EMPOWERING FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION STUDENTS THROUGH DIGITAL

RHETORIC

by

INGRID JOHNSON

(Under the direction of Michelle Ballif)

ABSTRACT

This study describes two approaches to promoting authorial identity: the self-expressionist and the social constructivist. Without resolving the tension between the two approaches, this thesis investigates how both may prove pedagogically useful when incorporating digital media (such as e-mail and weblogs) into the First-year Composition curriculum, specifically as tools for teaching authorial identity expression and construction. I begin by analyzing the "Great Debate" between Peter Elbow and David Bartholomae. Then, I expand the argument by examining how a constructivist pedagogy could be realized by using e-mail to help students construct a writerly identity and how an expressivist sense of writerly identity could be taught as students create weblogs. In each chapter, I briefly provide a comparison and contrast of these two new media to their traditional counterparts (letter writing and journals) in order to further express how digital rhetoric can be remediated for a contemporary twist on writer empowerment. I contend that the discipline has arrived at a critical point where we need to expand our pedagogical horizon within First-year Composition. Therefore, writing students should be given more opportunities to both construct and to express authorial identities within the writing space provided by new digital media.

INDEX WORDS: Digital, Rhetoric, Peter Elbow, Composition, Expressivism, David Bartholomae, First-year writing

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DEDICATION

For my family and friends, who offered me unconditional love and support throughout the course of writing this thesis.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The "Great Debate" Over Authorial Identity: Constructivist vs. Expressionist

    While completing my Master's degree, I was one of the privileged few to teach First-year Composition. As the semester began and the students received their first writing assignment, I was struck by the frustration students encountered as they struggled to negotiate an authorial identity: how they struggled to express a unique voice of their own as well as to perform an authoritative identity as they attempted to satisfy the requirements of the essay assignment. Although the students received what I thought to be a rather simple assignment (to argue for a specific topic), the students continued to toil with expressing and constructing authorial voice.

    I've come to learn that this student struggle with authorial voice is the topic of an on-going debate within the profession of Rhetoric and Composition. Teachers and theorists have repeatedly expressed concerns about how best to teach students how to negotiate writerly identity: should we teach writing in a manner that encourages students to express their own voice, and thereby to encourage the growth of the individual student's relationship to written language, or should we teach writing in a way that helps students participate in a discourse community, specifically the community of the academy, and thereby to teach students how to master conventional language? These two approaches to writer identity arguably are best represented by Peter Elbow and David Bartholomae.

    Peter Elbow, in *Writing With Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process,* claims that "good" writing is that which expresses an individual voice:

Writing with no voice is dead, mechanical, faceless. It lacks any sound. Writing

with no voice may be saying something true, important, or new; it may be

logically organized; it may even be a work of genius. But it is as though the

words came through some kind of mixer rather than being uttered by a person.

(287)

David Bartholomae, on the contrary, argues that "good" writing is when the student sounds like

an academic. He writes:

[The student] must become like us [. . .]. He must become someone he is not.

He must know what we know, talk like we talk [. . .]. He must invent the

university when he sits down to write [. . .]. The struggle of the student writer is

not the struggle to bring out that which is within; it is the struggle to carry out

those ritual activities that grant one entrance into a closed society. (300)

Without resolving this tension, this thesis will stress the major role that academia plays in the

shaping of our students' identities as writers. Specifically, I want to examine how electronic

forms of writing—such as e-mail and weblogs—could be used in contemporary First-year

Composition classrooms to either express or construct writerly identities.

A SAMPLING OF LINKAGES BETWEEN RHETORIC AND IDENTITY

In retrospect, identity and rhetoric (more specifically, writing) have long been linked.

Aristotle defines rhetoric as "the ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of

persuasion" (36-37). He writes:

Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so

spoken as to make us think him credible. We believe good men morefully and

more readily than others: this is true generally whatever the questions is, and

absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided [. .

.] his character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he

possesses. (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.2 135 [6a 4-12])

Thus, our perception of a speaker or writer's character influences how believable or convincing

we find the argument or message. Aristotle defines *ethos* as not only the moral character of the

speaker/writer, but also the knowledge or wisdom that the speaker exposes to his/her audience.

Ethos, then, is extremely crucial in the credibility of writing.[1] A writer's words must project

authority and wisdom in order to convince his/her reader. Therefore, as a writer, it is essential

that we construct our identity through developing a credible ethos, pathos, and logos.

