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Technique and content in the works of young artists: A methodological contribution

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TECHNIQUE AND CONTENT IN THE WORKS OF YOUNG ARTISTS:  
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**Abstract.** The authors present a novel data analytic approach used to analyze changes in visual artworks over time. The approach was developed as part of a broader study investigating changes in adolescents over the last twenty years. Drawing on principles of art historical criticism, researchers devised a comprehensive coding scheme that captured both technical and content categories. After establishing inter-rater agreement, the researcher team applied the coding scheme to 414 pieces of adolescent artwork published in a teen art and literary magazine between 1990 and 2011. Analyses of the occurrence of each code revealed notable changes in adolescent creative production over the twenty-year period under investigation. Applying this analytic approach to a portfolio of visual art can yield insights into artworks, their creators, and nuanced changes in creative production over time.

*Keywords:* visual art; methods; creativity

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this article is to introduce an innovative data analytic approach designed to collect and record data about visual artwork. The approach was developed as part of a larger study, the Developing Minds and Digital Media (DM2) Project, investigating changes in adolescents over the last twenty years. The project comprised three distinct phases, which together provided researchers with a broad view into the nature of these changes. In the first phase, researchers interviewed veteran classroom teachers in order to elicit their perceptions of digital media's influence on youth. In phase two, the research team assembled focus groups consisting of other youth development professionals, including camp directors, psychologists and religious leaders, who spoke to their experiences with youth over the past twenty years. Data from these focus groups suggested the existence of various changes in adolescents' experiences of themselves and the world around them that could be traced to the onset of readily accessible and comprehensive digital media.

In phase three of the project, the research team conducted in-depth analyses of adolescents' creative productions between 1990 and 2011. The first of these analyses involved adolescents' literary work: researchers analyzed fiction essays derived from a New Orleans-based high school literary magazine, as well as short stories written by middle school students attending an independent school in the Northeast. Researchers devised a coding scheme designed to assess key facets of students' writing, including distinctions such as characters, plot, setting, and narrative themes. This approach was adapted to investigate youths' visual productions.

The challenge for the research team was to develop a coding scheme that would capture in words information embedded in each image (Batey, 2012). The coding scheme described here

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is rooted in art historical traditions and aligned with rigorous qualitative standards (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

For this investigation, researchers assessed a collection of artwork that spanned over 20 years (1990-2011). The artwork was sourced from a portfolio of youth-generated artwork that was archived at a print publication, Teen Ink magazine, based in Newton, MA. Since its inception, Teen Ink has maintained an ongoing call for creative submissions; adolescent readers submit original pieces of literary and visual artwork for consideration. The editorial staff meticulously archived original pieces that were submitted to the publication via mail from the first several years. An electronic catalog format is used for archiving artwork in more recent years, as submissions are generally entered by uploading digital images.

The research question driving the investigation of youth's artworks was "How have the technical and thematic dimensions of adolescent art-making changed over the period of 1990-2011?" The research team hoped to identify what, if anything, has changed in youth-generated creative productions during this span of time.

To that end, researchers identified, isolated, and analyzed distinct characteristics of each art piece (Summers, 1982). Distinct characteristics, such as *line*, were coded separately from *composition* (Janson & Janson, 2001; Krages, 2005); *background* (Scott, 2006) was coded separately from *subject matter*; *color* was coded separately from *use of light*. The deliberate separation of individual qualities of the artwork made it possible to recognize trends and changes over time in a quantifiable way that would have been impossible if each piece had been assessed in an exclusively holistic manner. By identifying and recording specific elements in visual artworks, this data analytic approach allows researchers to identify change or consistency in a particular area of art production (e.g. composition, use of light).

At the same time, many art historians claim that aesthetics and interpretation are inseparable (Woodfield, 1994). With respect to this tradition, the researchers included four codes that captured an overall descriptive interpretation for each piece (Barnet, 2000; Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011).

### **The Artwork Archive**

In order to evaluate changes in adolescent artwork over the course of several years accurately, an ideal sample set must provide youth-generated artwork from a single, consistent and complete source. The Teen Ink magazine portfolio, which includes 20 years of teen artwork, satisfied these criteria and was thus selected as the dataset for this investigation.

Launched in 1989 and published continuously ever since, Teen Ink's content is based in the literary and visual arts; all content is generated by adolescents (ages 13-19) through an open call for submissions. This content model ensured that all artwork published by this source was within the project's specific age range. By maintaining a request for open submissions since its inception, Teen Ink's editors ensured that all content was user-generated, minimizing outside influence by avoiding the use of a specified prompt or medium in the submission process and thereby preserving the authentic intention of the artist.

