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You're the Only One Who Knows My True Identity:

How Fandoms Create New Identities for Constructed Language Learners

by

Brianna Peacey

Foreword

This research document was created as part of the fulfillment for a Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies at the University of British Columbia – Okanagan. It is a thesis, which is written under supervision and contains an overview of the research conducted, theoretical framework, methodology and methods used, and results for further discussion. If you want to see the original thesis, it is located on the UBC website [cIRcle](#) here:

Abstract

This thesis explores the intersections between fan studies, feminism, language, identity, and belonging. To do this, I employed community-based research with the online language fan community, Slakgedakru, who spend time learning the language Trigedasleng. Trigedasleng was made for the television show *The 100*, which airs on The CW Network. The members of Slakgedakru consist of both fans of the language and fans of the show. Many assumptions about fans have cast them in a negative light and this research also aims to dispel misconceptions about fans. Fans are more often intelligent, mature, and reasoning than they are portrayed. This is especially true of language fans, who spend their time learning grammar and vocabulary, and, in the case of Slakgedakru, expanding the language. Slakgedakru's international member base emphasizes the importance of online research. This research consisted of two phases: the first included a general survey for anyone learning Trigedasleng and an interview with the language's creator, David J. Peterson; the second phase involved two text-based focus groups, one on the software platform Slack and one on the software platform Discord, both of which Slakgedakru belong to. Throughout these phases, I also conducted participant observation within the general, public chat channels on both platforms. Once these phases were complete, I analyzed the data and found that Slakgedakru is comprised of intelligent, mature fans who are inclusive and diverse in gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. The community itself provides a space where the language, the show, and real-life intermingle and this produces discussion on real-world, complex topics. In addition, members are able to explore their diverse genders and sexualities with a community of like-minded individuals. By accessing these alternative worlds, members are able to re-imagine possibilities for the real world.

Lay Summary

This community-based research was done with Slakgedakru, an online community of Trigedasleng language learners. Trigedasleng was created by David J. Peterson for the television show *The 100*. The key goals of this research were to combat fan stereotypes, contribute to fan studies research, explore ways to do online research, and understand how community and language are tied to identity and a sense of belonging. The methods used in this research, which utilized feminist and identity theories, and fan studies were surveys, an interview, and focus group discussions. I found that Slakgedakru members shared the common interest of Trigedasleng, but also a sense of belonging in the community, which is highly diverse, particularly in gender and sexuality. By thinking about real-world issues through the lens of Trigedasleng and *The 100*, Slakgedakru members imagine how these issues can unfold in alternative ways and make the real world a better place.

Preface

Ethics approval for this research was given by all participants, and The University of British Columbia Okanagan Behavioural Research Ethics Board H19-02189.

Table of Contents

Foreword	ii
Abstract	iii
Lay Summary	iv
Preface	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Figures	x
Acknowledgements	xi
Dedication.....	xiii
Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review	14
1.0 Introduction	14
1.1 Research Questions	15
1.2 Research Background.....	16
1.2.1 Slakgedakru	19
1.3 Constructed Languages	20
1.3.1 Linguistic Anthropology and Constructed Languages	22
1.4 Who are Fans?.....	22
1.5 What is Fandom?.....	26
1.5.1 Media-Fandoms	27
1.5.2 Conlang Fandoms	27
1.5.3 Trigedasleng Fandom	28
1.6 Fan Studies	28
1.6.1 Benefits to Fan Studies	29
1.6.2 Critique of Fan Studies	30
1.6.3 Using Fan Studies in Research	30
1.7 Fan Spaces.....	31

1.7.1	Problematic Fan Spaces.....	32
1.7.2	Positivity Through Fan Spaces.....	32
1.7.3	Using Fandom to Address Real-World Issues.....	34
1.8	Thesis Organization.....	36
Chapter 2: Theory, Methodologies, and Methods		37
2.0	Outline.....	37
2.1	Theoretical Framework.....	37
2.1.1	Language Ideologies.....	38
2.1.2	Feminist Theory.....	39
2.1.3	Identity Theory.....	42
2.2	Methodologies.....	44
2.2.1	Grounded Theory.....	44
2.2.2	Community-Based Research.....	45
2.2.3	Fan Studies Methodologies.....	46
2.2.3.1	Online Fan Research.....	47
2.3	Methods.....	48
2.3.1	Participant Observation.....	50
2.3.2	Phase One: Survey and Interview.....	50
2.3.2.1	Survey.....	52
2.3.2.2	Interview.....	52
2.3.3	Phase Two: Text-Based Focus Groups.....	53
2.4	Data Analysis.....	53
2.5	Summary.....	55
Chapter 3: Results of Phase One and Participant Observation		56
3.0	Outline.....	56
3.1	Participant Observation.....	57

3.1.1	Notes.....	58
3.1.2	Examples	60
3.2	David J. Peterson’s Interview	66
3.3	Survey Quantitative Data	69
3.4	Survey Qualitative Data.....	76
3.4.1	Family, Home, Belonging	76
3.4.2	The 100.....	78
3.4.3	Trigedasleng	80
3.4.4	Why Trigedasleng?.....	82
3.4.5	Experience Within the Fandom	83
3.4.6	Gender and Sexuality.....	86
3.5	Summary	88
Chapter 4: Results of Phase Two - Focus Group Discussions		90
4.0	Outline.....	90
4.1	Text-Based Focus Groups as a Method	92
4.2	Focus Groups	94
4.2.1	Morality and the Future	95
4.2.2	Community and Support.....	98
4.2.3	Gender, Sexuality, and Representation.....	99
4.2.4	Fan Meet-Ups	102
4.2.5	Apocalyptic Content.....	103
4.3	Future Considerations for Text-Based Focus Groups.....	105
4.4	Summary	107
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion		109
5.0	Outline.....	109
5.1	Overall Results and Research Questions.....	109

5.1.1	Question One	109
5.1.2	Question Two	111
5.1.3	Question Three	112
5.2	Contributions to Fan Studies.....	113
5.2.1	Methods	113
5.2.2	Fan Scholars	114
5.2.3	Reflexivity	115
5.3	The Broader Picture	116
5.3.1	Fans as a Whole.....	117
5.3.2	Feminist Studies	118
5.3.3	Language and Belonging	118
5.4	Potential Limits and Strengths	119
5.5	Directions for Future Research	121
5.6	Conclusion.....	123
	Bibliography.....	125
	Appendices.....	130
	Appendix A: Advertisements for Survey.....	130
	Appendix B: Poster for Survey	131
	Appendix C: Advertisement for Focus Groups.....	132
	Appendix D: Survey Questions.....	133
	Appendix E: David J. Peterson’s Interview Questions	138
	Appendix F: Focus Group OpeningClosing Remarks and Questions.....	139
	Appendix G: Letter of Research Approval from Slakgedakru	141

List of Figures

Figure 1: Showing how active members are outside of channels.	19
Figure 2: A member showing appreciation for the sense of community.	61
Figure 3: Members showing support.	62
Figure 4: A pronoun visualization created by a community member.	63
Figure 5: A discussion on pronunciation.	63
Figure 6: Members creating a new word.	64
Figure 7: Members creating a new word.	64
Figure 8: Members creating a new word.	65
Figure 9: Member’s nationalities and ethnicities.	70
Figure 10: A visualization of members’ genders.	71
Figure 11: A visualization of members’ sexualities.	72
Figure 12: Members’ income levels.	72
Figure 13: Members’ education levels.	73
Figure 14: Member’s areas of employment.	74
Figure 15: Skills members have gained.	75
Figure 16: Languages that members are learning.	76
Figure 17: Members’ conversational/spoken fluency.	80
Figure 18: Members’ writing/reading fluency.	80

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I'd cite you, so here is a completely out of context quote: "These were unexpected, powerful moments" (Achilles 2018, 97). Thank you, friend, mate, for always being there for me.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to fans who have found or are still seeking a place to belong within their fandom.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

1.0 Introduction

I spent my childhood sitting on the floor, playing Super Nintendo, or competing against my siblings and friends in Halo matches. At dinner, we would sometimes be allowed to set up TV trays and step into the world of *Star Wars* or *The Chronicles of Riddick*. Every weekend we read books about characters in new worlds, rather than books about homework. These worlds fascinated me, partly because they were so exciting, but also because they opened up a new way of thinking about my own world. I remember one evening in particular: my sister and I were allowed to stay up late and watch the movie *Riddick*, that stars Vin Diesel as the heroic semi-villain. I remember this specifically because all the other characters believed he was, in some sense, evil. In fact, he ends up being the hero – not because he was nice or because he obeyed rules, but because he was practical and caring. Characters like this have always been interesting to me because they allowed me to understand humans on a deeper level. I understood that what's on the surface isn't the whole and that there is so much more depth and context to these characters and the worlds that they live in, and, in our own world. In my research, I wanted to explore the ways that these worlds impacted others and how participating in fan activities, fandoms, and fan communities shaped identity and understandings of the world for other people. In this chapter, I explain my research questions and background, as well as the background of the community that my research is with. I follow this by detailing what a conlang¹ is, what a fan is, and what a fandom is. The chapter then outlines the field of fan studies and future chapters.

¹ Conlangs are also sometimes referred to as created languages, invented languages, artificial languages, or fictional languages.

My research was with a community called Slakgedakru.² This community consists of language fans and language learners. They learn the language that was created for the television series *The 100*, called Trigedasleng. This language is spoken by grounders, a group of apocalyptic survivors from *The 100*, who live on Earth. The language originated from English and evolved over time to become its own language. Members of the community spend time learning this language, expanding the language, and helping each other translate texts, among other things. In addition, these fans engage with topics based on their experiences in their real lives. Members live all over the world and meet in a virtual space. Appadurai (1996) says that "...fantasy is now a social practice" (54) and for Slakgedakru, this is true. They use *The 100* and Trigedasleng to explore real-world topics related to their own political and social struggles. Many members of Slakgedakru are also fans of the show, and dedicate time to fan-based activities separate from their language activities. I will expand on these throughout the chapter.

1.1 Research Questions

My approach to this research began through a general interest in language and the mediated world. My educational background is linguistic anthropology, which I use as a basis for all of my analysis, in addition to feminist theory, identity theory, and grounded theory (outlined in Chapter Two). Using an interdisciplinary approach has been helpful because fan studies is often situated within other disciplines but does not have its own core methodology. My research also utilized linguistic anthropology, including theoretical and methodological aspects, which are less prevalent in cultural studies, where fan studies often exists. As well, I have included reflexivity in my approach, which is tied to anthropology. However, Evans and Stasi (2014) suggest using

² Slakgedakru is the name of the community, also referred to by members as Slakkru. The name breaks down into Slak, Geda, and Kru. Slak has a double meaning here – it was used because of the Slack software *and* because of the Trigedasleng meaning, which is easy, easy going, or open. Geda means nation or together and Kru means people.

reflexivity for fan studies through reflections on power, new forms of knowledge production, and fan (or fan researcher) representation (14).

This research focuses on three key questions:

1. What are fans' social and political motivations for learning Trigedasleng, and are these indicative of broader social power relations?
2. How does participation in this community (through learning, art, cosplay, etc.) affect one's sense of belonging or connection, and how does this play a role in the larger themes of identity, gender, and language?
3. In what ways can constructed languages, their fandoms, and their universes, allow us to explore complicated ideas in an alternative space (beyond our real world)?

These questions were developed out of my own research interests, and adapted based on my participant observation in the community, which I will discuss in Chapter 3. I wanted to capture the values and interests of Slakgedakru in order to benefit them through this research. When speaking of community-based research, Margaret R. Boyd (2014) notes, “[l]earning is co-created rather than unidirectional...” (4). In Slakgedakru, the language is learned and evolved in a collaborative way. I was invited to see this community and their fandom as a potential research topic by David J. Peterson, the language creator and a member of Slakgedakru. As well, once I entered into the community, many members were particularly keen to participate in this research and helped me create my research tools. The administrators were especially helpful with facilitating and continuously providing feedback throughout my research.

1.2 Research Background

The 100 is a science fiction television series on The CW network. The plot of the show begins in space, after a post-apocalyptic event occurred and several people managed to escape onto a shared space station. The resources on this station begin to run out after 97 years, earlier than the expected recuperation of planet Earth. Not knowing if the planet is habitable, the authorities on

the ship debate whether or not they need to cull some of their population. Instead, they send 100 juvenile delinquents down to Earth's surface to see if it is ready for habitation.

On the station, if someone commits a bad enough crime, they are "floated," or jettisoned into space. Since a death sentence is considered too extreme for minors, the community incarcerates minors until their 18th birthday, when they hold a trial to see if the individuals are able to incorporate themselves back into society. The 100 juvenile delinquents are the minors that are currently in custody and the group is comprised of children between approximately 10 years and 17 years old. The main character, Clarke, is one of the older minors. Her mother sat in a high position of power and tries to explain to her daughter that this is a chance for them to start again rather than risk being floated.

After being jettisoned down to Earth, the 100 find that Earth is, in fact, habitable. These minors are fitted with a technological bracelet which transmits information about their vitals up to the space station, and after a short period of time they began to remove them in order to gain freedom from their prison. Clarke, being the daughter of a more prominent family, tries to stop them so that her mother will know it's safe to come down. However, she soon learns that her mother aided in her father's demise and her bracelet comes off too. Everyone on the space station is concerned that the children are dying due to the dangers on the ground.

At the end of the first season, the 100 encounter another group of people and realize that not everyone perished in the apocalypse. These people are called the grounders (by the 100) and they speak a language called Trigedasleng (Trig). The 100 later find out that there were two groups of

survivors, one living underground and one on top that are both alive still. Those underground speak English, and those up top modified English in order to speak privately. Trigedasleng originated from English and developed similarly to a creole³, but is missing the language contact required for a creole to exist since it is purely from English origin. Many words were purposely altered by the grounders in order to confuse enemies, such as the word for sleep: *Rid op* which comes from read up. Other words sound similar to English, but have different meaning: *Ai hod yu in* which means I love you, from I hold you in. While this might make certain pieces of the language easier to comprehend for an English speaker, the two languages are not mutually intelligible. This means that you cannot easily understand one because you know the other. When Trigedasleng is spoken in conversation, an English speaker would only pick up on a few words, and, even then, they might be coded for secrecy.

The language's creator, David J. Peterson, was contracted by the CW to make a language for the grounder people. I met David at a screening of the film "Conlanging: The Art of Crafting Tongues", which I helped facilitate. David explained to me that he knew of a large community who were learning Trigedasleng together, the largest group he had come across for any of his invented languages. This was surprising, considering the popularity of Game of Thrones, which he developed several languages for. This prompted me to explore what was different about this community and they later became the focus of my research. At this time, I was also a fan of *The 100* and because of this, I was very interested in the Slakgedakru. David participates in Slakgedakru as a support for their language development, but he is reserved in his participation

³A creole is formed when two languages come into contact and form a new language over a period of time. These languages often consist of one dominant language and one secondary language. The dominant language makes up most of the grammar and vocabulary. Trigedasleng developed over time solely from English, changing specific pieces but keeping the dominant language (English) as its core, but a secondary language was never introduced.

so that members are able to explore what they know or want for Trigedasleng on their own (see Chapter Three for more details).

1.2.1 Slakgedakru

Slakgedakru, the online community of Trigedasleng learners, developed from a group of fans who shared a desire to learn Trigedasleng. At first, many of the interactions within this community were done on social media platforms. Several of them realized that there was a large community and decided to create a Slack⁴ account which would be open to anyone interested in learning Trigedasleng. Over time, the Slack community grew and now boasts over 600 members, although not all of them are active. By this, I mean that some people actively participate through public posts, some through private messaging, and some through lurking, while others join but don't participate on a regular basis. As you can see in Figure 15, the majority of activity takes place in private messaging.

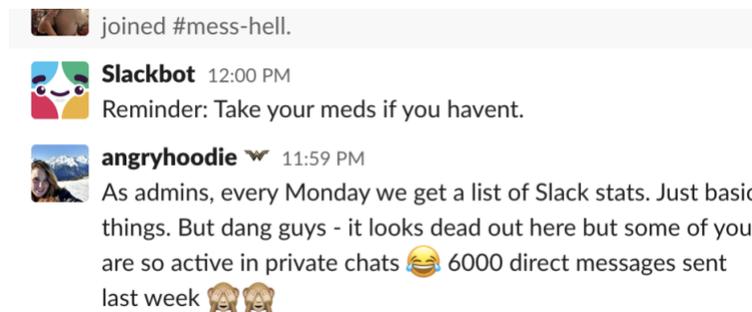


Figure 1: Showing how active members are outside of channels.

Slakgedakru extends to social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram, and has recently also begun a Discord. Discord is similar to Slack in function and both have advantages and disadvantages. For example, Slack has the ability to make threads which organize chatter more

⁴ Slack is a software platform that allows users to chat through written text (and in some cases through voice) in a variety of chat channels. The account acts as a hub for all of the available channels and is only accessible to members with a Slack account.

⁵ All of the participants in each figure gave permission for the figure to be shared in this thesis.

effectively, while Discord has easily operated voice chat channels. Several members chose to stay on Slack only, while others opted to join Discord and some use both; a lot of new members have joined on Discord since it originated. A few admins are on both platforms and transfer important information between the two as needed. Most of the necessary language information is accessible on Trigedasleng.net or the Wiki page, so it isn't required to be on one platform over another. The only real requirement of joining the community is a shared interest in Trigedasleng.

1.3 Constructed Languages

A constructed language, like Klingon, the language created for the media series *Star Trek*, or Trigedasleng, is "...a consciously invented language that had been brought to life" (Okrent 2009, 4). These languages are alive in the sense that people use them actively to communicate what they want and who they are. A constructed language, sometimes known as a conlang, is generally created for a specific purpose at a specific time by one or more individuals, as opposed to natural languages, which develop naturally in communities over time (Cheyne 2008; Destruel 2016; Okrent 2009). Many natural languages do not have a traceable origin point and are not created but rather developed, sometimes due to the political and social conditions present at the time. For example, pidgins are languages that occurred in colonial encounters, such as slave relations. The two groups often spoke different languages and the combining of different pieces of their languages resulted in a pidgin. Pidgins do have traceable origins but were not created, whereas conlangs are created on purpose. Conlangs can be auxiliary languages, which are created to ease communication between differing groups of speakers, or artistic languages, which are developed for aesthetic value (and often for film & television).

Auxiliary conlangs (auxlangs) are often made with the intent of being universal languages. Frequently, these conlangs are made for the purpose of bringing peace and better understanding between tension-riddled countries, such as Esperanto. Artistic conlangs (artlangs), which will be the focus of this thesis, are languages made for artistic purposes. Most often than not this includes works of fiction or for aesthetic value. For example, the script and sound of a language may be beautiful to the creator or developed to fit the world of a piece of media. Trigedasleng is an artistic conlang.

Conlangs have existed in the media for many years. Originally, they were developed for written works, but in recent years they have been adapted or created for film and television. Among the most well-known conlangs are Tolkien's *Lord of The Rings*' Quenya and Sindarin or Marc Okrand's Klingon. In more recent years, David J. Peterson worked on the *Game of Thrones* languages (Dothraki, Valyrian), Paul Frommer made Na'vi for *Avatar*, and Christine Schreyer developed Kryptonian for *Man of Steel*.

Conlangs have seen an increase in use during times of political and economic power struggles. As Heller (2015) notes, “[i]t is where the promises of democracy come up against the inequalities of capitalism, where the discourse of universal rights encounters social differences in the shape of nations, races, genders, and classes. Invented languages emerge from that crucible” (14). While Heller was focusing particularly on auxlangs, I argue that artlangs can also fill this void. Using artistic conlangs can allow learners to access alternative ways of interacting with their identities and their world. I use this premise to examine how the combination of a fandom's universe and language can be used as a space to consider alternative realities. For example, in

The 100, issues surrounding morality, gender, or social hierarchies are considered differently than humans currently experience them on Earth today. Through this alternative view, it is possible to investigate how humans may explore ideas with differing political, hierarchical, or stereotypical boundaries.

1.3.1 Linguistic Anthropology and Constructed Languages

As human beings, we use language in many different ways. Language is important for communicating with others and communicating with ourselves; for participation in groups; for social and political advantage; for art and aesthetic; for economic purposes; for status, and so on. A key idea in linguistic anthropology is that the language(s) we use will determine our worldview⁶ (Whorf 1956). There is a strong and weak version of this hypothesis of linguistic determinism, and for the purposes of this research, I subscribe to the weak version. The weak version still holds that language determines worldview, but that multiple languages can alter this worldview and expand on it, as opposed to the strong version, where the first language of a speaker keeps them from being able to grasp the worldview offered through other languages. The world can and is perceived in different ways by different people. This is also true of fans in fandoms. Fans with different language capabilities or worldviews will interpret their fandom related components differently than their peers. First, though, it is important to understand what exactly a fan is and how someone might become one.

1.4 Who are Fans?

Ever since I was young, I have been a fan of *Star Wars*. I don't know when I became a fan, although I'd like to think it was immediately after watching the original films. I spent all of my

⁶ Worldview refers to someone's understandings, perceptions, and beliefs about their world.

time reading *Star Wars* novels, watching the films (and forcing my poor parents to watch them too), and dressing up as characters. Whenever I had the opportunity to purchase something, it was *Star Wars* related. I even had a vest and a pair of striped pants that made me feel, at the time, as cool as Han Solo. For me, *Star Wars* shaped the way that I viewed and understood the world. Even though the story is set in a galaxy far, far away, I felt as though I could relate to and imagine the ways that my world and the *Star Wars* ' world were similar. Being a fan has shaped who I am today and many of the values and beliefs I have developed were due to my involvement in various fandoms, particularly *Star Wars*. People in my social circles also identify me as a fan of *Star Wars* and often purchase gifts or send me *Star Wars* related information.

Becoming a fan, like constructing identity, is typically a process drawn out over a period of time rather than a set of specific isolated moments that result in the creation of a fan (Duffett 2013). Becoming a fan is more like a transition and the fan may be unaware that it is even happening until after they are a fan. Being a fan is not only defined by interest in a particular piece of pop culture; it is also defined by other personal, affective and social factors. Fans are emotionally connected to their fandoms and participate in or practice associated activities. Although fans may belong to a single group with shared values and beliefs, the individuals within the group can have different understandings and interpretations of the fandom within the group (Duffett 2013). This begs the question of who can validate a fan as a fan? As Duffett notes, "...almost everyone self-identifies as a fan in some sense" (23).