Unlike Aristotle, Bakhtin argues that it is through "the I-for-the-other" model that

human beings develop a sense of self-identity. Bakhtin's view of discourse celebrates the

various shifts and temporal writing identities that can be "paradoxical and yet complement each

other at the same time" (Desser 317). Identity, as Bakhtin describes it, does not belong merely

to the individual, rather it is shared by all (Emerson and Morson). In order to persuade the

reader, this definition does not limit us to only view the acts of one particular writer to one

particular audience. Instead, it offers an ever-evolving dialogue between the reader, text,

author, and context (Desser 317).

Kenneth Burke's identification concept differs from that of Aristotle and Bakhtin.

Burke explains that our need to identify arises out of division. He explicates that humans are

born and exist as physically separate beings. Consequently, humans seek to identify through

communication in order to overcome separateness. Thus, Burke influences our understanding

of identification as bound to social and cultural ideologies. He argues that we experience the

ambiguity of being separate yet being identified with others at the same time: we are "both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another" (Burke 21). Burke recognizes the human desire to view ourselves as included within a community. He writes, "in forming ideas of our personal identity, we spontaneously identify ourselves with family, nation, political or cultural cause, church, and so on" (301). Thus, identity construction as a process is fundamental to being human and to communicating effectively.

Burke's scheme takes us beyond the more linear models of Aristotle and others. In this respect Burke's theory closely parallels Lev Vygotsky's theory of language learning. Burke and Vygotsky understand that identity formation is an essential process of the ongoing development of the author, his/her community, and his/her social and political surroundings. At the same time, Vygotsky's value to identity theory centers upon his providing conceptual and methodological tools for understanding how socio-cultural processes shape individual identity formation. Vygotsky believed that "the most significant moment in the course of intellectual development, which gives birth to the purely human forms of practical and abstract intelligence, occurs when speech and practical activity, two previously completely independent lines of development, converge" (Vygotsky 24). Therefore, an author's personal identification coupled with his/her social and cultural recognition while writing is a necessity of proficient writing.

As we can see, the notion of identity, specifically authorial identity, has been variously theorized. For the purposes of this thesis, we will focus, specifically, on the conceptions of identity as revealed in the ongoing debate between the expressivists and constructionist as to which pedagogy bests empowers students with an authorial identity.

EXPRESSIVISM

Supporters of this expressivist approach to writing instruction argue that although writing is grounded in social interaction, its heuristic function is at least as important as its communicative function. They go on to assert that learning to write is much more than relenting to the conventions of a specific community or society in general. Instead, they encourage students to explore new forms of thinking and writing and to find new ways to organize and understand their experiences.

Elbow further explicates this in *Writing without Teachers.* His theory is grounded upon his proposition that students write about their own experiences. Elbow introduces a new form of student writing with personal subject matter and no boundaries. To further highlight the process of writing and not the final product, he proposed freewriting exercises. Such exercises would allow students to write out their thoughts without the interruptions of self-editing. Elbow gives the example, "First you are writing about a dog you had; then you are writing about sadness; then you are writing about personalities of dogs, then about the effect of the past; then a poem about names; then an autobiographical self-analysis; then a story about your family. Each way of writing will bring out different aspects of the material" (55). Thus, authentic-voice pedagogy calls for writing instruction that takes more notice of students' needs for self expression as opposed to their needs for social demands. All authentic voice pedagogy helps students find personal writing styles that are honest and unconstrained by the traditional writing standards.

While expressivists argue that students should be encouraged to write in everyday language and should express their individual thoughts and feelings, constructionists argue that

language is socially constructed and that students must learn to write the way that academics do.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

The constructivists advance the view that good writers must master the accepted practices of a discourse community (Fishman and McCarthy 647). Constructionists (such as James Berlin, David Bartholomae, Patricia Bizzell, and John Trimbur) believe that teaching writing as an expression of individual thoughts and feelings would only produce "powerless" writers (Bartholomae 128). They feel that expressivism encourages students to write in everyday language instead of preparing them for academic writing thus limiting first-year students' chances to develop academically viewed ways of thinking.

David Bartholomae firmly explains his ideas regarding discourse communities in his article "Inventing the University." He writes:

> It is very hard for them [first year students] to take on the role—the voice, the persona—of authority whose more immediately available and realizable voice of authority, the voice of a teacher giving a lesson or the voice of a parent lecturing at the dinner table. They [students] offer advice or homilies rather than "academic" conclusions. (62)

In other words, students use everyday language and the moralizing advice that they hear at home or in church in their writing, instead of providing logical reasoning as academic scholars would. Students can write for personal gain at any time, but our job as teachers is to train them for future academic and professional writing.

