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Capturing Individual Uptake: Toward a Disruptive Research Methodology

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Abstract: This article presents and illustrates a qualitative research methodology for studies of uptake. It does so by articulating a theoretical framework for qualitative investigations of uptake and detailing a research study designed to invoke and capture students' uptakes in a first-year writing classroom. The research design sought to make uptake visible by disrupting habitual uptakes and encouraging students to design their own uptakes. The study employed the qualitative research methods of observation, survey, interview, and text analysis to uncover uptake processes and influential factors that inform them. Ultimately, this article argues that a disruptive methodology can provide much needed insight into how individuals take up texts and make use of their discursive resources.

Ten years after Carolyn Miller reimagined genre as not just form but also social action, Anthony Paré and Graham Smart proposed a research methodology that directs Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) researchers' attention to the different kinds of social action that constitute genre. They suggested that researchers observe and study regularities in four areas: a set of texts, the composing processes used to create the texts, the reading practices used to interpret the texts, and the social roles performed by the writers and readers when using the texts (147). By extending Miller's definition, Paré and Smart argued that to study genre as a social action is to observe regularities in a set of texts *and* regularities in how people create, read, and perform those texts.

Since Paré and Smart put forward their methodology, scholars have continued to study the varied social actions of genre in both the workplace (e.g. Berkenkotter; Freedman and Smart; Schryer) and classroom (e.g. Artemeva; Fuller and Lee; Johns; Nowacek; Soliday). Much of this research has focused on regularities, observing how readers' and writers' uptakes of genre work to normalize and, in some cases, formalize sets of texts, writers' practices, readers' practices, and social roles. This is especially true of RGS research in the first-year writing (FYW) classroom that traditionally focuses on helping students learn conventional uptakes of academic genres in higher education. While the focus of much of this research has been on regularities, some studies also have revealed, although less explicitly and often indirectly, the value in observing moments of irregularity when sets of texts, writers' practices, readers' practices, and social roles are disrupted due to naturally occurring circumstances. Paré, for example, in a teacher-researcher role within his social work writing class, finds that his Inuit students struggled to learn social work genres because their own subject positions as members of the Inuit community clashed with the detached, "professional" subject positions embedded in social work genres. In other words, a disruption occurred as the Inuit students struggled to adopt the unfamiliar and uncomfortable social roles required of writers of social work genres. Paré capitalizes on this disruption to reveal the ideological action of genre, particularly how genres act to normalize particular subject positions and power relations within institutions. Studying natural disruptions in the regularities of genre as Paré and others have done has been valuable in moving RGS research forward, and I contend that purposefully and strategically incorporating moments of disruption into our research designs within the FYW classroom context can be equally valuable to RGS. While a disruptive methodology as I conceptualize it has the potential to affect all four elements of genre, I am interested here in studying what happens when regularities in writers' practices are disrupted.

In this essay, then, I explore the potential of a disruptive methodology by detailing a qualitative research study that I designed to invoke and capture students' uptakes in a FYW classroom. I shift the lens of inquiry from genre to uptake, as introduced to RGS by Anne Freadman, because uptake allows me to highlight the ways in which the

individual as well as genre and context influence how writers take up texts and make use of their discursive resources. I use the term "individual" in this essay not to suggest that people act as totally uninhibited agents within the world but, rather, to acknowledge that while people are socially situated and influenced in many ways, the ways in which those factors coincide within an individual at a specific moment in time is singular to that individual. Explorations of methodology are of particular importance to RGS, and the field of rhetoric and composition as a whole, if we wish to further explore the complex ways in which individual, contextual, and generic expectations and intentions interact. In what follows, I begin by situating my methodology in scholarship on uptake. Then I describe the study's research design and methods as well as briefly share some of the findings. I conclude by considering pedagogical and methodological implications of this study for the future of RGS.

The Challenges of Studying Individual Uptake

Since Freadman introduced uptake to RGS,{1} scholars have adopted it as a heuristic to understand how texts and genres cohere within particular contexts (Emmons 135). This is not surprising given that Freadman adapts Austin's legal use of uptake in speech-act theory as "the bi-directional relation that holds between" texts to analyze how a sentence became an execution (39). With this definition and extended example, she directs our attention to the space between genres and the ways in which texts, genres, and contexts interact within this space to create meaning and achieve social action. For Freadman, a text's generic status is dependent upon a typified uptake. To use Anis Bawarshi's oft-cited example,{2} when a student encounters a text in a FYW classroom and composes an essay in response to it, the student's taking up of the text as a writing assignment and the corresponding act of composing an essay confirms the generic status of the text as a writing assignment. Uptake is of particular importance for Freadman because a text needs a typified uptake to become a genre and a genre needs an uptake to become an action.

While Freadman's and some scholars' use of uptake primarily concerns the textual, generic, and contextual elements of uptake (e.g. Tachino and Ray), other scholars (e.g. Bawarshi, Emmons, and Kill) extend Freadman's work beyond her original scope to examine the human element of uptake. These scholars explore, in particular, the implications of Freadman's assertion that "uptake is first the taking of the object; it is not the causation of a response by an intention"; instead, uptake "selects, defines, and represents its object" from a set of possible others (48). Uptake, ultimately, depends on the act of selection, which, as these scholars point out, relies on people and their actions. Of course, people can choose not to select a text at all or to define it as a different genre than the writer intended, but this rarely happens because how we take up texts is often the result of "long, ramified, intertextual, and intergeneric memories" of uptake (Freadman 40). While the ways in which we can take up a text are theoretically limitless, our uptake of it is influenced by and often limited to the way in which we ourselves and others have taken up similar texts within similar contexts in the past. This power of memory works to make our uptakes automatic and, thus, disguises the role of selection, definition, and representation—what Freadman refers to as the "hidden dimension" of uptake (40).

Attention to this hidden dimension of uptake has allowed RGS scholars to explore what Angela Rounsaville calls the "extratextual aspects" of uptake (n. pg). Kimberly Emmons in her work on the discourse of the treatment for depression, for instance, argues for a reanimation of uptake by studying the individuals who perform it, positing that when people take up texts, they take on particular dispositions and subject positions available in the genres and discourses (133, 134). For Emmons, uptake is powerful because it not only creates meaning between texts and genres but also shapes the subjectivities (and, thus, experiences) of people who take them up (cf. Seidel).