As Teen Ink grew its readership, published work was culled from an increasingly larger submission pool. However, the magazine's two primary editors have remained consistent throughout its existence. This detail was important in the decision to secure Teen Ink as the project's sample source, as consistent editors ensured a consistent curatorial eye.

### **Sample Selection**

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While the majority of Teen Ink's visual content is presented throughout each issue as complements to literary work (illustrative works selected because they reflect some aspect(s) of the written piece with which they are paired), each issue also includes a singular page dedicated to the visual arts, titled "Art Gallery." This page includes 5-13 artworks selected to stand alone as an exhibition of visual work. Artworks in the Art Gallery are printed at a larger scale than the illustrative works, and include a credit to the artist and their hometown. While most pieces are characterized as two-dimensional, many issues included photographs of three-dimensional (sculptural, performance, multi-media) artwork.

In general, the Art Gallery did not conform to a specific theme and contained an eclectic and varied collection of art. In Teen Ink issues that were purposefully designed around a theme, such as Valentine's Day or Sports, the Art Gallery did not exclusively reflect these thematic prompts. The Art Gallery has been a part of the Teen Ink layout since its earliest issues and therefore provided a diverse and reliable sample set from which data could be drawn.

Three time periods were selected to determine the scope of our research: Early (January 1990 through December 1995); Middle (January 2000-December 2001), and Late (January 2006-November 2011). The Middle period was coded and reviewed to ensure that a consistent approach was established. The Early and Late periods were used in the research team's final analysis to contrast and compare changes that may have occurred over the 20-year time span. Three pieces were randomly selected from each issue's Art Gallery. Each piece was entered into a database along with the following information: artist name, artist hometown, year, issue, page number.

In total, 177 pieces were randomly selected from the Early sample, 60 pieces from the Middle, and 177 pieces from the Late sample for a total of 414 pieces. Due to the poor print

quality of early issues and the general limitations of accuracy in printing, the research team referred to the original artworks during the coding process. If an original piece was missing from the Teen Ink archive, the remaining pieces on the Art Gallery page were re-randomized and a new piece was selected as a replacement. Adhering to this process allowed the team to maintain objectivity in selecting the sample pieces from the data set while assessing the highest-quality information (original work) available.

### **Developing the Coding Scheme**

Developing the coding scheme (Appendix A) was an iterative process. The first list of codes was generated from the codes used to analyze the literary productions (Appendix B), as well as the researchers' expertise in the fields of fine art education and exhibition. Through careful consideration of recognized formal evaluation criteria for artwork, as well as standards in art education (Janson & Janson, 2001; National Art Education Association, 1994), the researchers identified, described, and refined coding categories and subcategories. These categories included broad dimensions of art critique and categorization, including how the piece was made (medium), in which art historical context it was situated (genre), what it depicted (subject matter), and its most salient features (color, light, composition).

The initial list was drafted into a formal coding structure, which included the organization of the characteristics into two overarching categories: technical characteristics (e.g. color, light, medium, composition) and more holistic, content-based characteristics (e.g. tone, symbolism, theme, and stylistic approach). This combination of technical and holistic codes allowed the research team to observe the nature of the visual data from both a dissected perspective (separate

codes for each distinct component of the piece) and as a completed work of art (the way a typical viewer would take in the visual information as a whole).

Technical codes, like Medium, were relatively straightforward to define. This code is clearly rooted in art history and practice, and the materials are evident for each artwork even when reviewed as a digital image (Lucie-Smith, 2004). Content codes required some degree of interpretation by the researchers, but were designed to include relatively simplistic options for description. This allowed the coding team to assign a code for Stylistic Approach (Sands, 2012) while refraining from quality judgments of the artwork.

A preliminary coding was conducted on randomly selected works of art, and any new characteristics that emerged from this process were added to the coding scheme. The choice to design an adaptable coding scheme allowed the researchers to capture specific and accurate data for each individual piece (Maxwell, 2005). The final coding scheme includes 18 codes and reflects characteristics of the entire randomized sample.

Many of the 18 codes include sub-codes that reflect distinctions within the parent code. For example, Genre was divided into two sub-codes: Realist and Abstract. Within these sub-codes, a list of coding choices was provided (e.g. Landscape, Documentary, Fantasy, Still Life). While the coding choices for Genre were not exhaustive (i.e. Landscape could conceivably be separated into additional subcategories), the 24 designations within Genre covered all of the significant stylistic movements represented in the sample.