Bartholomae believes that language is socially constructed and is a product of a particular time and culture. His central thesis is that we, as academics, must teach our students to write and think the way that we academics do. This is in direct opposition to the expressivists's approach. Bartholomae challenges teachers to recognize the language that they demand from their students. He says that students experience such a disconnect between what they learn from their writing classes and what their discipline-specific courses require of them that they are often left to their own devices to figure out how to write acceptably. Thus, Bartholomae believes that teachers should immerse their students in academic writing (peer reviewed journals, scholarly books, etc.), so that they get sufficient exposure to "academic language" in a teacher-assisted environment.

THE GREAT DEBATE

At the 1989 and 1991 CCCC meetings, Peter Elbow and David Bartholomae began a public conversation about their ideas regarding personal and academic writing. In 1995, they decided to go public with this discussion. So, Bartholomae published "Writing With Teachers: A Conversation with Peter Elbow" in the *College Composition and Communication* journal and Elbow responded accordingly. This "discussion" has become known as the "Great Debate" within Rhetoric and Composition.

Bartholomae begins the discussion saying:

> I am here to argue for academic writing as part of an undergraduate's training, or as a form or motive to be taught/examined in the curriculum, I need to begin by saying that I am not here to argue for stuffy, lifeless prose or for mechanical (or dutiful) imitations of standard thoughts and forms […]. I want to argue that

academic writing is the real work of the academy. I also want to argue for

academic writing as a key term in the study of writing and the practice of

instruction. (63)

He explains that there is no writing done in or outside of the academy that isn't "academic"

writing. Teachers play a major role in the construction of authorial voice. He says that with the

proper instruction and lessons in critical reading, students can "learn to feel and see their

position inside a text they did not invent and can never, at least completely control. Inside a

practice: linguistic, rhetorical, cultural, historical" (65). He parallels this to the workforce. He

says that teachers should not think of themselves as frontier guides, but managers here to

manage "small shops in the general production of readers and writers" (66). So, in teaching

writer empowerment and authority in the classroom, we must make the writer aware of the

tradition of authorial voice (the writings of previous academics: Ralph Waldo Emerson,

Adrienne Rich, Simon Frith, etc.). Bartholomae says that students should use these previous

works as points of deflection. He says that:

> many students will not feel the pleasure or power of authorship unless we make
>
> that role available. Without our classes, students will probably not have the
>
> pleasure or the power of believing they are the figure that they have seen in
>
> pieces they have read […] unless we produce this effect in our classroom,
>
> students will not be Authors. (69)

Peter Elbow, on the other hand, says that "nothing that I've said here is an argument

against academic writing—only for something in addition" (88). Elbow argues for freewriting

and its use within First-year Composition. He says that freewriting is not a means for

eliminating the teacher. But, instead it is a method for students to alleviate the strains of

conventional writing. Elbow says that "people who use freewriting tend to notice immediately that it shows more nakedly than other kinds of writing all the junk that culture and the past have stuffed into our hands. Nothing is better than freewriting at showing us how we are constructed and situated" (89).

Although Elbow has been known as an advocate of "writing without teachers," he argues that there are no assigned writings without teachers and no schooling without teachers. But there is plenty of writing without teachers both inside and outside of the academy. He gives several examples of diaries, letters, notes, stories, poems, etc. (89). He says that it is empowering for our students to know that they can learn so much without instruction. Students gain authorial voice without the typical instructions and rules of the academy. We must give the student a little more control and let them make as many decisions as they can about their writing, for is it not, he asks, our primary goal to get students to think for themselves?

Elbow encourages teachers to have a little faith in their students. He says that "students easily distrust their experience, and we do harm if we try to 'correct' them about their own experience. In short, I want students to hear my comments but still be able to resist or deny them" (92). Thus, Elbow believes that our goal as teachers is to guide our students to personally engage in their writing. But, he stresses that we should encourage them to steer and lead the way, instead of the teacher controlling it for them.

DIGITAL RHETORIC: EXPRESSIVISM OR CONTRUCTIONISM?

As our students seek to define themselves as writers, their forums for doing so have expanded in our digital age. Because our students now spend a considerable amount of time writing online, the conversation about writerly identity now needs to include an examination of

how students use digital rhetoric to explore, express, or construct their identity. Several theorists (Sherry Turkle, Katherine Hayle, David Chandler, etc.) suggest that the world wide web (be it while e-mailing, blogging, surfing YouTube, or "Googling" a term) provides a new context for identity exploration, expression, and construction.