Anis Bawarshi calls attention to other extratextual elements of uptake by exploring its habitual and unconscious nature. Paying special attention to the role of memory, Bawarshi explains that what we choose to take up is "the result of learned recognitions of significance…that over time and in particular contexts becomes habitual" (Challenges 200). In other words, we learn "what to take up, how, and when" as we interact with texts over time (Bawarshi, Challenges 200). Mary Jo Reiff and Bawarshi's cross-institutional study on prior genre knowledge at the University of Tennessee and University of Washington speaks to the power of memory and the resulting habituation of uptake as it reveals that students drew from primarily academic genres when encountering a writing task in a FYW classroom despite having a wealth of prior genre knowledge and experience writing various non-academic genres (cf. Rounsaville, Goldberg, and Bawarshi). The students' uptakes of the writing task in this study were strongly influenced by the memories of the kinds of genres that they and others routinely perform within the context of the classroom, so they performed habitual uptakes, drawing from and composing academic genres. While the students' uptakes in this study may have been influenced by the memory of uptake, they most likely were not aware of this influence. Bawarshi argues that since uptakes become habitual over time, we often perform them unconsciously and deeply hold them as attachments (Challenges 200). In this way, we often do not recognize uptake as an active process that we consciously engage and shape but rather, simply, as just the way

things are done (similar to Paré's observation about genres).

As an often habitual and unconscious process that has the potential to shape our subjectivities, uptake may seem a rigid force. However, as Melanie Kill reminds us, "while uptakes often works so efficiently as to seem automatic, it is nevertheless a process that always involves selection and representation that open it up to intention and design'" (221).{3} Kill, like Bawarshi, acknowledges the power of habitual uptakes but looks to Freadman's assertion that uptake always involves first the selection and representation of a text to find room for the power of people on uptakes. Since uptake depends on selection and representation, people have the opportunity to contribute their own intentions and designs to their uptakes, which may work within or against habitual uptakes. While people's intentions and designs are often not fully achieved because the memory of uptake works to overshadow them and, instead, enforces habitual uptakes, the possibility nonetheless exists, and Kill encourages us to account for the intentions and purposes that people have as they select and design their uptakes (221).

My interest and use of uptake aligns with that of Kill's in that I, too, seek to account for the intentions and designs that people bring to uptake. To do so, I suggest that we need to study not only how and why individuals select, define, and represent texts in certain ways (as much RGS research has already done) but also how an individual's own intentions and designs can contribute to uptake. In other words, we need to examine the processes of selection, definition, and representation (what I'll refer to as "uptake processes") *and* what informs and influences them, including genre, context, and the individual (what I'll refer to as "individual uptake"). Recent RGS research on prior or antecedent genre knowledge has begun to reveal how prior genre knowledge informs and influences students' uptakes of new writing tasks in first-year writing classrooms (Reiff and Bawarshi; Devitt First-Year; Rounsaville, Goldberg, and Bawarshi; Rounsaville) and discipline-specific classrooms (Artemeva and Fox). I suggest an extension of this research that seeks to reveal other factors, especially those that the individual brings to uptake, that inform how and why students take up texts and make use of their discursive resources.

Studying uptake processes and individual uptake, however, presents (at least) two challenges. One complication is that uptake processes are largely non-visible. As Emmons insightfully demonstrates in her work, texts contain traces of uptake processes, but as Emmons also reminds us, textual traces do not reveal the complexity of what occurs for the individuals during uptake. Uptake processes, then, are not immediately visible—and perhaps cannot be entirely visible—to us as researchers. Another complication is the habitual nature of uptake. As demonstrated in research on prior genre knowledge, the habitual nature of uptake is not necessarily a problem for individuals because it allows them to take up texts in culturally recognized ways with ease. It does, however, present a problem for us as researchers because it works to make uptake processes automatic and disguises the individual's act of selection, definition, and representation—the hidden dimension of uptake.

Certainly, the non-visible and habitual nature of uptake present challenges for researchers, but I propose that we can make both uptake processes as well as individuals' intentions and designs more visible by designing research studies that incorporate multiple qualitative methods and pedagogical interventions that work to capture uptake as it is occurring, not just after it is completed in the form of a text.{4} In terms of FYW (the context in which I developed my own study), this would mean examining how a student takes up a text from the moment she first encounters a writing prompt to the moment she finalizes her own text in response. Multi-method approaches are common in RGS research (e.g. Bazerman Speech, Freedman, and Tardy), and they seem especially important as we seek to uncover and capture what are largely non-visible processes. As such, studies of uptake can be site-based—in the FYW classroom, for example—and employ a multi-method approach (some combination of observation, surveys, interviews, and text analysis) so that researchers can analyze uptake as it unfolds from multiple angles.

We also can incorporate into our research designs pedagogical interventions that allow us to more easily see uptake processes. One way we can do so is to follow Bawarshi's suggestion to delay and interrupt habitual uptakes so that students can critically examine the sources and motivations behind their uptakes (Challenges 201). For example, when students first encounter a writing prompt, we can ask them to engage in metacognitive reflections in which they "tell us what they think the task is asking them to do, what it is reminding them of, and what prior resources they feel inclined to draw on in completing the task" (Reiff and Bawarshi 332). In the FYW classroom, we can incorporate class activities and out-of-class assignments that work to achieve these ends. Directing a student's attention to her uptake processes and then asking her to critically reflect on them—either through talking or writing—would allow researchers some insight into an individual's habitual processes of selection, definition, and representation.

To make individuals' intentions and design visible, we can incorporate other more disruptive pedagogical interventions. Specifically, we can disrupt habitual uptakes and encourage students to more consciously and actively participate in their own uptakes. To do so, we might build upon Bawarshi's suggestion to develop writing tasks that invite students to use a wider range of their linguistic and discursive resources (Challenges 202).{5} For

instance, we can provide students with writing assignments that give students specific tasks but do not identify a genre in which students must compose a response; rather, they can invite students to select their own genres based on their own interests and concerns. As I will exemplify in my study, by encouraging students to design their own uptakes and reflect on these processes, we might be able to see more clearly how students negotiate the selection, definition, and representation of a text as well as what influences and informs them.

