

Chapter 8

Exercise 1

Passages 1 and 2 below show two distinct ways that writers identify knowledge deficits. Inspect these passages and identify the ways in which each one establishes the writer's (or writers') right to speak positively (i.e., by connecting the present work with established concerns) and negatively (i.e., by identifying a knowledge deficit).

PASSAGE 1

Playing off Marx's well-known description of capital as vampire in *Capital, Vol. 1*, Steve Shaviro suggests in a 2002 special issue of *Historical Materialism* on "Marxism and Fantasy" that our preoccupation with the zombie originates out of the zombie's relationship with contemporary global capitalism:

In contrast to the inhumanity of vampire-capital, zombies present the 'human face' of capitalist monstrosity. This is precisely because they are the dregs of humanity: the zombie is all that remains of 'human nature,' or even simply of a human scale, in the immense and unimaginably complex network economy. Where vampiric surplus appropriation is unthinkable, because it exceeds our powers of representation, the zombie is conversely what *must be thought*: the shape that representation unavoidably takes now that 'information' has displaced 'man' as the measure of all things. (emphasis in original; 288)

When our computers are compromised by hackers or viruses, they become zombie computers, and when our financial institutions fail, it is because they are zombie banks. Remorselessly consuming everything in their path, zombies leave nothing in their wake besides endless copies of themselves, making the zombie the perfect metaphor not only for how capitalism transforms its subjects but also for its relentless and devastating virologic march across the globe. The anti-ecological "proliferation of zombie bodies," Shaviro notes, inevitably culminates in "extermination and extinction"

(286)—a final nightmare of exhausted consumption that in our era of endangered species, overfarmed oceans, and Peak Everything does not seem so far off.

But where Shaviro sees the zombie as already identical to the proletarianized subject of late capitalism, I want in this paper to focus on the ways this identification seems troubled and necessarily incomplete.

Gerry Canavan 2010 “‘We are the walking dead’: Race, time, and survival in zombie narrative.” *Extrapolation* 51(3): 431-453, 432.

PASSAGE 2

The cultural value placed on creativity in the arts, sciences, technology, and political endeavors is immense. Creative people have received adulation throughout history (Nettle, 2001). Some researchers have argued that creativity constitutes humankind’s ultimate resource (Toynbee, 1964). Social and technical innovation rely heavily on creative people and processes (Runco, 2004). Yet, despite creativity’s undisputed importance, psychological research regarding creativity remains an academic backwater. Numerous researchers have commented on the relative paucity of either good creativity studies (Guilford, 1950; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999) or parsimonious theories that explain the origin and manifestation of creative behavior in certain individuals. The cause of this neglect may be attributable in part to the historical background of the construct or, more particularly, to problems with definition and therefore measurement. Perhaps what has set back the field for so long has been the relative absence of comprehensive and high-quality measures of creativity. However, growth in agreement on definitions, widely accepted models of personality, and the appropriate use of tests of divergent thinking (DT) point toward a positive future for creativity research.

In this article, we attempted to comprehensively and critically review the contribution of differential psychology to the creativity research literature. Our aim was to attempt to determine by review, rather than by meta-analytic procedures, the extent to which psychometrically assessed intellectual and personality traits relate to and explain everyday creativity.

Mark Batey and Adrian Furnham 2006 “Creativity, intelligence, and personality: A critical review of the scattered literature.” *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs* 132(4): 355-429, 355.

Exercise 2

The following two passages are taken from the beginnings of students' essays. Passage 1 is taken from an "analysis" essay that set out to analyze an object of popular culture (in this case, a zombie brain found in a costume shop) using a theoretical approach (in this case, Classical Marxism). The second passage is taken from a "research" essay in which the student tried to answer a question about a popular type of photograph. (See the Sample Student Essays at the end of this online supplement to read the conclusion in context.)

Consider how each passage works as an introduction. Compare the two passages. What moves does each make? What features of scholarly writing are present? As a reader, how does each introduction orient you on the essay? How does it relate the writer's approach to previous research?

PASSAGE 3

What are Zombies? Amy Wilentz tells us that a Zombie is a perpetual slave. In African religions, she notes, a Zombie was a person who had their soul stolen to be manipulated and controlled. To become a Zombie was a terrifying prospect to those of the Voodoo religion not just because you became a slave, but also because you could not enter into the afterlife as a Zombie. In Voodoo religion, Baron Samedi, the lord of the cemetery, had to dig your grave and then escort you to it (Wilentz). If you were a Zombie, Baron could not allow you to pass into the afterlife. When the French invaded Haiti and forced the Haitians to become slaves, it was said that the slave drivers used Zombification as a tool to scare the slaves into cooperation, and the only way for a person to be returned their soul as a Zombie was to eat salt (Wilentz).

This essay began with a love for Zombies and a rubber brain. My object(s) of discussion are any sort of Zombie-themed brain product. As Wilentz indicates, brains don't have much to do with the historical origin of Zombies, so where does the association come from? In fact, "brraaaiinnss" are a huge part of Zombie Culture today, and the modern Zombie seems to have a proclivity to eating brains. The Zombie Research Society enlightened me as to where 'brain eating' came from ("What Zombies Don't Eat"). It came from the *Return of the Living Dead* film series, a collection of spoof movies from the 80s and 90s, which depicted a Zombie always craving brains. I have

never seen any of this series, but there must have been something memorable about this brain craving Zombie to create such a powerful image of Zombies today. My essay will argue that Zombies are perpetrators of mass production and consumption.

Jayla Marshall 2013 “Zombies as perpetrators of mass production and consumption.” Interdisciplinary Studies 100: Popular Culture and University Writing. Vancouver Island University.

PASSAGE 4

With the rising popularity of social networking sites, selfie photography has become a defining form of self-expression among today’s youth. This style of photography’s popularity has exploded in recent years in correlation with the accessibility of the Internet and availability of front facing camera smart phones, making it possible to easily upload photos straight to social networking sites such as Myspace, Facebook, or Instagram. Their popularity is not only due to recent technological advancements, however. I have applied Jean Baudrillard’s theories of hyperreality and simulacrum to my own understanding of selfies as a member of the generation that popularized this style of photography. In addition, I have found research examining the habits of college students on social networking sites, the most common environment to find selfies. As I will demonstrate, I have concluded that selfies are a cultural product of a generation of North American youth raised to value individualism in an environment that has experienced a contemporary societal shift to become a “culture of the simulacrum” (Storey 193). Selfies simultaneously represent both subject and object: a declaration of identity and an endlessly reproduced image.

Greta Negrave 2013 “Selfie generation: Simulacrum of individuality.” Interdisciplinary Studies 100: Popular Culture and University Writing. Vancouver Island University.

Exercise 3

Compare an introduction from a scholarly article (Passages 1 or 2 above) with one taken from a student essay (Passages 3 or 4 above). Do you notice any differences? If so, what do you think accounts for them?