

An Exploration of the Ridvan 2010 Message

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ABSTRACT

In order to obtain a better understanding of the Ridvan 2010 message, six common elements of Plan letters of the Guardian and the House of Justice – praise and acknowledgement, analysis of conditions, call and directives, reminder of fundamentals, guidance, and encouragement and assurance – are explored within this message, using word counts of each element within each paragraph.

INTRODUCTION

The Vision Conveyed in Plans - chapter 2 of *The Spiritual Conquest of the Planet: Our Response to Plans*, the fifth publication in a *Series on Major Themes of the Creative Word*, authored by Melanie Smith and Paul Lample - explores an overview of the common elements that provide a framework for understanding the progress of the Divine Plan found in the messages of Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice. These elements include: praise and acknowledgment of achievements; an analysis of spiritual and material conditions; a call to new achievements and directives for action; a reminder of fundamental processes; guidance to individuals and institutions; and encouragement and assurance. These same elements appear in the Ridvan 2010 message of the House of Justice and will be explored below.

The Ridvan 2010 message of the House of Justice, the longest Ridvan message since the multiple messages in 1996, is a colossal work of beauty which details the cultural advances achieved by the Baha'i community since the start of the last quarter of the first century of the Formative Age fourteen years ago; calls for additional directives in the last year of the Five Year Plan within which it was written, after, of course, praising the community for winning the current Plan's goals a year in advance of its conclusion; and introduces the next two movements on which the Baha'i world is embarking, foreshadowing the next Plans and providing invaluable guidance through at least the hundred year anniversary of the Master's passing. Of note, the five prominent cultural advances, referred to below on many occasions, are all included in paragraph nineteen, and are, briefly: direct teaching, study circles, children's classes, the junior youth program, and a posture of learning. The message is separated into four sections, each by a distinguishing single centered asterisk: paragraphs one through eighteen deal with four of the cultural developments, namely the teaching work, the training institute, and its two programs for children and junior youth; nineteen through twenty-four explore the fifth cultural development, learning as a mode of operation, along with the relationships and the roles of the institutions; twenty-five through thirty-two discuss two new lines of action, social action and participation in prevalent discourses; and finally, as a section-in-itself, paragraph thirty-three reminds us of the spiritual nature of the enterprise.

Both of these patterns - exploring past, present, and future; and the six elements listed above – occur not only throughout the message as a whole, but also within specific topics addressed from paragraph to paragraph (ie, children's classes, role of the LSAs, etc.) Below are the six elements mentioned above, as taken from *The Spiritual Conquest of the Planet*:

Praise and acknowledgment of achievements

"Usually presented at the beginning of the messages, these passages recount the gains made during a particular time period, describe their effects in the world, and praise the believers' efforts. They impart a clear sense of our progress toward achieving the goals of the plan and offer concrete evidence of Bahá'u'lláh's power to build a new world."

Analysis of spiritual and material conditions

"A common theme in plan letters is an analysis of the current status of the twin processes of integration—the building of the new world order—and disintegration—the breakdown of the old world. These passages enable us to see the spiritual significance of past efforts and current and future challenges in the context of a long-range vision of the destiny of the Faith."

Call to new achievements and directives for action

"Each plan calls for new actions that build upon previous achievements and that set the stage for future development. Other messages presented in the course of a plan include additional objectives and specific directives that provide concrete ways to achieve the goals."

Reminder of fundamental processes

"As the Faith develops, the range of actions that engage the community becomes broader in scope, leading, potentially to confusion about priorities and how one goal relates to another. Plan messages are filled with reminders of fundamental processes and principles that guide our actions as we work. Examples include the organic process of growth, the purpose for which we are laboring, and the importance of teaching."

Guidance to individuals and institutions

"These passages acknowledge the obstacles and opportunities confronting individuals and institutions in the path of service, then provide detailed guidance for systematically addressing the challenges."

Encouragement and assurance

"Ultimately, the work of the Faith depends on spiritual forces that can be tapped through perseverance, selfless action, unity, and sacrifice. The messages are filled with assurances that potent spiritual forces will reinforce our efforts if we arise to do our part."

Released just over halfway through the quarter century series of Plans with the explicit aim of advancing the process of entry by troops, the message has seemed to inject a massive spiritual impetus to communities everywhere during the final year of the current Five Year Plan – an impetus already being added to the momentum generated from both the spiritual forces released from the historical 41 conferences at the halfway point of this twenty-five year period, and the winning of goals a year early. That the energy released will be drawn upon for years is equally matched by the far-reaching insights that will be used and referenced also for years – insights into understanding the purpose, nature, and dynamics of the community building process, and the two further areas of activity, namely social action and participation in discourse.

Understanding how these six elements, common features of the Plan messages of the Guardian and the House of Justice, play a role in the Ridvan 2010 message will help us obtain a better sense of the significance of the social and spiritual impact this momentous document has caused.

METHODS

Took six different color highlighters or pens, read the Ridvan message six times, underlined or highlighted passages corresponding to the above six elements with a respective color, used Microsoft Word's trusty word count tool to count words per paragraph, then counted up the words per paragraph per each color, inputted the word counts into Excel, made a bunch of elaborate graphs, looked over it a few times, pondered a bit, then wrote this paper.