### **Applying the Coding Scheme**

Researchers completed a coding memo for each piece of artwork. This memo listed each of the 18 lettered codes, with space beneath for the coder to record his or her code selection.



Researchers referred to the coding scheme, which included all of the detailed subcategory choices beneath each code, and selected from this scheme as the pieces were analyzed.

Responses that most accurately described the nature of the artwork were recorded beneath the corresponding code on the coding memo. For example, a painting that employed neon colors would be coded as “painting” in the Medium section of the memo, and coded as “bright” in the Color section.

### **Establishing Consistency and Accuracy in the Coding Process**

The research team established inter-coder agreement through its careful structuring of the coding process as both collaborative and independent. Beginning with the early sample set, one member of the research team completed a “first pass” (initial) coding. This responsibility was divided equally between researchers, as one was tasked with completing a first pass for selected work from the sample’s even-year issues (1990, 1992, 1994) and the other researcher completed a first pass throughout the set’s odd-year issues (1991, 1993, 1995). This process was repeated for both the middle set (2000 and 2001) and late set (2006, 2008, 2010 and 2007, 2009, 2011). Once a first pass was completed within each set, the other member of the research team completed a “shadow coding” (or “second pass” coding), which allowed the secondary researcher to evaluate the work independently and compare these results to the first-pass coding results.

Because the research team developed the coding scheme collaboratively (Smagorinsky, 2008), using specific and clear terms to define each code and sub-code, there existed very few instances of discrepancy between a piece’s first pass and shadow codes. Where discrepancies did occur, the occasion for disagreement occurred in fewer than 5 percent of the coded artworks. In

such cases, the research team discussed the code in question, highlighting evidence visible within the piece to support their respective coding decisions, until consensus was reached. Engaging in conversation when discrepancy arose enabled the research team to draw upon their collective and complementary knowledge, while maintaining objectivity and adhering to the definitions of the codes. Smagorinsky (2008) details how such discussion can bridge gaps and variations in expertise and experience among collaborative coders.

In order to confirm the accuracy of the lead and shadow coding process, a third researcher completed coding memos for a randomly selected set of artworks from across the sample. After completing this additional coding exercise, the researchers discussed and confirmed that the coding scheme and process produced accurate and consistent results regardless of the individual coder.

### **Analysis of the Codes**

All codes included in the coding memo were analyzed through N'Vivo 9, a software program used for organizing data to facilitate qualitative data analysis. The program allows researchers to run queries on individual codes and combinations of multiple codes; it also provides tools to cross-reference the code results with available metadata information (e.g. year of publication). Queries were run to count the rate of occurrence for each code and sub-code within the three times periods under examination. Coding categories that were thematically associated were sometimes reviewed in tandem. For example, Composition and Background are interrelated features and can provide additional insight into the work if reviewed side by side.

The data proved to be rich with information about how adolescent art production has evolved (see Weinstein et al., under review). For example, the research team found a statistically

significant difference between the ways in which the background was treated in earlier works compared to more recent works. Whereas the earlier pieces were more likely to contain unfinished or blank backgrounds, more recent pieces were more likely to include fully rendered backgrounds. Other changes were identified in both technical (e.g. Medium, Composition, Genre) and thematic (Stylistic Approach) codes (Weinstein, et al., under review). The analysis also highlighted consistencies across the 20-year period, most notably in the Subject Matter code.

## **Conclusion**

Researchers interested in analyzing a large body of visual artwork for specific content and technique attributes will find this data analytic approach useful in conducting their research. The coding scheme outlined here allows researchers to isolate and identify specific and quantifiable aspects of visual expression and in doing so determine precisely how visual productions are changing over time and across contexts. Artistic form and materials are individually noted, enabling the identification of trends that are not immediately obvious to the viewer. For example, by looking separately at Background, researchers were able to draw conclusions about changes in the completeness of visual artworks over time, regardless of medium, style, or quality (Weinstein, et al., under review). Further, a careful study of the subtle characteristics that determine the degree to which a work of art is unconventional – including composition, use of line and perspective – provides a useful way of understanding why it is identified as such in the first place. Thus, the data analytic approach outlined in this paper provides researchers with a rich and nuanced language through which visual art may be both studied and discussed.