'Fan' originally derives from 'fanatic,' which refers to "... excessive forms of religious beliefs and worship..." (Jenkins 2012, 12). Over time, this moved away from a religious context and

was applied to excessive amounts of enthusiasm in other areas (Jenkins 2012, 12). This idea is prevalent in many of the stereotypes that exist about fans today. Stereotyping of fans is common in the media, and fans are often misrepresented. For example, Duffett (2013) explains that fans have generally been portrayed as crazy, brainless and immature (see also Booth 2018; Evan and Mafalda 2014; Jenkins 2012; Yoon 2019). He adds that fans have been likened to addicts, and that they are perceived as being obsessive over their interests, to the point of being dangerous. These obsessive traits are also associated with social isolation and media portrayals of fans tend to depict them as unable to pick up on common social signals (Duffett 2013, 161). Throughout history, women have also been equated with similar traits like “impulsiveness, immaturity” and these traits have often become feminised (Wilson 2018). For example, Wilson (2018) explains how marketing companies will purposely market items towards women based on the perceived notion that women buy things impulsively and emotionally. According to Wilson, marketing companies believe that making items pink will result in women purchasing them, even though these ideas have been proven false (435). She then explains how this is similar to marketing towards fans, who are “...often depicted as mindless consumers, very susceptible to advertising and impulse” (435). Even though, historically, stereotypical fans tend to be middle-aged men, these men are considered less masculine than non-fans, and have been ascribed feminine characteristics, making fans gendered subjects.

Furthermore, enjoyment of fantasy narratives or fantasizing about meeting a celebrity have been defined by the media as a lack of ‘a grasp on reality’ which feeds into the psychotic, crazed fan stereotype. Duffett (2013) combats these stereotypes by explaining that the rare fans who end up stalking or murdering a celebrity are often also dealing with other mental health illnesses and

that they are not the ‘normal’ fan. Duffett (2013) also explains that there is a hierarchy of what is acceptable by fans within their fandoms. Certain behaviours and opinions are valued over others. Jenkins (2012) expands this by explaining that fans make hierarchies between differing fandoms, such as general Sci-Fi fans looking down on Star Trek fans.

The definitions offered here suggest that there are unspoken social norms by which fans must abide to be considered ‘normal’ fans and not extreme. It is difficult to define these rules for each individual fandom because, like identities, fandoms also vary from group to group and may have rules that are unique to their particular fandom. Booth (2015) also discusses the way that the media can control the narrative around what is or is not considered an acceptable fan. Comedy tropes often portray fans in a negative way and make fun of more enthusiastic or passionate fans and fan works (like slash fiction⁷) (2.12). As well, Duffett (2013) mentions that “[f]an practices are frequently more about comfort, relaxation and pleasure than they are about frustration with unavailable intimacy” (171). Fans are more likely to protect their celebrity interests than harm them, and they often seek out other fans for social relationships rather than being isolated (Duffett 2013, 173 – 178; Yoon 2019).

Fans use the experiences they have in their fandom communities to shape their identities and understand their world. The term ‘fan’ is widely used in everyday contexts. While most people seem to have an idea of what this term means, for many it is unclear just what constitutes a ‘fan’ as compared to a ‘true fan.’ The reasons that fans have for enjoying a piece of media are not always rational and can be subjective and emotion-based rather than logical (Chin 2018, 245).

⁷ Slash fiction is fan fiction written about two characters of the same gender who are in a romantic relationship, regardless of their relationship in the related piece of media.

Also, fans don't always consume media and differ from a general viewer in this way. For example, some members of Slakgedakru have never watched *The 100*, nor do they participate in fan-related activities outside of their language fandom. Just as individual fans may experience the same fandom differently, people belonging to the same fandom may also understand the elements of their fandom in distinct ways (Jenkins 2012; Wilson 2018). The computer and the internet have allowed fans to globally experience their fandom (Duffett 2013, 39 – 43).

1.5 What is Fandom?

A fandom is a group of individuals that are fans of a specific cultural phenomenon, and people may participate in fandoms both in-person or virtually (Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington 2017; Schreyer 2015). Duffett (2013) explains that identifying as a fan is a key component of being in a fandom and that “[a]t some initial point the fan has to deeply connect with, and love – or at least be fascinated by – the object of their interest” (61). Jenkins (2018) notes that a fandom is “... those who claim a common identity and a shared culture with other fans” (16). This shows that fandom itself is a social act. Communities of fans find enjoyment in different topics, such as a particular piece of media, a sport, or music. Duffett (2013) notes that:

... to understand fandom, we must recognize that it is actually two things: a social experience and topic of debate. On one hand, then, it is an inspirational experience and common social pursuit. On the other, it is a discursive construct: something represented by journalists, scriptwriters, academics and fans (446).

Fandoms shape identity by allowing fans to express themselves and communicate their identities in a shared online or offline space with like-minded individuals. For example, a conlang fandom is generally made up of fans who are trying to learn a specific language. In conlang fandoms, even when participants know little about the associated conlang, they still feel like a connected member of the broader fan community (Kazimierczak 2010; Schreyer 2015). These fans may enjoy the media or history surrounding the language but are focused on the shared interest of the

language itself. In a language fandom, fans will often participate in creating language learning tools, developing words or grammatical features, translations, and so on. Fandoms also often involve non-verbal communication such as cosplay, fanfiction, or fan art.

1.5.1 Media-Fandoms

In my research, I focus on a media fandom, which Duffett (2013) describes as, "... the recognition of a positive, personal, relatively deep, emotional connection with a mediated element of popular culture" (24). Popular culture can include film, television, books, or artwork, and merchandise related to these. Media fandoms differ from sports fandoms or music fandoms because they require a specific piece of media. For example, a sports fan can be a fan of a particular player, a particular team, or many different teams. A media fan, however, is a fan of created media rather than, for example, a sports team or a musician. In media fandoms, there are often virtual and imaginary components that are rarely seen in other fandoms, such as a largely online fan base or worlds that don't actually exist. More recently, media and language fandoms have seen overlap with each other because authors and producers are including conlangs in books, movies, and television. This brings an authenticity to the media, as well as to fan's creative works surrounding their fandom.

1.5.2 Conlang Fandoms

A conlang fandom is a language-specific fandom. While the members may also enjoy media that is created surrounding the conlang, the main focus is the conlang. Fans in these fandoms often learn the conlang of interest (also known as a fanlang), but also produce translations and language learning materials. In some cases, the conlang fandom will only encompass the conlang but in many contemporary conlang fandoms, there is media that correlates to the conlang. This can become complicated when put into perspective. For example, there is a fandom for *Lord of*

the Rings and a fandom for the languages of *Lord of the Rings* but these are two separate fandoms. While they may overlap, the first is more focused on media-related items and the latter more focused on the language itself.

1.5.3 Trigedasleng Fandom

Specifically, as noted above, I focus on the speakers of the conlang Trigedasleng, made for the television show *The 100*. Both the show and the language have a large online community-based fandom that call themselves Slakgedakru. This community controls the majority of fan-developed literature that exists about Trigedasleng (besides the canon⁸ material that is used in the show).⁹ Slack has been the main platform for the community, but, as noted above, there has recently been a split between Slack and Discord in order to include a wider number of members. I have chosen to work with speakers of Trigedasleng because they are a transnational, thriving, and growing group of fan learners, who use their fandom and its world to navigate their identities and understandings; and very little academic research, including fan studies research, has focused on this particular group of fans (Bourdaa 2015; Bridges 2018).

1.6 Fan Studies

Fan studies is still a new area of study, which became more popular in the 1990's, but does not currently have its own discipline, rather it is interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary (Ford 2014; Turk 2018). This area of study examines how fans interact with one another, with themselves, and with larger populations. It also explores the ways that fans interact with their fandoms on an individual level and as a cohesive group. Fan studies is necessary for understanding the

⁸ Canon refers to any piece of media that is official and owned by the production company. Non-canon would include fan-made media like fan fiction, fan art, or fan dictionaries.

⁹ Included in this are a Twitter page, YouTube videos, Tumblr page, Wiki pages, and a Slack/Discord community (the latter two are online chatroom platforms).

motivations of fans as both consumers and producers of fan-related materials. It is also valuable for assessing the meaning behind what it means to be a fan and participate in a fandom.

1.6.1 Benefits to Fan Studies

Scholars in the field of fan studies do not utilize one set of methodologies or methods. Many fan scholars believe that this multi-methodology and multi-methods approach can be beneficial to the field of fan studies as it allows scholars to cover a broad range of disciplinary topics (Duffett 2013; Ford 2014; Turk 2018). Currently, fan studies and fan scholars are most often situated within disciplines such as media or cultural studies. This is useful because, often, media and cultural studies departments are already interdisciplinary. As well, fan studies scholars borrow methods and frameworks from other disciplines, such as ethnography, focus groups, interviews, participant observation, feminist and queer theories, identity theories, and so on. Fan scholars are actively developing a fan studies specific methodology but, at the time of this research, none is recognized as a stand-alone method for the field. Turk (2018) highlights several benefits to the collaborative and interdisciplinary work of fan studies, including foundational knowledge on fan-research related content, validity of fan studies to non-fan scholars, and a solid network with which to share information (547-548). The use of fan-related methodologies can allow for a more accurate picture of who fans are and how we should communicate with them and for them. Accurate representation within research is important, especially because fans have been misrepresented so often. Accuracy, in this research, is allowing participant's voices to be heard as both individuals and as a community, and to represent who they have portrayed themselves to be throughout this research.

1.6.2 Critique of Fan Studies

Unfortunately, not belonging to a discipline can sometimes also limit how interdisciplinary a fan scholar can be – while scholars may collaborate with other disciplines, more often than not, they misinterpret the knowledge of another discipline and borrow bits and pieces from them (Evans and Stasi 2014; Turk 2018). As noted above, fan studies borrows from other disciplines - most often cultural/media studies - but lacks its own research methods and methodologies (Evans and Stasi 2014). While scholars like Ford (2014) advocate for a collaborative and interdisciplinary fan studies, Turk (2018) argues that fan studies is multidisciplinary, drawing from multiple disciplines, but has yet to move into the realm of interdisciplinary work. She explains that interdisciplinary work needs to engage with the theories and ideas of different disciplines in an integrated fashion, rather than piecing it together (Turk 2018, 543).

One problem with having fan studies positioned within another discipline is that the scholar may draw only on that discipline’s methodologies. The reason this is problematic is because the methodology often lacks explanation for readers outside of that discipline and this interferes with interdisciplinary work due to its exclusive nature (Turk 2018).

1.6.3 Using Fan Studies in Research

The lack of definitive methods and methodologies is similar to how feminist and queer research developed because of how intersectional and broad the topics are (McHugh 2014). These forms of research tend to span across multiple disciplinary fields, as fan studies does, and have faced the challenge of being lumped into a single disciplinary field. However, if scholars can be truly interdisciplinary and truly collaborative, these challenges can produce important and valuable research. For example, McHugh (2014) highlights the ability of feminist research to question

research methodologies and their colonial, patriarchal backgrounds. This explores the ways in which various structures of power in society, such as colonialism and the patriarchy, often work in conjunction with one another to oppress particular groups of people. Structures of power are interdisciplinary, and so intersectional research is needed to for a critical understanding of them. Fan studies should also be intersectional because it deals with issues of race, ethnicity, gender, social hierarchy, and so on.

In my own research, I use fan studies to understand fans broadly, and as a support for other literature. By mixing fan studies with my background in anthropology, feminist theory, and identity theory, I am able to accurately represent fans in the Slakgedakru community.

Conducting interdisciplinary research has allowed me to explore topics that the community values and if fan studies had been a more grounded discipline I may have missed the opportunity to explore these values in the depth that I have without being stretched too thin. By grounding my research in fan studies, I was able to use other disciplinary methods and methodologies without being exclusive to them. Fan studies also focuses on fan spaces, which include both the physical and virtual spaces that fans share.

1.7 Fan Spaces

Fan spaces provide a fan with a space to experience their fandom and connect with other fans. A fan space can range from the physical space of a bedroom, a convention, or a museum to the virtual space of online forums, video game chat rooms, or fanfiction websites. Slakgedakru, the space where my research occurred, is often considered an inclusive space.

1.7.1 Problematic Fan Spaces

Fan spaces generally operate as a safe space for fans to express themselves and explore their identities (Zubernis and Larsen 2018, 148). Even so, these spaces can still be problematic. As Booth (2015) notes, “[e]motional fandom is supposed to be hidden” (1.4). What Booth means here is that “too much” enthusiasm or emotion, even within fan spaces, is considered extreme or abnormal. This suggests that societal norms still impact the way in which fans can express themselves within a fandom space. It also demonstrates that the fan is still part of a broader society and different social groups that govern their behavior.

Satterwhite (2011) explores displaced families through readers’ reactions to books about Appalachia. She notes that many readers felt disconnected from their heritage and wanted to reconnect to their distant families through fictional novels. Satterwhite (2011) notes that the fact that the novels were fictitious allowed fans to access these historical ties without having to think of the consequences of their often racist and sexist ancestors. Vernon (2016) explores a similar idea with novels about the “rough south.” These fans ignored their racist pasts in order to connect to their past and avoid feeling “... culturally naked” (Vernon 2016, 82). These types of removed fandoms can be problematic because this romanticises ideas related to gender, sexuality, and race that are still real-world obstacles for many people and should be addressed in order to create critical change.

1.7.2 Positivity Through Fan Spaces

Fans actively rework and recreate meaning (Jenkins 2012, 23-24), often straying from the canon material. This type of reworking is sometimes referred to as fanon (Duffett 2013). In many fan communities, members will share fanon work, teach other fans skills and techniques, or

collaborate on art projects, all without payment. There are, however, many fans who professionalize their fanon by selling on websites like Etsy or at fan conventions.

Fandom spaces are places of communication and often members are able to provide knowledge to other members based on their own experiences. For instance, many fandom spaces have fans who can provide terminology and language about sexual and gender identities to other, less knowledgeable members (McInroy and Craig 2018). As well, these spaces can provide open discussion, support, and encouragement to members with queer identities (McInroy and Craig 2018, 190). Many people feel distant or have strained relationships with their kin and being part of a fan community can provide a fan with a sense of belonging (Zubernis and Larsen 2018). Fan communities can also provide emotional support and familial networks.

Wilson (2018) notes that for online fandoms specifically, “[b]y fostering communities based around similar interests or causes, the Internet provides users with a support system that bolsters rather than challenges their own beliefs, and it feels good to have your ideas and thoughts substantiated, to feel like you are part of something” (433). Fandom, for many fans, is connected to the idea of home because it is a safe space of belonging (Duffett 2013, 368). This sense of home surpasses the geographical constraints of the conventional idea of home because it is not grounded in a specific place.

Fans claim to be able to feel and experience the places they read about or view in media, which suggests how emotionally driven fans are in relation to their fandoms (Satterwhite 2011; Vernon 2016). While many fandom spaces do operate online, communities often meet offline as well.

Sometimes these meetings can take place at a physical landmark that is related to the fandom, which Duffett (2013) describes as bringing reality to the fandom and alternatively, bringing the fandom to reality (373). Through these physical spaces, fans may experience what it would be like if their fandom was real, and can connect with each other through the shared experience. This is another way to form networks of support, as fans often stay in closer contact after meeting in person and feel a deeper connection to one another. This connection and network of support were some of the main foundations for my research.

1.7.3 Using Fandom to Address Real-World Issues

Jenkins (2018) highlights the fact that “made up worlds” can allow fans to explore ideas that are too controversial or too weighted for the everyday real world (17). For example, many young people have trouble navigating the discussion and exploration of their gender identity within their normal social contexts. By accessing fandom spaces and using alternative worlds with alternative political views of gender, they are able to more openly explore how they identify with gender (McInroy and Craig 2018).

Jenkins (2018) explains that another form of this exploration is the ability to re-write narratives of canon material. For example, fans of Marvel have created artwork where Hawkeye (a male Marvel character) is redrawn into various comics in place of a woman’s character in order to highlight the oversexualized nature that females have been portrayed with (Booth 2015).

Through this, they are able to visually represent their disdain for the patriarchal views that comic artists have portrayed through female characters. In addition to this, Yoon (2019) points out that fan practices themselves can allow fans to re-imagine their own culture while simultaneously learning about other cultures (179). For members of *The 100* fandom, this is demonstrated by

members of Slackgedakru rewriting the narrative of the characters Clarke and Lexa, which will be discussed in Chapter Three.

Even though fans may enjoy most of a text, there are often parts they find frustrating (Jenkins 2012). For instance, when a fan is seeking a form of representation for their own identity and it does not clearly exist; this happens often for fans that are minorities (Jenkins 2018, 15). This can lead to fans lashing out against ‘unfit narratives’ which do not align with their understanding of that piece of media. When the media introduces diversity in a character, they are often killed quickly (queer characters, people of colour). It is important to note that when these characters are killed, it is a type of social death for the minority groups that identify with them as well. Proper representation is necessary and extends beyond fans and fandom. Booth (2015) explains how many fans also protest specific things about their fandoms in order to reach media producers, such as the portrayal of women in comic books. He states that fans find this to be “... a failure on the part of the professionals to listen” rather than fan to producer communication issues (3.15). A good example of this is the controversy surrounding *The 100*. Two characters on the show, Clarke and Lexa (Clexa) had a romantic lesbian relationship which gave queer fans some of the representation that media is often missing. After believing that Lexa was an integral part of the show, fans watched her die and felt that the networks misled them in order to gain viewers (Bourdaa 2018). Bourdaa (2018) explained that fans of Clexa then felt the need to take action and fight for proper queer representation in the media, which prompted an apology from the director of *The 100* and fan activists raising money for The Trevor Project (LGBTQ suicide prevention). Due to these events, Bourdaa (2018) highlights the fact that a fan network and community developed that supported one another through this challenge. Kligler-Vilenchik et al.

(2012) argue that participating in activism connects fans and brings them together (4.1 – 4.2). Bourdaa (2018) adds to this by noting that fandoms create spaces where fans can connect, bond, and discuss social issues (386-387). As noted above, fans also use these spaces to create new media, such as artwork or fan fiction. This includes language fandoms, which will be demonstrated in future chapters.

1.8 Thesis Organization

In this chapter, I have provided the background for my research and the community I researched with, Slakgedakru. I explained the ways that Trigedasleng and *The 100* connect this community of fans together, and shown how language fans often overlap with media fans. In addition, I provided a summary of contemporary fan studies as a discipline and will further address it as a part of my framework in the next chapter. In Chapter Two, I outline the theories, methodologies, methods that I used in my research. My main theories include identity theory and feminist theory and my methodology stems from Fan Studies, Grounded Theory, and Community Based-Research. In Chapter Three, I explain Phase One of my research, which includes a survey of Trigedasleng fans, an interview with language creator, David Peterson, and comments on participant observation in the fandom. I utilized the results from Phase One to prepare for the second phase of my research. In Chapter Four, I examine the results of my focus group discussions and explore ways that I conducted text-based focus groups and how this might be improved in the future. In Chapter Five, I make connections to the deeper implications of my research, outline my contributions to the current literature and explore future research avenues. Chapter Five will also return to my research questions and summarize the ways that fandom, language, identity, and belonging are interconnected.

Chapter 2: Theory, Methodologies, and Methods

2.0 Outline

In this chapter, I explain my theoretical framework, methodologies, and methods. My theoretical framework includes identity and feminist theory, as well as language ideologies. My methodologies include community-based research and fan studies methodologies, in addition to grounded theory, and I explain how each has shaped my research process. I used a mixed-methods approach including an online survey, participant observation, interview, and focus groups, which provided both qualitative and quantitative responses. I end this chapter with an explanation of how I conducted data analysis.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for my research pulls from many theories, including language ideologies, feminist theory, and identity theory. I chose both feminist theory and identity theory because I was aware of the inclusivity of both media *The 100* and *Slakgedakru* and because the theories themselves are intimately connected. *The 100* portrays romantic relationships between partners of all genders without making it the main defining characteristic of the characters. This is significant because it is rare that people in the real world (and arguably most television shows or movies) are able to have queer relationships without it being considered a dominant and ascribed marker of their identity. In *Slakgedakru*, members speak about their attractions, and they are accepting of all forms and don't base their friendships on whether or not someone aligns with their own preferences. In addition to this, the community is very diverse in gender and sexuality. Through community engagement, individuals have the opportunity to try different identities and find support for identities that they feel unsure of (especially in regards to sexual or

gender identities). They are also able to explore other aspects of their identity through the community and through Trigedasleng.

2.1.1 Language Ideologies

Language ideologies are the ideas, beliefs, values, and perspectives people have about language (Ahearn 2011, 23; Bucholtz and Hall 2004). These ideologies are held by both those participating in the interaction and those observing the interaction, including researchers (Irvine and Gal 2000). Ahearn (2011) explains that “[l]anguage is not a neutral medium for communication but rather a set of socially embedded practices” (3). Irvine and Gal (2000) in their work on language ideologies point out that colonial thinking is inherent in a lot of scholarly work describing language interactions today, and, in fact, influences the way people identify themselves, particularly in the West. Language ideologies about “othering” stem from the use of the English language during the colonial movement in North America, where all other languages are considered as the “other”.¹⁰

Broadly speaking, language ideologies about conlangs are mixed: some people view them as “real” languages and some do not. This is complicated because it then requires consideration about what a “real” language is – what qualifies it? Who qualifies it? How would a conlang compare to some of the existing endangered languages? These questions can reveal ideas about language ideologies, power relations, and status. Specifically, in the case of Slakgedakru, I utilized the concept of language ideologies to help understand the community. For instance, learners of Trigedasleng are learning new ways to communicate and interact with each other but

¹⁰ Other refers to an us/them dichotomy where the other is every group or person who is not included in the norms of a particular society.

also learning about grounder culture and grounder perspectives, the original speakers of Trigedasleng. In fact, members who possess knowledge of the events in *The 100* are going to experience, and possibly use Trigedasleng differently than those who don't. Additionally, language ideologies about slang, formal use, or interpretations can vary between learners as well, and so can learners' fluency levels.

This is interesting because *The 100* is set in futuristic America, but still holds ties to current language ideologies. The grounders speak a language that originated in English, but is no longer the dominant language and has now become "othered" which is implied by the way the grounders are depicted in the show (at first) as wild and uncivilized beings. This is even more important when thinking in terms of the apocalypse, which is also the setting for *The 100*, and will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

2.1.2 Feminist Theory

Feminist theory scholars, like fan studies scholars, pull from various disciplines. In many ways they complement each other because fan studies often overlaps with feminist studies. The gender and sexual identity of fans is often examined in both fan studies research and feminist research (Amon 2016; Baker 2016; Bourdaa 2018; Brennan 2018; Busker 2013; Duffett 2013; Ferreday 2015; McClellan 2014; McInroy and Craig 2018; Morrissey 2016; Osborne 2012; Saito 2011; Scott 2015; Shin 2018; Wilson 2018). Gender is part of an individual's identity that is socially and culturally constructed, and does not necessarily correspond with biological sex. In academia, it is widely recognized that gender is also not representative of the male/female binary that serves as the basis for biological sex. For instance, Butler (1988) describes gender as a repetition of performative acts which in turn form gender, whereas sex is a biological outcome. She

highlights the idea that the body is historical and that it is mediated by historical ideas of what constitutes a woman or a man, indicating that ideas about gender are fraught with historical ties to a specific set of social constructs.