I recognize that these methodological suggestions create some tension in qualitative studies of individual uptake. I argue that we should disrupt students' habitual uptake processes so that we can study in more detail and in different ways how students take up texts and make use of their discursive resources. Yet disrupting students' habitual uptakes can cause discomfort. Asking students to explicitly and critically reflect on their uptakes processes *and* break their habitual uptakes to design their own can place students in an unprecedented and uncomfortable writing situation. Potential pedagogical gains from disruption, however, can be worth the costs. Students can gain an awareness of their own uptake processes through metacognitive reflections—they may come to see the ways in which they read, understand, and perform writing tasks and how they could do so differently. Students also can engage in problem solving as they learn to initiate and negotiate their own intentions and designs within a writing task. Finally, students can gain a sense of rhetorical agency as they come to realize that they have control over their uptakes and writing. Disruption is helpful for us as researchers methodologically, but it is also potentially helpful for students pedagogically.

Taking into consideration the issues outlined above, I developed a qualitative research study that attempts to not only make visible student uptakes of a writing task in a FYW classroom but also disrupts their habitual uptakes to encourage the students' own intentions and designs. The scope of the study was to examine students' uptake processes and what informs them as well as to analyze their uptakes in terms of innovation and convention. For the purposes of this essay, my next section focuses on how the research design and methods sought to invoke and capture moments of and motivations behind students' uptakes.

A Qualitative Research Study of Individual Uptake

My research study examined the uptakes, texts, and experiences of students in a FYW class. While the study took place over the course of a semester, it focused on the third unit that culminated in an open-ended writing task. I designed this unit to disrupt habitual uptakes and encourage students to design their own uptakes in an attempt to make visible the students' selection and representation of the writing prompt as well as their own intentions. I studied these invoked moments of uptake through multiple qualitative research methods, including classroom observations, surveys, interviews, and text analysis. In this section, I will detail the study's context, design, and methods to provide an example of what a qualitative investigation of individual uptake can look like and to present a framework that others interested in pursuing empirical studies of uptake can build upon. I also will briefly share some findings to illustrate the kinds of data such investigations can produce.

Context

This study was conducted in a FYW class at a large, public midwestern university over the course of the Fall 2009 semester. The class, English 1110, is part of a two-year writing program. At the time of this study, the goals of English 1110 were to promote rhetorical flexibility and awareness by developing students' abilities to: 1) recognize writing situations, 2) identify and analyze the rhetorical components of those situations, and 3) compose texts in response to their analyses and the rhetorical situations. To achieve these goals, students composed a minimum of three formal papers, completed a final project, and engaged in in-class writing. Graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) teach most sections of English 1110.

The section of English 1110 that was the site of this study employed a rhetorical genre theory based pedagogy and curriculum (more specifically, the genre awareness approach advocated by Amy Devitt in *Writing Genres*) that utilized the textbook *Scenes of Writing* by Devitt, Reiff, and Bawarshi. The class was comprised of twenty-two students, 10 of whom volunteered to participate in this study. For all ten of these students (six female and four male), it was their first semester of college. The instructor, Lily (all research participants' names have been replaced with pseudonyms), had three years of experience teaching at the university-level prior to entering the program and was a GTA in her second year in the program. Lily's English 1110 course had four units, each of which culminated in a writing project: writing project 1 invited students to imitate multiple genres from different contexts and then describe the reasons for and effects of their differences among these genres; writing project 2 asked students to analyze the differences between multiple texts written within the same genre; writing project 3 (the one that I developed) invited students to critique a genre and then compose a critique text in a genre of their choosing; and writing project 4 asked students to revise one of their previous papers and compose a self-reflection

piece based on their revisions.

Study Design and Methods

Throughout the semester, I collected all course documents (the writing prompts and handouts for all four units) and the students' writing projects. Lily designed the overall structure of the class, the topics and goals for each unit, and the writing projects and daily activities for the first, second, and fourth units. An essential component of the study's design was the third unit that I created with Lily's permission and feedback, a unit for which I designed the writing project and daily activities and from which I also collected all of the students' written texts (writing project, class activities, and out-of-class assignments). In this unit, students were exposed to the concept of genre critique (defined in *Scenes of Writing* as questioning and evaluating to determine the strengths and shortcomings of a genre as well as its ideological import) to learn how to critique a genre.{6} The unit that I designed worked to achieve this outcome, but it also worked to invoke and capture performances of uptake. As discussed above, I sought to do so by delaying and disrupting habitual uptakes, asking students to critically reflect on their uptakes, and inviting them to use a wider range of their discursive resources.

I designed the third unit around a writing project that provided students with a specific task but did not provide specific genres in which they would undertake and complete the tasks. Specifically, students were asked to select any genre that interests them, critique it, and then present a critique of that genre by "alert[ing] others to one or more weaknesses" and were told "you will choose how you will present the critique" (See Appendix 1). The purpose of allowing students to select, to some extent, their own uptakes was so that I could study their uptake processes. In short, I wanted to see how students would take up a writing task when not told precisely how to do so and provided with the opportunity to design their own uptakes. The self-reflection piece that accompanied their critique text asked students to explore why they chose that particular genre in which to present their critique as well as why they made particular rhetorical and linguistic choices within their critique text so that I could gain some insight into the intentions and motivations embedded within the students' generic and textual choices.

Even though the writing task allowed students to choose their own genres for their critiques and compose their own critique texts, I knew that, given the highly habitual and deeply held nature of uptake within the FYW classroom, most students would likely rely on their uptake memories and choose to compose a limited range of genres. So to invoke more intentional performances of uptake, this third unit not only provided students with the opportunity to choose their own genres but also encouraged them to design their own uptakes through conscious and reflective attention to their uptake processes.

One of the ways in which I disrupted habitual uptakes was to compose the writing prompt in the genre of game rules rather than in the traditional genre of an assignment sheet. Since, as Bawarshi argues, the writing prompt itself is a site of invention that "organizes and generates the conditions within which individuals perform their activities" (*Genre* 27), the game rules genre sought to generate the conditions in which students would design their own uptakes. More specifically, the game rules genre required students to read and analyze carefully the writing prompt to understand the writing task and, in doing so, directed students' attention to their own uptake processes. At the same time, it implicitly challenged their habitual uptakes of what Janet Giltrow, Richard Gooding, Daniel Burgoyne, and Marlene Sawatsky refer to as the "schoolroom genre" (xi)—it demonstrated that this unit would not be "uptake as usual" and would ask for different kinds of responses and actions on their (and the instructor's) part.