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**Appendices**

Appendix A. Visual Art Coding Scheme

Appendix B. Literary Coding Scheme

## Appendix A.

### Visual Art Coding Scheme

#### **VISUAL ART CODING SCHEME**

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##### **A. Genre**

##### *A.1 Realist*

Impressionist  
Cartooning/Anime  
Landscape  
Documentary  
Fantasy  
Decorative  
Figurative  
Folk  
Found Object  
Graffiti  
Outsider Art  
Portraiture  
Religious/Sacred  
Symbolist  
Tribal  
Body Art  
Illustration  
Still Life  
Surrealist  
Psychedelic  
Conceptual  
Architectural  
Photography  
Color Field

##### *A.2 Abstract*

Impressionist  
Cartooning/Anime  
Landscape  
Documentary  
Fantasy  
Decorative  
Figurative  
Folk  
Found Object  
Graffiti  
Outsider Art  
Portraiture  
Religious/Sacred  
Symbolist  
Tribal  
Body Art  
Illustration  
Still Life  
Surrealist  
Psychedelic

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Conceptual  
Architectural  
Photography  
Color Field

**B. Medium**

*B.1 Two-Dimensional*

Photography  
Painting (oil/acrylic)  
Drawing  
Watercolor  
Pen and ink (line drawings)  
Collage  
Mixed Media  
Digital Art  
Printmaking (Woodcut / Silkscreen)  
Textile  
Public Art  
Found Art  
Pastel

*B.2 Three-Dimensional*

Photography  
Painting (oil/acrylic)  
Drawing  
Watercolor  
Pen and ink (line drawings)  
Collage  
Mixed Media  
Digital Art  
Printmaking (Woodcut / Silkscreen)  
Sculpture  
Ceramics  
Textile  
Installation  
Public Art  
Found Art  
Pastel

**C. Color**

*C.1 Palette*

Warm  
Cool  
Bright  
Muted  
Black/White  
Contrasting  
Complimentary  
Limited Palette  
Monochromatic  
Saturated  
Rich  
Varied

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Negative Space

*C.2 Dominant Color*

(note dominant colors here)

**D. Composition**

Balance

*Left*

*Right*

*Top*

*Bottom*

*Central*

*Uniform*

Cropped

Symmetrical

Dynamic

**E. Use of Light**

*E.1 Direction*

Left

Right

Top

Bottom

Front

Back

Central

No Directional Light Source

*E.2 Quality*

Underexposed

Overexposed

Washed Out

Backlit

Translucent

Dramatic

Uniform

Natural

**F. Perspective**

Above (bird's-eye)

Below (worm's-eye)

Eyelevel

Layered

Distorted

**G. Lines**

Thick

Thin



Sharp  
Blended  
Organic  
Structured  
Assertive  
Timid  
Exploratory

## **H. Background**

### *H.1 Rendering*

Fully Rendered  
Partially Rendered  
Blank (No Treatment)  
Single Color

### *H.2 Content*

Landscape  
Cityscape  
Architecture  
Expansive  
Tight  
Interior  
Abstract  
Collage  
Color Field  
Blank (Black/White)

## **I. Repetition**

Scattered/Random  
Uniform  
Linear

## **J. Reference to Historical Artwork**

## **K. Digitally Manipulated**

## **L. Subject Matter**

## **M. Dominant Figure**

## **N. Physical Relationship of Figures**

Close  
Distant  
Touching  
Embracing  
Looking at a Figure  
Looking Away from a Figure  
Object Between Figures  
Space Between Figures

**O. Tone**

Violent/Aggressive  
Romantic  
Mystical  
Benign  
Sinister  
Despondent  
Solemn  
Humorous  
Happy  
Playful  
Narcissistic  
Competitive  
Serene  
Melancholy  
Traditional

**P. Symbolism**

**Q. Theme**

Identity / Self  
Narcissism  
Isolation/Solitude  
Introspection  
Reflection  
Relationships  
*Friendship*  
*Community*  
*Family*  
*Romantic*  
Intimacy  
Nature  
Animals/ Pets  
Urban Life  
Branding  
Fashion  
Entertainment  
Ephemera  
Materialism  
Money  
Spirituality  
Imagination/Fantasy  
School  
Work  
Home

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Play

Age (youth, peers, adults, elders)

