disciplining a child does so out of love, but in that moment, if the child does not receive it as such, is it really love? For love seems to need to be recognized for what it is to be called love. If a spouse withholds information from the other out of a claim of love, and a desire not to “hurt” or “disappoint” the other, can this manipulation or lack of forthrightness really be called “love”? Even though one claims to exist and emanate actions from a point of “selfless love”?

The answer in my humble assertion is that action can be judged only by intentions. Any blight of manipulation, selfishness, arrogance, or pride in thought, action, or deed removes the light of love and thus turns a selfless intention into a selfish action.

So love is intention in action, doing and contributing your best to the universal welfare of all beings at all times and in this you are existing in true love. Sometimes your best might simply be allowing another soul to occupy its space in the universe to achieve its own state of growth and enlightenment. Even when our idea of love tells us we know best, our love in action may be realizing we don't!

Home Health Aides–Comic Aides

Judy Minster

Community Writing Center Participant



Born in Bay City, Michigan, Judy Minster completed three years of study at Saginaw Valley State College, but had to leave in her senior year when her health declined. She did not, however, allow her health issues to define her. Speaking often and openly about her blindness and her struggles with retinitis pigmentosa, she was a member of the National Federation of the Blind of Michigan. Judy also spent nearly ten years serving as the editor for the regional newsletter of the National Association of the Physically Handicapped (NAPH), and she was belted in taekwondo. Judy, who died in 2018 following complications from surgery, particularly enjoyed the Saginaw Community Writing Center's (SCWC's) creative writing group and memoir workshop. She is missed by her friends at the SCWC. The following are pieces that she was working on at the time of her death and that she worked on at the SCWC.

Toes

My companion complimented me one day. She was helping me get dressed. While attending to my feet, she said, "Were you a ballerina?" Not knowing where she was headed, I answered, "I wasn't a ballerina but as a young girl I did take dancing lessons." She replied to this, "I thought so. You've got ballerina toes." Unaware of how to reply to this comment, because ballerinas are not known for beautiful feet, I decided to take it as a compliment and thanked her for it.

The Double-Entendre

The aide I had that day was very active. She had a full day's schedule of different things that had to be done and didn't go into detail about any of them. She confided in me that she was worn out and exhausted at the end of the previous ten-hour workday. I stuck in my two cents worth of unasked opinion, and exclaimed, "You were pooped!" She immediately returned with unexpected jocularity, "No, I did that after I got back home."

Punches

I feel that I can confide in the aide that is the closest to my age. One evening when she was with me, I was doing my punching exercise. I thoughtfully told her, "You'd better watch out. I can never predict where these things are going to land." She chose her words very carefully, saying, "You better not hit me. I'll tell your mother." My mother was sitting in the next room, minding her own business. My aide surprised her when she entered and asked for permission to put an article of clothing into the wash. Then when she entered my room, I asked her, "Well, did you tell her?" She replied, "Tell her what?" "About my punching you."

Green

One of my healthcare workers is quite a gardener. She made some comments concerning this activity to my mom, who also loves to garden. In early June, she was so excited and sure that the tomato seeds she had planted were going to be up in two weeks like her flowers were. I hated to be the one to tell her differently, but someone had to. Therefore, I performed the unpleasant task of telling her that it wouldn't be tomato harvest season until at least two-thirds of the way through August. She seemed surprised and somewhat disappointed to hear that, but I think after she got used to the idea, she was ok with it. I'm glad because that's just the way things are, and they can't be changed. After some time had passed, my aide found her tomato plants were blossoming. There was a tiny sprig of fruit hanging on the vine, and she was delighted. She had a question though, and it was, "Shouldn't that green thing be red?"

The Time Clock

Donald Popielarz

“Get to Work” Contest Participant and Community Writing Center Participant



Donald Popielarz was raised on the East Side of Saginaw, Michigan. His contemporaries were more apt to go to prison, join the military, or work at General Motors than enroll in college. While going to undergraduate and law school, Don worked as a laborer at the Grey Iron Foundry. For the past thirty-nine years, he has practiced law. “The Time Clock” is a flash fiction piece set in Saginaw during the early 1960s. While based on historical facts, its sole source is Don’s imagination. Don is a frequent participant in the creative writing group at the Saginaw Community Writing Center.

The Chevrolet rambled north on Sixth Street. The Deacon gave a running commentary.

“Vescio’s... You can shop there.

“Barrera’s... You eat Mexican? They take your money.

“Elsie Black Funeral Home. That’s for coloreds. Miss Black... She’ll help bury you. Keep your body real good til your kin make it north or they gets enough money to bury you.

“St. Joseph’s. Catholic... Kinda strange, mostly Mexicans, poor whites and coloreds. A lot of coloreds from Louisiana are Catholic.

“Sixth Street Cinema... Mexicans.

“Harry’s Bar... whites only.

“Beet’s... stay outa there, brother.”

The smoke from the cupolas hung low over the Foundry. “See that smoke, low like that... gonna storm. If the smoke goes straight up, it’s gonna be nice and sunny.”