Another way in which I disrupted habitual uptakes was through class activities and out-of-class assignments. Some class activities sought to encourage students to use a wider range of their discursive resources. For example, Lily regularly invited students to respond to in-class prompts with freewrites, so on the first day of the unit, Lily asked the students to respond to a prompt with images instead of words. After seven minutes, they then reflected on their experience by considering the following question: "In the past, you have responded to in-class prompts in writing. How did it feel to compose in another medium?" In a second example, students reviewed and evaluated examples of published critiques produced by various professional writers, artists, comedians, and journalists that spanned multiple genres, including posters, songs, blogs, websites, artwork (sculpture and paintings), poems, short stories, comics, speeches, creative nonfiction, video clips, newspaper articles, editorials, academic articles, and academic articles with visual aids for an out-of-class assignment. The following class period, students shared their evaluations of these examples and then generated a "class list" of all the genres that could be used to present projects.{7} The goal of interruptions like these was to raise students' awareness of the wide range of discursive resources available to them and have them reflect on their use (or lack of use) of them.

Other class activities invited students to critically examine and reflect on their own uptakes. Some of these metacognitive reflections asked students to examine their uptakes of the writing prompt. For example, after

students read aloud the writing prompt, they responded in writing to the following three questions: 1) what do you think this writing assignment is asking you to do? 2) why is it asking you to do this? and 3) what kind of student is it asking you to be? Students then shared their responses with each other during a class discussion. Other metacognitive reflections asked students to examine their uptakes within the larger context of the class. For instance, students reflected on the past two weeks since they started the third unit and answered the following two questions in writing: 1) have things felt similar to or different from the first two units? and 2) in what ways and how? Again, students then shared their responses with each other during a class discussion. The purpose of these metacognitive reflections was to help students uncover not only how they come to understand writing tasks and situations but also how they develop their responses to them. As such, these written responses served as valuable data for analysis as they captured elements of the students' uptake processes as they were occurring.

To study these invoked moments of uptake, I employed the qualitative research methods of survey, observation, interview, and text analysis. The survey, administered on the fourth day of the class as a class activity, sought to uncover past experiences, preferences, and perceptions that might inform the students' uptakes. To aid in the development of this survey, I turned to Min-Zhan Lu's discussion of why people might make certain decisions while composing{8} as well as the survey administered by Reiff and Bawarshi in their cross-institutional study. Building off this work, my survey was divided into six sections—Background, Language Background, Educational Background, Educational Experience and Perceptions, Writing Experience, and Educational Objectives (see Appendix 2). In addition to relatively standard demographic information, the Educational Experience and Perceptions section provided thirteen, five-scale Likert items that attempted to uncover underlying beliefs and predispositions regarding writing and the classroom context.

To provide some information about the genres that might play a part in students' habitual uptakes, the Writing Experience section (modeled closely on the "types of communication" section from Reiff and Bawarshi's survey) invited students to identify the types of writing that they have performed in different contexts. In the form of a chart, students were presented with 38 genres separated into seven categories (papers/essays, informal writing, presentations, professional writing, public writing, correspondence, and creative writing) and were instructed to mark with an X which types of writing they have performed and when they did so either "for school," "for work," or "outside school and work." In addition to these 38 genres, students could identify other kinds of writing and reading that they had performed that were not listed in the chart. This section closed with four open-ended questions that sought to uncover student's attitudes toward the genres they have composed by asking them to indicate what types of writing they most and least enjoy as well as what types of writing they think are the most creative and the most conventional.

While the survey focused on the students' past experiences and background knowledge, my observation that began on the first day of the semester and continued to the last day focused on the students' lived experiences as they unfolded. I attended all class meetings, recording what occurred during the class. I observed the class meetings so that I understood the specific context for my study, but, more importantly, observation allowed me to witness and document immediate and visible elements of uptake as they occurred. I was especially interested in the students' initial reactions and responses to writing prompts and assignments. I recorded their physical reactions, such as facial expressions and body language, as well as their verbal reactions in talk, laughter, and silence. Although no observation is wholly unobtrusive (see, for example, Gesa E. Kirsch and Peter Mortensen), I acted only as an observer in the classroom. Lily was the primary and only visible teacher throughout the semester, so students did not know that I designed the third unit and their understanding of my involvement in the class was limited to that of a researcher who was interested in studying their writing.

In addition to the survey and observation, I conducted individual interviews with the student participants one week after unit three concluded to obtain their overall perceptions of the third unit and their retrospective accounts of the reasons and motivations for their uptakes in this unit. I also wanted to provide students with an opportunity to report to me information that they may not have included within their written work since Lily was reviewing and, often, evaluating it. I prepared 23-25 questions for each interview, which lasted for approximately one hour. I developed a set of questions to ask all students (see Appendix 3) and additional discourse-based questions for each individual student based on her written texts generated in unit three and survey information. The common questions asked students to reflect on their experiences in unit three. I wanted to hear how students interpreted and, thus, understood the purpose and goals of the third unit, but I also was interested in the students' affective responses in terms of their first reactions to the writing prompt and their comfort levels throughout the unit. The discourse-based questions probed the students' thought processes as I invited them to explain further why they made particular choices, especially the genres they selected to compose for their projects. I also asked students to reflect on what they meant by particular comments in their self-reflection papers, class activities, and out-of-class assignments and why they made those comments. After completing the student interviews, I interviewed Lily by adapting the common questions. This interview was meant to explore her reactions to unit three and her

recollections of the students' responses and actions so that I could gain another perspective on the students' self-reports and my own observations.

My text analysis focused on the student-generated material gathered from unit three (the critique text, the self-reflection piece, the class activities, and out-of-class assignments) and the interview data. Like other scholars of uptake before me, I conducted an analysis of the students' critique texts so that I could identify textual traces of generic and discursive uptake as defined by Emmons. I used a textual analytical method (similar to Thomas Huckin's context-sensitive text analysis) in which I identified, by way of color-coding, textual traces of generic and discursive uptake of the writing prompt, the writing classroom, and the genres that the students selected for their projects, including forms of discourse, social roles, specific words, phrases, and grammatical constructions. I also color-coded moments where generic or discursive uptakes seemed to be contradicted or resisted as well as where students interjected personal information, responses, or preferences. The goal of this text analysis was to provide initial insight into how students took up the writing prompt by identifying significant generic, rhetorical, and linguistic choices that the students made in their critique texts.