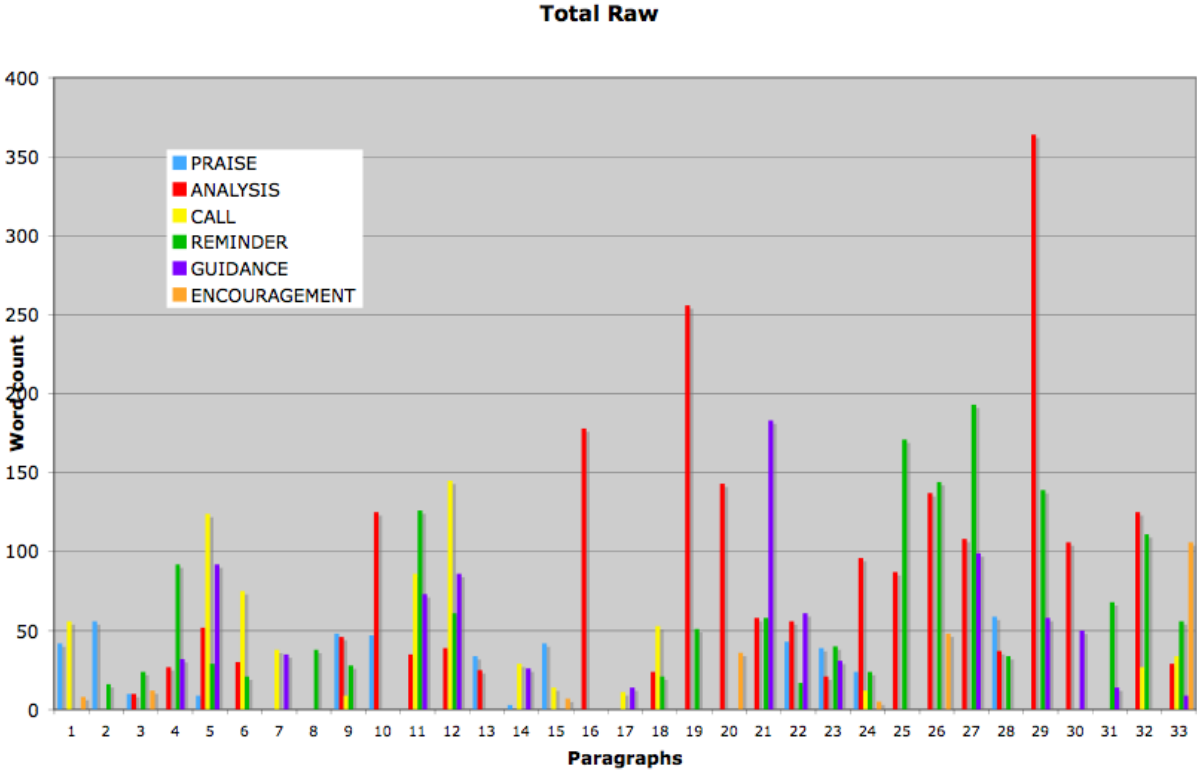
RESULTS

I didn't feel like reliving my college stats experience, so I didn't include any fancy p value calculations, standard deviation of the means, nor whatever else would have made this paper in any way even slightly statistically legitimate. Instead, it's simply a bunch of bar graphs based off each element's word count percentage of the paragraph's total word count. Then I just looked at the trends of the graphs. But I *did* try to match my color scheme on the graphs with my highlighted/underlined Ridvan message!

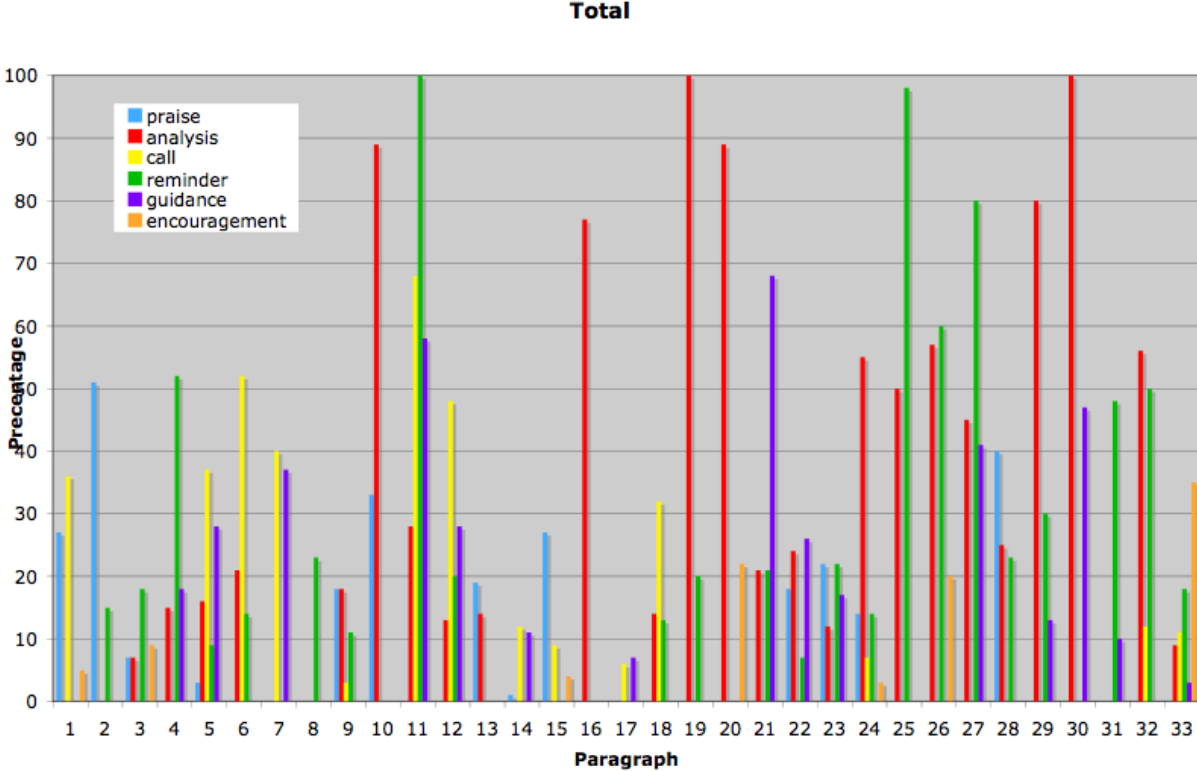
Table 1: Total word count (left column) and percentage word count (right column) for each element separated by paragraph. NOTE: Percentage word count is the data used throughout the discussion section.

Para graph	Words total	PRAISE		ANALYSIS		CALL		REMINDER		GUIDANCE		ENCOURAGEMENT	
1	154	42	27	0	0	56	36	0	0	0	0	8	5
2	110	56	51	0	0	0	0	16	15	0	0	0	0
3	136	10	7	10	7	0	0	24	18	0	0	12	9
4	177	0	0	27	15	0	0	92	52	32	18	0	0
5	334	9	3	52	16	124	37	29	9	92	28	0	0
6	145	0	0	30	21	75	52	21	14	0	0	0	0
7	94	0	0	0	0	38	40	0	0	35	37	0	0
8	162	0	0	0	0	0	0	38	23	0	0	0	0
9	262	48	18	46	18	9	3	28	11	0	0	0	0
10	141	47	33	125	89	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	126	0	0	35	28	86	68	126	100	73	58	0	0
12	303	0	0	39	13	145	48	61	20	86	28	0	0
13	180	34	19	25	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14	236	3	1	0	0	29	12	0	0	26	11	0	0
15	157	42	27	0	0	14	9	0	0	0	0	7	4
16	232	0	0	178	77	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	192	0	0	0	0	11	6	0	0	14	7	0	0
18	166	0	0	24	14	53	32	21	13	0	0	0	0
19	256	0	0	256	100	0	0	51	20	0	0	0	0
20	161	0	0	143	89	0	0	0	0	0	0	36	22
21	270	0	0	58	21	0	0	58	21	183	68	0	0
22	238	43	18	56	24	0	0	17	7	61	26	0	0
23	180	39	22	21	12	0	0	40	22	31	17	0	0
24	176	24	14	96	55	12	7	24	14	0	0	5	3
25	175	0	0	87	50	0	0	171	98	0	0	0	0
26	239	0	0	137	57	0	0	144	60	0	0	48	20
27	240	0	0	108	45	0	0	193	80	99	41	0	0
28	149	59	40	37	25	0	0	34	23	0	0	0	0
29	456	0	0	364	80	0	0	139	30	58	13	0	0
30	106	0	0	106	100	0	0	0	0	50	47	0	0
31	143	0	0	0	0	0	0	68	48	14	10	0	0
32	224	0	0	125	56	27	12	111	50	0	0	0	0
33	306	0	0	29	9	34	11	56	18	9	3	106	35

