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## 2020 Harvest Interns at Small Vines Wines as a Discourse Community

### **Abstract:**

The purpose of this experiment was to research the 2020 Harvest Interns at Small Vines wines as a discourse community. The driving questions of the study were focused on the interns perspective of wine and their opinions on the internship. A google form was created with questions focused around the driving questions and sent to the harvest interns. The harvest interns included in the study are myself, Brooklyn and Chip. We each came from different backgrounds, discovered the job differently, and all had different takeaways from the experience. The goals of the community were to learn, master and complete the tasks necessary to the job. The harvest interns were able to learn from the experts in the field, the winemakers, by asking questions and working together. The communication between interns and winemakers would be in formal work orders, text messages, and in person conversation. The final product of the harvest is a bottle of wine that holds the stories of the grapes, the interns and the winemaker's for each vintage. The communication is preserved in the bottle wine waiting to be uncorked and shared with someone new.

### **Introduction:**

A discourse community can be described simply as a group with a common goal and specialized form of communication. Melzer describes a discourse community as a: "community of people who share the same goals, the same methods of communicating, the same genres, and the same lexis (specialized language)" (Melzer, 2014). A group that qualifies to be a discourse community must share goals, have a special form of communication, a way to give feedback to fellow group members, genres related to the goals of the group, a language that belongs to the group, and a level of experience that qualifies members as experts. These components are found in every discourse community and can be used to compare one group to another.

The discourse community that is investigated by this study is the 2020 Harvest Interns at Small Vines Winery. The goals of the groups were to learn and complete the daily tasks. Some examples of the daily tasks are pump overs<sup>1</sup>, punch downs<sup>2</sup>, topping<sup>3</sup>, additions<sup>4</sup>, cleaning, tank

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<sup>1</sup> **Pump overs:** "The operation of transferring fluid, especially in fermenting red wine, from low in the container back over the surface, particularly the cap of floating grape skins" (Boulton, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> **Punch downs:** "is an alternative procedure of submerging the cap during macerations such as red wine fermentations" (Boulton, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> **Toppings:** "additional wine of the same type can be used to refill the container" (Boulton, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> **Additions:** "A treatment or additive is not specifically allowed by the regulations is prohibited until a Constitutional Use Permit is granted or new regulations or interpretations are forth-coming" (Boulton, 2010).

transfer, sampling<sup>5</sup>, and analysis<sup>6</sup>. The platforms and forms of communication for this group were talking in person, texting, messaging on GroupMe, and email. Most of the feedback was provided through discussions in person about an individual or the group's performance. The genres of the group would be wine<sup>7</sup>, winemaking<sup>8</sup> and harvest<sup>9</sup>. The specialized language used between members would be the winery and wine industry specific terms. The level of experience needed to be an expert member would be one year's experience as a harvest intern prior. In this specific discourse community, one member was considered an expert.

The people that belong to this discourse community have very different backgrounds, but all come together for the common goals of the group. The members of the group originate from Alabama, California, Florida and Georgia. The individuals are between the ages of 20 to 30 years old. The educational backgrounds of the members range from high school to bachelors degrees, which are in different majors. This discourse community is the temporary staff of this winery and only works during the scheduled harvest period. The winery itself is located in Sebastopol, CA and is a small, family run production.

I belonged to this community. I was a fellow intern and worked with the group at the winery from August to October. The work environment was dynamic and changing, which also meant that the number of interns needed for the daily tasks was constantly evolving. My experiences with the fellow interns and with the full time staff are included in the research and discussion of the paper. I also have the opportunity to belong to this community again, if I was to decide to work another harvest for Small Vine Wines next year. I also have a background in this genre because I am currently pursuing a degree in Viticulture and Enology<sup>10</sup> at the University of California, Davis.

The driving questions of this research are: What is your connection with wine and how has it changed after this experience? Why did you choose to work a harvest and would you want to work another in the future?

### **Methods and Materials:**

In order to conduct this research, a series of questions were derived from the driving questions of the experiment. These were used to create a google form and were sent out to the harvest interns. Their responses were sent back through google.

