In this dissertation, I build on scholarship in Rhetorical Genre Theory (especially the concept of “genre uptake” as developed in speech act theory and expanded by rhetorical genre scholars to account for the interplays and trans-actions between genres) to trace students’ uptake negotiations and translations in action, paying particular attention to the pathways drawn, managed, and constructed to make certain uptakes possible and not possible. By revealing what gets taken up and what gets set aside or blocked (the uptake remainders), my dissertation research contributes to the development of pedagogical practices that can enrich understandings of genre uptake and performance so that students can make fuller use of writing resources within first-year composition.

Examining uptakes in motion poses methodological challenges, especially since the linguistic, cultural, emotional and rhetorical variables involved are often metacognitive, dynamic, and fluid, as well as embodied, affective, and often invisible. Drawing on methods developed to study genre uptake, knowledge transfer, translingual and transmodal practices, and metacognition, my research examines two first-year writers’ genre uptakes during an introductory “stretch” composition course designed for historically underrepresented students at a large public research university. To capture what gets lost or set aside in uptake, I collected a pre-quarter web survey, assignment prompts, course writing, student video diaries, class observations, teacher feedback, and teacher and student interviews. Additionally, I used technologies that animate students’ writing processes in motion in order to better understand uptake at a micro-level.

My dissertation findings reveal that—in making myriad dynamic and complex choices when writing or communicating—what gets taken up and left behind by students is made possible (or not), in part, by the pathways teachers and students perceive as available as well as the relations (physical, conceptual, cognitive, material, etc.) that hold these pathways together. The results of my study contribute to efforts already underway to account for students’ existing rhetorical repertoires, lived experiences, and diverse meaning-making strategies in order to better support all student writers, including multilingual students and transnational literacies. More specifically, my findings highlight the range of possibilities available during uptake and the possible elements that might block uptake. I offer a new theoretical concept, “uptake remainder,” as a way to describe what can get “lost” in uptake translation as students take up genres. The intervention that my project makes is both theoretical and methodological, offering an approach to studying micro-, meso-, and macro-level negotiations in uptake that operate under the surface. This dissertation has implications for multilingual writers who have more cultural and linguistic repertoires than we can often see. Beyond implications for multilingual learners, this dissertation also has implications for multimodal composition, transfer research, and translingualism.

In Chapter I, I situate my dissertation in relation to Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS), genre uptake, and composition studies and identify theoretical and methodological gaps to explain how my research will address these gaps. I also describe how genre uptake can be seen as a process of translation and negotiation while making a case for “uptake remainders.” Studying uptakes (and remainders) poses methodological challenges, which I will describe in detail in Chapter II, which introduces a qualitative, mixed-method approach to studying uptake remainders and the methodological contributions I hope to make through my research. In Chapters III-V, I will address my research questions by reporting findings on the process in which uptake remainders are formed and the factors that cause them to manifest. In Chapter VI, the implications
section, I suggest how my research findings can influence future research directions as well as practical implications for research and teaching more broadly.

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Status of Research or Work: Completed/published
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