Sports

The Body

Mimicry

Cultural Perspectives

Sexualization

Race

Death/ War

Political

**R. Viewpoint**

Conservative

Neutral

Radical / Unconventional

## Appendix B.

### Literary Coding Scheme

#### **fiction coding scheme complete**

**Note: when giving examples in the sections, give one or two and note whether this is all or if there are a lot more.**

**Note: when the first coder is not sure about something and wants the shadow coder to check it – use a question mark (?). The shadow coder can agree and erase the ? or discuss with first coder to reach agreement.**

#### **A. (1.0) - Genre**

- Examples of genre in **fiction** include: realism; absurdism; epic/adventure/saga; action/adventure; comedy (subgenres include black comedy, slapstick); satire/parody; romance; science fiction; fantasy (including magical realism; fairy tale/fable; tall tale; myth; superhero); mystery; murder mystery/crime; historical fiction; epistle/diary/speech/monologue; stream of consciousness; pastiche
- Examples of genre in **nonfiction** include: autobiography/memoir; expository essay; narrative nonfiction (non-fiction written like narrative fiction); lecture/speech; stream of consciousness
- Other broad genres include: drama, prose poem

#### **B. (2.0) - Point of view, voice, & tense**

- Narrative point of view: first-person (“I”)/first-person plural (“we”); Second-person singular (“you”)/second-person plural (“you all”); Third-person (“he/she/they”); Alternating person view
  - (How is the story being told)
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> person: close (we “get inside the head” of only one character), distant (what an observer would see, we’re not in the head of any character), omniscient (we can see inside everyone’s head)
- Narrative voice: Stream-of-consciousness voice; character voice (this and third-person narration are most common: narrator is a person, as opposed to an abstract entity); Epistolary voice (mostly “you”/”y’all”); third-person voices: third-person subjective, third-person objective, third-person omniscient
  - (Who is narrating)
- Narrative tense: past, present, future, conditional (using subjunctive voice: “I would”)
- \*\* make a note of which character(s) is the central focus of the story? In other words, whose story is this? Whose head do we get inside of? \*\*

#### **C. (3.0) - Characters**

- gender, age, other notable features

C.1 - primary characters

- Who does the piece primarily concern?

C.2 - secondary characters

- Who else is centrally present in the story? Secondary characters can be “offstage”: they can be dead, present only in memory, etc.

C.3 - tertiary characters

- Tertiary characters include characters mentioned in passing, characters who pop in for one part of the story, etc.-- basically, characters are tertiary by default if they are not primary or secondary

**D. (4.0) - Setting & time period**

- Setting: Where does the story take place? (i.e., France, 187 Main St in the kitchen, on the moon) Note: many stories have more than one setting
- When does the story take place? 1776? The author’s childhood? A future in which humans live underground and communicate only by tongue clicks?
- Setting aside the ACTUAL setting/time period, what does the setting/time period FEEL like?
- Others forms of technology, such as transportation (cars, wagons) or tools (paper map, sword), would perhaps be noted in time setting (D) as indicators of period.

**E. (5.0) - Temporal span**

- How much time elapses in the course of the piece, both in terms of plot and in terms of time periods referenced?
  - For instance, in *Catcher in the Rye*, the plot events, which take place over a weekend, is a reflection from an unspecified point in time after these plot events happened; additionally, throughout the weekend that forms the bulk/plot of the story, Holden reminisces about events that took place throughout his life

**F. (6.0) - Structure**

- **Note** only when the structure deviates from the norm – norm would be mainly one story, linear, with marked sections, a beginning/middle/end or an introduction/discussion/conclusion.
  - E.g. if a story switches from a narrative and ends with a newspaper report
- What is going on in the different sections will now be noted in G3 – Action/drama/plot
- [*Prior definition: What is the architecture of the piece? Is there a beginning/middle/end? Is there an introduction/conclusion? Is it divided into marked sections? Are there two stories going on at once which alternate?*]

**G. (7.0) - Overall mood / emotion / sentiment**

- What does the piece *feel* like?

### G.1 - Style / language

- **Note** only when the style/language deviates from the norm – norm would be short informal sentences, some slang, some metaphor/simile, some dialog
  - E.g. when there are many examples of a particular element, such as physical descriptions of emotions
- [*Prior definition: Examples of language styles include: slangy, spunky, jumpy, solemn, deliberate, light, flippant, sarcastic, formal, poetic/figurative*]
- *What elements contribute to the overall style?*
  - *How much dialogue is there?*
  - *Elements of style include:*
    - *Diction/vocabulary: Formal, academic, mock formal, old vs. more modern vocabulary*
    - *Sentence structure: Long, formal, informal, short*
- *Other style elements to look out for: metaphors, similes, notable juxtapositions of images/sentiments (e.g. things that are opposites or don't seem to belong together)]*

### G.2 - Humor

- To what degree is humor present in the piece? Is it sparse, moderate, dominant? Does it provide comic relief to diffuse tension?
- Types of humor include: wit, irony, sarcasm/exaggeration, satire/parody, slapstick, language play (puns), black humor, insults
  - Where does the humor lie? In the narration? In the dialogue?