Further research on the discourse community was done from the research with the Illand, Waterhouse and Boulton textbooks. The textbooks have been used to define language from the

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<sup>5</sup> **Sampling:** "The general or commercial would be those tests intended to select the moment to start full harvest in a given vineyard" (Boulton, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> **Analysis:** "All wines should be subjected to appropriate analyses during their production and storage to meet the requirements of regulatory agencies and to give the winemaker information to monitor the operations properly" (Boulton, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> **Wine:** "Wine is produced by the alcoholic fermentation of grape juice or must (juice and solids), which results in the complete or partial transformation of grape sugars to ethanol and CO<sub>2</sub>" (Waterhouse, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> **Winemaking:** "the part of enology specifically related to selecting and converting grapes to wine ready to be consumed. The single word is preferred, unless special meaning is to be expressed" (Boulton, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> **Harvest:** "is the irrevocable step linking enology and viticulture. The winemaker and grape growers must closely cooperate in selecting the time to harvest each variety in each vineyard as near as possible to its optimum stage under the prevailing circumstances" (Boulton, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> **Enology:** "The science and technology (and residual artful know-how) of making and processing wine in all of its complexity. The original spelling was oenology" (Boulton, 2020).

discourse community in footnotes of the paper. These resources were also used to describe the more complex details of the winemaking process that may not be common knowledge for someone outside this discourse community.

## Results and Discussion:

Winemaking is a blend of art and science. It requires the analytical knowledge to understand the fermentation<sup>11</sup> process in order to control it, but also requires a finesse of each winemaker's unique artist touch. These can be seen by the winemaker making different choices throughout the process to change the way that these grapes become wine. One of the first decisions that a winemaker has is how to sort the grapes. When sorting berries, they determine what level of MOG<sup>12</sup> and if they want any whole cluster (**Figure 2**). In order to monitor the speed of the fermentation, the winemaker will have measurements of the fermenting must<sup>13</sup> be taken throughout the harvest (**Figure 3**). Common tools for this would be a hydrometer<sup>14</sup>, refractometer<sup>15</sup> and density meter<sup>16</sup>, which are all appropriate choices for wineries. They are fast, relatively accurate and easy to use. Another decision that winemakers have is how to control the temperature of the cap<sup>17</sup> in red wine fermentations. Typical practices of this would be pump overs, punch downs and delestages (**Figure 1**). All of these small choices are used to craft the winemaker's final vision of their wine.

As a harvest intern, the goals of this community are to learn the various tasks from the winemaker and complete them in a timely manner. The daily tasks assigned are typically following out the orders of the winemaker in order to maintain their vision. People choose to become a harvest intern for many different reasons including to learn about the process, to improve one's education and witness the transformation of juice to wine. I chose to work a harvest so that I could gain experience and practical knowledge for the field of study that I plan on turning into my career. Throughout the harvest, I was engaging the winemaker in conversations about their reasoning for various decisions they made throughout the process and how they problem solve when things go wrong. One of my fellow interns, Brooklyn, chose to work a harvest because it was something that had always been on her bucket list because she didn't know very much about it and she had the opportunity to do it when she got laid off from the COVID-19 pandemic in March, 2020. Although the harvest interns all entered at various levels of experience and expertise, the interns all left as expert's as a harvest intern and would be easily rehired as an intern at this winery or another.

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<sup>11</sup> **Fermentation:** "the alcoholic fermentation, the conversion of the principal grape sugars glucose and fructose to ethanol and carbon dioxide, is conducted by yeasts of the genus *Saccharomyces*, generally by *S. cerevisiae* and *S. bayanus*" (Boulton, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> **MOG** (material other than grapes): "contaminants such as leaves in harvested grapes" (Boulton, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> **Must:** "the grape material ready to be fermented. Whole must is usually crushed but destemmed grapes and mut pumps are designed to handle this mash without appreciable grinding" (Boulton, 2020).

<sup>14</sup> **Hydrometer:** "calibrated for sugar solutions is favored over those in degrees proof or percent by volume ethanol, or those using percent by weight such as the Richter, Cartier, Sikes, or Tralles scales, due to the need for analysis in both grapes and wines" (Boulton, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> **Refractometer:** "Refractive index is an intrinsic physical property of a substance. It is therefore a useful measurement to check the identity or to monitor the purity of a substance. For simple solutions, that is, having only one major component, it can be used to determine the solution density and concentration of a solute" (Tissue, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> **Density meter:** "Hydrometers have historically been the instruments of choice for undertaking measurements of Baumé and specific gravity. Electronic instruments, called density meters are now available which can measure these parameters" (Illand, 2015).