The man remained silent. Now the Deacon was forecasting the weather using smoke from the cupolas. But the Deacon had been right about everything else. How to lie about your age. To take ten years off to make it easier to get hired. It sure felt good to be twenty-five again. The man chuckled to himself, taking care not to let the Deacon see. How to get a driver’s license. How to go to the Social Security office to get nine numbers that the people at the Grey Iron insisted on having. The Deacon was even right on how easy it was to register to vote. No written test. No poll tax. The man had registered as a Democrat just as he had been told. He wasn’t exactly sure how to vote a straight ticket. The man knew that Lincoln and the Republicans freed the slaves. “I guess that debt was paid,” the man thought. “Maybe us colored folk would have better luck with the Democrats.”

The Deacon knew where to shop. He even introduced the man to Bob Beets, the only landlord to rent to colored folk outside the First Ward. And now, the man’s fate was in the hands and feet of the Deacon as they worked the accelerator and clutch of that old Chevrolet. The Deacon had four years of seniority. The Deacon couldn’t get fired for being late only once. You needed ninety days to be a union member. The man only had eighty-five days. Five more days and he’d be a card-carrying member of UAW Local 668. A local headed by a colored man. No high-yellow nigger. No sir, a colored man blacker than him. The man shook his head in disbelief.

The man prayed, “Ninety days. Ninety days. Please, Lord Jesus. Let me get my ninety days.” The boss man had to have a reason to get rid of you after ninety days. There were rules, written in a union contract. The man had seen other workers file grievances against their foreman. The workers were represented by union men. Committee men they were called. They were just like lawyers. Knew all the rules. Fought for all the men. Didn’t matter if they were white, colored, Mexican. Didn’t matter. They were all union men.

“Please, Lord Jesus. Please.”

The tires on the Chevy screeched as they looked for a parking space. The man still marveled that the white men and colored men parked together. The foremen, white men with white shirts, had separate lots though. The two men hustled past the guard gate, mingled in with the mass of men wearing overalls, steel-toed boots, and safety glasses, and carrying metal lunch buckets.

The man's grandmother had taught him to pray, telling him that God answers all prayers. But it seemed to the man that for generations, in response to all of his peoples' prayers, God had simply answered "No." Today, God's attention must have been elsewhere.

The man punched in.

Work Myth

Ben Champagne

“Get to Work” Contest Participant



A Saginaw, Michigan, native, Ben Champagne attended Arthur Hill High School and Saginaw Arts and Sciences Academy. He has taken several classes at SVSU and has written for NewPages.com. A fiction writer, Ben also engages in poetry, art, and music. Active in various aspects of the community, he is the owner and director of Counter Culture, an arts collective in Old Town. More information about Counter Culture can be found at www.counterculturearts.org or www.facebook.com/counterculturearts.

Outside the rescue mission, this could be heard:

Cursed is the ground because of you;
 through painful toil you will eat food from it
 all the days of your life.
It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
 and you will eat the plants of the field.
By the sweat of your brow
 you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
 since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
 and to dust you will return.

Let the great world spin. I am busy sitting at the mission. So I'm fasting. Dropped out. Like, why would I participate? People call me lazy. I don't care. It doesn't matter. I read Camus. The MYTH of Sisyphus, man. The MYTH! You can't take it with you. What are you working for? "Come to me all you who are burdened and are heavy laden and I will give you rest?" Can't you see it's all a cycle? He created the burden *and the rest* and well... I'm not going to work. Jesus died on a cross so I could quit my job. The rock goes up the hill, but it always comes back down.

I go to school, so I can get a good job, so I can buy a nice car, so I can attract a mate, so we can reproduce, so we can make a child, so he can go to school and boom! The cycle starts all over again.

I just don't see how me being cosmic space dust, traveling on an infinite journey, blah blah blah. I just don't care anymore.

I have a plan. It's never to work again, travail, or sweat. And not in that, like, find-what-you-love-and-you'll-never-work-another-day-in-your-life type thing. But in that crust punk, Box-Car Willie sort of way, you know what I mean? That there's-no-return-to-Eden sort of way. You can never go home again.

Anyhow, I'm beat. I'm real beat. It's the fasting. I've decided not to even beg for food. Mostly the churches give it out. They give it out because they know what a raw deal we got. They're trying to make it up to us. "Come back. I promise I won't do it again." God placed a rainbow in the sky for the first covenant. Said He would never flood the earth again. It's all in there! They thought of everything.

Our model for work is divine. One man in charge of the whole plan. The Boss man. Boss man got an idea. You better execute. So I said, no more. Not going to work for Boss man no more.

Not going to work for anyone. It's all a trap. I'm not going to eat either. Well, maybe just to keep from dying. Matter of fact, I don't think I'm even going to explain this any further.

Now I'm here. A *transient* as they say. Because they are confused and think some things are *permanent*. "Consider the lilies of the field and how they grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will He not much more clothe you—you of little faith?" They are clothed by the man Himself and they think of nothing. So now I am a flower. And I think of nothing and I'm done explaining this.