Graph 1: Total word count for each element per paragraph (NOT percentage)



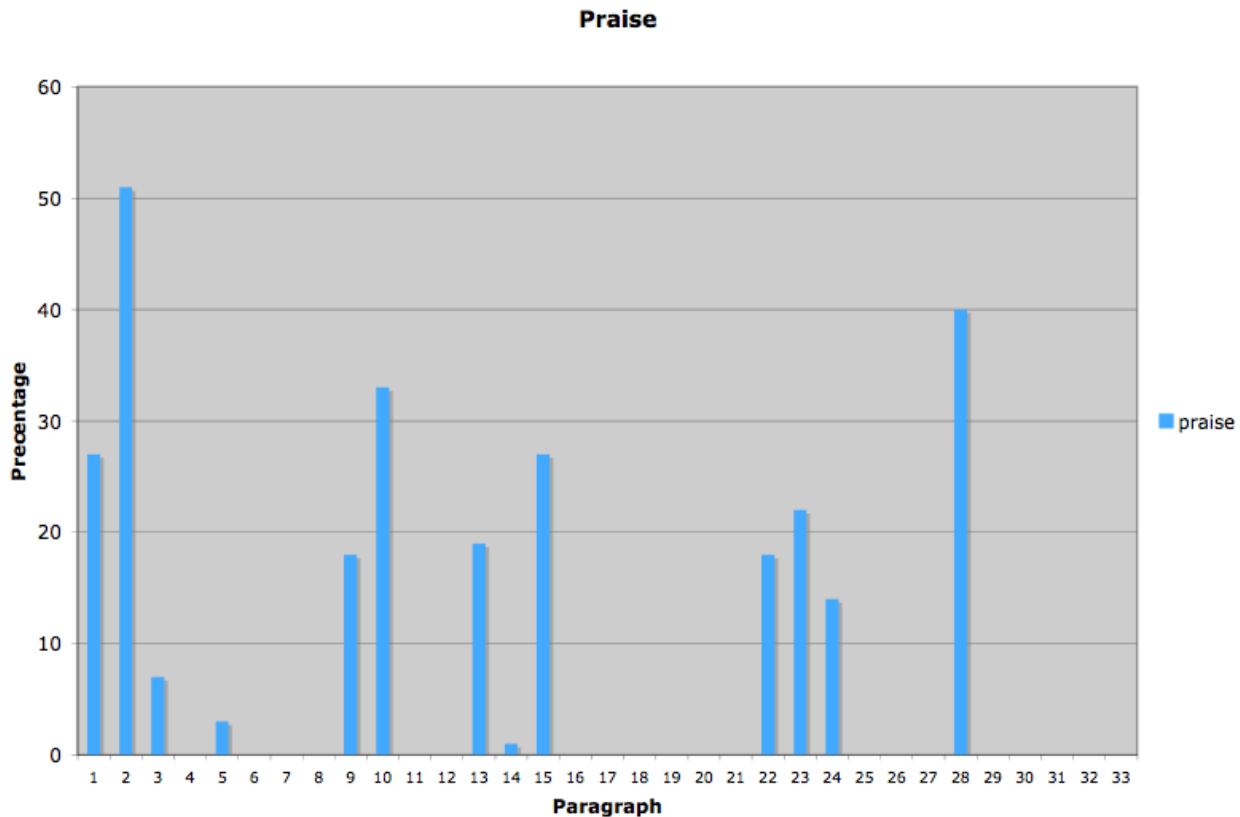
Graph 2: Percentage word count for each element per paragraph



So, it seems to make more sense for me to present the graphs and discuss the results of each particular element in the discussion section, hence that's what going to happen.

DISCUSSION

Assuming by now that you've thoroughly belabored upon and even memorized the results section, each element will be presented below and discussed one at a time. One thing to keep in mind when looking at the graphs is the separation of the message into four sections: paragraphs 1-18, 19-24, 25-32, and paragraph 33.



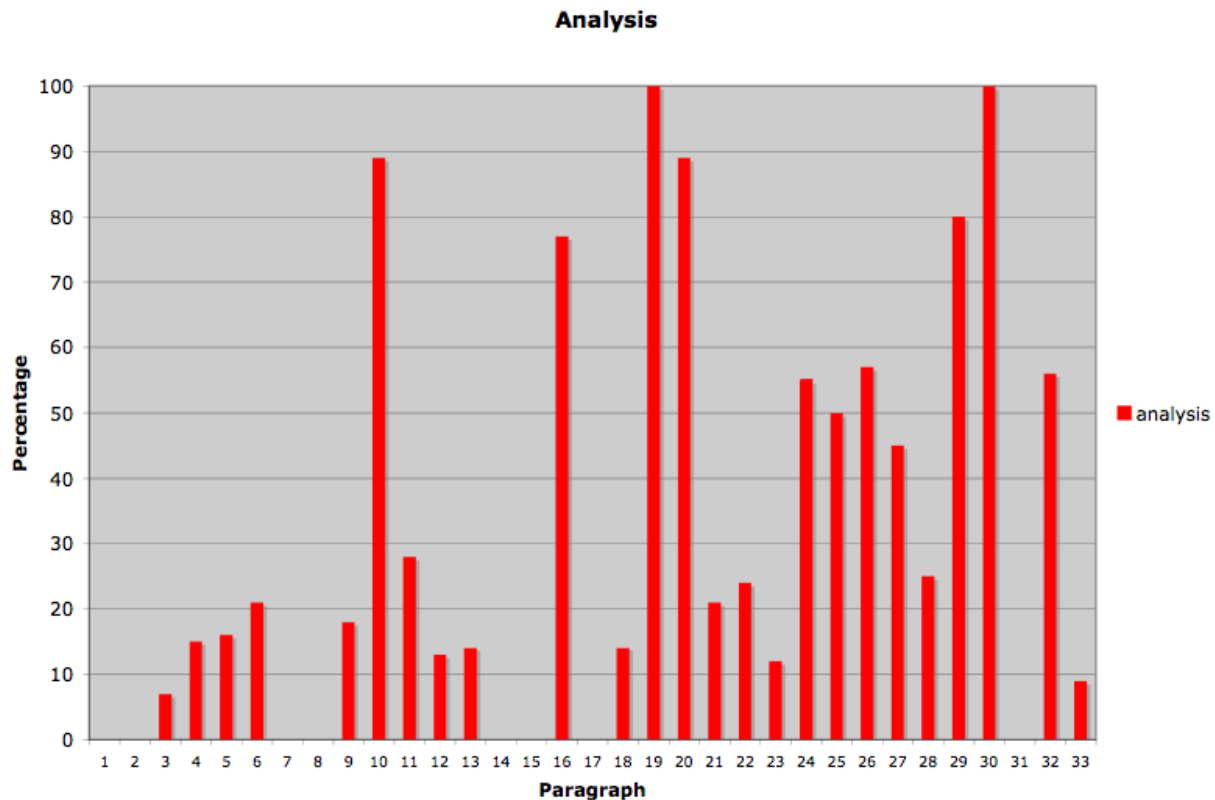
This element generally appears at the beginning of messages and recounts gains made and their effects on the world. In the Ridvan message, we see heavy praise placed in the first two paragraphs as the announcement is made that the goals of the Plan have been won a year early. More importantly though, and clearly and plainly written by the House in the second paragraph, the feat about which they are most proud is “a combination of developments at the more profound level of culture”.