How does the "Great Debate" between expressivism and constructionism translate into the world of digital rhetoric? The unresolved tensions between the expressivists and constructionists may prove very useful in examining ways to promote identity expression and construction in the contemporary First-year Composition classroom. Digital studies in Rhetoric and Composition, already rich in productive research within the field, have arrived at a critical point. We need to expand our pedagogical horizon within First-year Composition. Therefore, this thesis argues for the incorporation of digital media (such as e-mail and weblogs) as tools for identity expression and construction within the FYC classroom.

Chapter 2 expands this argument by examining how a constructivist pedagogy could be realized by using e-mail to help students construct a writerly identity and to "invent the university." Chapter 3 will examine how an expressivist sense of writerly identity could be taught as students create weblogs. In each chapter, I briefly provide a comparison and contrast of these two new media to their traditional counterparts (letter writing and journals) in order to further express how digital rhetoric can be remediated for a contemporary twist on writer empowerment. In addition, each chapter will provide practical exercises and ideas for their usage in First-year Composition. In the conclusion, I return to the debate reviewed in this chapter and develop the claim that both ideologies of thinking about writing and identity can be of use in the contemporary FYC classroom through digital rhetoric.

CHAPTER 2:

Constructing Identity through E-mail Writing Instruction

As students enter the university, they experience various degrees of uncertainty about their authority as writers. They are no experts in any discipline; however, they are asked early on to write with an assurance that conveys a sense of expertise and proficiency. Thus, the students' problem can be construed as trying to find a way in their writing to convey a sense of oneness with the discipline. David Bartholomae characterizes the problem this way: the students must "extend themselves, by successive approximations, into the commonplaces, set phrases, rituals and gestures, habits of mind, tricks of persuasion, obligatory conclusions and necessary connections that determine the 'what might be said' and constitute knowledge within the various branches of our academic community" ("Inventing the University" 146). Thus, our perception of a student's ability to conform to the conventions of our discipline somewhat influences how believable or convincing we find his/her argument or message.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how students might "invent the university" by inventing an authoritative writerly identity within the digital space of e-mail. E-mail has become a standard mode of academic and professional communication, and as such it provides a legitimate site for writing instruction, specifically in order to teach students how to construct writerly identities that are authoritative and credible and that empower them to participate in professional discourse communities. Of course, we—and our students—use e-mail for academic and professional uses, as well as to send quick messages to family and friends for personal uses. Such personal uses could well serve a self-expressivist pedagogy, but the purpose of this chapter is to articulate for writing instructors a rhetoric and a pedagogy that will include e-mail as a site for identity formation. E-mail users may construct identity traits

through large rhetorical strategies such as audience awareness or through smaller strategies such as subject headings and e-mail signatures. However, e-mail users (most specifically FYC students) have to be taught how to do so. Since e-mail is rapidly replacing traditional letter writing, and because e-mail writers are quite often inattentive to purpose, style, audience, and identity construction in the composition of e-mails, it is imperative that e-mail writing be taught and emphasized in the First-year Composition classroom. Therefore, while reflecting a constructivist approach to identity construction, this chapter proposes that e-mail writing provides a new component for academic and social identity formation. Thus, its inclusion in FYC may serve as a great context for students to experiment in shaping their identities as writers and thinkers.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM AND E-MAIL

As the introduction to this thesis detailed, the relationship between identity construction and FYC writing instruction has been a long-standing conversation within the discipline. The dialogue or the "Great Debate" between Peter Elbow and David Bartholomae represents two polar positions. The so-called "expressivists," best represented by Elbow, tend to presume that identity precedes a community, and the purpose of writing (instruction) is to help a writer express his/her identity. The constructivists believe that a discourse community assists in the construction of a writer's identity. Expressivists encourage students to explore new forms of thinking and writing and to find new ways to organize and understand their experiences, while constructivists believe that language is socially constructed and is a product of a particular time and culture. Bartholomae, for example, argues that we must teach our students to write and think like academics. For the purpose of this chapter, I will emphasize how students can

construct academic authority and voice while writing e-mails, and, therefore, they are not using

e-mail writing merely to discover or to express a pre-existent self. Therefore, my argument is

centered on a constructivist model, as I believe that it is our job as teachers to train our students

for future academic and professional writing.