Through the Gate

Tracy Deering

Saginaw Bay Writing Project Participant



Tracy Deering is a seventh-grade English Language Arts teacher at Petoskey Middle School in Petoskey, Michigan. She serves on the board of the Top-of-the-Mitt Writing Project in northern Michigan. She loves to read, cook for friends, travel the world, spend time outdoors, and write. She is a graduate of Spring Arbor University with a master's degree from Central Michigan University.

Deering wrote "Through the Gate" at the 2018 Vada B. Dow Writer's Workshop for Area Teachers that was coordinated by the Saginaw Bay Writing Project. Poet, memoirist, and playwright Anne-Marie Oomen and fiction writer and composition scholar John Mauk led the workshop.

Everything she had learned about life, she learned behind the barn.

She had been borne of the country farm that now surrounded her, edging her in. Her mother, "God Rest Her Soul," had pushed her from the womb, not so unlike the spring births of the livestock. The contractions had come along hard and fast amidst the daily chores of living, and her mother had taken herself to the quilt-laden bedroom and pushed. Her father had tended his wife as he would any animal of the farm; he carried the newborn over to a warm bowl of water, cleaned her, handed her back to the mother, and left to milk the cows.

The babe, now swaddled and nursing, took in this steadily realist view, centered her blue eyes upon it, and accepted her lot. As she grew, her blond, sprightly curls fought the country winds only in silent tenacity. Other than those errant strands, she followed the rules. They were her father's rules, and they were to be attended to with precision. His temper carried weight, and neither woman on the farm dared tempt it.

You could often find the girl at the gate, paused, one hand resting on the latch, the other shading her eyes from the sun as she gazed out and over open fields aplenty. But then she would stir, pat those curls into place, and pull herself up and out to the stalls and to the laundry and to the kitchen.

By the time she was twelve, her mother was gone, succumbing to the demands of an unnamed illness. And the young Eleanor took on the many tasks of running the farm. The farm was a place of seasons, tried and true; spring always followed winter, and babes were born, crops planted. Summer's work bent backs laden with earthly produce. Dirt embedded itself beneath fingernails, etched itself into padded fingerprints and eased itself into the fruits of their labor. Father and daughter shadowed fading daylight as fall took over, bringing with it the harvest time that clung to the dampened rays of the moon. Bedtimes came late, if at all, until the fields held only stubble and the root cellar's womb was filled with the fruits of the garden's summer season.

The working times between the two of them were filled with animal noise and the silence of a country wind. Eleanor's favorite pleasure came in the evenings, after she had served her father his dinner and cleaned up the kitchen. She would take herself away to her bedroom, with its fresh sheets and simple hand-hemmed bedspread. The quilts she kept folded and stored within the closet. She would lay on her stomach, reach beneath the bed, and pull from its hiding place the latest big-city catalog that she had gotten her hands on. In a daze, she would slowly turn pages, studying the polished looks of the young models, memorizing the cuts of their blouses, the style of their hair. As if in a trance, she would reach up and pat her country curls and dream. She dreamed of a life

removed from the stained aprons, animal smells, endless laboring, and daily mindless fatigue of the farm.

It was on one of these evenings when the farm life settled itself into its cocoon of sleepy slumber, living off stored rations and limited movement, when her father stopped her as she went to make her way up the stairs to escape. “I’ve found you a mother,” he stated simply, words clipped and castrated. “She will be joining us by foaling time.” Her step froze like the ice on the pond, easily fractured by the winter weather’s unpredictable disposition, and she risked a small turn of the lips, a slight show of white teeth, running her tongue along their sharp edge and breathing in. Her mouth tasted of hope and a lighter load: finally, another woman to converse with, a mother. The hand that held the banister loosened its grip unbidden, and she met her father’s eyes with a hopeful look of gratitude and continued her way up the stairs.

Upstairs in her bedroom, she sank to her bed and pulled a pillow into her arms. Cradling it close, she laid her head back against the headboard and allowed her eyes to close for a moment.

Her mind raced as she contemplated this new version of the future. Wonderment held her in anticipant awe of what this new mother would be like. Would she be from the city? What kinds of handsome clothes would she bring? Could she teach her new stepdaughter about applying make-up and setting her hair? She had so, so many questions. With her own womanhood almost upon her, she was anxious for a female voice. She fell asleep with a vision of a woman mirrored upon those of the catalogs, with long, slender fingers, polished nails, and a delicate stance, so far removed from the animalistic seasons of the farm. Her heartbeat raced as her dreams stretched on.

Mornings came and went, and eventually it was time for the new mother to arrive. She was young, much younger than Eleanor’s father, and she was slight. But her outward looks were not enough to hold her own in the room. Eleanor’s dream deflated slowly as this mother from town slowly settled into place. The garden-tending and canning were taken over, but the animal-tending and other strenuous tasks fell even more on Eleanor’s shoulders, as farm life had not been bred into this new mother’s being as it had been borne into her own.