In addition to this, Weedon (2004) highlights the fact that identity and gender are regulated in certain ways. For example, she explains that children's toys have often gender specific connotations, such as a boy's toy being a toy car and a girl's toy being a doll. Weedon (2004) expands on this, detailing how citizenship documentation in places like North America, such as passports, health cards, or driver's licenses all require gendered terms which the government and companies have access to. This can be taken a step further to include regulation and creation of gendered clothing, male or female specific items (such as shampoo, health products, or cleaning products), and autonomy over certain medical decisions.

Similarly, Duffett (2013) discusses how there are social pressures for men and women to like certain types of fandoms based on their content. He notes, "[o]ur gender is therefore an imitation, approximation and replication: something that we automatically borrow from others around us and yet feel as our own since it allows us to identify ourselves" (337). Even though gender roles have changed significantly over time, there are still specific social norms that are ascribed to gender. Sexual identity, like gender, can be fluid and does not always align in a binary gay/straight framework. Sexual identity, also referred to as sexuality, refers to the types of sexual and romantic relationships an individual is attracted to, or lack thereof.

Feminist and community-based research are often decolonizing and disassemble the individuality that colonialist viewpoints tend to have (Bleck 2015, 152). McHugh (2014) highlights the benefits of feminist research, saying that it is phenomenological, non-universal, anti-oppressive, and that intersectionality is key to understanding identity. Munday (2014) explains ways that focus groups could help in feminist research through:

... researching the experiences and empowerment of marginalized groups, rejection of essentialism and exploration of the social as constructed rather than pregiven, consideration of the collective as opposed to individual nature of social life, contextualization of data, and addressing the power inequalities that exist between the researcher and the researched. (233-234)

Focus groups weren't widely used in feminist research until around 2000 (Munday 2014, 233). The reason for this was because focus groups were generally considered useful for market research or objective truths rather than subjective understandings. Munday (2014) goes on to note that researchers should try to understand how participants "...actively construct social categories and phenomena" (328). In particular, through the use of focus groups, I was hoping to understand how Slakkru conceptualized ideas about power, sexuality, gender, and representation.

Please note that this paragraph contains spoilers. One of the main reasons I chose feminist theory early on is because I learned of a connection many of the community members had to a romantic relationship in *The 100*. As noted above, one of the main characters, Clarke, has intimate relationships with men and women, but she is not defined by which gender she has relationships with like she would be in the "real" world, where sexual preferences are seen as one of the main components of one's identity. It could be argued that she displays pansexuality, although there is no discussion of it within the show. Her relationship to a particular woman, Lexa, is a specific connection point for many fans because it provides them with an example of queer sexual

representation (Bourdaa 2015; Bridges 2018). This became one of my focus areas because the show's producers made it appear Clexa¹¹ would be a long-term, important plotline, but proceeded to quickly kill Lexa off. So many fans were affected by the end of this particular relationship and felt betrayed by the creators that they stopped watching the show (Bourdaa 2015; Bridges 2018). Even so, many of them continue to participate in the Trigedasleng community with language learning, development, and by showing support to each other through what I know as the "Clexa" event. I will discuss the implications of this relationship further in Chapters Three and Four. Ferreday (2015) explains that "...fan and feminist identities are not separate, that they coexist and intertwine" (23). I think, more than anything, Slakgedakru has proven this to be true throughout the course of my research. Feminist theory and identity theory are intimately linked and both explore how identity shapes human lives.

2.1.3 Identity Theory

In my research, I explored identity politics and identity construction in the context of conlangs and their fandoms in order to understand why individuals participate beyond general interest in a piece of popular culture. Identity is comprised of various social categories including (but not limited to) gender, nationality, religion, language, and ethnicity (Weedon 2004). Zubernis and Larsen (2018) explain that "[s]ocial identity theory holds that people use participation in social groups to maintain their personal and collective identities" (Zubernis and Larsen 2018, 146). This suggests social groups are key to discovering and maintaining who we want to be. Identity can change and evolve as individuals create new relationships, join or leave groups, and learn new information that challenges or supports their understandings of society. The ability to communicate effectively in various social situations is directly tied to the language we use and,

¹¹ A combination of their names, Clarke and Lexa, to signify their relationship.

since we are social beings, our identity. Social groups, communities, workplaces, intimate spaces, and so on influence how we perceive ourselves and others. This understanding of self also helps us decide how we want others to see us, and it allows us to construct our identities accordingly.

I also explored “roots” (heritage, extended family, cultural knowledge) in fandom communities. Duffett (2013) explains that “[a]nomie is the feeling of rootlessness and alienation that sociologists have described in modern society” (394). This rootlessness leads to a desire to belong, or a sense of belonging, which one may gain from participating in a community. In addition, I investigated how fandoms might act as a support system. Duffett (2013) highlights this by saying that “[f]an communities have both internal and external kinds of function. Internally, they welcome, support and socialize individuals. Externally, they organize to act as a collective bodies that represent both the fans and their heroes” (404). This is also important because globalization has led some to find a disassociation with familial or cultural ties, which are often a main support network, and which some fans find within their fandoms (Satterwhite 2011; Vernon 2016).

Many individuals find that fandoms are more like extended families, as Duffett (2013) notes, “...fan discourse works to create a specific kind of community that becomes more important than the object of fandom itself” (381). Fandoms also allow for a safe space of expression, where members can discuss gender, politics, and many other topics without the outside influences of social media or conventional societal norms, which often refrain from this type of important discussion. Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington (2017) also explain that engagement with texts

related to fandoms results in an emotionally invested participant and not simply an objective observer (10). This suggests that participants are gaining more than entertainment or enjoyment from fandoms and their communities, many of which are online. Nardi (2015) argues that our identities are becoming increasingly virtual, and that people explore virtual space through books, online platforms, and virtual technologies in which they love, work, and exist (15).

2.2 Methodologies

My research utilized a mix of methodologies drawing from community-based research, fan studies methodologies, online fan research and grounded theory. I used various methodologies because of the unique nature of Slakgedakru. For instance, I felt that using grounded theory as an approach was appropriate since very little research has been done in fan studies, let alone for this particular community, and so it allowed for a more exploratory research path. This was complimented with fan studies methodologies and online fan research because the community is based online and made up of language and media fans. Together, these methodologies provided me with a broad approach to my research and I address each in detail below.

2.2.1 Grounded Theory

The primary focus of grounded theory is the idea that research is derived from the data (Corbin 2017; Merriam and Tisdell 2015). This means that my research is not conducted with any specific conclusions in mind but rather bases its inquiry on the information that I gained, and evolved over time. Corbin (2017) explains that with grounded theory, initial data collection can be analyzed in order to create future data, and this can continue through multiple steps in the research (301). For example, I knew that the Trigedasleng community was concerned with gender, sexuality and representation but I didn't know specific details about how this affected the community as a whole and, therefore, could not assume an answer. In order to understand these

connections, I began with participant observation and a more general survey and used the results from those methods to inform my focus group discussions. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) explain that grounded theory leads to substantive theories, which are concerned with specificity and are useful for smaller, every-day situations (31-32). The fact that communities are constantly changing and evolving makes grounded theory a useful tool for finding the right information at the right time. Corbin (2017) states that “[s]ince the purpose of grounded theory research is to identify, develop, and integrate concepts, persons are not the objects of analysis. Rather it is the concepts that persons provide through data that are the object of analysis” (301). By looking at the community through this approach, I was able to organize the themes I used to create and later analyze my focus group discussions.

2.2.2 Community-Based Research

Community-based research is research that both serves the interests of the community and the researcher, and often produces social change (Caine and Mill 2016, 14). This type of research is inherently collaborative and I made efforts to work with Slakgedakru in a way that would benefit them. I wanted to represent this particular community of fans in the most accurate way possible. It is important to note that community is often associated with a physical place (including a software platform), but this does not have to be the case. As Caine and Mill (2016) explain, “... community refers to more than a place or a geographical location, but that it also speaks to a sense of shared experience, relationships, and the reality that communities have a sense of organizing themselves” (15). Fans of Trigedasleng and fans of *The 100* expand beyond the Slakgedakru community to comprise a larger community, and this larger community share their experiences with their fandom through other platforms like social media or at conventions. This, in particular, was why I did not restrict recruitment for my survey to Slack or Discord only.

Another important aspect of community-based research is recognizing the power structures present within the community, what roles members have, and what changes occur (Caine and Mill 2016). I took notes on these aspects throughout participant observation in order to gain a complete understanding of the structures within the community, including the role of language creator, David Peterson. I also paid attention to my own power relation as a researcher and as a fan (of both media and language). Being a fan helped me build rapport in the community and understand terminology that fans used. I was also able to share in their excitement over language learning, creation, and experimentation.

2.2.3 Fan Studies Methodologies

While fan studies methodologies are lacking across the discipline, what does exist still provides important information to those interested in conducting research with fans and within fandoms. Evans and Stasi (2014) explain that they had trouble finding explicit methods or methodology in fan studies, but there were some useful examples of what could be used in the few research articles that they did find with fan studies methods or methodologies. They propose using a mix of digital ethnography, autoethnography, participant observation, and reflexivity in order to begin forming conversation around a more coherent fan studies methodology in the future (Evans and Stasi 2014). Fan studies allows for a broad approach to research and focuses on combating fan stereotypes in order to determine who fans really are. Fan studies is also inherently and abundantly interdisciplinary (Evans and Stasi 2014). By using existing fan studies research, I was able to learn about fans in general, fan stereotypes, fan communities and fan representation. Through my own research, I am able to contribute to this field and expand on the current existing methodologies, which I will address further in Chapter Five.

2.2.3.1 Online Fan Research

In many ways, online and offline research have their own benefits and disadvantages. Gunter et al (2002) describe ways that online research, in particular surveys, have the potential to garner more information online rather than offline: "...limited 'social presence' of the online survey might facilitate answers less influenced by social desirability effects..." and this might lead respondents to "... complete more items, make fewer mistakes, give longer answers to open-ended questions, and disclose more about themselves" (230). In an offline survey, especially face-to-face, participants might be less likely to answer negatively or "against the grain". Offline research, however, does have the benefit of non-verbal social cues like facial expressions or tone of voice. If the community is both online and offline, offline surveys might be more accessible. In the case of Slakgedakru, offline would actually be less accessible since members are from all over the world and regularly meet in a virtual space.

The worlds of conlangs and their fandoms are not situated in a specific geographical location. This tends to mean that communities involved with them are based online. Due to this, they transcend physical borders that would have occurred in the past (as with many fandoms) and don't limit access to those within a small geographical area. This is helpful to understand because people with shared interests can align themselves with each other without repercussions from their geographic social relations, should conflict or difference arise.

Online fan research is sparse and I had to get creative when navigating this field. Although it is sparse, most of the research that has been done with language fan communities has been online (see Doricic 2019; Schreyer 2015). I chose to focus on community-based online research because

it allowed me to really understand the motivations and perceptions of a specific group of fans. This is important because much of the current fan research is based on a general assessment of fans. This includes sports fans, popular culture fans, music fans, and so on. It can be difficult to truly understand a fan base when it crosses so many vast domains, and misinformation is possible. Slakgedakru operates on Slack and Discord. As described previously, these are online chat platforms and the virtual location of the bulk of my research.

2.3 Methods

To begin my research, I joined Slakgedakru, an online community of Trigidasleng learners. Slakgedakru is mainly split between two online chat platforms: Slack and Discord. At the start of my research, only Slack was used. Part way through, the idea of opening a Discord was introduced to the Slack community. There was tension over whether or not Slack users who did not wish to transition over or use both would be left behind. Some of the admins made it clear that they would frequent both and this has been the case thus far. To my understanding, a lot of members prefer one app over the other, and some choose based on their needs and preferences. What I mean here is that some features of Slack are more user friendly for members who might have a sensitivity to high contrast settings or the “busier” layouts that are on Discord.

I spent time building rapport with both administrators and the general community. Once I had an idea of which topics they discussed often, I conducted an online survey to understand their interests and values at a base level. During this time, I also used participant observation and interviewed the language’s creator, David J. Peterson. This was the first phase of research. For the second phase, I continued participant observation, and used the information from phase one to create a focus group script. This focus group script explored the key themes found in phase

one, for a more in-depth understanding of member's interests. Phase one will be explained in Chapter Three and phase two will be explained in Chapter Four.

It is important that I represent the community accurately and I feel that the best way to do so is to make sure that fans have their own voices heard. This can be tricky, however, because fans involved at different stages of their fandoms will have different perspectives and answers (Duffett 2013, 413). Furthermore, I am a fan of the fandom that I am researching and have paid close attention to my own biases and reflected on my role as a researcher and my own reactions to the participants. While I am a fan, I am also a researcher and I have limited my participation in the fandom because of this, so that I don't take advantage of the power structures that this represents.

For my research, I used mixed qualitative methods, which are focused on exploring subjective aspects of the community, such as their views on gender/sexuality or their ideas about belonging (Boyd 2014, McHugh 2014). These methods align with Munday's (2014) ideas about how feminist theory should focus on participants' own understandings and constructs.

During both phases, I used a method called participant observation, where I actively participated in the Slakgedakru community while simultaneously noting important activities, comments, and posts. During these phases, I also made sure to include the community in the decisions that I made.

2.3.1 Participant Observation

Participant observation is research through the lens of the community or culture – a researcher enters into a community on a participatory basis, rather than viewing the community from afar. Throughout this research, I used participant observation. To do so, I participated in the Trigedasleng Slack and Discord communities. I am currently an active member of Slakgedakru and have been building rapport with the community since the beginning of the research process. This was useful because when members spoke about topics related to my research I was able to understand their perspectives and viewpoints. I also joined them in things like word creation, storytelling, and crafting art. Participants knew where to ‘private message’ me if they wanted to set up space to share details about personal matters unrelated to research, and I specified that they should contact me via email for research related questions or concerns.

Had I not opted to use participant observation and really become a member of the community, I would not have known about or learned from many of the core participants from Slakgedakru. This method allowed me to really understand the values of members on a daily basis, and to witness the incredibly inclusive environment that the members who participated in other parts of my research boasted of.

2.3.2 Phase One: Survey and Interview

The first phase of research was conducted in order to gain an overview of what mattered to the community and later to inform the second phase. At this point in time, I was fairly new in the community and wanted to understand what was important to them at a base level. For each step of the research, I consulted with the administrators in order to make sure what I was doing was acceptable and to see if they had any suggestions.

I initially joined Slackgedakru by sending an email to the Slack admins, explaining that I was hoping to do research with their community. Within a few hours they had given me access into their community and set up a channel for private discussion between all of the admins and myself. I created a username that was self-evident to those who know Trigedasleng: Skolakru. Skola is the Trig word for Student/Scholar/Academic and Kru is the word for people. If you hover over or click someone's name in Slack, you can also see a brief introduction about them. Most members placed their preferred pronouns¹² or a quote here, but I wrote that I am a UBCO researcher. After several months there, there was discussion about opening a Discord for the community. This was approved, and a link was provided for any person wishing to join (this included the broader social media community). I set my name as Skolakru on this platform as well, with my researcher description, to indicate that I was the same person on both platforms. If anyone inquired about my research, I was very open about my purpose for being there. I also explained that I was there as a member, not just a researcher, and that I wanted to participate in a similar way that other members did. I plan to stay as a member post-thesis because of my own interest in the language.

Both platforms, Slack and Discord, use channels, which are like separate discussion forums in real-time. This allows for multiple topic organization. For example, both platforms have a channel for creating Trigedasleng words and another channel for translating Trigedasleng into other languages. Slack has the ability to organize a chat into threads; this means that one person

¹² Although this community marks pronouns in their profiles, and this practice has become more common recently, I have not seen this as a trend among fan communities specifically. Slakgedakru's diversity is most likely why this occurred.

makes a comment and a thread can start with that comment while the main conversation continues. Discord does not have this feature, but it does have easily accessible voice chats.

I also did preliminary research on social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram, and collected information from the Youtube channel and Trigedasleng.net website. I formulated questions for my survey with the information gathered on these platforms, in addition to the Slack and Discord community.

2.3.2.1 Survey

Most of my survey questions attempt to get a sense of who was active in the community and find out what was of interest to them. The survey included a mixture of 42 multiple choice and written responses and took approximately 30 minutes to complete. A portion of the survey focuses on the Slack/Discord community specifically. In order to do this, a question asking if they were part of the community linked a positive response to a subsection of the survey. I also created a subsection like this for fans of *The 100*. I used social media and the Slack/Discord community to distribute the survey. I wanted to gain an understanding of who Trigedasleng learners are, their ages, genders, locations, and so on. The survey results are discussed in Chapter Three.

2.3.2.2 Interview

During the time that the survey was active, I interviewed David J. Peterson, who is the creator of Trigedasleng. This interview informed the way that the language has played a role in his life, and how the online community impacted his language development. David is a member of Slakgedakru and actively participates in discussions about the language. Due to this, it was important to understand his place within the community and his interaction with other members.

This interview took place over Skype. These responses also influenced the questions for Phase Two. The interview results are discussed in Chapter Three.

2.3.3 Phase Two: Text-Based Focus Groups

Focus groups were developed by Robert K. Merton and originally many researchers consider a them as a supplementary method rather than a primary research method; they were also initially associated with marketing research or consumerism (Munday 2014, 234). Munday (2014) goes on to explain that when analyzing a focus group discussion, the researcher should pay attention to the social interaction and meaning made from it. For example, how is conflict managed or consensus achieved and who has the power to impose these ideas (238). This also applies to text-based, or written, focus group discussions. A text-based focus group operates similarly to a verbal one, but there are significant differences in what the researcher should look out for. I will discuss these differences and how my written focus groups worked as a method at length in Chapter Four.

2.4 Data Analysis

In Phase One of my research, I grouped the survey into themes prior to the survey being active so that it would be easier to analyze later on. For example, the survey was split into sections focused on belonging, identity, Slakgedakru, *The 100*, and being a fan. I also created charts and graphics for some of the more quantitative results (see Chapter Three). During survey analysis, I was focused on what specific parts of each theme would be useful for my focus group script and what the community valued, so I grouped the responses together that had the most in common.

Following the interview with David J. Peterson, I transcribed our conversation verbatim. I then manually coded the interview for related themes. I focused on his interactions with the

community, as a member, and also as the language creator. I was able to find out the history of his involvement with Trigedasleng and Slakgedakru, as well as his involvement with the show. When analyzing this interview, I focused on two particular aspects: how David used his authority with Trigedasleng and how he related to the community on a personal level.

During both Phases, I used participant observation. Analyzing this was more difficult and took a great amount of organization. I took screenshots or notes of conversations that applied to one of my survey or focus group themes as I went. Participant observation helped to shape the research as I went, and ultimately played a large role in determining my final focus group themes. One less-obvious aspect about the community (in the survey) was their diverse gender and sexuality. However, by using participant observation, it was very clear that these were important pieces of who the community is. Participant observation also allowed me to understand the everyday of the community and from their interactions I noted specific instances that were common. For example, if someone discussed their familial ties to the community, or the ways that they have been supported within the online community space, I made sure to note or capture the comment. I coded these comments for the same themes that were used in my survey and later in my focus group (which were, in turn, created through the use of participant observation).

As noted above, in Phase Two of my research I used text-based focus groups to supplement and expand on Phase One. Again, I manually coded for themes, some of which I had decided prior to the focus group taking place and some that arose as it went on as I utilized grounded theory. The focus group was divided into the themes: morals & futures anxiety, inclusivity, gender & sexuality, and meet ups (see Appendix F for the full list of questions). While the focus group

discussion was ongoing, I noticed two alternative themes being discussed, namely, justice and apocalyptic narratives. I charted both focus group discussions into a spreadsheet so that I could analyze answers for both focus group discussions at the same time and compare the answers for each question. For a few more specific quotes, I pulled out pieces that encompassed the majority of the participants ideas in order to showcase the specific language used to discuss specific topics. These are all discussed in Chapter Four.

2.5 Summary

Through a mixed-methods approach I was able to understand on a broad scale what is important and valued within the Slakgedakru community. I used identity theory and feminist theory to understand how fans in this community understand themselves and identify as who they are. By using fan studies as a support, I was able to explore areas where I might combat fan stereotypes and understand fans as a whole. In addition to this, my various methods allowed me to first use grounded theory to see what was important to the community and second, to examine these topics more specifically. In Chapter Three, I will explore the results of Phase One, including the survey, interview, and participant observation. Chapter Three examines the different themes I originally established and which ones the community were more focused on, and my note taking process throughout participant observation. These themes include family, home, belonging; *The 100*; Trigedasleng; experiences in the fandom; and gender and sexuality Also, Chapter Three explains the significance of respondent's experiences within their community, why they learn Trigedasleng and why they continue to participate in both.

Chapter 3: Results of Phase One and Participant Observation

3.0 Outline

This chapter details the results of my interview with David J. Peterson (Trigedasleng's creator), my participant observation, and my online survey. I divided the survey into specific themes, which I discuss in their own sections below. The survey took place online through Qualtrics, survey software that was accessible through my university, the University of British Columbia - Okanagan. Each participant was required to provide informed consent and meet the criteria for eligibility prior to taking the survey including indicating if they were 16 or older, if they spoke English, and if they were learning Trigedasleng. Once these questions were completed, they were able to pause and come back as long as the survey was active. The survey was active from December 17th 2019 to January 18th 2020. I advertised for the survey on Slack and Discord, as well as on Twitter. Advertising included a written paragraph explaining the research survey's purpose, a poster, and links to the survey (See Appendix A, for the advertisements, B for the poster, and D for survey questions). The survey comprised both qualitative and quantitative questions, which were categorized into themes, such as demographic information; family, home, belonging; *The 100*; Trigedasleng; experience within the fandom; and gender and sexuality. The quantitative questions asked about age, ethnicity, gender, and other demographic information. For questions with multiple options, I tried to include an "other" option or a wide range of choices in order to be as inclusive as possible. The qualitative questions were open-ended with an unlimited text box for responses and asked questions about family, belonging, *The 100*, Slakgedakru, and fandom. The survey was anonymous and IP addresses were hidden to ensure privacy.

A total of 28 participants began a survey; however, only 17 individuals completed all of the questions, and 4 individuals partially completed the survey (over 30% completion) for a total of 21 participants. The surveys under 30% completion are omitted from the results, as they only reveal participant ages. For participants who completed the survey, the age range was between 16 years old and 47 years old, with an average age of 26. When I posted the advertisement one member on Slack expressed that they were too young to complete the survey but wanted to participate in the research. I told them that I would aim to lower the age range for the focus group to make it more inclusive and was able to gain ethics approval to change the age of participation for the focus groups to 14 years of age.