To illustrate the difficulty students have in constructing an ethos, specifically an ethos

of academic authority, I would like to consider Bartholomae's "Inventing the University" more

thoroughly. In his discussion of how he construes the status of his students' writing when he

asks them to write about *Bleak House*, for example, he says:

> I don't expect my students to *be* literary critics when they write about *Bleak*
>
> *House* [. . .]. I do, however, expect my students to be themselves, invented as
>
> literary critics by approximating the language of literary critics writing about
>
> *Bleak House*. My students, then, don't invent the language of literary criticism
>
> (they don't, that is, act on their own) but they are, themselves, invented by it.
>
> Their papers don't begin with a moment of insight, a "by God" moment that is
>
> outside of language. They begin with a moment of appropriation, a moment
>
> when they can offer up a sentence that is not theirs as though it were their own.
>
> (I can remember when, as a graduate student, I would begin papers by sitting
>
> down to write literally in the voice—with the syntax and the key words—of the
>
> strongest teacher I had met.) ("Inventing the University" 69)

Therefore, in the construction of an academic community, as Bartholomae suggests, the writer

takes on the role of a member of that community. So, when writing for academia, students must

learn to take on the identity of previous scholastic writers. Bartholomae reveals that teachers

have an active role in this process (students' construction of authorial voice). Teachers, then, help students believe that they can be a part of a long tradition of authors.

Bartholomae presents this process not only as taking on the *words* of others, but also taking on the *roles* of others. He writes:

> To speak with authority [student writers] have to speak not only in another's voice but through another's code; and they not only have to do this, they have to speak in the voice and through the codes of those of us with power and wisdom and they not only have to do this, they have to do it before they know what they are doing. (156)

Further, he argues that "[t]heir initial progress will be marked by their abilities to take on the role of privilege, by their abilities to establish authority" (162).

Digital rhetoric lends the same perspective. Students must gain an authoritative identity while writing online. A person's identity "emerges from whom one knows, one's associations and connections" (Turkle 258). Considering the many links that are established when one writes and receives e-mails from friends and others, e-mail provides a wonderful foundation for the rhetorical construction of an academic ethos. Therefore, much like the constructivist model, I recommend that FYC teachers immerse their students in academic and professional readings (specifically, here, the history of letter writing, e-mail and memo handbooks, etc.), so that they get sufficient exposure to the "language" of the academic and professional world. In this regard, e-mail writing instruction should incorporate a review of the history and conventions of letter-writing, of classical techniques of rhetorical mastery, of standard grammatical and stylistic conventions, and of strategies for ethos and audience awareness.

BRIEF HISTORY OF LETTER-WRITING INSTRUCTION

Letters are reported as being amongst early forms of writing. Examining earliest writing on clay tablets in Mesopotamia reveals that personal family letters were common (Barton and Hall 5). Many contemporary genres find their origins in letters. Elements of the letter can be seen in early newspaper articles, scientific journals, the Bible (Barton and Hall 5). Due to the dramatic impact of letter writing on the formation of civilization, "in the past, its basic principles were to be mastered at an early age, particularly by those who received a classical education" (Nevalainen 182). Throughout the classical and medieval times, letters were regarded as important compositions (Bizzell and Herzberg 429). Letter writing was deemed as an admirable talent, which led to a full-fledged *ars dictaminis*, or art of letter writing, complete with a variety of authored manuals that provided basic guidelines on the art of letter writing. These treatises, such as the anonymously authored *The Principles of Letter Writing* ca. 1135, focused on the importance of eloquence, audience, and purpose.

In the early 1800's, letter-writing instruction was heavily dependant upon a genre of instructional books known as "Complete Letter Writers." This curriculum applied the principles of Roman rhetoric to composing legal letters, and rules for composition were augmented with models from classical authors. These documents were to be copied verbatim or lightly adapted. Often the sample letters were preceded by a brief section on English grammar. This letter-writing curriculum quickly flourished and persists to this day (Shultz 112).

While instruction in rhetoric had been part of a university education in the United States from the colonial period, nineteenth-century instruction in personal letter writing (rooted in *ars dictaminis*) flourished not in the universities but in the grammar schools. Schools in the United States were dedicated to instructing children in knowledge *and* in virtue. Due to

nineteenth-century educational reformers' belief that families and churches were no longer as committed to moral education, "schools were seen as an instrument for promoting the social order, patriotism, and the Christian morality popular during the early decades of the 19th century" (Barton and Hall 110). Therefore, textbook letter-writing was not only designed to teach children how to be efficient letter-writers, but also to teach particular behaviors (manners, etc.).

American letter-writing instruction became a regular component of the public-school curriculum. Its role became multifaceted insomuch as students were not only asked to write familiar, business, and social letters, but letter writing provided more general instruction in etiquette (teaching the manners and morals of polite communication).