The changing of seasons, marked by the attachments and detachments of varied farm implements to the machines of labor, was now accomplished by the side-by-side motions of father and daughter as her new mother charged herself with the roles of interior farm-living and those duties that included the daily care of the nearby kitchen garden. Time for woman-to-woman talk was limited to sparse moments of minced-together questions, answered with sharp edges and contained within the walls of the kitchen.

Eleanor turned to the outdoor work with deeply summoned vigor, masking the emptiness that circled her deepest center and basking in the newfound attention and simple need of her father for her capabilities as a hard-working daughter. She felt she had been broken free from the enclosing circle of household servitude, and instead lent a hand in the springtime birthing season and the row upon row of field planting. As sweat formed itself on her brow and the brow of her father as they worked side by side, she felt like the son her father perhaps yearned for. She often caught him watching her as she wrestled with some attachment or heaved away at stubborn bolts that needed loosening, and she inwardly swelled with pride at her work. She knew her father was a man of few words, but she wanted to make him proud.

Pride, however, fell to her feet as she entered the kitchen and encountered her new mother always picking and chopping like a knife fighting its way through the tough stalks of weeds in the undergrowth of the garden, constantly picking out Eleanor’s inadequacies and failings. That first year of marriage had passed so quickly, as did Eleanor’s dreams of a confidante etched with wisdom and worldly knowledge; as another year of seasons approached in their endless cycle, Eleanor longed to be able to talk with her stepmother about what was happening to her body as curves began to develop and her waltz with womanhood began. But her stepmother, seemingly open to her role of surrogate mother in those very first days, had slowly closed herself off from Eleanor, dashing all dreams she had once had of gaining the secrets of “town” class and womanhood.

It was around this time that her father began bringing Eleanor small gifts from town on his trips in to gather supplies. The first time it had been a new catalog for her to browse, and she smiled inwardly at this new way her father seemed to notice and see her. She ignored the sideways glance of confusion and silent questioning that seemed to sweep across her stepmother's face and gladly carried the catalog up to her room, excited to explore the new ladies' styles and clothing.

The next gift was a bra and underclothing to help support the generous curves that had begun to develop, and Eleanor was embarrassed but grateful for the thoughtfulness of her often temperamental father. This time, however, her stepmother's confusion turned to malice as she inspected the pieces and then tossed them onto Eleanor's bed in disgust as Eleanor wondered with confusion at her reaction. She hid herself in her catalogs and women's magazines, desperate to discover the sophisticated and exciting world beyond the edged-in fences that bordered this land.

The fall air, though barely past summer season, held an early chill of winter the first time that her father called her out to help him move some of the old pieces of junk from behind the animal barn. He wanted a space cleared, he told her. They worked in silence until he set her upon the task of gathering rusted bolts tossed into weeded clumps that clung to the edges of the barn wood. Rough hands fell upon her shoulders as she worked, startling her. Turning to see it was only her father, she lowered her eyes back to her task. His hands did not move, however, and instead wandered further. He was shaking as he forced her to the ground. The hiss of his silence, warning her with animal breath, reminded her of the pressure cooker used for canning the summer's bounty of plump, ripe tomatoes, bursting apart at the seams as the pressure altered them forever. That first time he took her roughly as she tried not to cry out. Confusion blinded her as her body floated above, hands desperately searching for an anchor, finding only barn wood and grass and rusted bolts. He left her there with further directions on what else needed to be cleaned up and then made his way back in to tend the animals. She lay there, dirt embedded beneath fingernails, the splintered skin of red barn paint staining her.

When she had finished the work, straightened her clothes, and patted her curls as best she could back into place, she made her way to the house. She kept her eyes downcast as she helped her stepmother prepare dinner, ate, and headed to bed.

The morning brought with it the rust-red paint of the day before. Eleanor carried the load heavy on shoulders burdened with smoldering fire. Her footsteps carried her down the staircase to the breakfast table and her stepmother's interrogative stare. Her father had already eaten and left to take care of the livestock. Eleanor eased herself into a chair, movements slowed by bruised skin and torn asunder by shame.

"Here's the breakfast. Get it yourself. And make sure that you clean it up after you're done. I won't be any part of cleaning up the messes that you leave behind."

Eleanor barely glanced upwards, emotions raw and dangling like tender, fresh produce needing the care and love necessary to help package it safely and transport it to market.

"Did you hear me? I will not be a part of this. I will not. I know how you operate. You will never be a 'town-girl' now. That's right. I know how you dream," her stepmother stated as she caught Eleanor's eyes rising to meet hers. "I know how you lose yourself in the glamour of the looks of those girls in the catalogs and women's magazines he brings to you."

She paused for a moment's breath, the silence broken only by the strained moo of a lonesome female cow in the distance, working hard to avoid the inevitable impregnation by the bull left to perpetuate his bloodline in the openness of the field. "Do you hear me? You will never fit in. Not after what you've done. Never."

