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### Crochet Discourse Community

A discourse community is defined by ENGL101 as a “collection of people or groups that work towards a common goal through communication.” These types of groups exist all around us. So much so, that we all participate in multiple discourse communities throughout the course of our lives, many times without even realizing it. They can be found in games we play, the places we go, the things we do, and so much more. Like any other community, joining one is a process. Fortunately, social media has eased this strain by acting as a bridge that guides newcomers through the treacherous unknown of something new. Even so, the many different formats and structures found in social media often pose entirely new problems for people attempting to enter a discourse community. A prime example of this problem occurs in the crochet community.

Trying to enter the crochet community can be difficult due to certain pre-established social media genres, unbeknownst to newcomers. Patterns, “slang” for crochet instructions and a crucial step to learning how to crochet, are distributed over a variety of social media platforms, including but not limited to Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Each of these platforms has different formats/structures that suit certain patterns better than others. The audiences of these social media also vary wildly from each other so it stands to reason that the patterns found on

each of these platforms will vary as well. This means that if someone wants to find a specific pattern, they should search for it on a specific social media. This action in and of itself, however, requires knowledge that a newcomer doesn't have. This acts as a roadblock that deters many from entering the community.

Finding the motivation to not only learn a new skill, but to learn it while creating things that you don't truly want to make it incredibly difficult. Adara LoCascio is relatively new to crocheting and she remembers her first attempts with much clarity. She stated that the first thing she wanted to make was a crochet hat for her cat but struggled to find any patterns for it. So instead she settled for a collar. She tried to make it but her heart wasn't in it so she didn't like how it turned out. This resulted in an extreme drop in energy that kept her from crocheting for a few months. She mentioned, "I was very distressed when I couldn't find a free cat hat pattern. I lost motivation." This struggle is experienced by many who are first learning to crochet. When someone knows next to nothing about crochet, the idea of having to pay for a pattern they're unsure about or having to create their own feels so daunting that it deters them from even attempting it. For most, if there is no other factor motivating them, this is where they end their journey. Their view of the future is blocked by the sudden unexpected obstacle and a possible community member is lost.

This roadblock doesn't only stop newcomers from crocheting, it also halts the work of many experienced crocheters who already know they love the art. Starlyn Chitry has been crocheting since spring of 2021 and still finds that she'll "take breaks from crocheting" if she can't find what she's looking for because she'd "rather enjoy what [she's] making and the time [she] takes on it rather than just doing it as a task." Not having a set of instructions explicitly stating exactly how to do what you want to do means that you'll have to create your own

instructions. This makes the process much more time consuming and much more difficult. If the idea of that discourages experienced crocheters, it is reasonable to suggest that it would have an even greater effect on people who are completely new to the art.

While the existence of multiple social media formats causes confusion, there are some that are more crochet friendly than others. Among both beginners and advanced crocheters, YouTube trends as the favorite when it comes to following patterns. In the words of Starlyn Chitry, “I prefer YouTube for patterns because I feel like the creators can go a lot more in depth for the process of how to create a certain project.” It has hour long videos instructing viewers on how to perform each stitch. It also shows them the steps under a camera so that the viewer can follow along at their own pace. Since YouTube specializes in long videos, it has a variety of options for viewers. They can adjust the pace of the video, make it full screen, pause it, add captions, etc. These options create the ideal space for someone only beginning their crochet journey.

Even so, Youtube has its detriments. The long video structure makes it less popular to the general public, especially with the recent rise of TikTok which appeals to short attention spans. The longer videos also mean they require more effort to make, thus resulting in less videos being made in general. As a result, the options on YouTube are increasingly limited. This effects those wanting to learn because “the crocheting community that is portrayed on social media have all these cool patterns then you go on YouTube and you can never find it. A lot of the YouTube stuff is not complex so its hard to find patterns” (LoCascio). When someone becomes interested in crochet, they often want to make something that follows the current trends. Many people post completed projects on TikTok and Instagram, motivating people to follow in their footsteps and

search for the pattern. Unfortunately, the videos on YouTube don't encompass that genre and are seemingly outdated, thus attributing to the loss in motivation.

The variety of social media platforms makes learning how to crochet seem daunting at first sight. Having to search through so many places for a single pattern discourages entry into the crochet discourse community. Even so, 28.8 million people participated in crochet/knitting in 2016 (Morgan). The crochet community is full of people willing to teach and share their expertise, this makes entry all the more possibly despite the difficulties.

Work Cited

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