3.1 Participant Observation

A very vital aspect of this research was participant observation. As noted above, participant observation is when a researcher integrates themselves into a community or group and participates in their everyday activities. By doing so, the researcher is able to understand the values, beliefs, and norms of the community on their own terms, rather than inserting the researcher's biases that often come from an "outsider" perspective.¹³

My participant observation with Slakgedakru happened prior to my formal research on both Slack and Discord. I entered into the community through an invite link (Discord) and approval by an admin (Slack) to gather preliminary data for my research and began building rapport, but refrained from saving any screenshots or conversations during this time. Participant observation continued for the duration of the survey and focus group, at which point I had ethics approval to

¹³ An outsider's perspective is a term used in anthropology that describes the researcher, or outsider, entering into a community or society in which they did not previously belong. Due to this, context-based knowledge is unknown to the researcher and may be skewed by the researcher's own bias.

save important conversations. As well, it was important for me to join the community in order to properly conduct community-based research. I was a fan of the show, but was new to this community and therefore needed time to build rapport with community members and understand their needs. For this research, participant observation was particularly necessary for me to understand the community as a whole since there were a large number of active members speaking in the channels, but only a smaller subset of members participated in the survey and focus groups. By participating in the group, I was able to understand a *much* broader version of this community. Without participant observation, I'm not sure I would have been able to work with the community to develop a survey with questions that were relevant to them and, therefore, be able to represent this community accurately.

Through participant observation, I was able to discern that many members, whom could be considered "core" contributors to the community, only come on at random intervals. Many of the members speak about personal matters, such as health or family issues. In addition, several members have spoken about their sexuality and gender, with several identifying as trans. Some of these members are pre-transition and find support in the community. These types of details were fairly absent in my survey results, and I wouldn't have known to ask about them in a focus group discussion had I not participated in the community.

3.1.1 Notes

During participant observation, I used notes mostly to keep track of background information. I wrote these down in a notebook, similar to how anthropologists traditionally take fieldnotes during their ethnographic research. For example, I noted how often each channel was used, what topics were spoken about, who spoke more often and in which channels. I also tried to note who

was active on a regular basis, and who came into the group sporadically. Some members were active daily, but remained as lurkers and did not interact often. Other members, often core active members, would leave for two weeks and come back, and this happened on and off. Admins appeared to be on fairly consistently, both on Slack and Discord, and there seemed to be a constant stream of new members on both platforms. A channel on each was dedicated to newcomers where information on how to begin language learning or join other channels was available. This happened more frequently when the show was airing, as did discussions, but there were still lulls in server use.

As I was a member of the community prior to beginning my survey, members were very supportive when I shared the survey and even shared it in some of their other Trigedasleng related places. At the time of this research, Discord was a more active server compared to Slack. This may have been due to the fact that it was a newer server, and so many new members joined through that platform. Conversation in both communities ranged from variations in food types to the gender-neutral pronoun “em” in Trig. Through participant observation I was also able to learn that members are from all over the world, which can make comparing different social and cultural norms a very interesting, and challenging, discussion.

Often in this community emojis are used to indicate happiness, sadness, or a range of other emotions in response to someone’s post. This is particularly true for those who may not comment a lot otherwise. Conversations can shift in topics, in which case, the participants of that conversation will move to an appropriate channel. For example, if two members are in a Trig specific channel and they begin discussing something general, they will move their conversation

to the general channel. Trig specific channels and the general chat channels are the most used on both platforms.

Several times, I noted people speaking fondly about Slakgedakru and how they want to dedicate more time to it. Longer lasting members tend to use Slakkru to affectionately speak about the Slack and Discord members. I also noted that the admins only really step in during conflict, which is extremely rare. More so, admins are an authority over the setting of the servers and because they have language knowledge – something that they gladly seem to share with other members. Notes were useful for me to be able to have an overview of the regular activities and topics of discussion. I used them to make observations about channel use and frequency of use, as well as member activity.

Overall, I recommend using notes in online research, rather than focusing on specific conversations only. For online participant observation, the platform will dictate what you can come back to later, so it is important to pay attention to this early on. For example, the unpaid version of Slack that Slakgedakru uses will delete messages (oldest first) after a channel has reached 1000 messages. On Discord, however, these messages stayed indefinitely. This is still problematic because the researcher can spend hours scrolling back through messages on an active channel, and it is best to document things as they come up.

3.1.2 Examples

I was immediately accepted in this community. Originally, I gained permission from the admins to join, and throughout the whole process I felt as though my research and my presence were welcomed by everyone I spoke with. As I described above, I identified myself as a researcher by

using Skolakru as my username (Skola = scholar/researcher and Kru = people/person) and adding that I was a UBCO researcher to my profile. There are a few things specific to Slakgedakru that make it appealing as an online community. Slakgedakru is very diverse. This diversity leads to an accepting atmosphere and a welcoming space. In addition to this, the members and the admins are very inclusive – especially of queer identities. For an online platform, this inclusivity brings a unique aspect to the community, considering the amount of bullying and hate that can happen in queer people’s lives. In Schreyer’s (2015) study of the Na’vi learning community, she shows how many learners are there due to the “...welcoming community of speakers...” (5.7). She continues by showing how the community itself is likely the reason for the language learners’ continuation of their fandom and their learning. The next photos from my research (Figure 2 and Figure 3) include examples of this inclusive, supportive community environment. Members feel safe to discuss a range of topics in this space.

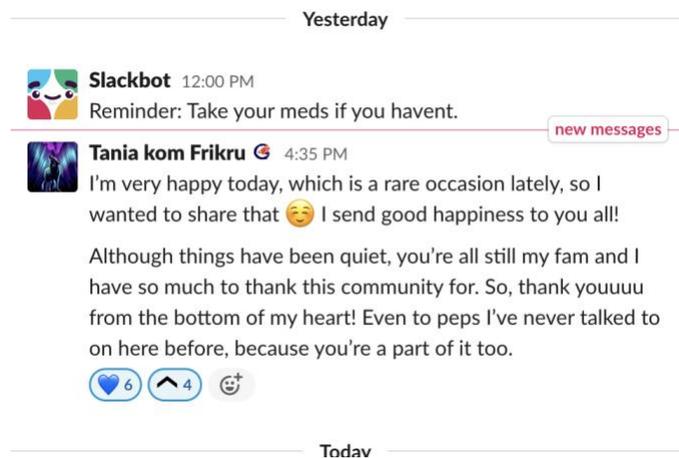


Figure 2: A member showing appreciation for the sense of community.

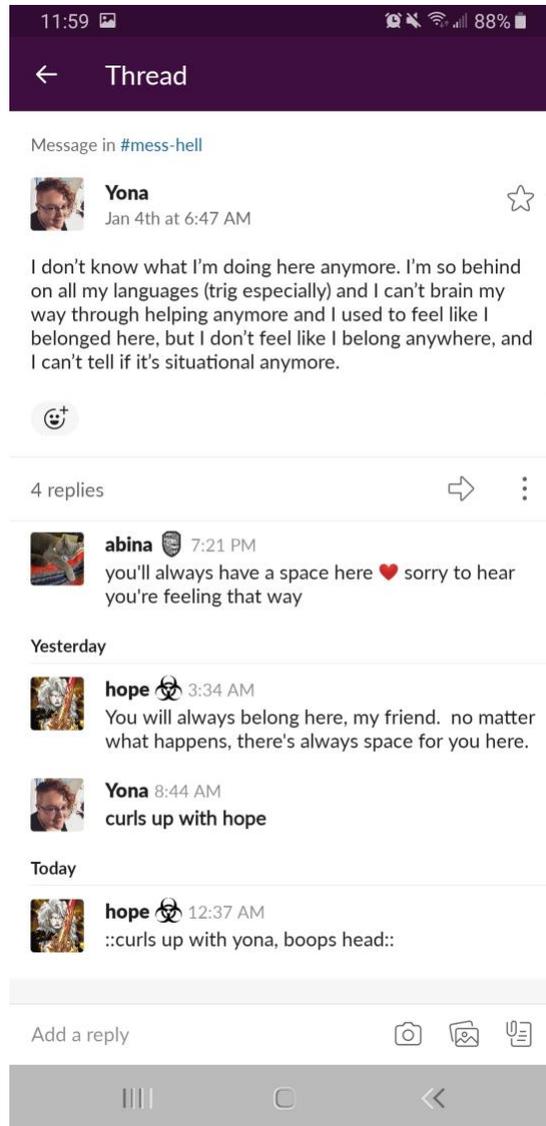
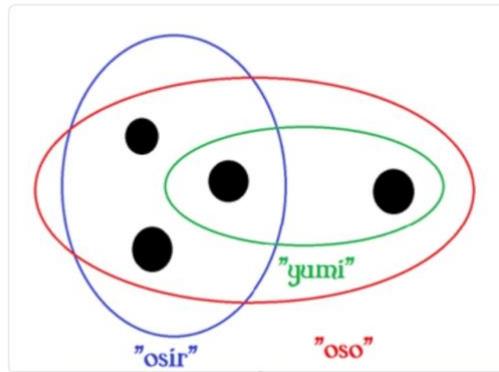


Figure 3: Members showing support.

I would also like to showcase how intricate the Trigedasleng language, word creations and translations can be. Below are some examples (Figure 4 to Figure 8), which not only show this language in use, but also give yet another example of how fans are intelligent, realistic, and mature, which conflicts with stereotypical views of fans. In addition, in Figure 8, David (Trigedasleng creator) commends them and says he will add their new word to the canon dictionary.

abina 11:48 PM
Juno from the Discord made me this very handy visual aide for the plural pronouns! I love



👍 3 😊

Figure 4: A pronoun visualization created by a community member.

Vax Yesterday at 4:34 PM
You pronounce Ryan with an /æ/? (edited)

abina Yesterday at 4:36 PM
It's phonetic. Afaik when there's a two-vowel sound like *ai* on a syllable break followed by a vowel like *e* they blend by the first sound getting simplified and adding *y* or *w*
It also happens on syllable breaks with *i* and *a* - like *miya*

Vax Yesterday at 4:38 PM
ah okie

abina Yesterday at 4:38 PM
that's why it's *faya* for "fire" instead of *faia* or *faiya*

Vax Yesterday at 4:39 PM
I was just trying to represent the phonetics of the original

abina Yesterday at 4:39 PM
I was just about to say, this is a name so you can break rules
just depends on how you wanna say it! *Raiyen* is probably the best blend of English/Trig pronunciation. It's a spectrum

Vax Yesterday at 4:40 PM
works for me 😊

Figure 5: A discussion on pronunciation.

trig-theorizing

Today NEW

 **Tania kom Frikru** 🌐 1:07 PM
If we don't already have a word for this already, any suggestions for "surgery"?

 **Tania kom Frikru** 🌐 1:14 PM
As in a noun

 **abina** 🇸🇪 1:18 PM
lol I was gonna suggest *kotplei* but I think Grounders would think of that as something else... 😊

suchaplei or *stichplei* from "suture play/stich play"
seshon from "c-section" (what I imagine to be the most common surgery)

 **Tania kom Frikru** 🌐 1:20 PM
Hm 😊

Kotplei sounds like torturing someone 😊

 **abina** 🇸🇪 1:21 PM
LOL exactly

wamplei kom thauz kodon

 **Tania kom Frikru** 🌐 1:22 PM
I agree that c-sections would definitely be one of the most common

I like *Stichplei*

^ 1 😊

Figure 6: Members creating a new word.

trig-theorizing

Any other suggestions?

 **keit** 🌐 2:36 PM
ai vout stichplei op

 **abina** 🇸🇪 2:39 PM
it's my fav too. works well with a verb form
ai na stich em op - "I will perform surgery on them" (literally 'I will stitch them up')
ai gaf stichplei in - "I need surgery"

I like it cause even tho we don't know how advanced their medical knowledge is, it still implies something a little more involved than *fis op* for "to heal"

 **keit** 🌐 2:40 PM
ooh I like that

stichon for an operation?
or *stichen*?

 **abina** 🇸🇪 2:56 PM
I like that! *stichplei* can be the general term while a single operation could be *stichen/stichon*

Figure 7: Members creating a new word.

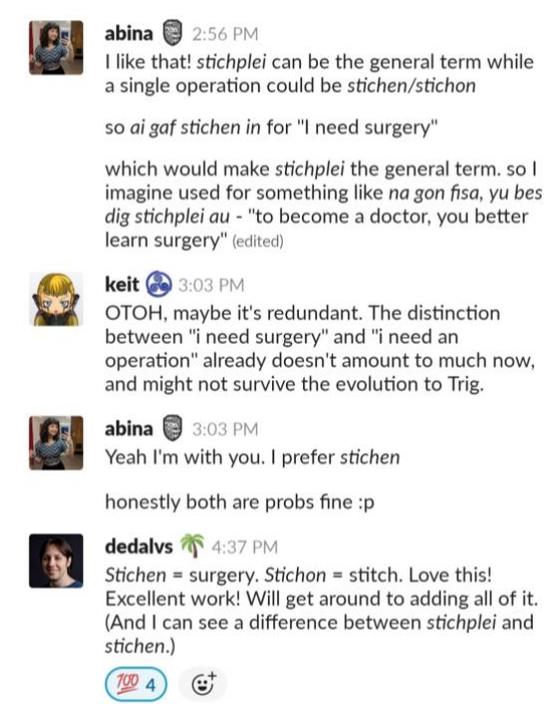


Figure 8: Members creating a new word.

As seen in these images, creating words and discussing the language is common and done by many members. Discussions like these happen on a regular basis and are interspersed with conversations about everyday life. Often, discussions will continue as members in other time-zones log on. This type of information, and examples of intelligent, level-headed fans, could be lost in a survey-only type of study. Through the use of participant observation, I was able to gain a more cohesive idea of the Slakgedakru community's interpersonal relationships and activities and also participate in their language learning processes.

3.2 David J. Peterson's Interview

I interviewed the language's creator, David J. Peterson¹⁴, for two reasons: first, because he had created the language and second, because he was a member of Slakgedakru. David was first contracted on another CW show, which didn't go forward and was a competitor of *The 100*. When the original show was canceled, he received a phone call from *The 100* showrunner, in which the showrunner didn't seem to know much about what they wanted for the language. Later, David found out that it was Mark Pedowitz, the President of The CW Television Network, that wanted the language (Peterson, interview, January 22, 2020).

Originally, David was given very little direction on what to do with the language. He decided to begin with something that inspired him. He explained:

...A brilliant linguist named David Perlmutter, he had a morphological exercise that he would do with undergraduate morphology students where he gave them a bunch of data, language data, that he prepared as a kind of beginning of class problem. All in IPA, with translations and glosses, but he didn't tell them what the language was. And then he'd wait a little bit and then, after a bit, people would figure it out and he would tell them to be quiet so nobody else would figure it out and they could come to it on their own. And what he did was he took English verbs followed by, specifically, three pronouns: you, him, and her. And he would just gloss them, you know, very technically and then say, with either a second person object, or a third person singular masculine object or a third person singular feminine object and say, here's this, here's this verbal data can you figure out what's going on?" And I thought wouldn't it be cool if English took that direction and I actually incorporated object to the point where it became a part of the verb's inflection, in English... (Peterson, interview, January 22, 2020)

After sending some initial ideas and translations, David was told that this was too complicated.

He was told that it needed to be more recognizably related to English and so he made some changes; the result is the Trigedasleng that is used today.

¹⁴ I use David for the remainder of this section because this is how many members address him (or slengheda, which is Trig for language header/commander/leader).

For most of the other languages David has created, there were a few scattered learners, but nothing like the Slakgedakru community. It came as a surprise to him when he began to see learners pop up on Twitter and Tumblr: "...the first thing I noticed on Tumblr, I think more than anything else, was that it wasn't really just that people liked the grounders, people like the idea of Lexa being a lesbian character. And then of course she was the leader of the grounders and the grounders had the language and so, that's how the dots were connected" (Peterson, interview, January 22, 2020). These fans, and some others, later formed a more solidified community through Slack and Discord. David's involvement with the community slowly grew through questions he received from them about Trigedasleng. Eventually, he became an admin on the Slack server and sometimes he adds non-canon words (Slaksleng – words created by Slakgedakru) to the canon dictionary (See Figure 8 above for an example). He keeps his involvement in Slakgedakru minimal though and tries to focus on language related questions so that members can decide what they want for the language, rather than relying on his input. He commented:

There were times where it would be cool actually to be more involved but they were so self-sustaining and so active that I also didn't want to interact too much because I didn't want to, you know, I kind of represented authority there and I didn't want to disturb what had already come to be (Peterson, interview, January 22, 2020).

David is aware of his own influence on the community and how his authority might cause complications in language learning, where members would listen to him rather than exploring the language on their own. He supports Slakgedakru's creation of non-canon materials and enjoys that fans are learning this language. Often, he lets the community know when he attends conventions or events related to *The 100* so that members can meet with him. At one point during our interview, he admitted that people vary greatly in the pronunciation of Trigedasleng when they try saying lines to him (both actors and fans). Since the language is spoken quickly, it

can be difficult to speak conversationally without having a solid grasp of the phonology or sounds of the language.

David spoke about the Lexa incident as well. He regrets not being more prepared for the episode where Lexa dies, as he had not yet read the script. He noticed that Lexa had less lines to translate, but did not put it together until he saw reactions from Twitter fans a few time zones ahead of him when the episode aired. One thing that he did notice after the episode was an increase in people's interest in Trigedasleng. David stated that:

It kind of became a bit of a rallying point for the LGBTQ+ fandom of *The 100*. There were already many who were interested in the language because of Lexa and now there were many that decided, that just said they were going to swear off the show but they still liked the world and they liked being able to write fanfic and stuff like that. And so they continued to be interested in the language and to follow it, but it also brought in a lot of new fans who said: I'm done with the show but I'm so upset with what happened to Lexa that I want to, first of all, talk to like-minded people who feel the same, and second, either re- or produced some alternate reality where something different happens (Peterson, interview, January 22, 2020).

David understands the impact that these events had on fans, and that many production staff and writers deserve the criticism they've gotten from fans. However, he also wanted to note that Jason Rothenberg and many of the writers have supported both David and the use of Trigedasleng in *The 100*. He explained:

There are times where, literally, there aren't even any grounders in the episode but he will just throw in a line, a line that may get cut later, for me to translate, just so I get paid for that episode. He does this a lot. The writers have bent over backwards to try to make the story still have grounders in it, despite the fact that they're not even on Earth anymore. He really does a lot to make sure that the language is still there and is still used in an important way in the show, and has some value. (Peterson, interview, January 22, 2020)

While he isn't sure about the future of the language, he is interested to see what happens after the show ends sometime near the fall of 2020. A new series pilot is supposed to air during May that

gives more information about the Grounders' origin. He says it is unclear still how this will develop and whether or not fans will be as interested in it.

David recognized, like the community, that queer representation played a significant role in this community coming together. It was clear that Lexa was a prominent figure for Trigedasleng fans and that the language had become tied to the grounder culture she was a part of from the show. In addition, David's reluctance to interfere as an authority figure shows his understanding of the community dynamic as a place of acceptance and encouragement rather than a place designated for language only. For example, as noted above, he did not want to use his position of power to deter members from exploring Trigedasleng as a language – with developing new words or thinking through existing grammar, he preferred that members decide what they wanted for the language rather than what he wanted.

3.3 Survey Quantitative Data

The survey began with demographic questions about the participants: where they were from, their level of education, their financial bracket, their age, and their ethnicity. Participants were asked to identify both their ethnicity and their nationality. I did this because where someone lives does not necessarily equate to their familial heritage and later on in the survey I focused on family and sense of belonging. Much like the other aspects of this community, participants' heritage and ethnicity were very diverse. The majority of participants were Americans, which is not surprising considering *The 100* is filmed and set in North America. In terms of nationality, some others were Australian, Argentinian, Chilean, Greek, and Spanish. For ethnicity, there were participants who identified as Australian, Estonian, Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, English, Hispanic, European, European-American, Italian-American, Polish-American, Native American,

and Pacific Islander. One participant said they were Human for both categories. One claimed to identify their ethnicity as “Geek” (Figure 9). Although participant’s identities are diverse, it is evident that many participants are white, but avoided using this term (for example, using European or Greek). While there might be more ethnic or racial diversity in the community, it does not appear here and this presents a challenge to fully understanding a community through online research because researchers have to rely on participant’s self-reporting.

What is your nationality?	How do you self-identify your ethnicity?
American	Geek (yes really)
Australian	1/4 Australian, 1/4 Estonian, 1/4 Chinese, 1/4 English
American	White
American	Japanese/Polish-American
Argentinian	
American.	Do you mean race? I'm Italian-American, so I identify as White or Caucasian.
	White but also other. I'm 1/4 Filipino.
USA	white
American	white
American	White
Chilean National	Hispanic
American	Caucasian
I'm a human	I'm a Human (as far as I know)
Spanish	European
Greek	Greek
I am American.	I identify myself as European-American.
I was born in the USA and honestly am rather unsure of most of my nationality by blood. The one country I do know is Wales.	Honestly I enjoy Celtic legends but beyond that I don't have any real ties to a land or people. At least such that it effects my life as I'm aware of.
Caucasian- United States	Caucasian
American	American
The United States of America (Citizen)	Native American and Pacific Islander

Figure 9: Member’s nationalities and ethnicities.

Participants were also asked to self-identify both their gender and sexuality. Of the 21 participants, 11 participants identified as female,¹⁵ six as male, and four chose other (Figure 10). Three of the individuals who chose the other category disclosed their identities as non-binary, and one “as a me”. Nine of the participants identified as bisexual, five as straight, three as pansexual, and four as other (Figure 11). Participants who chose the other category disclosed their sexualities as ace bisexual, queer, ace with demi tendencies, and homoromantic asexual. Only one of the six males identified as bisexual, while the other five identified as straight. This indicates that the sexual diversity among the community is mainly evident among individuals who identified as females.

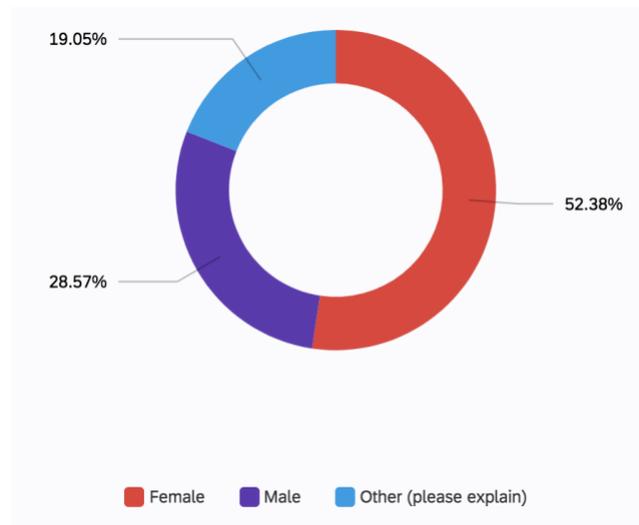


Figure 10: A visualization of members’ genders.

¹⁵ I originally used male/female distinctions in my survey. I later realized that man/woman would have been more appropriate and more accurate but for the purposes of the results I will use the terms I had in the survey.