Eleanor took a moment to gather herself, snatching silence from the air around her. It was in this moment, however, when it became clear to her. The fire she carried deep inside her sparked and left her slumped shoulder to settle in her eyes, a young girl determined not to be defeated.

"Did you hear me?" Her stepmother seemed to be pleading with her in a voice steeped in anger and denial. The atmosphere pierced and shattered with her final statements, "I won't be a part of this. I can't. Do you understand me?" And then with a barely audible tone, she turned to the

window to finish up the dishes stacked in the sink to be washed clean, and she continued, "He...you... can't make me."

Eleanor raised her face to meet her stepmother's slight back and focused her eyes on the sharply refined shoulder blades that turned on firm feet towards the kitchen sink. The day was beginning, and the farm needed tending. She would take her breakfast, take her leave, commit to the chores, and fan the flames that would take her away from here. "But I can," Eleanor whispered to herself in a voice firm with purpose. "I can." She pushed those errant curls up with her hands and carried herself tall out to the garden.

The outdoor work grew more laborious and frequent as Eleanor searched the sky for answers that never came. The chores remained a constant, and the winter season arrived. Cooped up in the house with a stepmother and her father, Eleanor began to stoke the firestorms harboring themselves behind a stilled voice. Fatigue caused her to speak her mind in ways she had never attempted before, and an unsettled stomach left her with little patience to deal with her stepmother's harsh eyes always upon her. She found herself cradling her abdomen and pondering the soreness that wrapped itself around her swollen breasts as the months wore on. School became a side note as she was often too tired or too ill to attend, and by the first hints of spring, she had resigned herself to not going at all.

Behind the barn, red paint flaked off from winter's winds and spring birthing season was soon upon them all. In the end, it was her stepmother who found her crumpled on the stairway, lost in labor and a pool of liquid. She helped Eleanor up the stairs, took charge, and called her husband inside. He tended the baby born as he would any animal of the farm, carried the newborn over to the warm bowl of water, cleaned him, and handed him to his wife. She handed the baby back to him. He spoke one word and one word only as he handed the babe firmly back to her, "Yours," and he left the room to go milk the cows.

And thus the summer carried itself on, with a new baby for the stepmother to claim as her own, and Eleanor shifting with unease to the role of other. Both women felt caged by rules dictated by another, and the flames were lit beneath their tongues. Lashing out at each other became the only outlet for the pain harboring itself just beneath the surface. Isolation brought them to desperation and lies told as a cover story began their work of divide and conquer. Only one woman could survive.

The summer load grew heavy and bled its way into fall as the work toppled forward. Eleanor had been out in the animal barn cleaning stalls when she heard the cries. She ran for the house and found him alone swaddled in his blanket, in his basket, beneath the line of clothes drying in the country breeze, crying inconsolably, not unlike the lamb that bleats for its mother when separated. Eleanor reached into the basket and clucked her tongue soothingly. His blue eyes found hers, and his cries ceased. She looked for her stepmother and found no sign. She searched the yard but saw nothing until she caught sight of the large open door to the big barn that housed the tractors and other large pieces of farm machinery. It was mostly empty, each piece of equipment still in use or in the process of getting cleaned up for the winter, and the darkness from within drew her closer. A swallow tore its way out of the big entrance as Eleanor reached the doorway and stepped inside. It was always like this on a farm, life and death so closely intertwined with one another. And she turned away from the swollen skin of her stepmother swaying from the wood beam near the hayloft, as the creak of the rope and the silence of the moment silhouetted itself on her memory. Her stepmother would have to be cut down; someone would have to be called. The cries of the babe once again distracted her. She walked back to the house, gathering the baby into the warmth of her arms, whispering sweet lullabies in his ear, all the while searching the open fields for her absent father.

It was spring once again and she had quit school for good. It was just too challenging. She had to stay home. She had work to do, a baby brother and a father to tend to. She had been borne of this country farm that surrounded her, but it would not hold her for much longer. One day as she walked through town, gathering supplies and pushing the baby in the pram, many folks had stopped

her and commented on what a cute baby she had. She did not correct them. She let it be. She did have a special touch with him. He was hers in her eyes. The factories were hiring, and some were even hiring women. She could do this type of work. She knew that she could.

She stayed for three more years, until her father found another wife. He found his daughter standing at the gate, with her hand resting on the latch, when he shared the news. He placed his hand on her shoulder, but she picked it up and removed it. She was ready for a new season. Her hand reached up to pat the errant curls back into place, but this time, they would not be stilled. The gate fell open, and she escaped.



Spotlight on... Visiting Writers

As part of its mission to enhance the life of the community in which it resides, SVSU is committed to bringing guest speakers to campus. Sponsored by individual departments and colleges, Student Life, the President's Office, student organizations and student support services, among other campus groups, these visitors create a richer learning environment at SVSU and speak to a host of interests and issues we face locally and globally.

Some of our visiting writers come as part of Voices in the Valley, a longstanding tradition at SVSU that profiles the work of creative writers. Dr. Arra Ross of the English Department currently directs the program and works to bring established and emerging voices to campus. Past guests of Voices in the Valley include poets Jamaal May, Tracy K. Smith, and Carolyn Forché; short story writer and novelist Peter Ho Davies; and memoirist Anne-Marie Oomen.