We subsequently see, within the first section, each of the four descriptions of culture advancement accompanied by praise. For instance, paragraphs nine and ten regarding study circles and paragraph thirteen about children's classes, include such words as “an accomplishment of enormous proportions”, “how pleased we are”, and “such promising beginnings”. For reference, paragraph nineteen recounts the four cultural developments detailed in the first section, and introduces a fifth. (And in retrospect, that paragraph should have been counted with heavy praise; my mistake. I figured it wasn't really praising, simply recounting.)

The three instances of praise we see in the second section is associated with each Institution – the

LSAs, NSAs, and Counsellors, one after another, in paragraphs twenty-two, twenty-three, and twenty-four, respectively, with words such as “It is gratifying to see” and “one of the most significant advances”. And the ITC is not left out; they receive “abiding gratitude” in section one, paragraph fifteen, for their efforts and energy; vital to secure the early attainment of the goals.

Finally, the only significant praise we see in the third section, paragraph twenty-eight, is contained in the first paragraph after introducing two new areas of activity, and give acknowledgement to the many Baha’is already engaged in these endeavors.



Analysis of the processes of integration and disintegration is not only the most abundant by total word count, but one of the most exciting features of this message, as we understand our efforts in the context of our world and the destiny of our Faith.

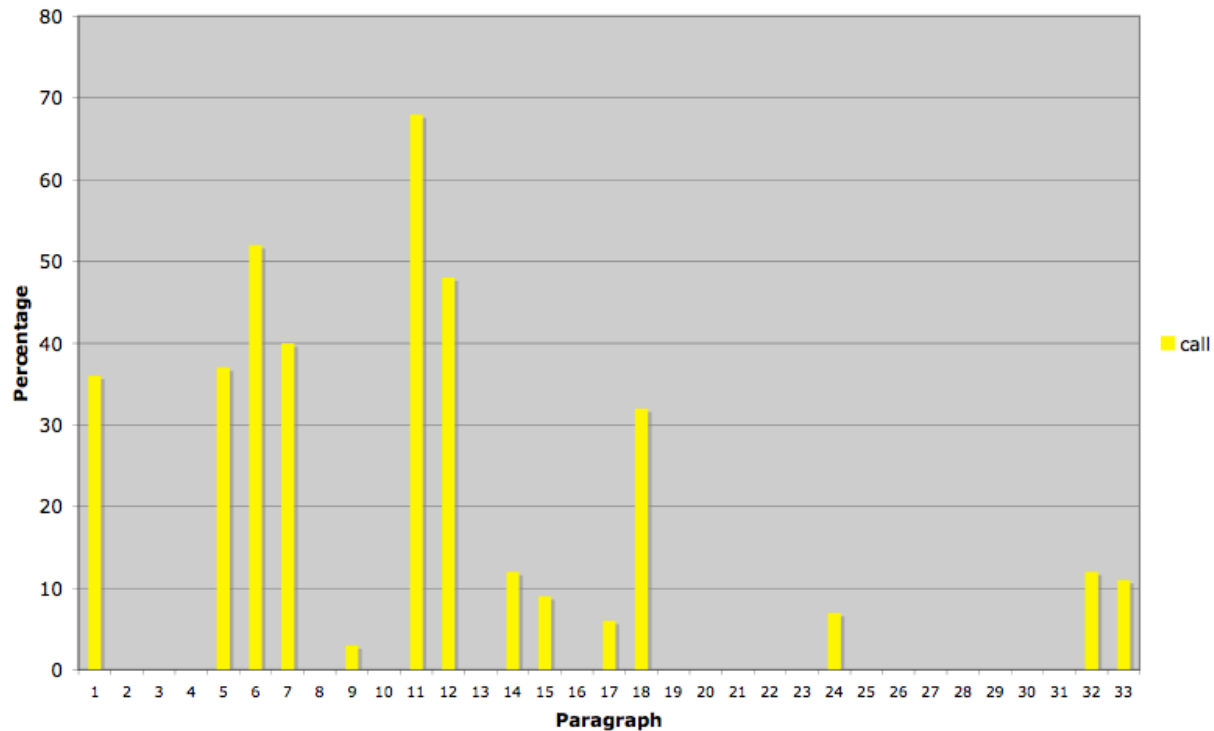
Contrasted with the element of call to new achievements, the element of analysis is heavy in the second half the message, and we see a major increased beginning in section two (paragraph 19) and continuing to be a very prominent feature of the sections two and three. In fact, statements of analysis comprise the majority of half of section two paragraphs (3/6), and more than half of section three paragraphs (5/8). These two sections are dealing with the Institutions and the Administrative Order, and social action and involvement in discourse. Naturally, the Administration is a crowning feature of the New World Order, and thus its evolution is heavily tied in with the process of integration; while social action and participation in discourse is related to the spiritual and material advancement of civilization, and is itself an integrative force

One example from section two includes the fifth cultural development first mentioned in paragraph nineteen, at which point the message contrasts the approach of the Baha'i community "in which learning is the mode of operation, a mode that fosters the informed participation of more and more people in a united efforts to apply Baha'u'llah's teachings to the construction of a divine civilization" against the "moribund ways of an old social order that so often seeks to harness human energy through domination, through greed, through guilt or through manipulation." An example from section two about the Administration includes, "Evolving relationships among administrative structures have brought the Local Spiritual Assembly to the threshold of a new stage in the exercise of its responsibilities to diffuse the Word of God, to mobilize the energies of the believers, and to forge an environment that is spiritually edifying."