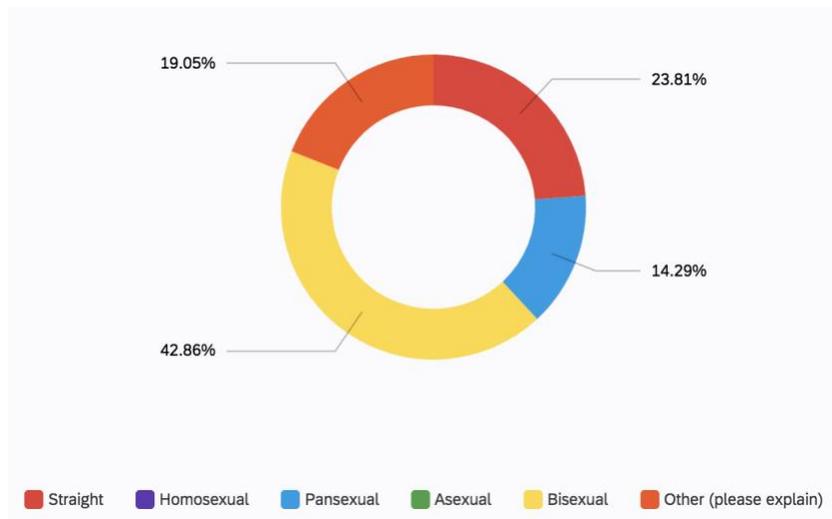


Figure 11: A visualization of members’ sexualities.

Participants were then asked about their financial status, as well as their level of education. The majority of participants were low income (USD 20,000 or less) but most also had some level of post-secondary education (Figure 12 and 13) One specific aspect to note was that many of the participants felt either their income level affected their ability to participate in fandom related activities like cosplay or meet-ups. I addressed this in the focus group discussion (see Chapter Four).

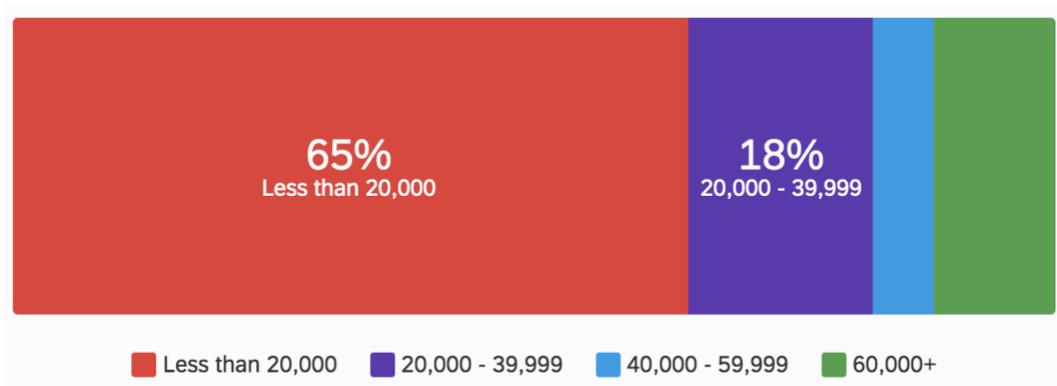


Figure 12: Members’ income levels.

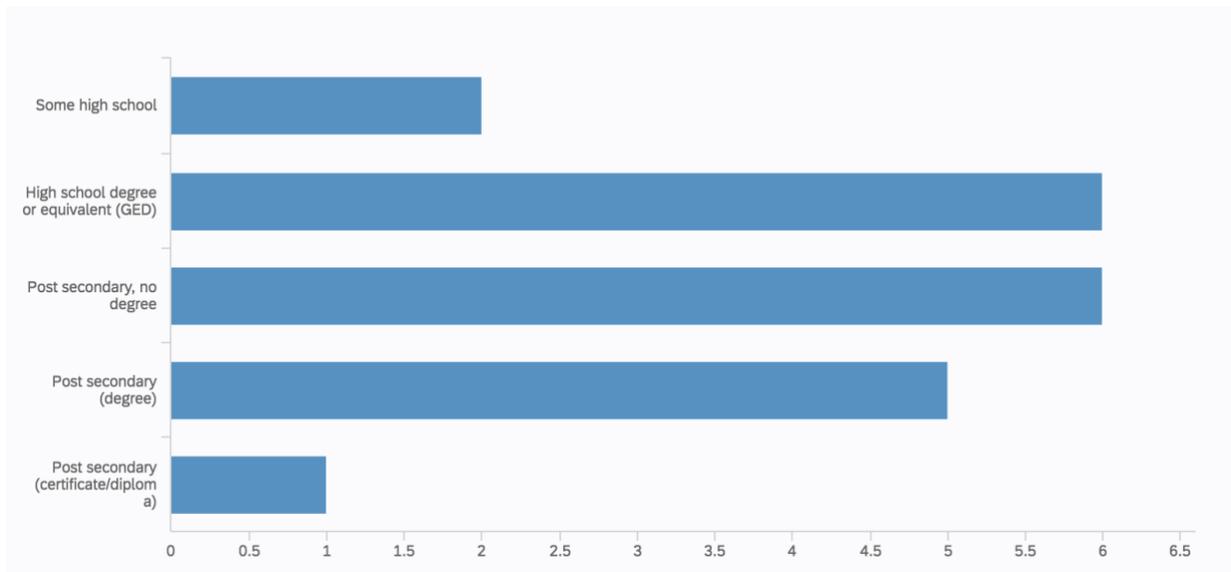


Figure 13: Members' education levels.

Participants were involved in a wide range of employment, including computer analyst, business owner, university admission employee, retail worker, machine operator, and students (Figure 14). This is significant to mention because fans have often been considered childish or immature, and unable to function as full members of society (Duffett 2013; Jenkins 2012; Yoon 2019). However, this data clearly indicated the opposite: fans surveyed here are educated and working in a very diverse set of highly technical and skilled positions. I also asked what other skills participants had learned as part of being involved in their fandom(s), and these answers included a range from computer programming to graphic design to horseback riding and so on, indicating a wide variety of interests and talents within the community (Figure 15).

Employment
Computer analyst/developer
Retail shop assistant
Factory worker
Machine Operator, Cook
University Admissions Employee
cashier
disabled
I work in an arts office and a museum at a large university
Business Analyst
Student at high school
Business Owner Graphic Wrap Company
student
unemployed
I work at a local market
Third party retail inventory auditor
Student
Student
Unemployed

Figure 14: Member's areas of employment.

Skills (obtained through fandom)
linguistics, writing, game development, origami
Sewing, crochet, survival and camping
Writing, Art, Conlanging
N/A
Abstract art, making charmed jewelry.
phonology
web design/html coding, photography, graphic design, creative writing
I have skills in writing, peer editing, and tutoring in writing. I've been published in various capacities, mostly in poetry. I am learning how to construct my own languages, though I've not yet built out a full one.
Programming, music, app development, database management
Cyr wheel, horse back riding, and theatre
Car wrapping, graphic design, Esperanto (language), abstract art, poetry, inspirational writing.
Greek, English, computer
I love outdoor exploration and have hiked, mountain biked, backpacked, and kayaked. Other skills include soccer and horseback riding. I hope that this answers the question correctly.
I have taught myself several computer programming languages, and some management skills from my time in military service.
Percussion, art, gymnastics, Portuguese
Photography, Philosophy, Psychology, Graphic Design

Figure 15: Skills members have gained.

Only 17 out of 21 participants completed the survey. The remainder of the results will focus on these completed surveys only. When asked what their first language was 82% (n =14 participants) answered English. Individuals also identified Spanish, Finnish, and Greek as their first languages. Every single participant said they were learning additional languages to Trigedasleng, with over 15 other languages described, including natural and constructed languages (Figure 16). Interestingly, Schreyer (2015) also noted many Na’vi language learners were learning additional languages, indicating a further interest in linguistic/language-based studies within conlang communities.

What other languages do you know or are learning?
Trigedasleng, Spanish, Esperanto
Trigedasleng, learning Estonian, Polish, Mandarin, and Mando'a (Mandalorian).
American Sign Language, Spanish
Mandarin, Welsh, Trigedasleng
Spanish
Italian, French.
Trying to learn Trigedasleng, Japanese, would love to know French and I know a couple of words in Tagalog.
Spanish, Japanese
American sign language, some French
I've been studying American Sign Language for a little over a decade and have a solid proficiency. Aside from Trigedasleng, the only other conlang I have a decent grasp of is Lang Belta from The Expanse.
Russian, Japanese, and French. Learning Arabic and Trig
I am learning Trig (obviously), French, and a bit of ASL.
Esperanto
English and French.
English
I know Spanish and began learning it at a young age. I began learning Trigedasleng in early 2018, and French in late 2019. Further on, if I am able to keep a strong grasp of these languages, I hope to pursue more.
Learning: French, Trigedasleng, Spanish

Figure 16: Languages that members are learning.

3.4 Survey Qualitative Data

In this section, I describe the results of the qualitative questions on the themes of family, home, belonging; *The 100*; Trigedasleng; experiences in the fandom; and gender and sexuality. I provide quotes from the surveys and I have made minor edits for clarity and grammatical structure. Each participant was assigned a random number in order to remain anonymous.

3.4.1 Family, Home, Belonging

Participants were asked to define family, home and belonging. I asked this question because of an occurrence in modern society where people feel disconnected from each other. Duffett (2013) describes how the concept of anomie - the sense of rootlessness and alienation (394) applies in

fan studies. Anomie is particularly important here because it describes a disconnected from things like heritage or familial ties and this is a role that fandoms are sometimes able to fill. In answer to these questions about belonging, participants claimed that “family” is people who love you, or people that you love. This love is generally unconditional and supportive, and does not require a blood relation to be valid. When asked to define home, participants claimed that home is a place, person, or space where one can feel safe, supported, and accepted for who they are. They associated home with belonging. When asked to define belonging, participants claimed that belonging is when you feel accepted for who you are, regardless of differences people may have or what they perceive as flaws. To belong is to be free, to be yourself, to be understood, and to be accepted. As one participant puts it: “A sense of self that says I am here because that is where I am meant to be” (Participant #2).

These themes were contrasted by the answers to the next question, which ask about the participants connection to their heritage. While 38% (n = 5) of participants felt mildly connected to their heritage through their family traditions or language use, the majority (n = 8) of participants did not feel connected to their heritage because of a lack of connection during their upbringing. These themes are important because they indicate that participants see a change in the family unit. For them, family is no longer connected to blood ties or heritage, and is becoming more of a created construct for each individual. In addition to this, 85% of participants described home as more than a geographical landmark where one might store their belongings and sleep. Home can be defined as a person, a place, or even a feeling in specific circumstances. This is significant, especially during a time where more and more people are seeking support networks through online communities (Nardi 2015).

3.4.2 The 100

Following the discussion of the concepts of family, home, and belonging, the survey turned to questions of fandom. Since fandoms have the potential to fill these gaps for some fans, it was important to understand how fans of Trigedasleng also felt about the universe where the language is used, *The 100*. At this stage in the survey, participants were asked if they were a fan of *The 100*. Out of the 17 participants, two said no, and did not complete this particular section but they moved on to the Trigedasleng section instead. The remaining 15 were redirected to a section specific to the show and their fan identities.

When asked what they liked about the show, participants spoke about the complexity of the characters, their relationships, and the moral dilemmas that they face. One participant stated: “I like the characters and the fact that no single person is ‘good’ or ‘bad’. Everyone has their motives and people they want to protect” (Participant #6). Another explained “I enjoy the elements which explore the cultural drift of the post-American cultures (both Skaikru¹⁶ and *Grounder*)” (Participant #9). Others said that the diversity of both the show and cast, as well as the representation of queer identities and strong female characters, were what led them to watch. Several participants expressed that they found the futuristic, apocalyptic setting appealing while others found the language Trigedasleng the most appealing.

When asked what they disliked about the show, participants mainly spoke about their concern with character development and believability. Many of the decisions characters made in the show contradict what these fans believed the character would have done in those situations. Also, even

¹⁶ Skaikru is the name of the people that came back down to Earth after the apocalypse. Skai (sky) kru (people).

though it is science fiction, some of the scenarios seem less believable than they should. In addition, it appears that the show is more plot-based rather than character-based, and since this group of fans were highly interested in the complexity of the characters, this is not an ideal structure for them. One participant explained, “I dislike that *The 100* does not slow down from the large dramas to take time to further develop the characters and their relationships with others. Everything moves so quickly that it doesn't allow the viewers to really see into the characters and how they handle the extremely overwhelming events” (Participant #5). The other main issue was the fact that certain characters had died, mainly Lexa; the Claxa incident was explained in Chapter One.

The last question in this section asked how *The 100* has affected participants' views of the world. Some participants claimed that it hadn't affected their views but that they loved learning Trigedasleng. Others spoke about how it allowed them to conceptualize reasons for people's behaviour. For example, whether or not people are inherently good or bad, or if good or bad are even categories we can use to define someone, since there is so much in between. One participant said “Strength isn't always muscle. Sometimes losing is its own kind of victory” (Participant #4). Another participant used the show to focus on their own relationships and whether or not to forgive someone or give them second chances: “i feel like it's made me more aware of how people treat me and whether or not someone who hurts you deserves (or needs) forgiveness or a second chance” (Participant #7). What these examples signify is that there is an underlying moral principle present in the show that carries into some fans' lives. Through the scenarios presented in *The 100*, fans are able to determine how they might make these decisions in their everyday lives.

3.4.3 Trigedasleng

Participants were asked to self-identify their fluency from a selection of options (Figure 17 and 18). Fluency in reading and writing was much higher than fluency in conversation and speaking. This makes sense considering the majority of communicating is done through text-based messages. Most participants used YouTube, Discord, or Trigedasleng.net as their most used language resources (Figure 19). In other studies (Doricic 2019; Okrent 2009; Schreyer 2015) there are similar resources for learning the target language, especially a community of online learners and these learners are often better at reading and writing than they are at speaking and listening. This indicates that community is likely a key component for a thriving conlang fandom.

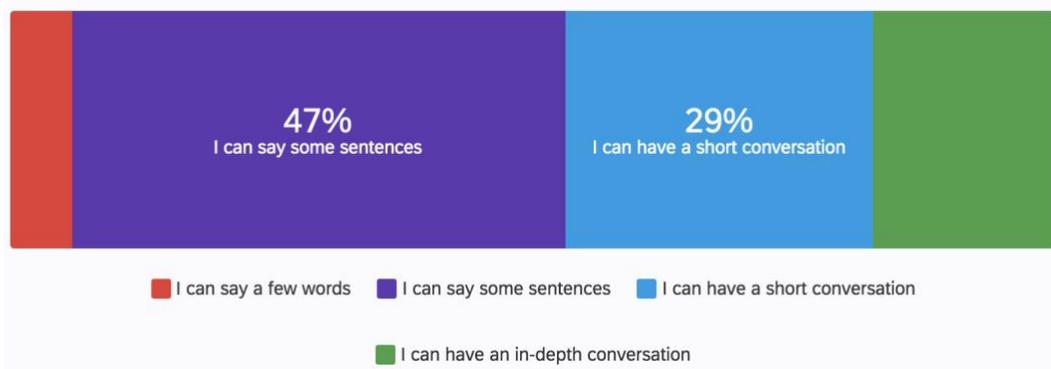


Figure 17: Members' conversational/spoken fluency.

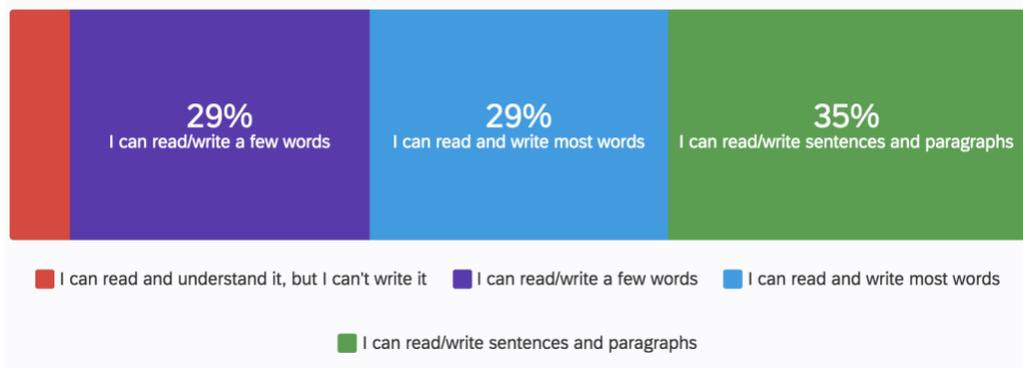


Figure 18: Members' writing/reading fluency.

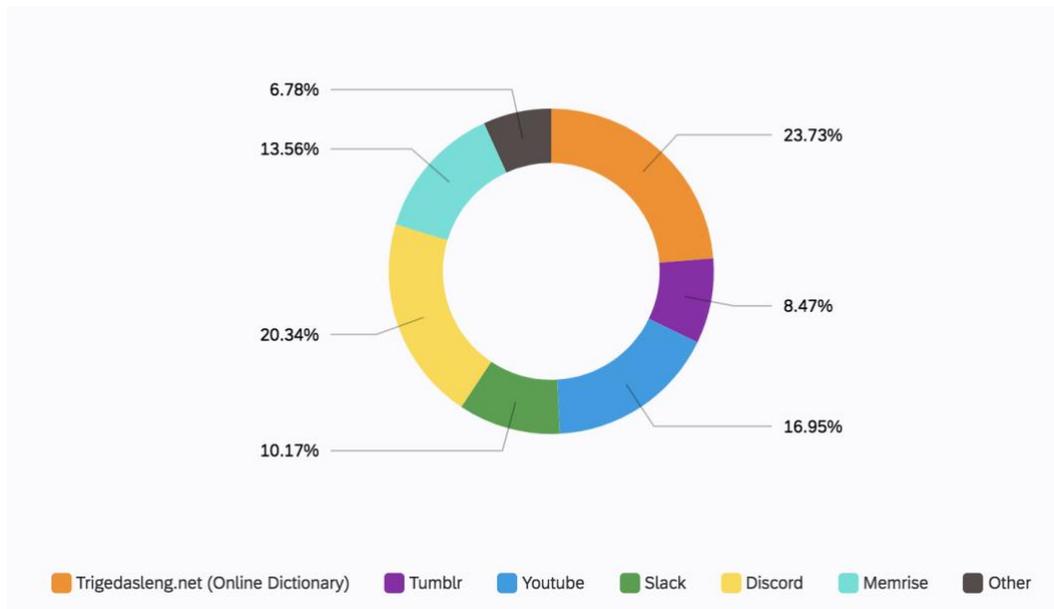


Figure 19: Resources members use for learning Trigedasleng.

Several people (n = 8) indicated that they chose to learn Trigedasleng based on their interest from watching the show, as well as the sound of the language. One participant wrote, “It’s a very musical, interesting and beautiful language” (Participant #4). Another participant expressed their desire to use Trigedasleng for their fanfiction, and another was just bored and looking for something to do. There were several answers that spoke about the language being tied to the Kru (Slakgedakru) and others who spoke about being connected to the grounder culture from *The 100*. These answers about the universe of *The 100*, in particular, delved into complex ideas.

One participant wrote:

How the "universe" of *The 100* has affected my view on the world is by showing me that Humanity and the way we work and operate cannot fully change into a Utopia without some type of corruption or by gaining to those means through War, but it does show that there are people out there in this world that are genuine and they are few and far between. It has shown me despite all of what I said previously is that there is hope for humanity, and that maybe we can do better (Participant #2)

Another said:

The 100 has affected my view on the world by allowing me to step into the apocalyptic mindset and causing me to research and look into survivalist ideas. While I was interested in

the outdoors prior to the show, when I was offered the opportunity to go on a trip for a few weeks, I wanted a chance to live in the outdoors and get an idea of how this is accomplished. I ended up going on a 3 week backpacking trip and was both pleasantly surprised and challenged. Finally, *The 100* and more particularly Trigedasleng, have inspired me to study linguistics and a variety of languages (Participant #5)

Fans use their fandom to face new experiences in life, to understand humanity, or to learn new things. By participating in a fan community, members of that community will be able to discuss experiences, thoughts, or new ideas, much like they do in *Slakgedakru*. This fandom offers unique perspective because of its intermingling between the universe of *The 100*, Trigedasleng, and the real world. Heller (2017) explains that alternative worlds can be imagined in many different ways to create tensions between perfection/imperfection or human/non-human and so on. People are making conlangs for non-scientific reasons like books, movies, television, or art (Heller, 2017, 20). Many of these conlangs are created for a new world, but at the same time they also re-imagine our world and give humans agency over what occurs, or is experienced, in it.

3.4.4 Why Trigedasleng?

Participants were asked what they liked and disliked about Trigedasleng. For the former, participants spoke about the ease of learning for English speakers, the traceability of words from English etymology (both being able to learn where it came from and the task of following it back to its origin), being able to have a not-so-secret secret language, and the fact that it has gender-neutral pronouns. Participants disliked the lack of vocabulary and grammar rules that exist (since the language is fairly new), how the show can alter meanings in a way that doesn't make sense for the language or restricts the language to reflect "grunder culture", and the fact that English and Trigedasleng do not translate directly, which complicates learning. Participants said that Trigedasleng was reminiscent of many languages including English, ASL/SL, Spanish, Gullah, Tok Pisin, Patwah, Lang Belta, Finnish, Latin, and Native American languages. This similarity

also led to some members choosing to learn languages like ASL and Spanish in addition to Trigedasleng. Participants use Trigedasleng to communicate with each other, but also for fun with their friends or peers.

Languages aren't the only addition to participants' lives when they participate in a media fandom. They also participate in cosplay, a form of costume play where the person dresses as a character or their own variety of a character from the fandom; writing fanfiction, which can be used to recreate narratives that fans disagree with or new adventures for their favourite characters; fan art, which is similar to fan fiction but with different media; role playing, which is a form of live-action storytelling where each person acts as one or more characters; visiting other members, or even teaching their dogs commands in Trigedasleng. One participant explained that they used their fandom to name a racoon Lexa for a fundraiser, "i actually hosted a fundraiser for a wildlife rehab just outside Boston that named one of their rescue raccoons Lexa. it was amazing, and there was a lot of support for it from the fandom" (Participant #7). While many fans did not participate in activism directly related to Trigedasleng or *The 100* they did speak about being part of other activism related groups, charities, or activities, such as Tao Primary¹⁷ and The Ships Alliance¹⁸ or protesting for women's rights and climate advocacy.

3.4.5 Experience Within the Fandom

Overall, participants' experience joining the Trigedasleng community appears to have been more positive than joining *The 100* fandom. Some participants expressed an interest in the language and the show, which led them to find Slakgedakru. Over 50% of Slakgedakru members explain

¹⁷ Tao Primary is a non-profit school in Thailand, founded by Eliza Taylor, the actor that plays Clarke in *The 100*.