Each year a writer also visits SVSU in connection with the Stuart D. and Vernice M. Gross Award for Literature. The Gross Award carries a prize of \$1,000 and honors publications, whether historical writing, fiction, or drama, linked to Michigan or the larger region. Mr. Gross was a published author, a historian who focused on the Saginaw area, and a reporter for *The Saginaw News*, as well as a former employee of SVSU.

Several of our visiting authors from the 2018–2019 school year have been gracious enough to let us reprint some of their work in *Writing@SVSU* on the following pages.

How a Single Rosh Hashanah Dinner Sparked 10 Years of Research

Devin Murphy

Visiting Author



Devin Murphy holds his Ph.D. from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and currently teaches at Bradley University, where he is an assistant professor of creative writing. A critically acclaimed writer of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction, he is the author of the novels *The Boat Runner* (Harper Perennial, 2017) and *Tiny Americans* (Harper Perennial, 2019). The following essay talks of his inspiration for his first novel. Murphy visited SVSU in April 2019 as part of the Voices in the Valley series. More information about Murphy’s life and work can be found at <https://www.devinmurphyauthor.com>.

My wife’s family shows up. For everything. Birthdays, hospital visits, graduations—you name it, they show up. That is this family’s doctrine. When my wife was running late to pick up the kids, there was no question that I would show up on her behalf. Once at the school, she called back to tell me I was also going to stand in for a meeting she had set up. I went to the lobby of my kid’s preschool at the local Synagogue and a very lovely lady offered me a seat, introducing herself as the Synagogue’s membership director.

“So, what are you looking for in a Jewish community?” she asked.

I stared at her in silence.

My father comes from centuries of meat and potato Irish Catholics. He’s a philosophy and religious studies professor who hides the baseboards of our home with stacks of musty religious texts. He keeps a copy of a Byzantine era “Madonna and Child” mosaic on our living room wall. Gregorian chants are mood music when he has company. One of his best friends is a one-eyed Trappist monk who recently completed a 30-year vow of silence. For the most part we were library-quiet in our home. My father sent me to Catholic elementary school where the stark images of both Testaments were burned into my imagination. There I was led through the bodily and bloody Stations of the Cross. While I was in the trenches of puberty, I was lectured about the awful impulses of our own bodies until I felt the bloom of shame burst open in my chest. Then when I was 14 years old, I was asked if I wanted to be confirmed, to become an adult in the eyes of the church. My first serious solo decision, for which I’d been coached by my father my whole young life. When the time came, my response was a swift, “Nope!”

I bowed out of formalized religion for the rest of my life. Or so I thought.

When I was 17 I’d began what would be 12 years of drifting about the planet, working jobs on land and at sea that brought me close to the natural world and a far more profound connection to the possibility of some great firmament than formalized religion ever had. But those years in constant motion left me feeling like I had drifted too far from my small family and ultimately, nearly emotionally paralyzed by loneliness.

All of that changed when a curly-haired girl I met and fell in love with in the foothills of Colorado turned out to be from a gigantic Jewish family. A family she had every intention of living near for the rest of her life.

My first introduction to this family came in loud, chattering waves at Rosh Hashanah dinner. Her parents and sibling were lovely, welcoming, and full of questions about *exactly* what sort of life I had been living. Cousin Neal’s very first words to me came in a whisper-yell over the table, “Do. Not. Eat. The. Gefilte. Fish.” A dozen cousins, each more handsome and beautiful than the last, had to sit at the “kids table” despite each being on the cusp of careers as surgeons, lawyers,

and journalists. There was constant talking. Questions. Laughing. Noise. Not a chant or mute Trappist monk to be found anywhere.

Bottles of sweet red wine were readily passed. Apple slices dipped in honey were served on china. Challah bread was pulled apart by hand and shared around the room. Talk of babies' birth weights, an aunt's cancer treatments, job interviews, relationships, recipes, the history of pediatric cardiology, and why the Bears offensive line could not pass-protect worth anything drifted around me. In the corner of the room sat one of two of my girlfriend's 85-year-old grandfathers, Bopa, who hugged me upon our first meeting. I told him I'd heard he served in the Pacific campaign during WWII.

"The first Marines on Okinawa were walking dead men," Bopa said. "I had to work with those guys and you could see it in their eyes. They were no longer human. Glazed over. Beyond fear. There were six of them and me. They had to march straight up to these caves and pillboxes and unload all their ammunition into them."

No one seemed to hear Bopa as he spoke. Cousin Neal hoisted a three-year-old up and spun her over his head. My girlfriend's father was already doing a round of dishes. There was a rising laughter from the conversation in the other room.

"They had no idea what was going to come out of that cave or pillbox at them. Flames, gases, bullets with tracers, cannons, snipers. All this nastiness to mow you in half. I had to sneak wide of the whole mess, and come around the back with a satchel of C-4. I'd have to sit on top of the cave. I'd have to swing it in, or just drop it down and then run like hell before it blew."