<sup>17</sup> **Cap:** "red wine fermentation and CO<sub>2</sub> production are delayed during which a cap of grape skins forms on the surface of the must" (Boulton, 2010).

Throughout the harvest period, the staff was able to taste<sup>18</sup> and smell the grapes during the whole process. On the first day that the grapes arrive, the grapes taste sweet and acidic with very little other flavors detected. As the fermentation began and juice began to produce alcohol, the wine produced many other compounds along the way or picked them up from the vessel<sup>19</sup> that they are being fermented in, such as oak barrels creating vanilla or creamy flavor in wine. This was one of the most valuable and incredible experiences of the internship because in the beginning the juice is something unrecognizable to the casual wine drinker. However, as the juice slowly turns into wine, it becomes something recognizable. It is an amazing opportunity to be able to witness the change in aroma<sup>20</sup>, bouquet<sup>21</sup>, and flavor<sup>22</sup> of the must during the fermentation process. Brooklyn felt that the most valuable part of the internship was this process of: “being able to taste the juice from “infancy” and see it transform before my eyes into something I recognize as being the wine that I am familiar with” (**Table 1**). The harvest interns were each able to learn about the genres that they are more interested in by having the winemaker assign them tasks related to their interests. As a student and an aspiring winemaker, I appreciated learning about the process of developing the grapes to wine on a chemical, theoretical and physical level. However, Brooklyn and Chip were more interested in the sensory changes that occurred throughout the harvest since they are both part of the retail side of the wine industry.

During the harvest period, the harvest interns are able work with the winemakers in a very intimate setting. Sometimes when performing a task it will just be an intern and the winemaker, during these moments the most valuable lessons can be taught. For Chip, he found that he was exposed to “constant learning and mentorship from the Sloans, Byron and even Niclas.” I had a similar experience where I felt comfortable asking questions to the winemakers so that I could have a deeper understanding of every task being performed. There were moments when I was able to seek advice on gaining employment after this experience, their background in the field, and discussing the theoretical aspects of harvest and winemaking. The winemakers are the most experienced and expert parts of the harvest staff, which are able to provide answers to every question that an intern could have. These moments may have been informal but they still have a very formal nature to them because it is always the winemaker answering the interns questions.

However, the communication between interns is very different to that between a winemaker and an intern. The interns will be able to communicate to each other in much shorter sentences and sometimes without saying anything. Once, I worked alongside another intern as we did a pump over on a tank in a seamless fashion without needing to say one word to another. One of the most common aspects of our communication is when asking each other to fetch a certain piece of equipment from the fittings board or another part of the winery. It is necessary to learn the name for every piece of equipment in the winery in order to properly communicate with

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<sup>18</sup> **Taste:** “Strictly, the mouth sensations sensed by the taste buds including bitter, salty, tart (acidic), and sweet. Commonly, the other oral sensations of astringency, body, hotness or pungency are also included” (Boulton, 2020).

<sup>19</sup> **Vessel:** “A wine container ideally would be impervious, inert, durable, strong, easy to clean, easy to maintain, convenient, and cheap. It should impart no flavors or the imparted flavors should be desirable” (Boulton, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> **Aroma:** “The odors in wine related to the grape from which they were made as distinguished from process and aging odors” (Boulton, 2020).

<sup>21</sup> **Bouquet:** “The odors in wines resulting from processing and aging as distinguished from the raw material’s odors, e.g., fermentation or bottle bouquets” (Boulton, 2020).

<sup>22</sup> **Flavor:** “The overall sensory character including odors, tastes, and feelings such as astringency, body, or perhaps “texture”” (Boulton, 2020).

one another. Personally, I struggle with remembering the proper name for each piece of equipment and was constantly being corrected by fellow interns and the winemakers. Another common communication between the winery interns would be asking each other how much time is left in the projects assigned for the day or if anyone needs any help. Oftentimes, someone would start a task and another intern would join in to help in order to make it go faster. The most important communication for our discourse community was to be able to understand the typed tasks from our winemaker that describes the necessary projects for the day. The intern is expected to be able to read a work order for a pump over on a tank that may need an addition and be able to perform this task without any problems. These daily tasks were often very repetitive, meaning the same task on the same tank for the harvest period. So after the first week, the harvest interns had a pretty strong understanding of the daily tasks and were confident in the understanding of the written communication from the winemaker.