¹⁸ The Ships Alliance is an anti-bullying campaign for fans created by Sachin Sahel, the actor who plays Eric Jackson on *The 100*.

feeling a sense of belonging, friendship, and community with other members (this spanned across several responses to different questions). Other members (n = 4) describe themselves as lurkers. Lurkers are members who participate without contributing to the majority of interactions. For example, a lurker may private message someone or use an emoji to express how they feel about a comment, but they likely won't participate in the broader conversations going on in the main channels. Nonnecke and Preece (1999) explain that the number of lurkers often outweigh the number of active participants in an online space, and that these lurkers don't exist for "sinister" reasons. They explain that lurkers can range from completely inactive to those that post in some instances and that lurkers might become members in order to gain information about the community's interests. In the case of Slakgedakru, it seems likely that lurkers may use the discussions already taking place in the community to aid their learning, while not actually feeling the need to contribute in posts. Nonnecke and Preece (1999) also explain that lurkers often still feel a strong sense of community, even if they aren't actively participating as a member.

Several participants refer to *The 100* fans in a different way – not Slakgedakru or Trigedasleng fans, but fans of the show specifically – and how these fans in particular can sometimes be aggressive or confrontational. Most often, these fans are a larger community that participate through social media. This viewpoint is probably due to the large number of "shippers"¹⁹ for different couples on the show. Comments from *The 100* actors' and producers' Twitter accounts, show one group shipping Lexa and Clarke, while another ships Bellamy and Clarke – creating a divide and tension in the fandom. This is further complicated because one group supports a

¹⁹ Shippers refers to the desire and support for a couple to be together as their characters, regardless of their relationship in the piece of media.

lesbian relationship (Clexa) while the other supports the heteronormative one (Bellarke). Even more, the actor who plays Clarke and the actor who plays Bellamy recently married, and although their characters' relationship has been platonic thus far in the show, it further fueled the Bellarke fan's desire for the relationship to become canon.²⁰

In Slakgedakru, in particular, participants described how their experiences have been much more focused on positive relationships and non-confrontational interactions. However, members that identified themselves as new to the community were unsure or neutral in their ideas about the community. Members who had spent some time in the community expressed how they felt about it in the survey. One member said:

There aren't enough words to express this. my entire life has very quickly become about this fandom and the people I've gotten to know through it. there are four, possibly five of us from my discord group that are going to conageddon together and I'm just as excited to spend time with them as i am to meet the cast members. it's given me a sense of belonging and as someone who is too sick to leave the house often, that's a pretty amazing gift because I've never felt that way outside of my illness support groups (Participant #7).

One participant revealed themselves to be an admin, and claimed that they felt a responsibility in their position. Not only did they feel the need to protect younger members in the group, they also felt an obligation to help with language learning since they had a wider grasp of Trig than most.

This participant explained:

...I'm super proud of any member that takes an active role in their learning and throws out a question or practice translation, so it's important to me to try to encourage that. I feel a responsibility in answering the language-related questions because I know I'm one of a few people who has this much working knowledge of the language... (Participant #3)

A few participants were also members in other *The 100* related fan groups: Wonkru Bunker; Wonkru Discord; Bellarke Community; and a role-play Discord. Participants listed several ways

²⁰ Canon is the officially licenced content of a fandom. It belongs to the producers or network rather than the fans, the latter of which is often referred to as fanon.

that they use Trig in their everyday lives, including speaking with their friends and family, social media, making shopping lists, and translating songs to sing. Most participants stay in the community for their love of Trig and the people that they meet there. As one participant commented:

As fun as Trigedasleng itself is, I doubt I would have stayed in the community so long if it wasn't such a safe space on the internet for me. The fact that it's a linguistic nerd community that demographically skews queer female is so rare and special. I feel that I've sort of luckily stumbled into this and I treasure that (Participant #3).

This indicates the sort of environment that Slakgedakru provides. A few responses to this section involved participants explaining that they were exploring their sexual orientation and their gender, and that they felt the community had supported them and aided them throughout the process. While most participants' understandings of gender and sexuality did not change because of *The 100*, several of them were exploring these topics at the same time as the show and felt validated through it. This is expanded on below.

3.4.6 Gender and Sexuality

Clarke, the main character of *The 100*, had a relationship with the grounders' leader, Lexa, that caused a lot of emotion and activism in the fan community at large. In this survey, in particular, many participants admitted that they did not care as much about the relationship between Clarke and Lexa as they did about the narrative and representation of lesbian characters. I do not try to take away from the importance of this relationship for those that ship this couple, but instead want to emphasize the underlying implications of the relationship itself. For some, it was the first representation they had seen of same-sex partners in media and it helped to normalize non-heterosexual relationships. About a third of respondents stopped watching the show after Lexa's death, and several more were upset after the ordeal. They specifically note that this follows the trope of writers looking for shock value rather than writing for gay representation. However,

some participants chose to keep the story going through their own way in their fanfiction writing and through learning Trigedasleng.

Trigedalseng has gender-neutral pronouns, which were widely supported by all. Two participants wanted more specific pronouns for clarity, but still supported the use of gender-neutral pronouns.

This comment expresses the sentiment of one of the participants:

I love em! Em is something I just do in real life in certain environments, so I find it really intuitive and charming. It's also nice that it's not fraught by gender. I'm a nonbinary person without any pronoun preferences. I usually get she, sometimes they, and rarely he - all of them are good with me. I love em though, I've joked that it's my "real" preferred pronoun (Participant #3).

Overall, participants enjoyed the egalitarian theme of the show and were fairly happy with the representation of sexuality, gender, and race. Several participants liked that relationships and sexuality did not define the characters and, instead, just existed as a normal, unquestioned aspect of their lives. There were some comments, however, about ways in which representations could be improved. As one participant noted:

...I think that although The 100 includes characters of color, those characters narratives often include pain or torture in order to influence the narratives of adjacent white characters. When it comes to gender, I feel like the focus on women tends to be almost exclusively on white women, and mostly those who fight physically. Rarely do we see depictions of women showing strength in other ways. Sexuality might be the only thing the show gets right - it's a non-issue. People sleep with who they want to sleep with, or don't, and it's fine. I appreciate that aspect of it (Participant #1).

Another participant stated:

I do appreciate how they present the Ark and Grounders as having moved beyond heteronormative patriarchal thinking, because it allows stories of strong women to breathe without having to negotiate realism. In terms of representation and narrative, though The 100 has good diversity all around, it has struggled bigtime with a White Savior problem in Clarke's story lines. I also absolutely hate how they sidelined Ricky Whittle's character, and thinking of Lincoln's death in season 4 in context of the rumors of that actor being bullied on set - it still makes me uncomfortable to think about. The 100 may present a world beyond

racism/sexism/whatever but it is still very much in THIS world and it suffers from the same racist sexist pitfalls as the rest of Hollywood (Participant #3).

Finally, another participant commented:

So far they are doing a decent job. But with today's society and all the new gender affiliations popping up I feel there is no way The 100 can fully represent all of them, but by having at least a few main characters apart of the LGBTQ+ community on the show is a good way to represent it. As for Race Representation, it's a post-apocalyptic scenario so some poorer races might not have made it to the Ark or on the Ground (ex: there are no Native Americans to my knowledge) but if that isn't the case, I would love to see a few more races being represented on the show (Participant #2).

Interestingly, participants brought up many issues that occur in a broader context, such as race representation, equality, and social hierarchy. This particular comment reveals an ideology about poorer races being less likely to survive an apocalyptic scenario, and specifically uses Native Americans to explain this. This could easily be tied to the current (mis)representations of Indigenous people in North America after suffering through a colonial past. Members suggested that there is room for improvement and reflection for television and film writers, producers, and actors. These survey results indicate that fans not only have an awareness of social and political issues like race and status, but also that they continue to combat the stereotype of the “crazy, immature” fan.

3.5 Summary

In summary, the survey, interview, and participant observation allowed me to understand the values and beliefs of the community and provided me with an opportunity to develop questions on specific, key, topics for the focus group discussions. Slackgedakru is an inclusive, intelligent community of language learners, who act as a community and treat one another with respect. They welcome people of different identities and value their relationships with one another, and operate just like a physical community would. Members often help each other with their language learning, offering advice and aiding in translations, including David Peterson as the

language creator and community member. The members of the community support one another and share common ground through *The 100* and Trigedasleng. By using these methods – survey, interview, participant observation – in phase one of my research, I was able to focus on more specific topics in my second phase. This, of course, being the focus group discussions– which aligned more clearly with my original research questions and simultaneously with the interests of the community. In the next chapter, I will discuss the focus group results.

Chapter 4: Results of Phase Two - Focus Group Discussions

4.0 Outline

In this chapter I will discuss the results of my focus group discussions and how themes from the survey were tied to themes in the focus group discussions. I discuss how feminist researchers have used focus groups and how to use text-based focus groups as a method. I chose to conduct a focus group after doing a survey so that I could use a ground-up approach (grounded theory) and focus on what was important for the community. Due to this community having a large number of members with queer identities, focus groups that utilized a feminist research perspective seemed appropriate. The themes that emerged from the focus group discussion include morality and the future; community and support; gender, sexuality, and representation; fan meet-ups; and apocalyptic content.

Focus groups guide the participants, giving them agency, rather than the researcher being in the only position of power. Munday (2014) explains that “[f]or many feminist researchers, conducting focus groups in a feminist manner that seeks to empower participants and disrupt hierarchies means participants must be included and offered control over every stage of the project” (256). This was important because I wanted to empower my participants to challenge notions of what is “normal” and dig into what they really wanted to discuss, particularly as I was approaching this through a community-based research methodology. In order to develop my focus group discussion questions, I asked the admins of both Discord and Slack what they were interested in learning about the Trig community and what they thought the interests of the community might be, and also utilized what I learned in participant observation. This along with my survey results allowed me to develop the script for my focus group discussion. While the

survey was ongoing, I posted the list of focus group discussion questions to the admins for approval and further suggestions. Once the survey was complete, I incorporated this additional data with the admins suggestions to create the topics of discussion for the focus group.

Focus groups allow researchers to explore narrative components, like personal storytelling, between participants. Munday notes that "...working with preexisting groups affords a number of advantages. These include ease of recruitment, the fact that participants already feel relaxed with one another and need little time to warm up, and the way that discussion can be prompted by reference to shared stories and experiences" (Munday 2014, 240). Insider or not, the researcher impacts the research and research process. As the researcher I don't consider being an outsider to be preferable when representing a community accurately. Munday (2014) discusses how insiders might assume trust and people might tend to overshare, while outsiders might misunderstand or have trouble connecting to certain participants (256). Focus groups with people who know each other require the researcher to learn about the "...hierarchies and patterns of interaction..." (Munday 2014, 240) in order to properly conduct the focus group and analyze results. Looking at these specific types of interaction can lead to knowledge about the collective community and how they operate.

As I was working with a community who mainly communicate in text, rather than orally communicate, my focus group discussion was conducted in text only. What this means is that all of the questions and responses were given through written text and no participation was verbal. The focus group discussions took place in a private chatroom on Slack and on Discord on March 19th, 2020 - where all other participants, including myself, were present. To reiterate, there were

no voiced responses or video/audio recorded responses. I also took notes throughout, which are mainly summarized in the reflection section of this chapter.

4.1 Text-Based Focus Groups as a Method

Stewart and Williams (2005) explain that focus groups are “... an organized group discussion around a given topic, which is monitored, guided if necessary, and recorded by a researcher. They are distinguished by their explicit use of group interaction to produce data” (396). Using text-based focus groups as a method requires the researcher to pay attention to a number of elements that are different than using a traditional verbal approach. These include the group size, time allotted, technology being used and access to it, literacy levels, recruitment processes, and security (Murray 1997; Stewart and Williams 2005; Turney and Pocknee 2005).

Stewart and Williams (2005) explain that using graphic meeting spaces can foster more discussion because participants are in a shared “space” and are able to use their avatars to display “face-to-face” emotions. In my own research, it was evident that using emojis is a similar type of display to face-to-face emotions. On both Slack and Discord (and I imagine many other platforms as well) emojis can be used in two ways: one is during someone’s main text where they write to address the group; the other is using an emoji to react to someone’s written text. React emojis are context based and can range from showing agreeance with the poster to conveying emotion on a topic. For my own focus group, most react emojis were used to show agreement and a few were used to indicate that the participant had read my message and acknowledged it (like a nod, smile, or thumbs up in person). One difference between this and face-to-face focus groups is that emojis can be placed retroactively. When this happens, it indicates that participants are either a bit behind in the conversation or that they have gone back

to re-read something. The ability to reference previous content can be less stressful for participants because they are not required to retain large pieces of information, especially for lengthy questions or descriptions.

Another difference between verbal and text-based focus groups is the pauses between speaking. In a physically shared setting, rather than virtual, the researcher is able to pick up on speaking cues – someone starting to speak and being interrupted, someone else raising their hand to take a turn, etc. In a virtual setting this is a bit more discreet. The researcher needs to keep the focus group going in order to finish within the time allotted while simultaneously paying attention to who is speaking and who is not. Stewart and Williams (2005) explain:

The immediacy of synchronous communication online makes it akin to that of offline communication within focus groups. This heightened sense of immediacy in chat leads to the expression of more emotion and often produces more heated exchanges. Emotion can be readily expressed within synchronous forms of communication; while asynchronous communications are literate, synchronous communications are more oral. Although synchronous communication is written and not spoken, many of its linguistic characteristics mirror the spoken word (405).

Ideally, the researcher will use a platform where they can see who is typing in real-time. If this is the case, the researcher should be able to see if someone was previously typing and stops. Often, participants will take time to write their responses because they are given a chance to consider what they are saying before posting, rather than the quick replies of an oral focus group discussion. Sometimes this means that someone will begin typing and then read someone else's response and stop. This doesn't necessarily mean they don't want to answer now, but rather are pausing to take the new information in. They may begin typing again or the researcher might need to prompt them. I found that, during times with no response, especially when I had seen someone typing, it was very useful to ask "Do you have anything to add here, (insert name)?" or

“Does anyone else want to answer this question?” In addition to this, some participants took a long time to respond. When this happened, I waited patiently until the typing had discontinued for about 30 seconds or a response was posted. In some instances, this could take up to 5 minutes and other participants will be waiting with you, so it is important to preface the focus group with a message about realistic pacing. I prefaced my own focus groups this way:

During the focus group please be respectful of other participants. If there is a lull in conversation it is because I am allowing time for everyone to reply and some participants may be slower at responding than others. It is encouraged not to spam the chat so that everyone may respond to the questions (see Appendix F for the full opening message).

Everyone in the focus group discussions was patient with other members and didn't try to control the conversation.

Something else the researcher should pay attention to is the order and frequency of responses. Researchers should be able to see who types and when, who responds promptly, and who takes a back seat. Much like a verbal focus group, you can examine hierarchical power structures based on who speaks with authority and who speaks most often, but you have the added ability to see who might have spoken, if given the chance, and can prompt them to speak later. You can also acknowledge relationships between members based on who speaks to whom and how often.

4.2 Focus Groups

I held the first focus group (A) on the Slack platform and the second focus group (B) on the Discord platform. I chose to include the results of both focus groups together because some members attended both and, as a result, didn't re-answer all of the questions during the second one. Also, comparing the results across both platforms allowed for a better understanding of the community as a whole. At the beginning of both focus groups, I began with this message:

Monin! This focus group is designed to allow you to openly discuss specific topics and your opinions; there are no wrong answers. These topics were developed based on replies from the Trigedasleng survey and focus on ideas of inclusivity, morality, gender, and sexuality. You are not obligated to answer any of the questions asked or stay for the duration of the focus group. However, you are encouraged to stay for the duration of the focus group because if you leave and come back you will lose context for the discussion topics. Please remember, there are no wrong answers, only what you wish to share.

During the focus group please be respectful of other participants. If there is a lull in conversation it is because I am allowing time for everyone to reply and some participants may be slower at responding than others. It is encouraged not to spam the chat so that everyone may respond to the questions.

When most members used a thumbs up emoji to acknowledge that they had read the message, I moved on to asking questions. The main focus group themes I covered were morality and the future; community and support; gender, sexuality, and representation; fan meet-ups; and apocalyptic content. Due to the limited number of participants in each focus group, I have decided not to cite participants individually in order to ensure anonymity.

4.2.1 Morality and the Future

I asked participants a variety of questions on the topics of morality and the future in order to discover their ideas about morality, how they viewed morality in *The 100* and in the real world, how they felt about the end of the show approaching, and what they predicted for the future of Trigedasleng and Slakgedakru. I began by asking the following question:

The 100 is set around an apocalyptic event, which changes the way the world, in particular America, is portrayed. In the survey, a lot of people mentioned the moral issues that the characters struggle with. For example, whether or not someone deserves a second chance. What kinds of moral issues do you think our society is facing?

The participants' answers for this were quite varied and included comments on human rights, who counts in terms of receiving equal rights and treatment, who is worth saving and who is worth sacrificing. I then asked the participants what they felt were important moral issues to

them specifically. These responses were even more broad, including economic inequality, climate change, or how personal actions affect others.

Two responses in particular stood out here because of their complexity and the fan's ability to relate to the real world, an ability that fans are often assumed to neglect (Duffett 2013; Jenkins 2012). One individual wrote, "it is weird to try to negotiate the fallout of the moral failures of others against just trying to be a good person yourself. Which now that I think about it, really is the crux of the show". The other response delves deeper into inequality:

I'm homeless, I'm queer, I'm trans and don't pass. I am afraid to call the police if I'm robbed or attacked, I'm afraid to use a public bathroom, and food is... let's say a logistical problem. Meanwhile there's people putting gold dust on their pizza. Wealthy powerful people break the law with impunity and no one enforces it against them. I am just very very angry.

This example explores the complex topics of inequality, economic instability, and justice. Fans experiences with navigating queer identities become further complicated by other social factors. One reason this inequality occurs is because underrepresentation in the media allows for inequality to become normalised and continue to exist. The lack of queer representation in the media creates a void that non-queer folks don't necessarily consider. If all someone sees are heteronormative representations those with queer identities are less likely to feel as though they belong and those around them are less likely to normalise queer identities.

While morality in *The 100* specifically was not important for participants, they did admire what they termed as 'justice' that they experienced through the show, and, mainly, through the fandom. This justice happened when the "Clexa incident" happened – fans sought justice when Lexa was killed of the show after being promoted as a long-term character. Through activism, participants raised awareness for queer representation in television and the harmful ways that

queer characters are negated in the media. One member mentioned that Lexa is a strong role model and a leader. Lexa is depicted as a brave warrior in *The 100* and at the beginning she believes that *jus drein jus daun*, which means that “blood must have blood.” For some participants, they believed that this applied to the moral state of current society. In addition, a member discussed that grounder culture had made them feel as though, in some cases, violence might be the answer. Some participants mentioned that the community, rather than the show, has allowed them a broader understanding of different perspectives on moral issues, as well as in other areas. As one participant wrote:

The kru has been incredibly helpful for me. Not the language itself, but the culture that has grown up around the language. not the show, but the language. I heard about the kru from DJP as an actual speaker community. Coincidentally, I was just starting transition. And I (unexpectedly) found a community of queer women, nonbinaries, and genderqueers who were strong and supportive.

The “Kru” is an affectionate term for members of Slakgedakru. Narratives surrounding queer identities often appeared in responses, showing again how important this aspect of the community really is.

Due to the fact that the community is directly tied to *The 100* and member use fluctuates between seasons, it was important to bring up the future of the show and the community. Most participants spoke about the possibility of having more freedom with Trigedasleng, since it won’t be as strictly tied to the show anymore. Some participants also expressed concern for the continuity of the community but are hopeful that it will stay active with the members that already exist. One participant mentioned the prequel series that is supposed to air during the final season of *The 100*, which may bring new interest, and another explained

that some of their current members join through outreach on social media, which should also continue.

4.2.2 Community and Support

In this section, participants were asked about their experiences in Slakgedakru, including whether they have shared personal struggles and triumphs or found some form of support through the community. When asked if they felt that the community was a safe and inclusive place, respondents all answered that they do. One participant explains this well here:

Strong agree. I think it's that same origin as a fandom full of marginalized people that have a high respect for justice and community. The post-apocalyptic survivor community is sort of a modern symbol for a community that protects one another from a violent and unsympathetic world. I think that resonates with women and queer women specifically.

This quote gestures at the real-world, largely unaddressed reality, that women face violence every day, and this happens all over the world. Women are also seen as caretakers, and are able to reclaim this perception in a new way by participating in communities that protect and support women. Most participants added that the representation of a lesbian relationship in the show was particularly of interest, and led to a community with many queer women. One member explained “slakkru is the tightest crew I've ever been a part of. I've had close friends before--one or two--but never a *community*”. The inclusiveness of the community also allowed another participant to feel supported during their transition. Another participant had financial help from other community members when they were in need. This participant explains their experience of transition and then expresses how accepting the community was of them. They wrote:

The *kru* was the first place I received complete acceptance. My first piece of physical mail I received with my new name on it was from someone in the kru, sending me a drawing of the slakkru symbol. I still have that envelope. I sort of wandered in and said "Can I be one of you"? and the kru said monin, lukot²¹ and told me I was who I thought I was and they had my back.

²¹ “Monin, lukot” means “Welcome, friend”.

This quote indicates that the relationships formed within the community extend beyond the virtual world in which they take place, into the real world. This is important to note because it helps legitimize the relationships that are formed within Slakgedakru. These overwhelming stories of support are echoed throughout both my survey and focus groups, and were very evident during my participant observation as well. This is explained well, by another participant who commented:

I've got a decent amount of connections to the queer community in the city I live in - but something about Slakkru is a whole 'nother level. I have a suspicion it's a little bit the demographics (a lot of queer rep, like we've been talking about) but also the language aspect. Language is like a glue for communities. I studied Deaf culture in school and it reminds me of that in some ways, how people completely unrelated are a part of one community because they share a language, a worldview, and lived experiences.

Most participants stated that they keep Slack or Discord open to Slakgedakru on a regular basis, even if they are away from their devices. A lot of participants indicated that they do some form of lurking when they aren't actively speaking in the group. Also, many interactions take place through private messaging, so a lot of conversations do not happen in the general chat. Either way, ideas of community, acceptance, and belonging all seem to be widely promoted and an area of pride for participants. In addition, the inclusivity of all genders and all sexualities was a large piece of this pride.

4.2.3 Gender, Sexuality, and Representation

Slakgedakru members are a diverse population and during the focus group discussion I asked questions about participants' ideas about gender, sexuality, and representation in both the community and Slakgedakru. I also asked about the "Clexa incident" because it has been brought up many times throughout my research process for having profound effects on the community at large. Even with unrelated questions, Clexa and queer identities were topics of interest and ultimately linked to many responses.