Most recently, letter-writing instruction has continued to be incorporated into FYC in a variety of ways. One early example of letter-writing instruction is Robert Whitlock's 1977 "Monday Letter Writing Assignments," in which he describes how in his college literature classes he asked students to compose letters focused on certain topics related to their reading assignments. He also used letter-writing as a prompt for essay writing. No matter the assignment, letter writing has been proven to invite the students "into a class dialogue [with the intention that they may] learn more about themselves as part of a community of learners" (Medley 670).

In a way, letter-writing instruction contributed to an enormous breakthrough in composition instruction. In the nineteenth century, students were taught to write themes about interpersonal and abstract topics (like modesty, patience, and industry, for example) and to write with a voice that mimicked the voice of an adult. Letter-writing instruction invited students to write about their own lives, about their own experiences, and in their own. Thus,

even in the distorted world of autonomous school literacy and FYC practices, it is possible for

letters to be the source of meaningful writing activities for contemporary letter-writing, better

known as e-mail. Although such examples support a self-expressivist pedagogical approach, a

writing instructor can use e-mail to emphasize the socially constructed conventions and codes

of letter-writing, and hence of the socially constructed nature of written discourse and of its

author.

E-MAIL WRITING VS. LETTER-WRITING

E-mail instruction can be used for the very same functions as letter-writing. E-mail is

such an elegantly simple idea that, once you begin to use it, you wonder how you lived without

it (David Angell and Brent Heslop). Not only does e-mail provide a speedy way of

communicating with family, friends and co-workers, it may be used as a pedagogical site to

teach students how to construct a credible ethos in writing.

The largest advantage of e-mail is convenience. One no longer has to write a message,

put it in an envelope, stamp it, and take it to the post office. An e-mail message is sent out by

simply clicking the "Send" button. E-mail messages can be communicated to anyone in any

part of the world far more rapidly than a traditional letter might take. The Internet with its

support of e-mail and the World Wide Web technologies makes the presentation and

transmission of messages to a larger audience easier. Due to its speed and broadcast ability, e-

mail is fundamentally different from paper-based communication. Because the turnaround time

can be so fast, e-mail is much more conversational than letters. Therefore, e-mail affords us the

opportunity to find various ways in which technology (more specifically, e-mail), cultural

practices, cultural contexts, and genres of communication are interconnected within this new digital economy of writing.

Needless to say, the need to buy or have a stamp, paper, and envelopes were small deterrents in the letter-writing process. Now, having contact with the internet makes it is easier to send a message without those minor distractions.

The development of computer based communication has therefore "textualized society" (Zuboff 18). E-mail is both a development of existing technology and a remediation of the use of writing and traditional letter writing. Danet says that "[e-mail] is more intangible and ephemeral, with somewhat different consequences for letter-writing and for author-based modes, which have assumed a non-interactive reader [. . .] hard copies of e-mail messages are optional, as is electronic storage of them. Millions of us routinely write-and-send, and read-and-delete dozens of messages (Danet 8). In the past, researchers thought that e-mail's lack of a material trace might itself affect the researching of letters, especially as historical evidence. However, in recent years, new technology has developed a means for recording e-mail messages sent in government offices, work places, and schools.

E-mail offers so many new, fun, and exciting variables to letter-writing. However, these exciting differences between the traditional letter and e-mail also present problems. In writing on a screen, writers may at times lose the sense of an audience, become self-absorbed, and lose the constraints and inhibitions that the imagined audience provides. These very small differences produce what has been called "flaming" (outrageous and often hurtful language transmitted as a part of the e-mail message), grammatical and stylistic difficulties, and incoherence. The speed and ease of transmission also poses problems for the e-mail user that

needs to be addressed. The medium does not seem to encourage re-reading (or revision) before responding.

E-MAIL USE IN FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION

Therefore, we should include e-mail in a tradition that reaches back to the medieval *ars dictaminis*, to the letter writing handbooks of the Renaissance, and the writing handbooks and composition text books of the present day (Hawisher and Moran 629). A writing pedagogy that includes e-mail in its field of vision would confront all of these issues. I propose that a portion of the FYC course be dedicated to digital rhetoric, or more specifically, a rhetoric of e-mail. Such a rhetoric would teach composition students the current e-mail conventions as well as online identity construction.

E-mail gives our students an opportunity to practice constructing authoritative writerly identities as presenters of their stances, their ideas, their perspectives while communicating with persons considered significant by the author. E-mail writers get a chance to decide what they want or do not want to reveal about themselves in their e-mails. The spelling, punctuation, grammatical idiosyncrasies say much about the e-mail author's personality and can either lend credibility by identifying the writer as a member of an appropriate discourse community or destroy credibility by identifying the writer as an "outsider." Therefore, composition instructors assist student writers by teaching them the rules and conventions of traditional letter writing and e-mail.