The most significant analysis, in my opinion, comes in section three, as the House is not only introducing these two new areas of activity, but describing their significance in context of the history and future of the Faith. "The work advancing in every corner of the globe today represents the latest stage of the ongoing Bahá'í endeavour to create the nucleus of the glorious civilization enshrined in His teachings, the building of which is an enterprise of infinite complexity and scale, one that will demand centuries of exertion by humanity to bring to fruition." They mention by name the dual process of integration and disintegration at the end of paragraph twenty-nine, another analysis-heavy paragraph that explains, among other things, how "perpetuation of ignorance is a most grievous form of oppression; it reinforces the many walls of prejudice that stand as barriers to the realization of the oneness of humankind, at once the goal and operating principle of Baha'u'llah's Revelation." And finally, section three is ending with placing our work in the context of "the movement of populations towards Baha'u'llah's vision of a prosperous and peaceful world civilization."

Prior to sections two and three, the significant areas of analysis are mainly in describing the role of the core activities in contrast to the forces of disintegration in the world. In paragraph six, just after paragraph five describes all of the core activities, we are given a task to "find those souls longing to shed the lethargy imposed on them by society". In paragraph ten, the highest spike of analysis in section one, we see the juxtaposition of a cultural development enabling millions to see themselves as active agents of their own learning, to advance and tread a common path of service together through the educational system built around the study circle and the Ruhi curriculum, against with the forces of society and the current educational systems of the world today, which breed passivity and cultivate a desire to be entertained and led. Finally, paragraph sixteen, the second large spike of analysis in section one, begins by introducing the fourth cultural advance, the junior youth program, and immediately contrasts the image that the world attributes to this age group against that of the Baha'i world. "While global trends project an image of this age group as problematic, lost in the throes of tumultuous physical and emotional change, unresponsive and self- consumed, the Bahá'í community—in the language it employs and the approaches it adopts—is moving decidedly in the opposite direction, seeing in junior youth instead altruism, an acute sense of justice, eagerness to learn about the universe and a desire to contribute to the construction of a better world." The paragraph continues to explain that this program will enable junior youth to, themselves, analyze the constructive and destructive forces in the world and "combat the forces that would rob them of their true identity as noble beings."

Call



Since the Ridvan message of 2010 was written towards the end of the Five Year Plan, it calls for additional objectives not specified in the 27 Dec 2005 message, in addition to restating certain goals that were previously present. This element is really only prominent in section one of the message, where much of the discussion regarding the current Plan is found; though, of note, it does occur only once per each other section, in each concluding paragraph (including the concluding paragraph of section one).

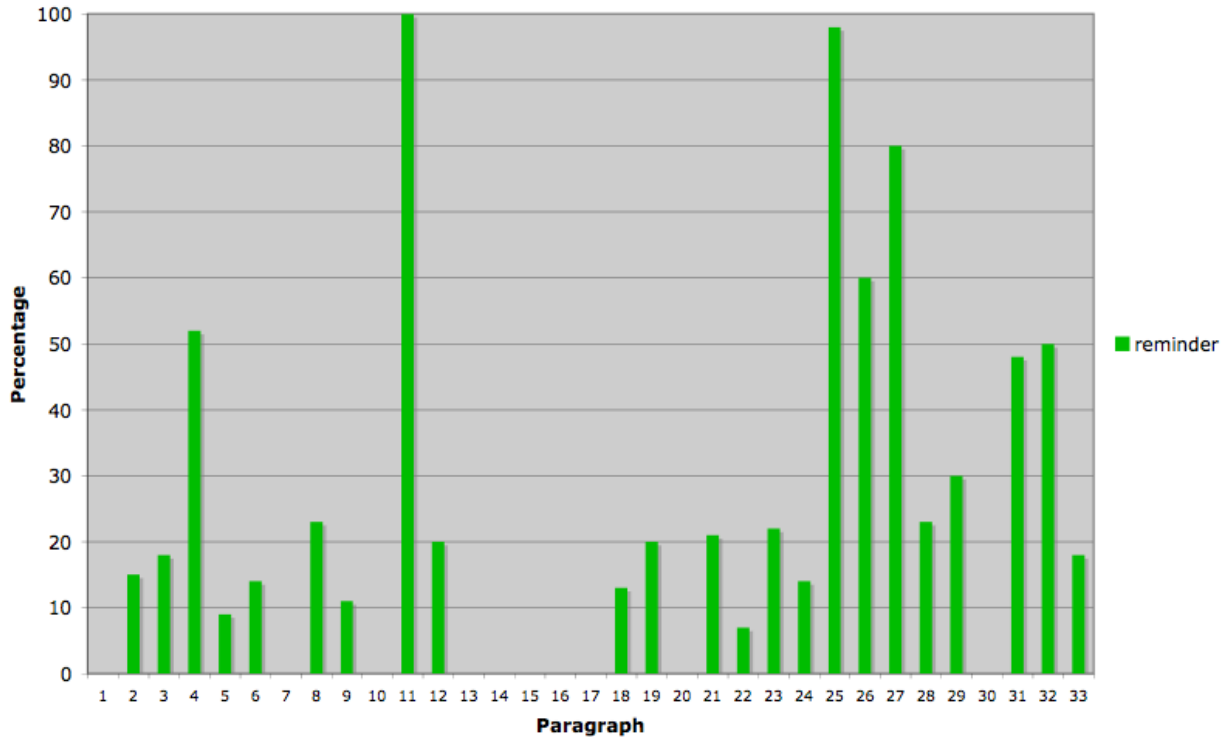
The call that begins the message in paragraph one is to “strengthen the pattern of expansion and consolidation now everywhere established”, further elaborated in paragraph five, six, and seven, as we are asked to extend this pattern broadly while also focusing on pockets of the population, teach within one or more receptive populations this year, and strengthen the institute process and increase those capable of acting as tutors, respectively.

As the section moves on to the first core activity addressed, study circles, the tutors are called upon in paragraphs eleven and twelve to increase the quality of the study circle and provide an environment conducive to spiritual empowerment, the coordinators are called upon to accompany tutors and arrange periodic tutor reflection gatherings, and all are called upon to learn how to ensure a “proper measure of vitality is pulsating through this system”.

With the next two core activities / cultural developments, children’s classes and the junior youth program, a few specific calls are made. Paragraph fourteen calls for further efforts to systematize the provision of spiritual education of children, while paragraph fifteen specifically notes an upcoming analysis of the ITC. Finally, in the conclusion of the first section, a very specific call is made to establish thirty-two JYSEP learning sites and institute six hundred forty full-time JY coordinators.