My girlfriend smiled at me across the room. She thought it was nice that I liked her grandfather.

I hinted to Uncle Wynn some of what Bopa had just told me.

"Yeah. You should talk to *my* dad too."

"Why?" I asked.

"Well. Let's put it this way. We never camped as kids because Dad camped for two years during the war and said that was quite enough for one lifetime."

So around the serving table I began asking questions of the second grandfather, Papa Joe. He had been a medic in Europe during WWII. His unit had cleared the death camps. When the crowd around us was speaking over each other, he pulled out his wallet and slipped an old photo the size of a slice of baseball card bubblegum loose. When I held it the past suddenly felt like a seething floor about to pull me under. The image was of a heap of striped-pajama clad bodies.

"Have you carried this since then?" I asked.

"Yes," he said. "So I never forget."

I tried to imagine such a raw image in your pocket for nearly 70 years. The reality that what both of these grandfathers had lived through was only a lifetime removed from my own felt like a stunning revelation. I think Papa Joe realized I was reeling.

"An image like that trains you to keep your eyes out for the good things in the world," he said waving his hand about the room, which felt like its own kind of religious outlook to me.

Roots set into me that night, weaving this family's fascinating past into my imagination. This night started me off on nearly a decade of research about WWII because I sensed that with the loss of these aging veterans something essential would slip away—perhaps some visceral truth of how communities are torn apart and stitched together.

When the novel that these conversations launched me into was finished eight years later, I was able to visit an ailing Bopa in the hospital with a galley copy of *The Boat Runner*. He was 94 years old. He read it in one day and left me a voicemail late that night. "Dev..." his voice was dry. His breathing shallow. "I don't have the words. I don't know how you did it. I don't know how you brought that to life."

I didn't get to call him back right away. I should have. I should have said, "It was because of you."

A month later, after he died, I helped clean out his house. The requisite detritus of a good life: a mountain of old paperwork, worn tools he'd used to build his own house after the war, and fishing rods that must have flirted with every croppy in the north woods over the last 50 years. Then came a closet full of what must have been deeply personal artifacts. His old green service helmet. A trench digger. A pile of pictures of him as a young frog man in the Pacific. Images of him in a world that has not changed so much but has much to teach us if we will only listen through the din.

*

This Rosh Hashanah my son will blow a paper-mâché shofar. My daughter's hands will be sticky from dipping apples in honey. There is talk of Bopa and his life, but also babies' birth weight, and this time my third child, Jude, is the topic of this weigh-in. My father-in-law is doing dishes. There is a rising laughter. I prod Papa Joe to let loose another insane war story. These stories are part of the raucous energy of this family, which has stitched me into their fabric. I'm always hungry to hear more.

I mouth across the room to Cousin Neal. "Pass. The. Kishke."

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The Strong Man and the Clown

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Aisha Sabatini Sloan currently teaches at the University of Michigan–Ann Arbor in its graduate program in English; there she serves as the Helen Zell Visiting Professor of Creative Nonfiction. The author of *Dreaming of Ramadi in Detroit* (1913 Press, 2017) and *The Fluency of Light: Coming of Age in a Theater of Black and White* (University of Iowa Press, 2013), Sloan completed her undergraduate degree at Carleton College and graduate degrees from New York University and the University of Arizona.

Sloan is the winner of the CLMP Award for Nonfiction and has been published in *Callaloo*, *The Paris Review*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, and *The Southern Review*, among many other journals and anthologies. Her work has also appeared in the *Best American Essay* and the *Best American Non-Required Reading* series.

Sloan read “The Strong Man and the Clown,” which first appeared in *The Fluency of Light*, when she visited SVSU in April 2019 as part of Voices in the Valley. More information about Sloan and her work can be found at www.aishasloan.com.

Coffee spits at me from a small paper cup as I walk down the gangway in the airport. “Why does coffee spit?” I ask. My dad, who for as long as I can remember has been jotting down quotes in a thin, beige notebook, says, “Coffee spitting, now that’s a good opener.” “Yeah, and I’m going to use it.” My mom laughs. My father feigns disappointment. We are at the end of a layover in Ohio, on our seventh trip to Italy as a family.

During the layover my mom asks me to put some Icy Hot on her back, so we march to the nearest rest room. She waits for me to pee, standing near the sink where she has uncapped the Icy Hot. It looks like a stick of deodorant. A woman who has just washed her hands looks lost and my mom smiles sweetly, pointing to the paper towel dispenser with her trusty stick of Icy Hot. The woman makes it clear that she doesn’t know what my mother is doing. My mom puts the Icy Hot on the counter and then says to me, “I’m going to pee; watch this,” and I entertain the thought that perhaps this woman thinks my mom is crazy, as I look unrelated to her—a black woman across the bathroom from a small white lady, who is constantly motioning to people with deodorant. When she gets back from using the bathroom, she bends her neck forward and I apply the salve.