Although some writing instructors, such as Joyce Kinkead, Gail Hawisher, Cynthia Selfe, and Charles Moran have begun to implement e-mail use in the college classroom, few foreground the social construction of identity while using e-mail as a pedagogical tool. Most

professors simply focus on three methods of e-mail implementation into the curriculum:

student-to-student-correspondence, student-teacher correspondence, and e-mail tutoring

through Writing Center Correspondence (Kinkead 338). Teachers seem to focus on the

medium's ability to promote improved relationships among teachers and students. Although

this is important, and it is pleasing to learn that writing instructors are finally addressing e-

mail's significance in the classroom, teachers have failed to address the larger significance.

That is: how e-mail can be used to help students "invent the university," and how the

fundamentals of e-mail writing could be used to help students construct an academic ethos.

  A full rhetoric of e-mail would consider the different rhetorical contexts for e-mail,

including genre and uses, audiences, ethos, and the extent to which any and all of these are

influenced by the properties of the medium. I offer here the beginnings of such a rhetoric.

1. Tone, genre, and uses

  E-mail has various genres and uses. E-mails are used in the work place, in academic

settings, and for personal use. The genres may include but are not limited to: the memo, the

proposal, a dialogue, and the ballot.[2] Due to the variety of genres, it is imperative that e-mail

writers be attentive to their specific use for the message. Therefore, e-mail writing involves

skills, such as interpreting the relevance of a message according to one's recipient. It includes

being aware of the tone used when sending a message for a specific purpose. It involves the

competence to fill in a message with relevant context, to sort messages various degrees of

relevance, and reply to them accordingly.

2. Audience

  Sending an e-mail is equivalent to presenting information to an intended audience. The

key elements we need to consider are why it is being sent and what information is being

conveyed. Is the information that we are sending easy to comprehend and digest or will it be a mass of empty words on a screen?

It is therefore useful for writers to be aware of their audience and to pay attention to what they write and how they write it. E-mail writers should always try to avoid talking down to their reader or talking over their reader's head. The writer does not want to anger, insult, or bore the reader. Specifically, if one adopts a social constructivist position, it is imperative that a writer understand that he/she is writing in dialogue with an ongoing conversation within any discourse community. Hence, audience awareness is key in establishing one's writerly identity.

3. Identity

Also, it is important to note that so much of who and what we are can be seen through our writing that e-mail may be the perfect stage upon which students can learn to perform and construct themselves. Part of the ethos students claim as writers is determined by various identity categories—woman, man, artist, scientist, teacher, athlete. E-mail writing instruction may serve as a vehicle for helping students examine how they identify themselves, how they define identity categories, and how they are defined by these very categories. According to Daniel Chandler (par. 29), we, as teachers, have an important role in assisting students to develop self identity online. How do we do this? Chandler suggests that we follow the same procedures as those taught in academic writing: study of the genre and its evolving rhetorical conventions as to appropriately teach writerly identity to our students. Why should the teaching of online writing be any different?

As mentioned before, instruct students to read previous works and use them as points of integration, to assist them in finding their academic voice deflection. FYC teachers might even present their own work and examples of their own e-mail writing for the students to review.

Students can "learn to feel and see their position inside a text," and "there is no better way to investigate the transmission of power, tradition and authority than by asking students to do what academics do-- work with the past, with key texts (such as the classic texts of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Simon Frith)" (Bartholomae 66).

To enhance e-mail instruction, teachers may incorporate collaborative exercises (peer response groups, e-mail pen pals, etc.) to promote idea development. Collaborative thinking sometimes assists students in creating new ideas and in constructing new knowledge among the group. Teachers may share their own ideas in collaboration with their FYC writers and may write e-mail messages to their students.

Such a participatory dialogue helps students understand how disciplinary knowledge is socially constructed through discourse. Other exercises can teach students to understand how a writer's identity, authority—or ethos—is constructed in writing. This can be done through several class exercises:

1. Ask the class to examine several e-mail messages for authorial pronouns that assert identity. Students may be arranged in small groups of two or three and asked to mark pronouns in an anonymous e-mail message (which could very well be written by the instructor). Allot about 5 minutes for this exercise. Then, from those pronouns (marked by each group), ask the groups to distinguish as much as possible about the e-mail author. Specifically, you want the students to identify how the e-mail author distinguishes himself/herself as a credible author.