As mentioned earlier, each section’s concluding paragraph contains a call. In section two, paragraph twenty-four, the institutions of the Administrative Order are called to strive to reinforce the mode of learning referred to as the fifth cultural development at the beginning of that section. And in section three, paragraph thirty-two, we are asked to concentrate on strengthening “the institute process and the pattern of activity that it engenders”, despite the House having just described two new opportunities now opening at the level of the cluster. Finally, in the concluding paragraph of the message, we are asked, after stirring encouragement, to continue to “bring Baha’u’llah’s message to waiting souls”.

Reminder



The second most abundant element (after analysis), reminder of the fundamentals seems especially important in this Ridvan message, not only because two new areas of activity are introduced, but also because certain concepts within expansion and consolidation are re-examined. In this period of history, characterized by rapid change and development in the Baha’i community, by an increase in the breadth and scope of its range of actions, a reminder of the purpose and nature of our work and the relationship between various goals and priorities are very much needed. Thus, one unique feature of this element is that nearly half of the paragraphs total have a constant baseline of an average of 15% reminder statements. This baseline is prominent in the first half of section one and throughout section two, while section three contains all but two of the spikes in reminders, the others being in section one.

The first set of reminders in the first half of section one (paragraphs two through six) deal with teaching the Faith within the context of community building. We are reminded first, “that teaching is a basic requirement of a life of generous giving”, teaching is “an indispensable feature of Baha’i life”, and it can become “a catalyst for an enduring process of spiritual transformation”. Next, however, we are reminded to view our teaching work “in terms of community building”, as a “process that seeks to raise capacity”. It is in this light that the House makes two very significant priority-shifting statements. At the end of paragraph four, we are told that more important than whether contacts lead to

enrollments in the Baha'i community or simply participation, is that every soul feel welcome to contribute to the better of society. For so long, teaching work was aimed at increasing the numerical strength of the Baha'i community; now the priority is not declaration, but community building. Secondly, in paragraph six, the House redefines receptivity as "willingness to participate in the process of community building set in motion by the core activities". Again, for so long, receptivity was a person's readiness to embrace Baha'u'llah; now the priority is their readiness to community building activities.

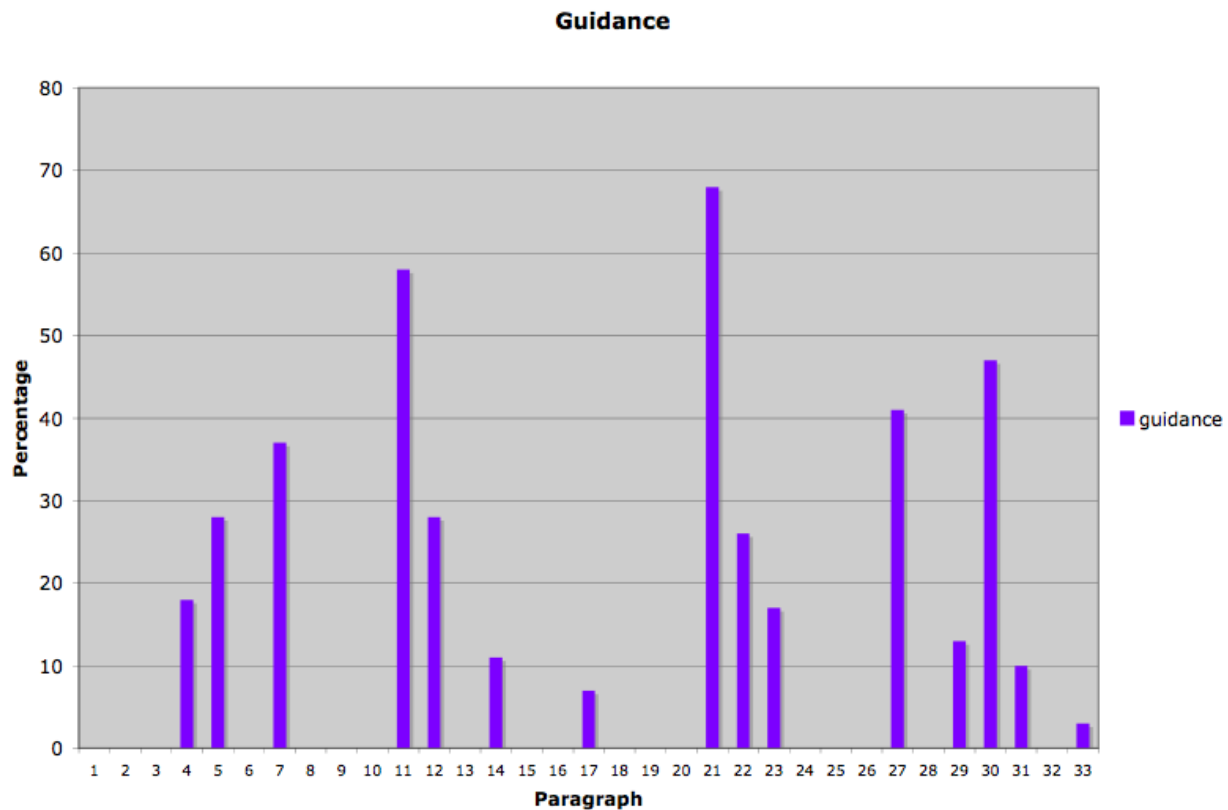
The second group of reminder statements in the first half of the first section (paragraphs eight through twelve) deal with the fundamental purpose behind the Ruhi curriculum and some characteristics about those who serve as tutors. We are reminded that training institutes were called for fourteen years ago in order to impart knowledge, insights, and skills required for expansion and consolidation, and the Ruhi Institute fulfilled this call. We are reminded in paragraph nine that understanding the implications of the Revelation "increase manifold when study and service are joined and carried out concurrently", a principle that is echoed three paragraphs later when discussing the way in which capabilities of tutors develop. Finally in paragraph eleven, we are reminded that the force necessary for change is generated through spiritual empowerment of individuals, through their constant effort to apply knowledge to effect transformation.

To end section one, the House places priority this coming year on creating the capacity to offer the junior youth program.

Section two has a low yet constant level of reminders, first about learning, and then about the nature and role of the Administration. The culture of learning mentioned in paragraph nineteen, we are reminded, is directly tied into the "construction of a divine civilization, which Guardian states is the primary mission of the Faith." Next, we look at Baha'i administration as a living organism, able to evolve higher and higher degrees of complexity. Finally, we see the role of the Institutions in the Plan and in reinforcing this mode of learning.