While analyzing these students' critique texts provided some insight into how students took up the writing task, the analysis of the self-reflection papers, class activities, out-of-class assignments, and interviews proved a richer source of data. The analysis provided a more detailed look into how and why students took up the writing prompt in certain ways. For these texts, I did not begin with a coding schema as I did with the students' critique texts; instead, I identified each student's self-reported reasons and motivations for taking up the prompt as she did in her own words. I then paired each student's self-reported reasons and motivations with her survey data to create individual profiles for each student that outlined prominent factors that appeared to influence and inform the student's uptake processes. After I completed this analysis of individual uptake processes, I looked for patterns across the students' self-reports and individual profiles to discover common uptake processes as well as factors that influenced them.

Before I proceed to some findings, let me acknowledge limitations to studying a small sample size of ten students as well as to studying what are largely non-visible, cognitive processes through self-reporting, observation, and text analysis. Any findings cannot be applied large scale and cannot reflect the full complexity of uptake. However, studying ten students in detail through multiple qualitative methods can bring to light patterns and raise questions that future studies can pursue. Additionally, combining multiple qualitative methods allows for a triangulation of data that provides some insight into the uptake processes of these students and how they made use of their discursive resources. For example, pairing the survey information with the students' interviews and written texts reveals what might have motivated and informed students' uptakes. In another example, combining observational data, interview data, and students' written texts allowed me see uptakes processes by tracing the students' initial responses to writing tasks, their textual responses, and their reflections on their uptakes. Triangulating the data in these ways allows for a fuller—if incomplete—understanding of these ten students' uptake processes and what influenced and informed them for this particular assignment in this particular classroom. Most important, these methods enabled me to delay and disrupt habitual uptakes (both the students' and instructor's) in order to make uptake more visible to the students as well as accessible to me as the researcher.

Findings

The study produced considerable data to help in understanding how and why students take up texts and make use of their discursive resources. To illustrate the kinds of data and insights qualitative studies of individual uptake can produce, I will outline three of the more prominent factors that informed and influenced students' generic uptakes of the writing prompt in the third unit. While I explore these factors here as distinct and separate, they are, of course, not mutually exclusive but rather interacting.

One of the factors that influenced students' generic uptakes was their past and immediate experience with the genres they chose for their critique texts. When encouraged to design their own uptakes, students in this study selected a variety of genres, as indicated in Table 1—some of which they reported having had previous experience writing and some of which they did not.

Table 1. Genres that Students Critiqued and Genres that Students Selected for their Critique Texts

Student	Genre Critiqued	Genre of Critique Text
Amanda	Women's Magazines	Magazine Article

Ashley	Syllabus	Business Letter
Bradley	Fast Food Advertisements	Recipe
Derrick	Movie Reviews	Recipe
Lauren	Recipes	Blog
Lucy	CD Covers	PowerPoint
Mallory	Weight Loss Advertisements	Advertisement
Michael	Vehicle Consumer Reports	Recipe
Ryan	Movie Posters	Power Point and Oral Speech
Veronica	Music Magazines	Magazine Cover

Three of the students cited in their surveys and confirmed in their interviews that they had previous experience writing the genres of their critique texts. Lucy and Ryan selected a genre—PowerPoint—that they had composed for school and outside of school and work. Lauren drew from a genre she had composed only outside of the school context, reporting that she had experience writing blogs for work and outside of school and work. Another student, Ashley, provided conflicting reports regarding her prior genre knowledge. She reported in her survey that she had experience writing business letters in school but said in the interview that she had never written a business letter before. Instead she said she drew from her experience writing letters to the editor in the first unit of this course to compose her business letter for this project.

Prior genre knowledge appears to have informed some students' generic uptakes in this classroom but not all of them. The remaining six students did not indicate in their surveys or interviews that they had previously written in the genres that they chose for their critique texts. They were, however, exposed to the genres within this unit. Mallory, Veronica, and Amanda each composed her critique text in a genre similar to the one she critiqued. Mallory composed her critique of weight loss advertisements in an advertisement, Veronica composed her critique of music magazines in a magazine cover, and Amanda composed her critique of women's magazines in a magazine article. None of these students reported previous experience writing these genres, but they certainly had experience reading and critiquing them within the context of this class. Michael, Bradley, and Derrick all composed their projects in the genre of a recipe. The idea for using a recipe arose when students created the class list of all the possible genres in which they could compose their projects. Derrick later explained in his interview that he thought of the idea to present his critique text as a recipe when Lauren brought into class samples of recipes, the genre she was critiquing for this assignment. So while these six students did not have prior experience writing these genres, they did have immediate experience with or exposure to these genres in this unit. It seems that both prior genre knowledge and genre knowledge introduced in the FYW classroom can be taken up by students when their habitual uptakes are delayed and disrupted.

A second factor that influenced students' generic uptakes was their experiences in the first two units because they appear to have shaped how students defined unit three. Some students (Lauren, Ryan, Lucy, and Ashley) saw unit three as a clear combination of units one and two and, as a result, often directly applied Lily's comments on their previous papers and their experiences from the previous units to this unit. Since Lily asked students within units one and two to compose academic genres as part of their projects (and weighted them most heavily in the grade) and stressed the importance of analysis and evidence verbally in class (briefly mentioning it or discussing it directly in nearly every class period) and in previous written marginal comments (approximately one-two marginal comments per paper used the word "evidence" and two-three used the words "analysis" or "analyze" with a total of six- eight comments per paper), some students understandably carried over these experiences and expectations into this unit. Lauren, for example, explains in her interview that "This [unit] is the one I was most concerned about" because "I had some problems in my second paper with analysis…I thought the goals [of the unit] were to not just give your opinion but do it in an intellectual way and give evidence on it to support what you were saying." Given these students' concern with providing "enough" evidence and analysis, they tended to select genres that they had previous experience writing and that they reported allowed them to be explicit about their critiques and explain them in detail, like the blog, PowerPoint, and business letter.

