

Letter from the Editors

The NU Writing Journal Editorial Board proudly presents “Re/Structure”—a collection of essays from students in the Northeastern University Writing Program.

The concepts of construction and deconstruction take on more complexity when one considers the implications of societal structures on individuals in particular. Though these structures are usually singular and overarching, the differences among people cause them to be affected in varying ways. “Drug Courts: Where We Are and Where We Could Be” explores this concept, suggesting a deconstruction and reevaluation of the current justice system in order to better accommodate offenders who are dependent on alcohol or drugs. Altering structures in this way can allow them to become more geared toward an individual, toeing a delicate balance between accommodating all members and maintaining the integrity of the structure itself. “Rhetorical Analysis of Mathematical Organization and Style in ‘Three dimensions of knot coloring’” underlines the importance of effective structure, suggesting that the style in which a mathematical argument is presented is crucial to its reception by individuals. Similarly, “Adult Language Acquisition” explores the best way to teach language to an adult, dealing with a construction of understanding and a deconstruction of preexisting mental blocks. Structure matters not only in its efficiency, but also in the way it affects individuals differently.

A second major facet of “structure” resides in the concept of tradition. The very notion of tradition depends upon structure in that a continued set of beliefs and corresponding actions depend on consistency and stability in order to be considered traditions. Three selected essays examined the concept of traditions; specifically how certain traditions and customs are being both maintained and altered in order to accommodate a more modern mentality, and traditions do not always provide the best structure for fluctuating societies. In “Defining the Dating Game”, romantic conventions are explored. The piece focuses on drawing parallels between dating customs through generations. Although there are major and obvious differences between going on a date in decades past and going on a date today many of the fundamental principles remained the same, proving that structured traditions can play a role in illustrating that certain values may never change. In contrast, the other instances’, breaking with tradition is a matter of survival. In “The Problem with Theatre in the Digital Age”, our ever-evolving world is reflected in changes within the structure of theaters. Although live theatrical performances have existed for centuries, recently they have had to compete with live digital technologies. This essay delves into how more traditional theaters are being forced to change in order to provide a higher level of accessibility to patrons, proving that sometimes the structure of tradition can be a hindrance. “The Case of the Capital Letter” takes more of a lighthearted standpoint on tradition. The essay breaks down the structure of modern English and questions whether or not capitalization is always necessary in every instance. The author also makes the point that language has evolved so much in our digital age that differing degrees of capitalization comprise a language of its own. Structure plays a fundamental role in tradition, however it can be altered in order to provide accommodation.

The concept of restructuring as a means of restoring accessibility takes on an interesting role in three other selected pieces. Inaccessibility often leads to the breakdown of existing structure in an effort to reform, reconstruct, or rethink otherwise concrete institutions of our modern society.

In Jacob T. Nolan's literature review of "Modern Day Vigilantism," he discusses the concept of taking justice into one's own hands. As a society, we often rely on the police to uphold and administer justice to the utmost degree. What he discusses, however, is the dissolution of institutionalized norms as a result of distrust in the justice system. The breakdown of the traditional justice system and the restructure of this system often prompt vigilante acts, leading frustrated citizens to challenge the monopoly of force belonging to the state. In Crissy Beluk and Dunia Kassay's "Proposal for Peer Mentoring at Northeastern University," they discuss the restructure of the traditionally rigid peer mentoring system to increase accessibility to mental health services. In acknowledging the fact that the university faces a challenge in accommodating the needs of thousands of students, they propose that the existing mental health care system be restructured to include peer mentors to foster healthy peer relationships in addition to mental health professionals. In Caitlyn Hester's piece, "Crisis of Care for the Aging Incarcerated Population: Understanding the 'Greying Issue' of Prisons," she examines the gaps in research on geriatric care in aging prison populations. Understanding the rather unbending quality and availability of medical treatment for elderly inmates prompts a look into the restructuring of a system that has never been historically evaluated or restructured to accommodate the needs of a specialized prison population. This involves breaking down the traditional concept of prison life and medical treatment to fit the needs of a population with separate and unique issues compared to the majority of the population. The breakdown of traditional institutions and the subsequent restructuring of these institutions can be the result of a perception of inaccessibility to justice, proper treatment, or adequate accommodation.

Finally, several works showcased in NU Writing focus on the structuring of a variety of smaller, niche societies. In what ways do the individuals in these groups interact? Do some individuals hold more power? How do an individual's motives affect the group as a whole? These are societal structures, structures that exist because of the cooperation of the individuals within. Some of the structures featured here include the Northeastern students and faculty, a choir, and the graphic design community. "NU Talk," a communications app, examines the traditional hierarchy of a university (Students, Faculty, and Administration) and proposes instead a "flattened hierarchy." The traditional structure involves a chain of command, with ideas having to flow from students to faculty to administration, more often than not failing to reach fruition. This "flattened hierarchy," achieved by use of the NU Talk app, allows for direct communication between all members of all groups, effectively changing the structure of Northeastern relationships. In "The Necessity of Panopticism?" the relationships between individual members of a choir are examined and, as you may have guessed, juxtaposed with the ideas of Panopticism. The motives of individual choir members are explained, as are perceived roles of power and, of course, the necessity of such roles and motives. "Analysis of the Design Discourse Community: Whitney Museum Identity Redesign" focuses on several societal structures and the interactions of their respective members, all in relation to the new logo of the Whitney Museum. This analysis works its way outwards, beginning with some design professionals before moving on to the greater design community, the design public and finally the general public. The analysis spares no one, examining the motives of each group, calling out pretension and potential bias, and ultimately challenging the notion of what success really means for the subjective.