### G.3 - Action / drama/plot

- How much action is there? Is the action tense and fast-paced or slow and meandering?
- What is the central tension/conflict of the story?
- Add in the general plot – what is going on in the different sections of the story (previously noted in F (6.0) structure.

### H. (8.0) - What kind of world / society does the author depict?

- It's likely that this code will relate to others, such as contextual details & overall mood
- Does the author depict a generally positive or a generally negative society?
- What are the specific positive and negative qualities of this world? e.g. Is this a world where people are treated fairly and get their just desserts? Is hard work, playing by the book rewarded, or do the people who cut corners come out ahead?
- Additional societal attributes to look out for: peaceful or violent; competitive vs. laid back; local vs. global
- May also be helpful to judge whether the characters are...happy, fulfilled, lonely, wealthy, poor, ethical, compassionate, intelligent

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- Does it seem as though this world is the author's world, or does it seem to exist more in the author's imagination?
- **Note** the role of adults in the story – do they play a prominent role or not; is this a world of youth only, or are adults part of the world.
- H.1 and H.2 are rolled into H – no longer capturing under those headings, include here if known

[H.1 - How does **author** perceive/judge this world?

- *May not be clear*

H.2 - How do **characters** perceive/judge this world?

- *May not be clear]*

**I. (9.0) - Specialized / technical knowledge**

- to what extent does author use language that demonstrates specialized/technical knowledge?
- instances could be individual words (e.g. “patella” instead of “knee cap”) or entire paragraphs that go into specific detail about a given phenomena (e.g. photosynthesis, the mating habits of a particular animal)

**J. (10.0) - Identity related themes**

- overall, we're looking for how the main characters perceive and experience themselves, as well as how they present and express themselves to others
- try to capture big picture identity-related themes in top-level, e.g. is the author saying anything generally about what it means to be alive (or dead), or what it means to exist as a human being in this world?

J.01 - Emotions / mood

- note any references to the main characters' emotions and/or mood; are they primarily happy, or does it seem they're depressed?
- To what extent are the characters' emotions/mood described or alluded to by the author?
- include emotional suffering/pain

J.01a - Self-Disclosure

- Do the characters share their emotions with others, or do they keep them to themselves?
- If they do share their emotions with others, with whom do they share them, how, and where (e.g. online or face-to-face, public or private setting, text message or phone call)?

J.02 - Self-efficacy / confidence

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- look for references to the main character's sense of personal adequacy/worth as an individual
- could be either general sense of adequacy/worth, or it might be domain-specific (e.g. character may feel that he/she is particularly socially competent or skilled at sports, academics, or the arts)
- high self-confidence/efficacy: being sure about oneself and one's abilities; recognizing one's skills, positive attributes; believing that others have positive opinions of oneself
- low self-confidence/efficacy: self-doubt; not liking certain things about oneself; feelings of inadequacy; discomfort expressing oneself

J.03 - Personal goals

- What sorts of goals does the main character have for him/herself, if any?
- focus on longer-term, general life goals (i.e. don't include a simple goal of taking out the trash)

J.04 - Values / ideals (may overlap with J0.3 Personal goals)

- What does the main character believe in, and how do those beliefs/values influence his/her behavior?
- Is the main character passionate about his/her beliefs, or would we describe character as primarily apathetic?
- Can the values/ideals be attributed to the author or character?

J.05 - Social roles - number & type

- How many and what kind of roles does **the main character** assume? (e.g. daughter, sibling, spouse, student, orchestra member, athlete, political activist)
- How does the main character behave in each role? Are these behaviors consistent with each other, or are they contradictory (e.g. loud, outgoing in one role vs. shy, reserved in another)
- Does the main character keep these roles separate, or do they ever overlap? Do they ever conflict with each other?
- Other social roles in the story can be listed – no particular details needed

J.06 - Packaged / professionalized self

- To what extent are main characters checking off the boxes to create the perception of a well-rounded individual?
- Do the main characters seem to have arrived at an early focus on what they will do with the rest of their lives? (e.g. deciding in high school to become a doctor and as a result taking relevant science classes & seeking relevant summer jobs)

J.07 - External vs. internal self

- Are characters more inward or outward focused?
- note any discrepancies btwn internal & external self



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- External self: Are characters focused on promoting their “personal brand”? Do they seem as though they’re actors in a play?
- Internal self: Do characters spend more time “in their heads”? To what extent are they introspective, self-reflective?