Even though all ten students received feedback from Lily in class and in their previous papers that highlighted the importance of evidence and analysis, other students (Amanda, Michael, Bradley, Derrick, Veronica, and Mallory) defined unit three as distinct from units one and two. More precisely, they explained in their interviews that the primary goals of unit three were creativity and discovery even though Lily never said these words in class nor did they appear in the assignment sheet. For instance, Veronica positions this unit in opposition to the first two, noting in her interview that "It was different and more creative because we weren't critiquing things and then you are writing a paper, uh, like, these are the things you need to write, and it was more like you take it and however you want and create your own critique in whatever way best will describe it." Since these students understood the unit as one of creativity and discovery, they tended to select genres that they did not have previous experience writing and that they reported allowed for creativity in language and visuals, like the magazine cover, magazine advertisement, magazine article, and recipes. Their generic uptakes appeared to be influenced by the previous units, but their interviews and reflections revealed that their uptakes were selected in contrast to, rather than in consort with, the previous assignments.

A third factor that influenced students' generic uptakes—and one that traditional textual and generic analyses are especially unlikely to uncover—was their self-perceptions of their abilities. Lucy, Ashley, Bradley, and Lauren all indicated in their interviews and/or self-reflection pieces that they believed that they lacked "creativity" because they were not that "kind of person." For example, Bradley writes in his self-reflection piece that "Being creative, for me, is not very easy; some people are just born to be creative people and I am definitely not one of those people." These students' perceptions that they lacked creativity appears to have influenced their uptakes—Lucy and Lauren selected genres that they had written before, Ashley selected a genre similar to one she composed earlier in this class, and Bradley selected a genre that was provided as an example in class.

Other students, including Veronica, Amanda, Mallory, Michael, and Derrick, indicated in their interviews a clear desire to demonstrate their creativity, talents, or personality in their uptakes. Veronica, for instance, explains in her interview that she wanted to show her talent for art because she identifies herself as a "very visual person" who likes to draw and be creative. Similarly, others expressed a strong desire to show their personality especially when it came to humor and sarcasm. For example, Michael explains in his interview that he chose the recipe primarily because he wanted to show his personality: "I'm a very open person, and I'll basically talk to anybody. So I want people to know my personality, to know me. So I just want, I don't know, I don't know how to say it. I just want to be out there, and people to know that this is me, this is my work, this is what I did, nobody else did this."

These findings build on previous research regarding prior genre knowledge by shedding light on other factors that appear to shape students' uptake processes in this FYW classroom. More specifically, students' self-perceptions of their abilities, their understandings of the curriculum, and their prior genre knowledge or immediate genre experience all appear to have influenced students' uptakes. By combining textual with qualitative methods and, most importantly, by disrupting habitual uptakes, we can begin to see how students in this class negotiate individual, contextual, and generic expectations and intentions when encouraged to play an active role in their own uptakes.

Conclusion

It is not unusual to study the FYW classroom within RGS research or the field of composition and rhetoric at large, but the disruptive methodology that I propose and outline above is a different way of conducting classroom research. The value in a methodology such as this is that it allows us to see what happens when one or more of the four genre regularities that Paré and Smart outline—sets of texts, writers' practices, readers' practices, and social roles—are disrupted. In terms of pedagogical gains, when these students could no longer rely solely on their habitual uptakes, they were invited to see the FYW classroom as a place where they were learning rather than a place where they were taught and writing tasks as something that they created rather than something that they completed. As Michael, one of the students in the study, observed: "Like with the first and second units, [Lily] did a lot more teaching. And in the third unit, I felt like she had us learning more. She wasn't teaching as much as we were learning, if that makes any sense." Disruption was, at first, unnerving for the students in this study, but ongoing metacognitive reflection on their uptake processes seemed to reduce their initial anxiety and helped them see the active role that they can and should play in their own writing.

In terms of methodological gains, a disruptive methodology allows researchers to see largely non-visible and routinely habitual uptake processes. By disrupting habitual uptakes and encouraging students' active reflection of and engagement with their uptake processes, this study was able to make visible—to some extent—not only the hidden dimension of uptake but also the role of the individual in uptake processes. While the individual is, of course, socially situated and influenced in many ways, this study reveals that there is value in studying how

individuals negotiate these influences because different individuals negotiate those influences in different ways. Uptake is a messy, complex activity that no one study can capture in its entirety, but, as I hope to have demonstrated, we can gain insight into how students take up texts and make use of their discursive resources when we investigate uptakes as individual as well as textual, generic, and contextual phenomena.

To conclude, I will briefly consider some implications of this study for both pedagogy and research methods. This study seems to reinforce the value of Devitt's critical genre analysis approach, which directs students' attention to the relationship between genre critique and text production. The pedagogical approach utilized in this study further emphasized that relationship, inviting students to turn their critiques into written texts. In addition, this study indicates that creativity is a key factor of disruption in the FYW classroom—that is, students turned to their own creativity (or perceived lack thereof) when their habitual uptakes were disrupted. As such, teachers wishing to encourage creativity in their students' writing might consider the power of disruption. Finally, this study reveals that disruption is potentially a useful pedagogical tool in the writing classroom. While, of course, FYW can help transition students into the context of higher education through convention as the course in this study did, it also can help prepare students for new and uncomfortable writing situations in the future through a focus on disruption.

In addition to the pedagogical implications of this study, I also believe it suggests there is much potential for future studies of uptake. Researchers can continue to study uptake within the FYW context, with or without interventions, to further uncover how and why students take up writing tasks in certain ways. We also might turn our attention to other contexts, particularly ones where researchers do not need as much intervention in habitual uptakes to observe an individual's own intention and design, so that we can more clearly see the role that context plays in uptake processes. Even in these cases, metacognitive reflection seems a necessity to capture uptake processes, so future studies may want to more carefully study the role of metacognitive reflection in uptake. Along those lines, I also would encourage the growing interest in cognition within RGS to explore connections with uptake and disruption (see Bazerman "Genre" and Dryer). Finally, while my study focused on the individual, I encourage research that continues to unpack the complex interactions among individual, generic, and contextual expectations and intentions that occur within uptake. Qualitative investigations, whether disruptive or not, of uptake have much to offer not only RGS but also the field of rhetoric and composition as a whole by providing insights into how we make sense of and act within the textual worlds in which we live.

Appendices

1. Appendix 1: Writing Prompt for Unit Three
2. Appendix 2: Student Survey
3. Appendix 3: Common Interview Questions

Appendix 1: Writing Prompt for Unit Three

Critiquing a Genre Rules / Instructions

Critiquing a Genre Game Rules

Average Price: Priceless	Ages: 17+
Playing Time: 4 Weeks	Players: 1

Object of "Critiquing a Genre":

Your goal is to move through the steps of the game by developing a critique of a chosen genre, writing something that shows others why your genre needs to change, and reflecting upon what you wrote to show what you critique. The player who demonstrates the most rhetorical savvy wins the game.