The final product, which as an intern you may not get to see, is a bottle of wine. All of the bottles of wine, which we assisted in producing, will be from the 2020 vintage<sup>23</sup> unless we bottled a red wine that aged for a longer period. As interns, we were all pretty young, with one of us below the legal drinking age in the United States. So many of our connections to wine were undeveloped or premature, but at the end of the internship may have completely changed. Prior to harvest, my relationship to wine was defined by connection to my family and our family restaurant. My father, who is a Michelin star chef, slowly taught me about wine through family dinners. We would uncork a bottle of wine and discuss the different aspects of the wine such as the variety<sup>24</sup>, region, and style<sup>25</sup>. After working a harvest, I have learned how much work, energy and thought goes into every bottle of wine. The labor is hard physical work but can be even harder conceptual work because of all of the problem solving. Brooklyn had a similar initial connection to wine, in which she would often open bottles of wine for her stepmother at family dinners. After harvest, she felt that she had a whole new appreciation for wine. Similarly, she had come to realize how much work goes into a bottle of wine. Being able to drink a bottle of wine that you helped produce provides an immense feeling of pride for all of the hard work that went into that harvest. The best way to end harvest, and the way that it ended for us, was being able to take home some of the wine that we made.

Oftentimes, the winery staff would have a bottle of wine together after a hard day's work. When everyone was drinking the wine, people would communicate the sensory attributes of the wine to each other as well as the facts about the wine. It was very common to discuss the region, style, winemaker, variety and other statistical information about the wine. While tasting the wine, it would be common for everyone to take a moment to swirl their glass, sniff, and then taste. After tasting the wine, everyone would contribute to the discussion of what made this wine unique such as the nose and the flavors. Some of the less experienced wine drinkers would use very basic winemaking terms such as good or bad. The more experienced wine drinkers would use more descriptive words for the flavor such as acidic, sweet<sup>26</sup>, tannic, astringent<sup>27</sup>. These

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<sup>23</sup> **Vintage:** "A specific harvest season for grapes and the restaurant wine" (Boulton, 2020).

<sup>24</sup> **Variety:** "A wine named for the variety of grapes from which it was made. By US regulations it must be from a minimum of 75% of the named grape, with additional rules if more than one variety is named" (Boulton, 2020).

<sup>25</sup> **Style:** "The characteristics within a wine type that are intended to distinguish one wine from another" (Boulton, 2020).

<sup>26</sup> **Sweet:** "is usually not detectable unless a wine contains more than 1% sugar. We may sometimes think we are perceiving sweetness in a completely dry wine. The perception may be due to the presence of something else that we associate with sweetness, like honey or butterscotch aromas found in some old white wine" (Meredith, 2002).

<sup>27</sup> **Astringency:** "is not a taste but a sensation, a puckery feeling" (Meredith, 2002).

words are used to describe the qualities of the wine that are only understood by people with a more experienced background in wine.

A bottle of wine is a form of communication from the winemaker to the consumers. The finished wine tells a story of the year's harvest with all of the difficulties and all the advantages. Each grape developed as a cluster from a single flower on the plant, which the vineyard manager cared for. Maybe the vineyard had to survive fires, draughts, or other natural disasters. Once the grapes are harvested and reach the winery, then the winemaker alters the wine, or story, to fit their style, or narrative. The winemaker is able to share something indescribable with their consumers. The wine represents the communication of the winemaker to the consumer to describe the viability of the harvest and the style of the region or winemaker.

The 2020 Harvest Interns offers a look into a very unique, dynamic community that offers so much knowledge to be learned. The people that join this community can have a wide variety of background knowledge in the genre of wine, including some people that have almost no knowledge at all. Yet, at the end of this experience, every intern walks out of the internship as an expert. They acquire knowledge of the overall process of harvest, practical and hands-on skills such as building a pump, and learning about tools used to measure various aspects of the fermentation to evaluate its viability. The winemakers are the people that are the main source of information for the interns and are able to provide the interns with all the information necessary.