It is naturally expected that the bulk of reminders will come in section three, as two new areas of endeavor are introduced and tied into the purpose of and the principles that govern our work. Statements such as "[Baha'u'llah's Revelation] calls for a profound change not only at the level of the individual but also in the structure of society", "every human being...can take inspiration from His teachings", "numerous groups and organizations...will contribute to the civilization destined to emerge", and "the world civilization...must achieve a dynamic coherence between the material and spiritual requirements of life" remind us of the purpose and nature of our work, and that this Revelation has come for all of humankind. We are then reminded directly that the value of social action and public discourse is not to be judged by enrollments generated, but their purpose is to apply the teachings and principles of the Faith to improve some aspect of social and economic life. And to conclude section three, we are reminded that, over the next year, our priorities still lie with the current Plan's focus on expansion and consolidation.

Finally, in section four, we are beautifully reminded of 'Abdu'l-Baha's exhortation to "see all men as friends", and that all our work is really an expression of universal love.



The majority of guidance to individuals and institutions appears to come in large and spread out clumps. These statements acknowledge obstacles and opportunities, and then give detailed guidance about how to proceed.

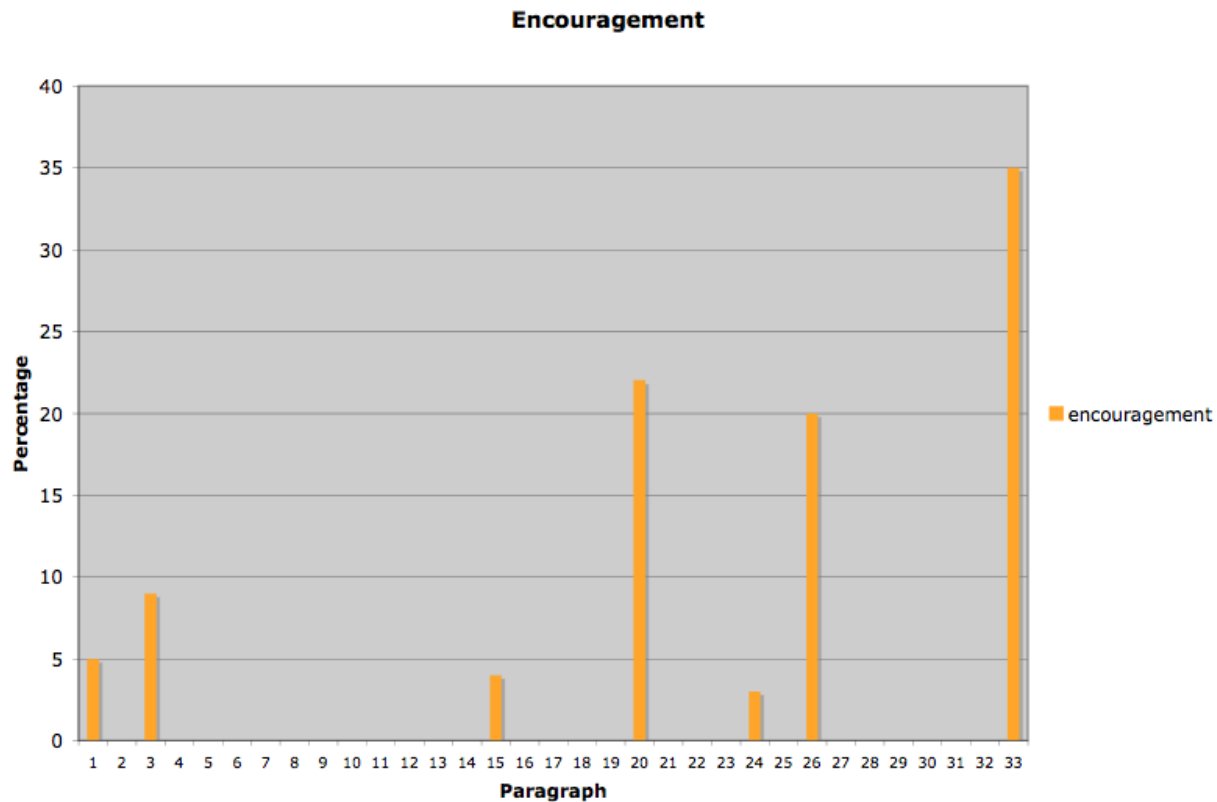
Throughout the first section, we see each of the four cultural developments with some example of guidance, in addition to the community building process in general. Examples of the four cultural developments include understanding the logic underlying the illustrative example in Ruhi Book six to present the essentials of the Faith, providing a spiritually empowering environment for study circles, having patience and cooperation while efforts to educate children are systematized, and supporting JY coordinators with resources persons. The guidance regarding community building in general comes mainly in paragraphs five, seven, and twelve. The activities that drive this process are described, at which point it is stated that indigenous human resources should soon sustain them. To specifically meet this challenge, two points of guidance are offered: the institute process needs to be strengthened, and the coordinators must bring both practical experience and dynamism to his or her efforts to accompany those who serve as tutors.

Section two, paragraph twenty-one, addresses the fifth cultural advance, and contains guidance regarding collective decision-making in the context of learning as the community's mode of operation. Specifically, reflection gatherings – cluster-wide, for tutors, for children's class teachers, and for animators – and cluster agencies (coordinators, ATC, ABM) are offered as a way to enable planning and implementation to become more responsive to circumstances on the ground.

In section three, just before social action and participation in discourse are introduced, the House is guiding the friends everywhere to reflect on the nature of the contributions which their communities will make to the material and spiritual progress of society. It seems, then, that these two new areas of

activity are the fruit of such reflection, and the rest of the section contains points of guidance regarding them. General examples include the first sentence of paragraph twenty-nine and the second sentence of paragraph thirty, while detailed examples include “Efforts best being, then, on a modest scale” and “sincerity in this respect in an imperative.”

And in the concluding section, the guidance that will always help overcome any challenge we may face is to press on and bring Baha’u’llah’s message to waiting souls everywhere.



Encouragement and assurance of the potent spiritual forces at our aid, though by word count was the least numerous within the message a whole, perhaps included the most powerful statements delivered at very intentional moments, and provided a spiritual foundation upon which rests the entire message. Each instance will be examined.

A few sentences into the message, we witness that the House says that the opportunity of this coming year to strengthen the pattern of expansion and consolidation is a bounty that God has bestowed upon His community. This sets the attitude and approach for all upcoming directives and calls for achievement that are given for the coming year.

Two paragraphs later, we read the implication of the establishment of 1,500 IPGs and the first cultural advance, the rise in capacity to converse with others on spiritual matters – that believers are “ready to be led by the guiding Hand of the All-Merciful”. Throughout the message, all future achievements recounted and goals given related to individual initiative will be with this implication in mind.