Contents of "Critiquing a Genre":

Your "Critiquing a Genre" game should consist of 1) a chosen genre to critique, 2) a worthy and insightful critique of your chosen genre that you present in a manner of your choosing, 3) a self-reflection piece in which you explain—with detailed evidence and analysis—*how* and *why* you chose to present the critique as you did.

Game Preparation:

You will choose a genre (one that is of interest or is familiar) and critique that genre using box 4.1 in *Scenes of Writing*. You must then decide what critique of the genre you will use throughout the remainder of the game.

Game Play:

The official "critiquing a genre" game rules state that each player must participate in and complete the "game preparation" before beginning the game and each individual step of the game before moving onto the next. If a player fails to do so, he or she will be declared rhetorically unfit and is out of the game. Each time a player completes a step, he or she receives a kindly nod and daily writing points from the teacher. The rules also state that all players must begin the game on October 20th and end the game by November 12th.

Rules for Presenting Your Critique
You will choose how you will present the critique of your chosen genre. Examples of how others have chosen to present critiques will be provided throughout the time of play. The goal here is alert others to one or more weaknesses in your chosen genre.

You must decide on the specific critique of your chosen genre by October 29th. If a critique is not determined by this date, no daily writing points will be collected and you lose a turn. You must have a draft of your critique that you have presented in a manner of your choosing by November 5th. Once again, if a draft is not provided on this date, no daily writing points will be collected and you lose a turn. Sorry, those are the rules!

The final version that presents the critique (along with the self-reflection piece) will be due on November 12th. No extra turns will be provided after this date. The criteria for evaluating the final version will vary according to the genre chosen, although winners be declared based upon quality and clarity of the critique as well as the quality of the final product.

Self-Reflection Rules
You will also compose a self-reflection piece that examines and analyzes the critique you make and the manner in which you present it. You must have a draft of the self-reflection piece by November 10th. If a draft is not provided on this date, no daily writing points will be collected and you lose a turn. The final version of the self-reflection piece (along with the presentation of the critique) will be due on November 12th. No extra turns will be provided after this date. If you fail to complete and turn in all parts of the game, you will be sent directly to jail.

The goal here is to explain *how* and *why* you chose to present your critique, using detailed evidence and analysis. You must be sure to address 1) what genre you chose to present the critique in and why you chose that genre and 2) what choices you made regarding the rhetorical features (content, structure, format, diction, sentence structure, rhetorical appeals) in your created product and why you made those specific choices. Winners will be declared based upon the quality and clarity of the explanation of your choices and use of relevant textual evidence.

Ready, Set, Go!

Appendix 2: Student Survey

Survey

Please answer the following questions. Some are multiple choice; others are short answer. The questions ask for background and contact information as well as past language, educational, and writing experiences. If you choose not to respond to a question, please leave it blank. Remember all collected information will remain confidential and will be stored in a secured location.

Background

1. Name:_____
2. Email Address:_____
3. Age:_____
4. Gender:_____

5. What race do you consider yourself? *Please place an X next to your answer or specify where indicated.*

____ AmericanIndian/Alaska Native ____ Latino or Hispanic
____ Asian ____ Pacific Islander
____ Black or African-American ____ Other
Please specify: _____
____ Caucasian

6. In what country were you born?_____
7. How long did you reside in this country? _____ (in years)
8. How many countries have you resided in? Please list name and length of residence in years:
_____
9. Parent/guardian educational background: *Please place an X next to your answer.*

____ Some high school ____ High school diploma
____ Vocational certificate ____ Some college
____ Bachelor's degree ____ Master's degree of PhD

10. Parent/guardian household income: *Please place an X next to your answer.*

____ under $10,000 ____ $60,000-$79,000
____ $10,000-$19,000 ____ $80,000-$99,000
____ $20,000-$39,000 ____ $100,000-$149,000
____ $40,000-$59,000 ____ $150,000-$249,000
____ $250,000+

Language Background

I am interested in not only standard languages, such as English, French, Italian, Spanish, etc. but also dialects. A dialect is a regional or social variety of a language that differs from a standard language in terms of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Examples include African American English, Southern English, Chicano English, and Pidgen.

1. Number of languages spoken fluently:_____
Please list them: _____
2. First language/dialect acquired:_____
3. Language(s)/dialect(s) used regularly with family: _____
4. Language(s)/dialect(s) used regularly with friends, in workplace, etc.: _____

Educational Background

1. This is your: *please place an X next to your answer.*

____ 1st year at KU ____ 4th year at KU
____ 2nd year at KU ____ Other
____ 3rd year at KU Please specify:_____

2. City, state, county of last school attended: _____
3. Type of school attended for primary education: *Please place an X next to your answer.*

____ Public elementary/middle school ____ Home schooled
____ Private elementary/middle school ____ Other
____ Charter school Please specify:_____

4. Type of school attended for secondary education: *Please place an X next to your answer.*

____ Home schooled
____ Public high school ____ Community college
____ Private high school ____ Other
____ Charter school Please specify:_____

5. What English classes did you take in high school?_____
6. What material was covered in your English classes within high school?_____

Educational Experience and Perceptions

Please indicate with an X the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. My past teachers encouraged me to follow the rules of writing.
   ___ Strongly Disagree ____Disagree ____Neutral _____Agree ____Strongly Agree
2. My past teachers encouraged me to experiment with writing.
   ___ Strongly Disagree ____Disagree ____Neutral _____Agree ____Strongly Agree
3. When writing a paper for a class, one should use correct, standard edited English.
   ___ Strongly Disagree ____Disagree ____Neutral _____Agree ____Strongly Agree
4. When responding to an assignment, one should write a conventional, academic paper.
   ___ Strongly Disagree ____Disagree ____Neutral _____Agree ____Strongly Agree
5. It is important to please the teacher in a class even if you disagree with her or him.
   ___ Strongly Disagree ____Disagree ____Neutral _____Agree ____Strongly Agree
6. It is important to me to receive a high grade in my English classes.
   ___ Strongly Disagree ____Disagree ____Neutral _____Agree ____Strongly Agree
7. I consider myself to be a skilled English language user.
   ___ Strongly Disagree ____Disagree ____Neutral _____Agree ____Strongly Agree
8. I believe that writing can be used to effect social, cultural, political, or economic changes.
   ___ Strongly Disagree ____Disagree ____Neutral _____Agree ____Strongly Agree
9. I feel comfortable taking risks in writing within the classroom.
   ___ Strongly Disagree ____Disagree ____Neutral _____Agree ____Strongly Agree
10. I prefer to follow the rules of writing and write in ways that I already know in the classroom.
    ___ Strongly Disagree ____Disagree ____Neutral _____Agree ____Strongly Agree
11. When offered a creative alternative to an assignment, I would choose a more conventional response rather than the creative one.
    ___ Strongly Disagree ____Disagree ____Neutral _____Agree ____Strongly Agree
12. When another student responds to an assignment in a creative way, I wish I would have done so as well.
    ___ Strongly Disagree ____Disagree ____Neutral _____Agree ____Strongly Agree
13. When teachers offer creative alternatives to an assignment, they grade them differently (and often harder) than conventional responses.
    ___ Strongly Disagree ____Disagree ____Neutral _____Agree ____Strongly Agree