**Table 1:** Responses from the interview questions in the google form.

Name:	Brooklyn Bain	Chip Curtis
<b>What was your level of experience before working the 2020 harvest?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drinking wine</li> <li>• Selling wine in a restaurant/bar</li> <li>• Sommelier</li> <li>• Wine retail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selling wine in a restaurant/bar</li> <li>• Sommelier</li> </ul>
<b>Can you write a small summary of your educational and work experience?</b>	I have a BFA in Photography and shortly after graduation ended up working in a small restaurant. I worked my way up from Hostess to Bar Manager, which led me to studying more wine and spirits. I am now Certified through the Court of Master Sommeliers.	Former wine director, B.S. in Hotel Restaurant Management
<b>Why did you choose to work a harvest?</b>	Working harvest was always on my bucket list, a way for me to dive into a part of the wine industry I was less comfortable talking about in detail. Unfortunately (or fortunately), I was furloughed from my management position due to the pandemic and took it as an opportunity to learn something new.	So see first-hand how wine is made, and to make connections throughout Sonoma
<b>Would you be willing to work another harvest?</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>What is your connection to wine?</b>	My stepmom is French and so not only did I grow up with wine being an integral part of their dinner time traditions, but it was my job to go fetch the bottles for them and open them. I opened my first bottle when I was 11 years old. Little did I know, I was being groomed for a future in hospitality and wine.	My connection to wine began as a cook with food pairing, and evolved as I studied the many cultures that make it and even revere it.
<b>Has this experience changed your connection to wine?</b>	This experience has given me a whole new appreciation for wine. The effort it takes to not only get from grapes to bottle is extensive, but then you add all the work, planning, and details that are required in the vineyard before the grapes begin to grow.	I have a greater admiration of the work that goes into making fine wine having now done it myself.
<b>How will this internship help your career or your future?</b>	This industry can be very cut throat and anything you can add to your resume looks good, but it also demonstrates that someone is eager and driven to continue their education and less likely to get complacent and coast. Those are traits that cannot be taught.	It's already provided me with connections to work at Timber Cove, and as Small Vines grows I'll be proud to say I worked their most difficult harvest to date
<b>What did you value most from the job?</b>	Being able to taste the juice from "infancy" and see it transform before my eyes into something I recognized as being the wine that I am familiar with.	The constant learning and mentorship from The Sloans, Byron, and even Niclas (kinda)
<b>What was the hardest thing you had to do?</b>	While I knew it would be a very physical job, I was not quite prepared for the level of continuous labor it required. Especially after having been home and not working for several months.	TBH 943 PN 100%WC punchdown
<b>What did you learn?</b>	I learned that I have only scratched the surface when it comes to learning about wine making and viticulture. One thing that really blew my mind was being out in the vineyard. I knew there were options when choosing different clonal selections of grapes but I had no idea that vines are essentially lego pieces with an assortment of choices (i.e. different types of rootstocks!).	So much, but mainly how little I and other working somms really know about winemaking and the evolution of flavors from vine to bottle.
<b>Any last thoughts?</b>	Other than being an obvious choice for people who are already in the wine industry or studying wine, I feel like this experience (even an abbreviated form) would be amazing for anyone who is remotely nerdy about the beverage.	

**Figure 1:** Harvest Intern, Riley, is doing a punch down on a bin holding a red must while the winemaker, assistant winemaker and fellow intern watch and discuss.



**Figure 2:** The winery staff are berry sorting Cabernet sauvignon.



**Figure 3:** Harvest Intern, Riley, is taking Brix<sup>28</sup> and temperature readings with a density meter from the white musts in the stainless steel and oak barrels<sup>29</sup>.



<sup>28</sup> **Brix:** "Solution property equivalent to that of reference aqueous solutions of sucrose in grams per 100 grams of solution at 20°C. Usually measured by hydrometer (density) or in juices by refractometer" (Boulton, 2010).

<sup>29</sup> **Barrel:** "Sometimes used too generally, a barrel is an oaken liquid container with a double-arched truncated ellipsoid shape made liquidtight by appropriate taper of side units (staves) and ends (heads) wedged together by driven metal hoops. The usual sizes for wine, regardless of region, have been in the range of 190 to 230 L, more or less" (Boulton, 2020).

**Conclusion:**

Winemaking is an artistic and scientific career that allows for people to make unique wines in a style. In order for a winemaker to achieve their goal wine, they are required to effectively communicate the decision made about the grapes from start to finish. These orders come from the winemaker to the intern as an order from personal communication or from a written work order. The interns' communication between each other is used to determine how much teamwork is necessary for each task and to clarify with one another that each intern has a strong understanding of every task performed. The communication shared with one another when drinking a glass of wine is used to describe the qualities that make each wine unique. And the final and most important form of communication for the discourse community is the bottle of wine. Within that bottle of wine, is the story of the grapes, the interns and the winemaker.

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