J.08 Self-authenticity

- Do characters strive to express themselves in an authentic way, regardless of whether it impresses/attracts the attention of others?
- Do they strive to be true to themselves?

J.09 - Self-focus / narcissism

- To what extent are main characters self-absorbed, looking out primarily for their own good at the expense of others?

J.10 – Physical self, attributes

- \*\* Take note of whether a character is introduced w/ a physical description \*\*
- How does author describe physical attributes of the characters (if at all)?
- Are these attributes an important part of how the character is depicted?

J.11 – Sexual identity

- Are characters’ appearances or behaviors described in a sexual way?
- Does the story contain sexual elements—even if they’re only suggested?
- Is sexual identity or orientation mentioned?

**K. (11.0) - Relationships**

- for each relationship, record the characters involved & describe the qualities of their relationship
- for relationship qualities, look out for presence & level of: conflict; tension; tenderness/warmth; self-disclosure; trust; physicality; empathy
- note the specific code for power dynamics; are characters on an equal footing, or does one hold all/most of the power in the relationship?
- **NOTE:** for subcodes, distinguish who judges qualities to be positive vs. negative (i.e. researcher, author, characters)
- **Note** which relationships are of most (least) importance or are dominant (minor)
  - E.g. there seem to be no family relationships, whole story revolves around peer relationships
  - Also got rid of three subcategories (power dynamics, positive qualities, negative qualities) include if anything of note under heading

K.1 - Family relationships (power, positive, negative)

K.2 - Peer relationships (power, positive, negative)

K.3 – Romantic/sexual relationships (actual & imagined; include husband/wife rshps here)  
(power, positive, negative)

K.4 - Other relationships (power, positive, negative)

**L. (12.0) - Relationship to/with non-family authority figures**

- look out for references to traditional authority figures, which will primarily be people serving in professional roles, e.g. police, doctors, lawyers, bus drivers, teachers, boss
- DON'T include parents, as they will be coded separately under the relationships code

**M. (13.0) - Mentors / role models / heroes**

- this code may overlap with the Relationships code and the Authority figures code
- focus primarily on individuals who are perceived by at least one of the main characters as a mentor/role model/hero
- look for a character who is admired by the main character; who has expertise that the main character aspires to gain; who provides support/guidance to the main character
- note that the main character may not have met the mentor/role model (could be a celebrity, a deceased family member, etc)

**M.1 - Anti-Mentor / “tor-mentor”**

- Do any of the main characters have someone in their lives whom they explicitly don't admire or view as someone they do NOT want to be like?
- look out for characters who are used by the author as an example of what NOT to be like, or whose behavior/demeanor is set up in opposition to the main character

**N. (14.0) - Reflection**

- Do any of the authors/narrators/characters step back from the action, even for just a moment, to reflect on what is going on or how (s)he feels?
- What does this reflection look like-- is it superficial? vulnerable? Whom does it primarily concern? (Is it mostly about other characters? Does the narrator reflect on his own actions?)
- What is the reflection about? Is it about emotions? Actions? Consequences?

**O. (15.0) - How free / extracurricular time is spent**

- focus primarily on main character/s
- How much free time does the main character have, and how does he/she use it? (reading a book, daydreaming, going online, hanging out with friends, playing sports)
- NOTE: include references to unstructured time, but make a note if this time isn't depicted as free time

**O.1 - Solitude**

- note how much time main character/s spend alone & the qualities of their alone time

**P. (16.0) - Violence**

- look for instances of physical, verbal, psychological violence involving characters
- a sentient being must be the source of the violence

P.1 - Physical violence

P.2 - Verbal/psychological violence

**Q. (17.0) - Pain / suffering**

- code character's pain/suffering

Q.1 - Physical pain / suffering

Q.2 - Emotional / psychological pain / suffering (will overlap with 10.1)

**R. (18.0) - School / education**

- Does the author mention anything about school/education?
- Do schools or other educational environments make up any part of the setting?
- Note the educational experiences and/or attainment of the main characters
- How central is school/education in the lives of the main characters?
- How do the main characters perceive school/education generally? Is it something to be endured, or do they gain enrichment from it?
- Are there any references to positive and negative qualities of school/educational system? (e.g. references to competitiveness, boring classes, bad/amazing teachers, etc.)