At their first mention of an Institution, in paragraph fifteen, they tell of “the tremendous power inherent in the Administrative Order”, further evidenced by their assertion in paragraph twenty-four of

the energies released in 2001 when the Counsellors and their Auxiliaries gathered in the Holy Land. Section two's description of the roles and relationships of the Administrative Institutions are within this context.

After describing the fifth cultural advance, learning as a mode of operation, we read its requirement that all assume a posture of humility, "placing complete trust in God, reliant on His all-sustaining power and confident in His unfailing assistance, knowing that He, and He alone, can change the gnat into an eagle, the drop into a boundless sea." The assurance of God's assistance for individuals and institutions that are characterized by a humble posture of learning is a foundational theme for all of section two and three, as the maturation of Institutions are recounted and two new areas of activity are introduced.

In the second paragraph of section three, we read that there is no greater joy than for a soul, yearning for Truth, to find shelter in the stronghold of the Cause, draw strength from the unifying power of the Covenant, and receive sustenance from Baha'u'llah's life-giving message – this contrasted with Baha'u'llah's statement in the Iqan (and referenced in the 2008 Ridvan message) that there is no more grievous oppression than for a soul, seeking the truth, should know not where to go for it and from whom to seek it. The paragraph continues that the spirit of world solidarity, an indirect manifestation of Baha'u'llah's conception of the principle of the oneness of humankind, will animate numerous groups and organizations. That all of humanity, "irrespective of whether they are counted among His followers, can take inspiration from His teachings, benefiting from whatever gems of wisdom and knowledge will aid them in addressing the challenges they face", and the assurance that spiritual forces, whether direct or indirect, are present, is a fundamental principle upon which social action and participation in prevalent discourses are introduced.

And finally, in the fourth section and last paragraph of the message, we see a relatively large amount of encouragement and assurance of potent spiritual forces, as the House reminds us that all that we are doing is motivated by love for God and is "an expression of universal love achieved through the power of the Holy Spirit." They end their message by injecting spiritual vigor into the community of the Greatest Name with this powerful, wholehearted, and moving assurance: "Never do you leave our thoughts and prayers, and we will continue to implore the Almighty to reinforce you with His wondrous grace.

CONCLUSION

The null hypothesis is rejected.

Mainly, I think that reading the Ridvan 2010 message with these six elements in mind helped me to understand it in a greater depth. And with this understanding, I was able to better understand where it came from. From seeing the type of language that the House uses in praising the believers and understanding what really evokes pride and gratitude in their hearts, to getting a better sense of the value priorities they are asking us to adopt at this current stage in the Divine Plan; from placing our work in the context of building a New World Order, to reminding us of the spiritual forces if we but arise and play our part; from contrasting our approach to community-building with that of the current social orders, to addressing specific challenges we face with their wisdom borne of a collective experience and a world-embracing vision; I felt my heart and mind connected this much more to an Institution, and although thousands of miles away, I felt that they knew me and my cluster, and that I was somehow involved in the writing of this message. I felt closer and closer to the "last refuge of a tottering civilization", the "source of all good", and the implementator of the Divine Plan. Through

further understanding the message, I felt more connected to both its content and the process by which it was written. And I felt more intimately tied with 'Abdu'l-Baha's Divine Plan.

Additionally, in this first attempt of mine to really analyze these six elements within a Plan message, I feel I am better able now to naturally keep these elements in mind as I read and attempt to delve deep into future Plan messages, most specifically the 28 Dec 2010 message. I hope that my understanding of this next letter, and other Plan messages, will be strengthened because of this paper. This, really, might be the most practically beneficial outcome of my endeavor.

Not really sure what the conclusion is meant for, but I will, at this point, mention a few observations for any future undertaking of this nature (besides the glaring observation that the author should next time figure out how to properly write a research paper, and learn what each section is for). The first is regarding statistics. I simply based everything on word count percentage per paragraph. A few obvious problems arise, let alone all the subtle ones if one was to delve into statistics. Because the paragraph lengths vary, certain elements within certain paragraphs having either a skewed increase or decrease in percentage. The basic trend I found was that analysis, and to a lesser extent reminder, was more prevalent in larger paragraphs, and therefore had a relatively lower total percentage compared to a percentage of total message word count. Encouragement tended to be in smaller paragraphs and the opposite situation arose. Additionally, because many sentences had more than one element or neither, total percentages per paragraph never once added to 100. I don't think it influenced the discussion and conclusions drawn, as the basic trends stayed the same for the most part (and I did include raw data vs percentage data in the results section for your viewing pleasure), but if statistical analysis is to be done, these discrepancies should be taken into account.

I think something exciting to do for next time would be an in-depth analysis on the regions of overlap between various elements. I was contemplating including that as a seventh section in my discussion, or even as the major theme of my conclusion section, but I realized how it would pretty much be as long as what I've already written, and how this paper was already much longer than I imagined. In general, call and guidance seemed to overlap, as did reminder and analysis. There were points in the message where sentences had three or four elements within them (color overload, I know!). One brief example occurs in paragraph eleven, where we are reminded, called, and guided, "that the quality of the educational process fostered at the level of the study circle rise markedly over the next year".

I suppose a concluding remark for each element is warranted at this point, to end this never-ending paper.

Praise: What struck me originally upon my first read of the Ridvan message was how I really felt the deep sense of pride and gratitude that the House of Justice had in its heart for the cultural developments achieved. After this analysis, I realize that it wasn't simply a second paragraph phenomenon, but that each mention of cultural development throughout the message, in addition to each Institution named and even early social action efforts, was accompanied by emotional words of praise that served to further motivate the reader towards whatever action, achievement, or advance was being praised.

Analysis: Not to repeat myself too much, it will suffice to simply add that the vision of the worldwide Baha'i community was greatly enhanced by the exquisite analysis of our work within the context of the world.

Call: Among the eleven pages, no one is left without a clear direction about how to proceed during this upcoming year.

Reminder: As individuals and institutions, we are constantly striving to align our wills through the Minor Plan with God's will through His Major Plan, and these reminders prove invaluable to understanding principles, priorities, and processes, and help us discern characteristics of the Faith that are constant versus aspects that evolve and change. The House never ceases to lovingly aid in the maturation of the individual, the community, and the institutions.

Guidance: As if they were two clusters away, the guidance from the Supreme Institution to address specific challenges seems to be speaking directly to the reader's conditions on the grassroots; and further reinforces that they are deeply in touch with our struggles, our obstacles, and our conditions in the field.

Encouragement: If each section were accorded equal weight, we would see a statistically massive amount of encouragement and assurance, as it is the most prominent feature of the last paragraph – a section within itself. While the first three sections provided the social insights on myriad topics, section four injected spiritual energy directly into the veins of the community of the Greatest Name and strengthened the tie that binds the Universal House of Justice with every single of this community's members.