Additional comments regarding questions 1-13:

_____

_____

Writing Experience

Please place an X in the column in which you have performed the following types of writing.

	For School	For Work	Outside School and Work
Papers/Essays			
Summary			
Description			
Personal narrative			
Opinion/position paper			
Book report			
Interpretation of a piece of literature			
Lab write-up/report			
Analytical essay			
5-paragraph essay			

Research paper/report (with information/sources provided)			
Research paper/report (with information/sources you found)			
Informal writing			
Notes on presentation (e.g. meeting, lecture)			
Notes on reading			
Freewriting			
Presentations			
Oral report or speech			
PowerPoint slide show			
Informal oral presentation			
Professional writing			
Business letter			
Resume			
Professional article			
Journalism			
Public writing			
Letter to the editor			
Web page text			
Web page design			
Blog or online journal entry			
Social networking profiles (ie, MySpace)			
Correspondence			
Email			
Personal letter			
Listserv discussion			
Online discussion board			
Blog or online journal response			
Instant Messaging			
Creative writing			
Poetry			
Spoken word			
Short stories			
Long fiction			
Creative nonfiction			
Song lyrics			

Other: Please specific other kinds of writing and reading you do that are not listed above.

_____

_____

1. What types of writing do you most enjoy writing?_____
2. What types of writing do you least enjoy writing?_____
3. What types of writing do you think are the most creative?_____
4. What types of writing do you think are the most conventional (the least room for creativity)?

_____

Educational Objectives

1. Intended college major or primary area of interest: _____
2. Intended college minor or secondary area of interest: _____
3. Plans after college: *Please place an X next to your answer.*
   ____ Enter workforce directly
   ____ Pursue advanced degree(s) before entering workforce
   ____ Work at home as parent, caregiver, or homemaker
   ____ Entry into the military
   ____ Other: Please specify_____

Appendix 3: Common Interview Questions

1. How would you describe this third unit?
   a. What were the goals?
   b. Is this unit similar to what you have done in other classes? In what ways? Or how is it different?
2. What makes a good writing project three?
   a. What do you think Lily is looking for in this writing project?
   b. How well do you think your project will please Lily?
3. What was your first reaction to the writing prompt?
4. How comfortable did you feel with this unit?
   a. Compare your comfort level in this unit to units one and two. Was it similar or different? Why?
   b. How did your comfort change over the course of the unit?
5. If there was a continuum, on one side the most conventional genres for the classroom and the other the least conventional, what examples would you put on either side? And where would you place your project?
6. At the end of this unit, do you feel more or less comfortable responding to assignments in different ways?
7. In the future, do you think that you are more or less likely to choose a less common genre in response to an assignment if given an option? Why or Why not?
   a. Do you think you will encounter more assignments that will give you options? Why or why not?
   b. Have you thought about what genre you will use for the self-assessment piece for unit four? Would you have thought about this genre before unit three?
8. Would you like to add anything else?

Notes

1. Anne Freadman first introduced uptake to RGS in Anyone for Tennis (1994) where she uses a tennis analogy to explore how texts and genres interact within particular contexts to create meaning. In a later essay, titled Uptake (2002), she more fully explores her use and adoption of uptake, and in an even later essay, The Traps and Trappings of Genre (2012), she returns to uptake again to comment on how uptake has been taken up in RGS scholarship. In this essay, I refer to Uptake when referencing Freadman since she deals most fully with defining uptake in this essay and RGS scholars most often cite this essay when referring to her work. (Return to text.)
2. See Bawarshi's chapter Sites of Invention in *Genre and the Invention of the Writer* for his full description of students' uptakes of a writing prompt in the FYW course. (Return to text.)
3. Kill's acknowledgement that uptake is always open to intention and design strongly echoes Bakhtin's assertion in The Problem of Speech Genres that since all utterances are individual, they can reflect a speaker's or writer's individuality (63). (Return to text.)
4. Scholars also have attempted to capture composing processes as they occur. While I do not delve into this connection here, other scholars and future studies may want to explore how studies of composing processes can inform studies of uptake processes. (Return to text.)
5. Bawarshi goes on to specifically suggest designing assignments in which students mix genres and modalities from different contexts and then reflect on that experience. While I do not take up this particular suggestion in my research study since one of the primary goals of my study was to examine how students take up a writing prompt when not provided with a specific genre or instructions, many examples of this suggestion currently exist, including Julie Jung's multigenre texts, Tom Romano's multi-genre papers, and Robert L. Davis and Mark F. Shadle's multiwriting. (Return to text.)
6. Critique, according to Devitt, Reiff, and Bawarshi, "enables you to examine not just how genres function within their scenes, but also how they might support and/or fail to serve the needs of their users within the scenes" (150). (Return to text.)

7. The “class list” included: academic essay, advertisement, movie/book review, wedding announcements, freewrites, song, video, posters, magazines, newspaper article, syllabi, letter to editor, mission statement, video game, game rules, political cartoons, blogs, email, PowerPoint, speech, rubric, recipes, and art. (Return to text.)
8. Lu explains that studying writers’ discursive resources would include considering the writer’s language expertise, language affiliation, language inheritance, “sense of ‘order’ between and across the languages, englishes, and discourses among those resources” (31), sense of self, and “view of the kinds of world and success she and others have had, could have, and should have” (33). (Return to text.)

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