I focused one question specifically on Lexa, due to the fact that it arose in discussion so often. Initially, participants felt upset about the way Lexa had died in a somewhat predictable trope. By this, I mean that Lexa being killed off on the show is similar to other television shows when it comes to queer characters – they usually don't last very long. Often, this is called 'queerbaiting' or 'bury your gay', which Bridges (2018) explains as:

(1) Queerbaiting erases or sidelines LGBTQ characters by limiting their sexuality to the level of subtext, eliminating them altogether, or relegating them to opposite-sex relationships despite any previous queer coding. Similarly, (2) the BYG trope punishes these characters by erasing them from the narrative entirely if the depiction indeed goes beyond subtext to include acknowledged queer identity. (116)

This trope negatively affects people with queer identities and the narratives surrounding queer identities. One participant explained at length. They wrote:

Regarding Clarke and Lexa- i was myself at the time of watching it really enthralled with their relationship, despite not at the time identifying as feminine and a Big Gay™ there was just something about Lexa i really identified with, and i was really upset when she was killed. While i do understand that there was narrative purpose regarding her death in the form of opening Clark up to more change and forcing her into a quite untenable situation, as well as worldbuilding wise with exploring the post-Kongeda²² politics of the world, it still upset me and i feel the aforementioned items could have been achieved via other means. I would also clarify that i don't feel it was malicious but rather that Lexa was being fridged²³ in the way any love interest character is wont to do in media that plays into that trope. I think it was a sort of trope induced habit rather than an attempt to snub queer fans of the show, even if it came off that way.

Other participants used terms like “punched in the heart,” “bleak,” and “not surprised” to describe their responses to Lexa's death. It's unfortunate that this outcome was a predictable one, especially when the media surrounding Lexa made her appear to be a long-term character.

²² Kongeda is the “alliance” or “coalition” of people. Literal translation is “come-gather”.

²³ Fridged refers to “women in refrigerators” which is a popular trope for women in the media, who are sacrificed for another (usually male) character's storyline.

Trying to define gender and sexuality was a bit problematic. Not in the sense that participants had trouble explaining their identities, but that they disliked one singular version of a definition for these terms. Not only does language about gender and sexuality change over time, but the way an individual identifies might also change. One participant mentioned that they have seen someone stuck “in a label” that they no longer belong in, and another responded by saying “yeah I feel like gatekeeping only really occurs because of the identity politics of it all. because suddenly it's not about what you're feeling in the moment, it has to be about something larger that ‘qualifies’ you”. Participants believe that sexuality and gender are more fluid, changing concepts, and that these labels alone should not define who someone is.

In *The 100* and *Slakgedakru*, people are valued as multi-dimensional individuals. I continued by asking what influence this diversity has on participants and one individual replied:

It's had the BEST kind of influence in the sense that there's a) solidarity, and b) it's a non-issue. You just are who you are, some people get it because they're the same way, those that don't might not get it but are accepting. I've noticed people being more willing to share private struggles related to identity because they see others sharing similar struggles and they realize they're not alone. That's nice to see. It's the diversity that makes us inclusive.

When asked about the diversity of both the community and the show, participants explained that while many of them have queer identities in common, it isn't something they need to talk about on a constant basis, but it is nice that they have the opportunity to do so. Having other members that are in a similar situation has been supportive in its own way, and has allowed many people to explore how they identify themselves. As noted by one participant here: “I will say that I've had more than one young person (usually 14-16) tell me that this group helped them come to terms with their sexuality and even come out to their family or peers”. *Slakgedakru* provides a

space for discussion about these topics, but members also try to meet in person when they are able to.

4.2.4 Fan Meet-Ups

On my survey, several participants indicated that they were unable to financially afford some aspects of their fandom, especially any sort of meet-up or gathering. I used this section to ask about what participants would want to occur at a meet-up and where something like that might happen. Most members were unsure where one might happen but suggested somewhere that David J Peterson might be able to get to so that he could join (likely the USA). Unfortunately, financial problems arise with meet-ups because members are from so many different countries, so someone will end up paying more for a flight, accommodation, etc.

The participants did suggest many options for what they might do at a meet-up, all including speaking Trig, as well as eating snacks, going on a hike or having a house party. One participant even suggested a rap battle in Trig! Members of the community have met one-on-one or at conventions but this is generally limited to members who live near each other. In order to facilitate something larger as an in-person meet-up, it seems that fundraising will be necessary. Fundraising being necessary highlights the fact that access to online resources can allow marginalized people to participate in virtual, intellectual spaces. Often, marginalized people encounter limitations in real world situations where access to information and skills are difficult to access. In Slakgedakru, as referenced in Chapter Three, skills are obtained, especially linguistic ones, that might not have been accessible otherwise.

4.2.5 Apocalyptic Content

Although I did not have specific questions about apocalyptic content, I did gesture at it in some of my earlier questions. Members in the Discord focus group recognized this as an important idea and they ended up having a very in-depth conversation about it. One participant even claimed that, “[i]n a way, we're in the middle of an apocalypse - just one that's going in slow motion”.²⁴ At the end of my focus group questions, another member noted how many people had been through an apocalyptic experience in real-world situations. They explained how European colonization in the West was similar to an apocalypse for the Indigenous people. This is significant for two reasons: first, it shows deep thinking processes and the connectedness to reality that Slakgedakru members have; and second, exploring these topics in relation to *The 100* shows how media can become an intersection for education, dissemination, and advocacy.

There were also two main observations from participants. The first was that using apocalypse narratives is a way for people to overcome their fears. One participant spoke about existing media centered on apocalyptic narratives, which arose around fears from plagues and wars in the past. Another participant spoke about how this narrative can allow someone a fresh start and a chance to be the hero, while another saw this narrative as a valuable lesson in what to avoid for the future. The second observation was that, although there are positive notes, apocalypse narratives are often romanticized and presented to the benefit of those telling it. For example, a participant mentioned the celebration of the holiday Thanksgiving and how the idea behind this holiday is being thankful for the cooperation between the Indigenous people and the invading Europeans when, in fact, it is really a story of genocide and colonialism. One participant was

²⁴ The focus group discussions took place near the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

unable to join in the conversation as it happened but had a lot to say on this topic after reading other responses.²⁵ They commented:

Regarding our fascination with the "post apocalyptic" i think it has a lot to do with the feeling of being trapped within our own society- like one is part of a grand uncaring machine to be one day replaced and promptly forgotten. We romanticize the past, we treat history as legend and folklore and imagine the disordering of our own society to be a return to the legendary form of the past; that is, breaking the machine allows all the cogs to turn of their own accord, to become heroes, survivors, victims, warriors. Everything we want for ourselves but feel wrongly we cannot achieve within "the machine". There is also the appeal of blatant sadism and criminality with no consequences, but this is rarer in my opinion. For my own enjoyment of the genre, i find much of the same but i also find it to be an interesting canvas for worldbuilding- especially in regards to the Americas. There's interesting anthropological implications of the european conquest of these lands- in many ways were essentially watching ethnic groups or cultures split and evolve in real time, and the post apocalyptic genre can accentuate this in a worldbuilding context by removing the also present cultural leveling that occurs in the real world due to ever growing technology and economic interdependence. Without that constraint, one can imagine americans developing into large "clans" like in the 100, etc etc. It provides a canvas and a set of paints, in essence which is why writers keep coming back to it. More modernly anywho early post apocalyptic literature was mainly about scaring people into compliance regarding certain things.

Not only does this response show a great deal of thought, but it also shows an understanding of the apocalyptic narrative in multiple ways. One way is to explore what occurred in the past through a different lens, rather than the biased form of history often told by those in power. As mentioned earlier, apocalyptic stories can be used as a fresh start, as a way to rewrite history or attempt to prewrite the future. The prewriting of the future is full of potential because fans can use both their fandoms and communities to consider scenarios (like apocalyptic narratives) for their future, based on how they feel about the present. In this sense, they are able to use an alternative world to create new ideas in the real world. This is similar to what Monica Heller (2017) speaks about in her article on conlangs, where she explains that the alternative worlds, created for things like conlangs or television, can be useful for academic research, specifically

²⁵ The focus group was left up until March 20th, 2020 at 10:00 A.M. (PST) in order to accommodate this individual, after receiving permission from the other participants. Afterwards, I removed the discussion as per ethics requirements.

anthropology. By allowing the researcher to make sense of new, sometimes troubling aspects or events that humans face and hopefully, by doing so, making things better. Making our world better by learning from the past is the driving force of *The 100*'s plotline.

4.3 Future Considerations for Text-Based Focus Groups

Throughout this process, I noted some important considerations for future use of text-based focus group discussions. First, the number of participants will affect the results. Larger groups do not equal more participation and can end up being overwhelming for both participants and researchers (Murray 1997; Stewart and Williams 2005). Often, in a text-based situation, if someone has answered in a similar way to another participant, they will refrain from typing their own answer. This is different than in-person focus groups, where you might hear a participant begin speaking and acknowledge that they had something to say that was similar. For text-based focus group discussions, using a platform where you can see participants typing is important for this step – and you can use this to make sure each member is included equally. However, this will become increasingly difficult with more members, so notes are also useful here. With two or three participants, each person has a chance to answer. With five or more, it's likely that some participants will take a backseat to others, especially if they are slow at typing – even if they have valuable, new information to contribute. This means that it is vital that the researcher is focused on who speaks when and how often and follows up with less active participants. More participants will allow for a more cohesive sample of the community, while fewer participants will allow for a more in-depth conversation with specific community members.

Second, as mentioned above, it is very important to use a platform that allows the researcher to see who is typing. Using this type of platform allows the researcher realistic time management

for responses. The time allotted for the focus group should be longer than an in-person focus group, and this is something to consider when slotting time during the set-up of the focus group before asking participants to sign up. There is also an unpredictable time period for individual responses during the session. In my focus group, some participants answered in seconds, while others took a full five minutes. Had I not had the ability to see them typing, I would have moved onto the next question and missed many responses. Participants often had well thought out responses, and some took much longer than others. The researcher needs to have patience and acknowledge this at the beginning of the focus group because other participants will be waiting as well.

Lastly, managing conflict online can be difficult. While I did not have this issue during my focus group, I tried to prepare in case something came up during the discussion. Ideally, the researcher should find a platform that allows them to remove or mute participants from the focus group if necessary. User identity is difficult to manage in an online setting, and can lead to questions about authentic sampling (Turney and Pocknee 2005). Stewart and Williams (2005) suggest that using a platform which requires some type of registration (IP address, email address, username) can help avoid unwanted participants (internet “trolls” or bots). Conflict occurring between participants who previously had troubled relationships can be mitigated by allowing for an anonymous entry into the focus group. This also allows participants who don’t want to be identified by their personal stories to still participate. I allowed for this to occur by providing participants with the opportunity to make a secondary account prior to the focus group and then privately send me the username so that I could add them into the session under the desired username. No one ended up doing this in this particular instance, but it should always be an

option. This is highly dependent on the researcher keeping information confidential and should be handled with care.

Text-based focus groups may not be appropriate for all areas of research, but they are useful for communities that mainly interact through text-based platforms because it allows them to be in a comfortable and familiar space. Also, it differs from in-person focus groups, where participants may speak quickly, and instead allows participants ample time to consider their answers. In this way, text-based focus groups can allow the researcher to more accurately represent the individual and the community as a whole. In addition to this, the researcher will spend less time on transcribing and interpretation, and can focus on more intricate details about their research.

4.4 Summary

Throughout this chapter, several things are evident. The first is that focus group discussions are an excellent way to gain insightful information about the deeper influences within a community. I found core themes as I went along, the most prominent being gender and sexuality. I also found new themes, like the importance of apocalyptic narratives, that I didn't realize were so embedded in the minds of the participants. Focus groups allowed me to understand participants on a more personal level as well.

Secondly, and I repeat, this research contributes to the idea of intelligent and mature fans.

Combating stereotypes about fans is important because they have been highly misrepresented in the past. Fans have discussions that are full of depth and full of value in relation to real world situations, such as comments that these fans made on the topics of narrative control, gender,

sexuality, and community; fans have so much to contribute – whether it ends up being at a convention panel or in an online chat room – and are very dedicated to their fandoms.

Lastly, this community in particular is founded on being inclusive and accepting. Slakgedakru has members from Mexico, Africa, Australia, England, Canada, USA, and several other countries. It also has members that identify as queer, members that vary greatly in age, and members that come from vastly different financial and social backgrounds. In many ways, this is similar to the characters in *The 100*, who vary in nationality, sexuality, age, and background. Yet, despite this difference, or perhaps because of it, Slakgedakru is able to function as a highly intelligent, dedicated, and cohesive community. They celebrate their ability to accept others and create a safe place to share their love for Trigedasleng. In the next chapter, I conclude the thesis by examining my research questions and discussing directions for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

5.0 Outline

This chapter summarizes the results of my research and addresses my research questions. I will explore the ways that I have contributed to academic literature, particularly fan studies, and discuss how this research relates to broader ideas about online communities, fans, and language. From there, I will examine the limitations and strengths of my research and discuss directions for future research. Finally, I will conclude the thesis with a brief summary and concluding remarks.

5.1 Overall Results and Research Questions

My research has shown how the Slakgedakru language fan community combats fan stereotypes, explores complex ideas about class, sexuality, and gender, and fosters an accepting, inclusive online environment. This thesis explored the following three questions:

1. What are fans' social and political motivations for learning Trigedasleng, and are these indicative of broader social power relations?
2. How does participation in this community (through learning, art, cosplay, etc.) affect one's sense of belonging or connection, and how does this play a role in the larger themes of identity, gender, and language?
3. In what ways can constructed languages, their fandoms, and their universes allow us to explore complicated ideas in an alternative space (beyond our real world)?

Utilizing my research results as discussed in the previous chapters, I will address each question separately below and demonstrate what each one tells us about online fan communities.

5.1.1 Question One

What are fans' social and political motivations for learning Trigedasleng, and are these indicative of broader social power relations?

Members of Slakgedakru had a variety of reasons for learning Trigedasleng, most notably a general interest in the language itself and an interest in grounder culture. Specifically, learners' initial motivation for learning Trig seemed to be a result of their general interest in the language.

However, learners were motivated to continue learning by their participation in the Slakgedakru community. In other words, the community itself plays a key role for many language learners and their involvement over time with the language. Additionally, some learners even remained in the community after they stopped learning the language or felt that they had reached full fluency. This occurred for various reasons; for example, some members stay to help new members learn while others stay for friendship or familial ties.

Politically speaking, some members decided to learn Trigedasleng because of their desire to feel more connected to the fictional grounders. The grounders are governed by different political and social systems than what exists in the real-world. For example, their status hierarchy consists of commanders and warriors, rather than politicians and civilians. For some of these members, it was because Lexa, a positive queer representation, was leader of the grounders that specifically made them want to learn the language. For other members, it was because of the grounder culture itself – a post-apocalyptic group of people with different rules and different standards of living than contemporary North America offered viewers an alternative way to imagine the world and its contemporary issues. By learning the language, fans are able to access deeper understandings of grounder culture and why they live the way they do. By doing so, they can also compare the cultures in *The 100* and consider real-world options for contemporary problems. For example, Trig has gender neutral pronouns, which help impact how speakers view the world. As well, grounders portray relationships that imply that attraction can happen with multiple genders or that intimacy is only limited by personal attraction. This is different from contemporary North America, where there is a divide between men, women, and ‘other’, and these distinctions often cause tensions politically and socially.

5.1.2 Question Two

How does participation in this community (through learning, art, cosplay, etc.) affect one's sense of belonging or connection, and how does this play a role in the larger themes of identity, gender, and language?

Everyone who enters the Slakgedakru community is motivated to learn Trigedasleng with like-minded individuals. Consequently, it becomes evident that language acts as a common ground where members from all over the world can interact and network with each other, which often forms a sense of belonging. This subsequently results in *The 100*, Trigedasleng, and their universe being a diverse and inclusive community of fans. The broader fan community for *The 100* is not tied to Trigedasleng and has sometimes been described as hostile by members in Slakgedakru because of differing opinions on how character's relationships should play out, but in Slakgedakru these tensions do not seem to exist.

Participation in Slakgedakru, whether visibly active or lurking, seems to play a special role in members' sense of belonging. This goes beyond what in-person friendship might offer, partly because it allows participants to strategically construct and negotiate their identities in relation to the rest of the community. Members are afforded some level of anonymity (they are not required to reveal how they look, their age, their education levels, their finances, and so on) and are able to create a persona based on who they want to be. This is helpful for navigating identity, which can often be tricky in real-world scenarios. This construction and negotiation are most evident when looking at gender and sexuality in Slakgedakru. For example, if someone's family had a negative opinion about queer people, that individual might not reveal this piece of themselves to other family members. Virtual spaces like Slakgedakru that allow for anonymity, and by extension some level of safety, allow them to explore this part of who they want to be.

Identity and gender are intertwined and can play an important role in discovering one's sexuality. In my research, several members spoke about their transitions or their struggles with how to represent their gender in the real-world. Again, this can be easier to navigate in an online community because of the afforded level of anonymity and the ability to be a lurker until a safe space presents itself.

5.1.3 Question Three

In what ways can constructed languages, their fandoms, and their universes allow us to explore complicated ideas in an alternative space (beyond our real world)?

In Slakgedakru, topics of discussion vary greatly, but they are often about real-world issues. Within the focus group discussion, one of the main ideas the community explored was the apocalyptic narrative, which is likely due to the apocalyptic content from *The 100* and the grounder culture that is tied to Trigedasleng. By connecting these to the real-world, members of Slakgedakru discussed topics like colonialism, genocide, representation, history, or justice. These sorts of topics occasionally come up in general chats, but they were more focused and structured in the focus group. Engaging with such topics in this space allows people to share their experiences and bond with others who have had similar experiences, which greatly contributes to the sense of belonging many members feel. Engagement with real-world issues in an alternative space like the fandom community and the show also allows people to imagine different outcomes that may not be possible in the real-world for a variety of reasons. For example, many members who identify as queer felt that *The 100* portrayed positive forms of queer representation, and they also felt that Slakgedakru itself allowed for an open, accepting

space to speak about and navigate this aspect of their identities while building relationships with people who have experienced similar real-world issues.

5.2 Contributions to Fan Studies

Within my research, I employed identity theory, feminist theory, and fan studies in order to understand who Slakgedakru is and to better understand their social and political motivations for participating in Slakgedakru. This approach was specifically developed to help address my research questions, and as with most methodologies, may need to be amended to fit other research projects. For example, if a researcher was looking at race in fandom, they might opt to draw from Critical Race Theory in addition to, or in place of, one my theoretical positions. This sort of theoretical and methodological flexibility is one benefit of conducting interdisciplinary research. However, fan studies as a discipline would benefit from some form of broad, but standard, theoretical framework, similar to what feminist or cultural studies has, in order to accurately conduct research with fans. For example, one main focus of fan studies has been to combat negative stereotypes about fans and this could be a driving force for fan studies, along with a critical focus on social issues. Many fan groups are also activists who fight for human rights, proper representation, and so on, and as such the discipline should reflect the core motivations and interests of its participants.

5.2.1 Methods

Focus groups, whether online or offline, are an excellent way to learn about fan communities' interests and values. Interviews can focus on one individual, but fandom is a social phenomenon and there are almost always other fans surrounding each individual fan, as an interconnected group, rather than fans experiencing their fandoms alone. Focus groups allow for a similar, albeit less structured, question and answer format to interviews, but they also allow for discussions

between participants that are indirectly related to the topics being asked about. These discussions are where the researcher should pay special attention because they show several pieces of information: what the participants are concerned with outside of the immediate research project, how the participants interact with one another, and power relations between participants (who speaks when, turn-taking, and how much does each person contribute) (Munday 2014). This can also be applied to text-based focus groups.

Text-based focus groups will be particularly important in the future, as will many other forms of online research. Online research is becoming more prevalent as the globalized world, especially during a pandemic like COVID-19, begins to explore online options to once localized options. Text-based focus groups follow similar procedures to face-to-face focus – they have a similar structure and flow as well, with the researcher acting as more of a guide to the conversation. As outlined in Chapter Four, text-based focus groups require an online space, preferably one that is commonly used by participants and one that allows the researcher to see when participants are typing. Using real-time for these focus groups, rather than email or forum, allows for more immediate conversations and is more similar to in-person focus groups.

5.2.2 Fan Scholars

Fans can be scholars, scholars can be fans, and both can be fan scholars. Fans are often also people in highly technical and skilled positions, parents, scholars, and so on. It is important to remember that fans exist outside of their fandoms and that they are complex, multi-dimensional people who are fully capable of anything a non-fan scholar would be. In addition, fans are often seen making academic level arguments within their fandoms at fan conventions, in fan-related

books or magazines, and in online blogs.²⁶ While these fans might not possess official credentials, this does not mean that they cannot make critical points about the causes they advocate for, and insightful contributions to the field of fan studies itself.

Some fan studies scholars have argued against the notion that scholars can be fans. Their arguments are based on the assumption that a non-fan scholar will be less biased (or not biased at all), and consequently able to make observations that a fan scholar might miss (Hills 2017, 61). I do not agree that either position offers a ‘better’ or unbiased position; unbiased opinions are not truly possible due to the fact that individuals also have different and complex life experiences. However, I do believe that scholar fans have insider information, can build rapport with such information, and can truly understand what their fellow fans are going through. Non-fan scholars will probably pick up on some of the more common, mundane aspects of being a fan but they might also misrepresent the fans that they work with because of their disconnection with the focus of the fan material. Fandom is, after all, a very emotionally driven endeavour (Booth 2015; Chin 2018; Duffett 2013; Satterwhite 2011; Vernon 2016).

5.2.3 Reflexivity

In order to be a fan scholar, it is important to use reflexivity on a constant basis, including the initial research planning, its execution, and data analysis (Duffett 2013; Evans and Stasi 2014). I did not want to impose my own relationship with *The 100* or its universe onto my research participants, and I wanted to make sure that I was approaching the Slakgedakru community in the most ethical way possible. As such, throughout this research I reflected on the following questions to ensure that my research needs aligned with the needs and goals of Slakgedakru: 1) is

²⁶ For example: Wiscon is a science fiction feminist convention with an academic track, but many non-academics do panels about topics like gender, sexuality, and race in media.

my research reciprocal or, in other words, am I offering Slakgedakru anything significant? 2) is my work too focused on my own academic goals? 3) what are my biases and how are they affecting my interpretation of the data? 4) how might a non-fan scholar approach this research? In order to acknowledge these concerns, I checked in with the admins of Slakgedakru for each step of my research and took notes on my own interpretations during participant observation. I also tried to consider the community from my own, insider, perspective and later from an outsider's perspective.

5.3 The Broader Picture

In contemporary society, it has become more difficult to distinguish between online or offline spaces, as most communities now occupy some form of both. Appadurai (1996) speaks about the ways that modernity, or modern society, have resulted in many people becoming 'deterritorialized'. In other words, the constant movement of people, media, politics, and national identities have intermingled to become a form of globalized identity which does not necessarily fall under any specific geographic location or any specific cultural rules. In many ways, this is how Slakgedakru exists.²⁷ Although the members are on specific online platforms and those platforms are governed by the rules and regulations of their countries of origin, the members themselves adhere to their own rules and regulations as well. This results in complicated power structures and politics being embedded in their activities, discussions, and identities.

