

Chapter 17: Research Remix: Soundwriting Studies of the English Language

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with Benjamin Flournoy, Katie Furr, Sarah Johnson, Katie Lewis, Angela Meade, Hannah Ray, Garrett Simpson, Kate Vriesema, and Ally Ward

8. Ally Ward's Discourse Ethnography: International Equestrian Center

Ally Ward considers how language functions to establish a community at a dynamic, international equestrian center.

Transcript

[sound of a horse galloping gets closer and then further from the microphone]

Ally Ward: The Tryon International Equestrian Center is a year-round venue for not only horseback riders across the globe but also for horse lovers from down the road. Despite its diversity, Tryon is composed of a community of people that share one specific feature: They all are passionate about horses.

Interviewee: I didn't grow up in this kind of competitive environment at all, but I loved horses, you know, from childhood it never stopped. But the horse phase never went away. *[laughs]*

Ally: The community that is Tryon primarily focuses in English-style horseback riding, where riders compete and share their horses in multiple disciplines.

Interviewee: We're gonna have eight different disciplines that all have eight different worlds around them. *[laughs]* And so it's been really fun to learn about all of that.

Ally: Regardless that riders come from a variety of backgrounds, there's a shared communication and community that exists between them.

Interviewee: Equestrians, I'm learning, especially on the competition circuit, all know each other. Very well. *[laughs]* Very, very, very well. Because everyone kind of has a circuit, so they, especially among the professionals.

Ally: *[clip starts mid-sentence]* . . . how tight knit the community is, they don't explain the jargon they're using and presume the spectators' knowledge of horses. However, at their shows, they have written guides that describe everything in detail, so that even non-horseback riders will understand what they're seeing and hearing and the language used at Tryon.

During my time at Tryon, I observed this close-knit community during their hundred-jumper competition.

[field audio of a horn, dogs barking, indistinct talking plays under the following narration]

However, the competition was soon interrupted by a group of fox hunters on horseback that were herding their fox hounds.

During this competition, I also got to observe audience members. Even people that ride strictly recreationally enjoy watching other riders compete and are very supportive. During these events, competitors and recreational horseback riders come together and really interact with each other. Even opposing competitors are supportive of other riders and will freely cheer for them. As a result, events at Tryon are usually filled with consistent chatter and laughter.

After every rider completed their portion of the competition, the winners were announced, starting with the sixth-place winner and ending with the first-place winner. Even during this phase of the competition, riders were extremely encouraging to one another.

[big group cheer]

At the end of the hundred competition, I got the opportunity to speak with the first-place winner, who was constantly being congratulated on her win.

Woman: Thank you! Thank you, thank you!

Man: Congratulations.

Woman: Thank you!

Ally: Tryon might feel like an exclusive and closed-off community for non-horseback riders; however, that is not the case. Tryon and horseback riders in general, no matter their background, want to pass on their tradition and passion of riding horses to other people. Riding is a tradition and lifestyle for hundreds of people in the U.S. and other countries, and they all want to pass that lifestyle on to others to keep it alive. Loving horses connects these people to each other, and lifelong friends between horseback riders result. Tryon's goal was to keep this passion alive and to inspire others to love horses too, so that riding will not become obsolete.

Woman: *[interview tape starts mid-sentence]* . . . is that people enjoy horses, and that's one of our key goals, is to make horses more accessible, and to do that, you have to have multiple ways to access the horse. Everyone connects to a horse differently. Like, they like doing pony rides, they've ridden a carousel before and they love that, um, maybe they have special needs and are in a therapeutic riding program and love that. Or maybe they volunteer at a therapeutic riding program and otherwise have no other access to horses. So, like, there are so many different ways that we like to involve people here, and we want them to be able to see what they want to see, you know.

Ally: Yeah!

Woman: And have as many things here for them as possible.

[sound of a horse galloping gets closer and then further from the microphone]