“You know what I’m looking forward to?” she asks as we walk back to the gate. “Dinners. Are you writing down everything I’m saying?”

I know what she means because I too was there that night in Assisi when we ate pasta with truffles. I remember the way the food tasted, how we had a sense of discovery in our blood, as though we were scouting out new territory to settle for the strange nation we as a family composed. We visited a friend and I ran through her property, picking young, green apples from her trees. She was black, a dancer, and her house was full of hardwood floors, draping fabric and mirrors. She was deeply artistic, living in what felt to be a forest. It was as though we’d made contact with a resident of a little-known, distant moon.

Once we board the plane, it gets dark. We are surrounded, for a moment, by multiple screens of a glowing yellow topographical map of Ohio and Kentucky and Indiana. Light glances

off my parents' held hands. A cartoon of a plane taking off into a blue-and-white sky plays as our own plane ascends into night.

One of the great tragedies of our early vacations to Italy was the loss of the Pinocchio dolls. My mother fell in love with the smooth red-and-green figures, and several were stolen from our suitcases. So for me, memories of Italy are imbued with the Italian fairy tale. As the story goes, a newly carved Pinocchio leaves home one day, waving sweetly to his father. Neither of them realize how far he must journey before he can come home again.

Pinocchio is the story of a puppet, yes. But it is also the story of a child who turned out differently from what his father had intended.

My mother was disowned by her father around the same time that she started dating my dad. As she tells it, he disowned her because she moved out of the family house to live with friends at a time when Italian girls, even in Detroit, weren't allowed to leave home without a husband. He died not long after this silence settled between them.

The greatest surge of Italians to move to the United States occurred during the period from 1870 until 1920. Four million Italians immigrated during this time. The poor economy after unification sent many young men away to forge a new life for their families. My mother was not the only daughter of this migration who fell in love with a black man.

In *Jungle Fever*, Italian American Angie Tucci gets punched and kicked by her father as punishment for her relationship with a black architect named Flipper Purify. He shouts after her not to come home with any "nigger babies." The verb *whale* means "to whip, flagellate, flog, hide, larrup, lash, scourge, stripe, thrash, wear out." My mother swears that her father didn't know she was dating a black man. "He would have been upset," she says, "but I think if he knew Daddy he would have come around." He was not a bigot, from anyone's recollection. Any person she brought into the house was to be treated with respect, and my mother's friends came from all kinds of backgrounds. If there wasn't enough food, it went to the guest. She has little memory of him saying anything negative about other ethnic groups. But it was the sixties. In Detroit. There had been that riot.

This story wants to be one of redemption. Of a man who crawls onto a deserted beach filled with anguish and regret. Some Anthony Quinn, breaking his fist on the sand with sadness over the loss of his daughter. But of course, it falls somewhere short of that. What we know for sure is that in 1922, a twenty-two-year-old with four-inch-tall pomaded hair as rugged as a rock cliff gazed out of a porthole in third class on a ship headed for Ellis Island. He wore the tattoo of a naked lady on his arm, which he'd gotten years before when the circus came to town. He may have known that once in America, he would become a boxer. He may have been planning to bury fruit trees in winter, to tie together cut branches coated in zinc in spring to inspire the growth of hybrid fruit. He may have known that he would hunt for dandelions along the edges of his neighbor's property to use for salads and sautés. But surely he had no clue that the family he was about to start would move back across the Mediterranean with Africa in its blood.

The plot of *Pinocchio* is familiar, in part, because it involves a man being swallowed by a whale. The Book of Jonah tells another version of this story. Jonah is trying to run away from a task that God has given him: to warn the wayward people of Nineveh that their town will be destroyed unless they ask for God's forgiveness. It is an action plot, in some ways, a divine car chase. Jonah runs from his duty, and God follows him with tempests and whales. It becomes harder to run when Jonah realizes that other lives are at stake.

When the boat he's boarded gets caught in a storm, Jonah tells a group of mariners, "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." In an illustrated version of the King James Bible, there is a rendering of Jonah in the water. He is an old man, gazing to his right. Behind him like a shadow stands the great tail of a whale. It looks as though he is about to be swallowed. But he looks stubborn, willfully ignoring the presence lurking behind and beneath. This image in particular helps

convey the moment I am so fascinated by: my mother and her father suspended, chest deep in some story they've wandered into, not guilty of much, but not prepared to forget or forgive. In this snapshot of time, their relationship is forever about to be swallowed into a dream from which it might never wake.

A whale is a mammal. Synonyms for it include *giant*, *behemoth*, *leviathan*, *mammoth*, *monster*. I was a child of the "Save the Whales" generation. To me, the term connotes a universe of gray, blue, and green. The kind of melancholy you'd find in a Miles Davis song or an art museum. When I think of the sea creature who swallowed Jonah, or the whale from *Pinocchio* who swallowed a father and his long lost child, I don't see an angry monster like Maestro. I wonder about the whale's own longings and loneliness. Emotions for which his body becomes a metaphor.

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