In Slakgedakru specifically, these power dynamics and political differences did not appear to cause group turmoil. Discussions generally consisted of varying points, and members with

²⁷ In some ways, this is also similar to the world of *The 100*. Even though there are some geographical locations, the main characters move around a lot, to the extent of living off-planet, and meet with groups who have different social and political structures to their own.

different opinions would try to consider the other member's explanations rather than immediately taking sides. There are admins available to resolve conflict, but in conversations we had on Slack and Discord they told me that they rarely ever needed to.²⁸ It is important to note that not all online fan communities will be as peaceful and accepting as Slakgedakru, and that researchers should pay special attention to the location of both the member's geographic location, as well as the communities online or offline locations, because the real-world events, politics, and ideologies influence how people interact with the fandom and in a virtual space.

5.3.1 Fans as a Whole

In fan studies, it is important to consider who fans are at both an individual and collective level. Collective fan identities and individual fan identities are intrinsically linked because our self-constitution is informed by our group memberships (Tajfel 1981). Our group memberships will differ in salience over time and space, resulting in some groups having more influence over individual identities than others. Although we may have common values or shared experiences with other members in our social groups, as individuals, our experiences within these particular groups are unique to us because of our differing backgrounds, identities, experiences, and biases.

Fan scholars can generalize about fans and fandoms to some extent, as some similarities do commonly exist. These similarities include things like fan artwork, fan meet-ups, or fans dressing in cosplay. However, overgeneralizations can lead to or rely heavily on inaccurate stereotypes about fans. This process is similar to how other groups of people are stereotyped, and can lead to negative and misplaced understandings of that group.

²⁸ Admins are from multiple countries but mainly the USA.

5.3.2 Feminist Studies

In Slakgedakru the majority of members are women. The admins are mostly women, and the active members are mostly women, which is not the stereotypical representation of a fan. Activities that fans do and the way that fans act are often considered ‘feminine’ even though fans are often stereotypes as middle-aged effeminate men who are effeminate because they are fans. Fans and fan-related activities are often considered to reflect femininity and immaturity (Baker 2016). A common fan stereotype is the middle-aged man who plays dress up or plays with toys; this stereotype associates fandom with immaturity by labeling activities such as cosplay or video games in a way that evokes an association with children’s play. Male fans are sometimes considered ‘less masculine’ because of their enthusiastic and dedicated engagement with activities that are stereotyped as feminine, such as writing, artwork, or cosplay (Baker 2016; Wilson 2018). Although Slackdegakru members are mainly women, they are also very diverse as women. Their diversity spans across a continuum of gender, sexual identities, nationalities, and ethnicities. Slakgedakru has women that have technical skills, linguistic skills, and high-paying employment. Not only is this research able to combat negative fan stereotypes, but also negative stereotypes about women. The women in this group, like many fans, possess high levels of reasoning, intelligence, and maturity.

5.3.3 Language and Belonging

Language is tied to one’s identity and experiences. For Slakgedakru, the conlang Trigedasleng created a community with the initial shared interest of a conlang and a continued interest in the culture surrounding the conlang and the community. Heller (2017) speaks about conlangs becoming popular during times of high tension:

Indeed, the moment of explosion of European interest in invented language, the late nineteenth century, is not coincidentally the crucible linking modernity, colonialism, nation-states, and capitalism. This is where the authority of the divine cedes to the struggle between

the authority of nature and the authority of human agency and will. It is where the promises of democracy come up against the inequalities of capitalism, where the discourse of universal rights encounters social differences in the shape of nations, races, genders, and classes. Invented languages emerge from that crucible. (14)

Minority groups have often used language as a way to combat undesirable social conditions. For example, in print media it has become increasingly more common to capitalize the ‘I’ in Indigenous. This is done to signify the legitimate status Indigenous people should have over their lands, culture, and ideas; it also combats colonial and negative representations of Indigenous people. As Heller notes above, languages as a whole can also be used as a way to fight inequality, and as she notes, those fighting injustice or inequality have created conlangs, notably Esperanto (a language invented to help promote world peace pre-WWI), during these times. Conlangs are likely imagined as a tool for combatting undesirable social conditions due to their initial lack of political and social implications and their ability to idealize a new world. This is similar to the ideas portrayed in *The 100* – where an apocalyptic world allows survivors to have a new start, and they begin by creating a new language. Members are able to use these ideas and their familial ties to the group as tools to explore their own version of the world and their own identities. In Slakgedakru, for example, members use Trigedasleng to think about their own culture and compare how Grounder culture might address the same issues, like having gender-neutral pronouns. Fictional conlangs, in this way, open up the possibility to re-imagine what the real-world has to offer.

5.4 Potential Limits and Strengths

Potential limitations for this research include difficulties with online research, the reach of a focus group, and the constant flux that fans and their fandoms are in. This research took place in an already existing online community, and as such members communicated primarily online, which made it difficult or impossible to speak with them in person. This is problematic because

it does not allow for much of a peripheral look at who fans are outside of their specific community, so it lacks a completely holistic approach, which can lead to misrepresentation. Also, this limitation means that my methods and methodologies had to be adapted to an online format. Online research is still a relatively new style of research, particularly with fan communities and in community-engaged research, so these methods have rarely been tried and may not have been the best for this type of research.

Online focus groups may not be good for all types of online communities or online research. Some online communities may be too large or have a very scattered member base for a focus group to be an effective method. Researchers may wish to opt for an ethnographic approach instead or they may be more interested in collecting demographic style responses. As well, some online communities might have high tension, and placing members into a chat with sensitive topics would be difficult. Luckily, this did not pose a problem in this research.

Online fan communities can vary in size and are constantly changing. I only conducted research within Slakgedakru for a short time, but it would be useful to see how the community evolves over time, especially with the series finale of *The 100* approaching. The afterlife of this particular fandom would offer the potential for a comparative analysis in future research.

Through this research, I was able to focus on the intersectionality of identity, feminism, language, and fandom. While there are limitations to this research, there are also strengths; these include the fact that Slakgedakru is online, specifically, which allowed for a unique opportunity to do online-only research; combating fan stereotypes by addressing misrepresentation; and

contributing to fan studies research. This research opened the door for new directions in online and fan research, specifically, and broadened the scope of text-based focus groups and community-based research.

5.5 Directions for Future Research

There are several things to consider for future research in the area of fan studies and online communities, specifically the Trigedasleng community. In particular, looking at the “behind the scenes” of a community was something this research lacked. Part way through my research, I found out that admins had access to analytical tools that provided information on members’ activities, such as the number of messages sent within a certain timeframe. This specific information would have helped me see how active members were and how many “lurkers” existed in the public portion of the community. More work on the “behind the scenes” of fandoms, online ones in particular, is needed because it shows the activity level of the online community. For example, in Chapter One, I provided a screenshot that explains that there were over six thousand private messages in one week. These occurred “behind the scenes” and far less activity occurred on the public chat channels.

Another aspect to focus on, and which could be done shortly for the Trig community, is an investigation into the afterlife of the fandom. Williams (2018) explains that “[f]ans continue to discuss, produce, and display their fandom in a range of ways while also working to cope with changes to their fan identities and communities in this period of post-object fandom” (451). Even though the fandom’s canon content is ending, it can also live on in objects, places, or, in the case of *The 100*, language. I mention this here because *The 100* is on its final season and, therefore, Trigedasleng and Slakgedakru will likely go through some form of transformation in the near

future. For example, the rate of new members may begin to decline, and the content for canon may stop altogether.

Interestingly, across fandoms, the majority of fanfiction authors appear to be women (Jenkins 2018), yet the current core literature on fan studies is heavily influenced and written by men (Duffett, Booth, and Jenkins are three examples of this.). There is an underrepresentation of women in academic fan studies, which indicates a potential discrepancy in the way that fans and fandoms are represented and understood in the academic literature, and could be an avenue of future research.

In the future, it will also be important to focus on fans in other spaces. In particular, more research is needed on how fans interact online and offline, but also cross-cultural and cross-nationally. Most of fan studies to date is based on North American fans (Yoon 2019). This is problematic because it creates a bias in fan studies, where scholars have failed to consider how fans outside of North America interact with both North American fans and the content that is created there, but also the ways that transnational fans interact with fandoms in general. This is also problematic because of the global world we live in, as Appadurai (1996) explains:

... sentiments, whose greatest force is in their ability to ignite intimacy into a political state and turn locality into a staging ground for identity, have become spread over vast and irregular spaces as groups move yet stay linked to one another through sophisticated media capabilities. (41)

Although the world has become 'deterritorialized', it is still connected through media. Appadurai (1996) describes deterritorialization as "...one of the central forces of the modern world because it brings labouring populations into the lower-class sectors and spaces of relatively wealthy societies, while sometimes creating exaggerated and intensified senses of criticism or attachments

to politics on the home state” (37 – 38). This means that the distinctions between and power over class, wealth, nation, land, and politics become blurred and this leads to new identity formations and cultural productions. Fans are also connected through media, as this thesis has demonstrated. Fan studies should focus on transnational and transcultural fans in order to address the global world that fandom exists within, and by doing so, avoid bias, misrepresentation, and the ‘othering’ of groups outside of North America.

5.6 Conclusion

Slakgedakru, as a whole, is an accepting community of fans that meet online in a virtual space to perform various language and non-language related activities. My research explored how the fan community Slakgedakru identify themselves, participate in their community, and re-imagine real-world situations with the help of their fandom. By using identity theory, feminist theory, and fan studies research, I paid special attention to the members’ sense of belonging within the community and why and how the community created this sense. Membership in Slakgedakru, and many other communities, is a multifaceted experience. For example, in Slakgedakru, some members are active in the general chat channels, some are active in Trig specific channels only, and other members lurk, but none of them are seen as negative or lesser because of the type of member they choose to be and everyone is considered to belong.

Fan studies is growing, and it is important to consider new avenues of research that explore transnational fandom and cross-cultural comparisons. It will also be important to consider online and offline fans, who generally exist simultaneously, as well as language fans, who offer a unique perspective to broader fandoms. Finally, fans are constantly changing, fluid groups of

people, and each fandom has its own unique ideas, values, and goals, which I hope is evident in what I have presented here about Slakgedakru.

Disha gonplei ste odon.

This fight is over.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Advertisements for Survey

The following script will be posted to my personal Twitter, as well as the Slack and Discord Trigedasleng groups:

Are you a member of any communities related to #Trigedasleng and #The 100? Tell us about your experiences with the language and community by taking this UBCO research study survey! If you have questions please email me at Brianna.peacey@alumni.ubc.ca. #Trigsurvey

This script will be given to members who want to share from Slakgedakru's Twitter and Instagram:

Are you a member of any #Trigedasleng or #The 100 communities? Tell us about your experiences with the language and community by taking this UBCO research study survey! If you have questions please email the researcher at Brianna.peacey@alumni.ubc.ca. #Trigsurvey

Appendix B: Poster for Survey

You're the only one who knows my true identity: How randoms create new identities for constructed language learners

This survey is part of a UBCO study that focuses on Trigedasleng learners, their communities, and their identities.

The survey is anonymous and will take 20 – 30 minutes to complete. You must be at least 14 years of age to participate, be learning Trigedasleng and be able to read & write English.

Are you learning Trigedasleng? Are you part of Slakgedakru? This survey is for you!

LINK TO SURVEY

Questions or Concerns?
Principal Investigator:
Christine Schreyer
Associate Professor of Anthropology
Email: Christine.Schreyer@ubc.ca

Co-investigator:
Brianna Peacey
Graduate Student - Interdisciplinary Studies
Email: Brianna.peacey@alumni.ubc.ca

Appendix C: Advertisement for Focus Groups

Hello everyone! I am a UBCO researcher who recently did a Trigedasleng research survey and on (date) I will be holding a focus group. A focus group is like an interview with multiple people and less structure, which allows you to freely discuss topics in more detail. I will be holding one on Discord and one on Slack so that members on each platform can participate. If you use both, you can participate in just one, or in both. The times for each platform will be different. Slack will be from (time – time + timezone) and Discord will be from (time – time + timezone). If you would like to participate and are 14 years or older, you can read more about the survey and consent to participate using the form located at (insert link). You will need to provide consent and your username by (day before focus group for Slack and day before focus group for Discord) so that I can add you into the private chat room. If you are concerned about your identity during the focus group, you can create an alternate account and send the newly created username to me. You do not need to tell me your current username to participate but you do need to be a member on either Slack or Discord.

Appendix D: Survey Questions

Reminder: You may skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering.

Qualifiers

1. Do you speak English?
2. Are you learning Trigedasleng?
3. How old are you?

Identification

4. How do you self-identify your gender?
5. How do you self-identify your sexuality?
6. What is your level of education?
7. What is your occupation?
8. Aside from officially certified education, what skills have you learned? Such as...computer programming, art, etc.
9. What is your financial status?
10. Does your financial status affect your participation in fandom(s)?
11. What is your nationality?
12. How do you self-identify your ethnicity?

Connections

13. In order to have a better understanding of community members and their backgrounds, this research explores how communities, familial ties, and personal history effects experiences. How do you define: Family, Home, Belonging
14. Do you feel connected to your heritage? Heritage meaning your history with your ancestor's culture (for example, cultural items, land, language) on either side of your family, your ethnicity, and your nationality. Why/why not?

15. What is your first language(s)?
16. What other languages do you know or are learning?
17. Are you a fan of The 100?

The 100

18. What do you like about The 100?
19. What do you dislike about The 100?
20. How has the ‘universe’ of The 100 affected how you view the world?

Trigedasleng

21. Why did you choose to learn Trigedasleng?
22. How would you self-identify your proficiency level in conversational Trigedasleng?
23. How would you self-identify your proficiency level in reading and writing Trigedasleng?
24. What resources or tools do you use to learn Trigedasleng?
25. What do you like about Trigedasleng?
26. What do you dislike about Trigedasleng?
27. How do you feel about the gender neutral pronouns used in Trigedasleng? For example, Em meaning he/she/they.
28. Does Trigedasleng remind you of any other languages? If so, why?

General fandom

29. Please describe your experience in joining the Trigedasleng and The 100 fandom(s).
30. What fan activities do you do in the sphere of Trigedasleng and The 100? Such as cosplay, fan art, language use, etc.
31. How has the experience of participating in this community/fandom affected you?

32. Have you participated in fan activism (such as fundraising, protesting, or using social media to promote human rights)? If so, what kind?

Slack and Discord

33. Are you a member on Slakgedakru or Discord?

34. Are you active on the Slack or Discord group? What do you do there? Please describe your experience joining and/or participating in the group.

35. Has your family/home life affected your experience in these communities?

36. What motivated you to stay in the community?

37. Do you participate in/are you a part of another fandom community related to The 100 or Trigedasleng? If yes, which ones?

38. Do you speak, write, or communicate in any other way in Trigedasleng outside of the Slack/Discord community?

Gender/Sexuality

39. After watching The 100 did your understanding of gender or sexuality change?

40. Does the Clexa (Clarke and Lexa) relationship mean anything to you? If yes, please explain.

41. After the "Clexa incident", did your feelings towards The 100 and/or Trigedasleng change? If yes, please explain.

42. What do you think about the representation of race, gender, and sexuality in the 100?

Final Remarks

43. Is there anything else that you would like to share about The 100 or Trigedasleng, or anything that you felt this survey left out?

If you have experienced distress or unease during any part of this survey, please review the provided free resources below or search out local resources as needed.

National Crisis Hotlines Kids Help Phone (between 15-20 years) 1-800-668-6868

Crisis Services Canada 1-833-456-4566 or text 45645

First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line 1-855-242-3310

National resources for information about mental illness Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention (not a crisis line) 613-702-4446

Canadian Mental Health Association 416-646-5557

British Columbia Crisis Hotlines Crisis Centre 1-800-784-2433

No area code needed: 310-6789

British Columbia Resources Canadian Mental Health Association - British Columbia Division 1-800-555-8222 HeretoHelp 1-800-661-2121 12/13/2019

Youth in B.C. online chat Greater Vancouver Area: 604-872-3311

Howe Sunshine & Sunshine Coast: 1-866-661-3311

Aboriginal Wellness Program 604-875-6601

Alberta Crisis Hotlines Distress Centre 403-266-4357

Alberta Resources Canadian Mental Health Association - Alberta Division 780-482-6576

Manitoba Crisis Hotlines Klinik Crisis Line 1-888-322-3019

Manitoba Resources Canadian Mental Health Association - Manitoba Division 204-982-6100

Mental Health Education Resource Centre of Manitoba 1-855-942-6568

Yukon Crisis Hotlines Yukon Crisis Line 403-668-9111

Yukon Resources Yukon Health and Social Services 1-866-456-3838

Mood Disorders Society of Canada - Yukon Division 1-867-667-8346

Depression Understood 403-668-9111 12/13/2019

Ontario Crisis Hotlines Ontario Mental Health Helpline 1-866-531-2600

Good2Talk 1-866-925-5454

Gerstein Crisis Centre 416-929-5200

Mental Health Crisis Line In Ottawa: 613-722-6914 In the larger Ottawa area: 1-866-996-0991

ONTX Ontario Online & Text Crisis Service Text 741741

Ontario Resources Canadian Mental Health Association - Ontario Division 1-800-875-6213

Toronto Distress Centre 416-408-4357

Quebec Crisis Hotlines Centre de Prevention du Suicide de Quebec 1-866-277-3553

Quebec Resources Action on Mental Illness 1-877-303-0264

Newfoundland and Labrador Crisis Hotlines Mental Health Crisis Line 1-888-737-4668

Newfoundland and Labrador Resources Canadian Mental Health Association - Newfoundland and Labrador Division 1-877-753-8550

Mental Health and Addictions Services triage line 1-844-353-3330

New Brunswick Resources Canadian Mental Health Association - New Brunswick Division 506-455-5231

Prince Edward Island Crisis Hotlines The Island Helpline 1-800-218-2885

Prince Edward Island Resources Canadian Mental Health Association 902-566-3034

Nova Scotia Crisis Hotlines Mental Health Mobile Crisis Line 1-888-429-8167

Nova Scotia Resources Canadian Mental Health Association - Nova Scotia Division 902-466-6600

Appendix E: David J. Peterson's Interview Questions

1. How/when were you approached to create Trigedasleng?
2. From Tumblr, I read that Trigedasleng is similar to a pidgin but not quite the same due to it being from English only. During the creation process, were you given any direction on how to develop the language?
3. Did you expect people to learn Trigedasleng? Why/why not?
4. Did you have expectations for who the fans would be?
5. After meeting the fans, was there anything that surprised you about who they were, what they're doing, how they organize themselves?
6. From my experience on Slack I can see that you engage with Trig, how else do you use Trigedasleng outside of your work for *The 100*?
7. What about the Trigedasleng community makes you engage with the community members?
8. Does Trigedasleng have an effect on your personal life, aside from developing the language? If yes, please explain.
9. How do you approach the copyright for your language materials?
10. You've mentioned that Clexa caused a rift in the community, how do you think that impacted the language learning community?
11. Is there anything else that you would like to add about Trigedasleng or Slakgedakru?

Appendix F: Focus Group OpeningClosing Remarks and Questions

Opening remarks: *Monin!* This focus group is designed to allow you to openly discuss specific topics and your opinions; there are no wrong answers. These topics were developed based on replies from the Trigedasleng survey and focus on ideas of inclusivity, morality, gender, and sexuality. You are not obligated to answer any of the questions asked or stay for the duration of the focus group. However, you are encouraged to stay for the duration of the focus group because if you leave and come back you will lose context for the discussion topics. Please remember, there are no wrong answers, only what you wish to share.

During the focus group please be respectful of other participants. If there is a lull in conversation it is because I am allowing time for everyone to reply and some participants may be slower at responding than others. It is encouraged not to spam the chat so that everyone may respond to the questions.

Morality & Futures Anxiety

1. The 100 is set around an apocalyptic event, which changes the way the world, in particular America, is portrayed. In the survey, a lot of people mentioned the moral issues that the characters struggle with. For example, whether or not someone deserves a second chance. What kinds of moral issues do you think our society is facing?
2. What kinds of moral issues are important to you?
3. Why is the representation of morality in The 100 important for you?
4. Has Trigedasleng, Slakgedakru or The 100 been helpful to you for discussing concerns with current political issues or moral dilemmas?
5. How are you feeling with the last season of The 100 approaching?
6. What do you predict for the future of Trigedasleng and Slakgedakru?

7. Do you particularly appreciate anything else about the world of The 100 that sets it apart from the world we live in?

Inclusivity

8. A lot of answers in the survey indicated that the Trigedasleng community was a safe and inclusive place. Do you agree with this sentiment and, if so, why do you think that is?
9. If you have shared personal stories and struggles here, why was that important to you?
10. If Slakgedakru has given you support, what kind of support has it been? Emotional, financial, personal, or something else?
11. How much time do you spend here, as compared to other activities in your life?

Gender & Sexuality

12. What do the terms 'gender' and 'sexuality' mean to you?
13. The 100 is diverse in sexuality, while Slakgedakru is diverse in both gender and sexuality. Has this influenced your experience in the community?
14. Clarke and Lexa's relationship was a positive form of representation for many people in the queer community. Unfortunately, Lexa was killed in Season 3. When this occurred, what did you feel?
15. Has anything else influenced your experiences of gender or sexuality in the community?

Meet Ups

16. Many people have mentioned a lack of finances or resources preventing them from attending meet-ups/conventions. Is a meet-up something you would be interested in having? Where would it occur?
17. If you could choose, what would occur at a meet-up?

Conclusion

18. Is there anything else you would like to add?

I want to thank you for your time and I appreciate *oso* coming together to discuss these topics. If you have questions or concerns following this focus group, or would like a summary report, please email me at Brianna.peacey@alumni.ubc.ca. Once my thesis has been published, it will be available to the public, and I will make sure to share the link with the admins.

Appendix G: Letter of Research Approval from Slakgedakru

To whom it may concern, We, the administrative team of Slakgedakru on Discord and Slack, agree to let Brianna Peacey do her research in these groups. She has previously explained to the admins that her research is exploring the ways that constructed languages and their communities effect members' sense of belonging, identity, and experiences. She has also sent them a draft of her survey questions for approval/adjustments. We agree to have her conduct participant observation in public channels (ones that are open to all members) using her personal handle: Skolakru, with which she has identified herself as a researcher from the University of British Columbia since the beginning of her time in our groups. We agree to let Brianna inform the community about her research, what participant observation is and how she will be conducting it and to advertise her survey. Brianna agrees to ask permission of anyone whose conversation she wants to use in her thesis. In return, Brianna has agreed to provide a summary of survey results and a copy of her thesis to the community.

Signature of admin for both Slack and Discord

Heidi Lin
Abbey Willman