**S. (19.0) - Career / jobs**

- Does the author mention anything about careers/jobs, or the world of work?
- Does the main character's work environment make up any part of the setting?
- Note whether the main character/s are employed & what kind of jobs they have
- How central are careers/jobs in the lives of the main characters?
- How do the main characters perceive work generally? Is a job just something that you get to pay the bills, or is it a source of personal fulfillment? Are they trying to contribute to society through their jobs?
- Look out for references to positive and negative qualities of work (e.g. good/bad pay, difficulty/ease of finding a job, fulfillment/boredom)

**T. (20.0) - Religion / God / supernatural / spiritual**

- note any reference to religion or God, as well as the supernatural and spiritual
- How central is religion/god/spirituality in the lives of the main characters?
- note how religion/god/spirituality is treated & how it contributes (if at all) to the story (could be the plot, the overall tone, or both)
- Look out for references to positive and negative

**U. (21.0) - Contextual details**

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- recording the contextual details of the story will likely help us to determine the type of world/society the author is trying to depict
- for each sub-code note first whether it comes up at all in the story; then record how it is treated & how it contributes (if at all) to the story (could be the plot, the overall tone, or both)
- also note whether the author depicts each sub-code in a primarily positive or negative way
- look for interrelationships between each sub-code

U.1 - Technology / Media

- Does technology play a notable role in the story? Note any technology that's emphasized in any way (doesn't have to drive the entire plot). How is it used?
- Note attitudes toward technology (on the part of narrator and/or characters)
- Note any breaks from technology that's of the author's time
  - If the story is in a contemporary setting, simply note that technology is of the time (maybe give some examples, e.g. Sega in early 90s)
  - If the story isn't in a contemporary setting, note the technology that the author uses to portray the time period
  - By Technology we mean: communication technology (e.g. telephone, email, social networks) and entertainment (e.g. TV, iPod). Others forms of technology, such as transportation (cars, wagons) or tools (paper map, sword), would perhaps be noted in time setting (D) as indicators of period. However, each story is reviewed on a case by case basis and the above are not strict rules.

U.2 - Nature / Weather

- How does the author depict nature and/or the weather, if at all?
- Weather: is it benign, violent, disruptive to the characters? is it used as a plot device?
- Nature: what is the relationship between nature and civilization? (e.g. has human consumption, suburban sprawl damaged nature? does the author foreground nature, or civilization, or are they each present to the same degree in the story?)

U.3 - The economy

- may overlap with careers/jobs code
- is the economy strong/weak/unstable, and how (if at all) is it affecting the main character/s?
- \*\* doesn't have to be explicitly about the economy, but any sort of economic activity \*\*

U.4 - Politics / government

- if mentioned, does author portray politics/government in a positive or negative light?
- to what degree do the main characters (and the author) trust/distrust politicians and government?

U.5 - War

- any reference to past, present, future wars
- if war is mentioned, how large a role does it play in the main characters lives?

U.6 - Non-US references

- include any mention of destinations, cultures, people outside of the US context

U.7 - Science / empiricism / disciplinary knowledge

- how does the author perceive scientific progress (is it a good or bad thing?)
- what is the relationship between science & nature?
- include references both to the scientific process (e.g. hypothesis generating & testing) and the knowledge generated from scientific inquiry
- include references both to the “hard” (biology, chemistry, physics) and “soft” (psychology, sociology) sciences
- Does the character take a rational information seeking approach, akin to the scientific method?

**V. (22.0) – Mention of/attitude toward those who are different**

- Is there mention of characters’ characteristics which make them “different” or outside the norm?

V.1 Attitudes toward people who are different from the protagonist/narrator

- How does a character view people who are different from her/himself?

V.2 Attitudes toward people who do not conform to general society

- How does a character view people who do not conform to majority society, whether due to race, religion, gender/sexual orientation, socioeconomic status/disadvantage, or disability? (Note: depending on a character’s identity characteristics, V.2 may overlap with V.1)

V.3 Attitudes about conformity

- Are attitudes expressed about conformity (such as in regard to the abovementioned characteristics?)
- Does the character seem to have a particular view on what conformity should be? E.g. all youth should be ... This should be a world of ...