   Such a mini-analysis makes students aware of their sometimes unconscious practices of asserting identity. This kind of rhetorical consciousness, raises students'

awareness of what they do while writing themselves and provides an opportunity for them to critically evaluate their e-mail writing habits (Hyland 355).

2. Students can also practice using various e-mail signatures to convey authoritative identity. After providing examples, ask students—as a homework assignment—to research various signature options and to create a number of possible signatures for themselves. At the onset of the class period, retrieve each student's assignment, pass out each student's e-mail signatures to a different student, and ask the student to review the various signatures and assess it for authorial features that would tell them something about the writer and to assess its contribution (or not) in constructing an authoritative ethos for the writer.

3. Concise and substantive writing is vital to the construction of identity through e-mail. As an exercise, ask students to compose e-mails, and then have them convene as peer editors to review and revise their e-mails in terms of word choice, sentence structure, organization, coherence, and tone, in order to revise the messages in such a way as to provide maximum credibility and authority for the author.

4. Sometimes our students can get a little carried away with their e-mail messages with regard to tone. Students sometimes write their messages so quickly that they forget about the impression that they may be giving to their reading audience. E-mail tone is crucial when constructing identity online. First impressions can be extremely important when you are writing to your teacher or a prospective employer.

For this exercise, divide the students into two groups. Group One will be considered the employers while Group Two will be the prospective employees. Have Group

Two (employees) write letters of introduction that describe their employment

interest. While, Group One (employers) will make comments on the e-mail, and

together the two groups will decide what kind of tone is given through the e-mail

and how that tone could be improved in terms of the e-mail writer's purpose,

specifically in order to increase the writer's authority.

(Note: As mentioned earlier, the proposed exercises are only models; instructors may modify

them for their specific class needs.)

As we take into consideration the ongoing conversation regarding online identity

construction, I think we can all agree that the inclusion of e-mail writing (and other forms of

online communication, alike) in First-year Composition may provide an effective medium and

context in which students may experiment in shaping their identity as thinkers and writers

within an academic or professional community. Writing an e-mail is then no longer seen as

simply the personal exchange of thoughts, ideas, and materials on the computer but rather as a

new venue for students to "invent the university," by participating in a collaborative discourse

community and by constructing appropriate and authoritative writerly identities.

CHAPTER 3:

Expressing Identity through Weblog Instruction

Since the creation of online written communication media, such as weblogs
(Blogger.com and LiveJournal.com about five years ago), several questions and theories have
arisen regarding the role of identity in electronic writing. As "blogging" has become a most
popular and expedient electronic medium,[3] webblogging sites are utilized to facilitate invention
in the composition of brief online personal journals or diaries. It is as simple as connecting to
the Internet, going to a website, logging in, composing a post and pressing "Publish." In
seconds, the site is updated, and you have been published to the world. Thus, with the
projected availability and ease of use for blog websites, creating weblogs has become a viable
classroom activity. While some educators have already started using blogs in the classroom,
some teachers only care to focus on the potential of blogging in teaching and learning (qtd. in
Ferdig and Trammell: par. 3). Although students formerly created learning journals, thinking
journals, and reflective class journals, some teachers remain skeptical with regard to the
usefulness of weblogs. Today's weblogs, however, provide the opportunity for students to
document and collect their entries for self analysis and reflection, to share their thoughts with
fellow classmates, and to create reading responses with ease. Specifically, for the purposes of
this chapter, I will look at weblogs as a pedagogical tool for assisting students in discovering
and expressing their identities as writers. Whereas in the previous chapter we examined how a
writing instructor could integrate the electronic media of e-mail as a tool to help students
understand how to *construct* authoritative identities in order to empower them to participate in
appropriate discourse communities, here we will investigate how another electronic media—
that of weblogs—can help students *express* their authorial selves, to discover their unique

voices and identities. As I have previously noted, there is nothing about either media that prescribes a constructivist or an expressivist pedagogical approach. E-mail writing could be a powerful form of self-expression and self-discovery, just as blogging could be used to teach the conventions of academic discourse and authority. But, for the purposes of this thesis—and focused exploration, this chapter will examine the weblog, specifically as a potential pedagogical tool as a viable means for self-discovery.

<u>WEBLOGS AND EXPRESSIVISM</u>

Supporters of weblog use in the composition classroom highlight the weblogs similarity to the writing journals, which have had a important role in the process revolution of composition instruction. Peter Elbow, among others, has advocated the writing journal as a powerful means for placing the authority for learning how to write in the students' hands. By using techniques such as free-writing and open-ended writing, Elbow encourages students to use their own experiences as credible sources for their writing, thus elevating the students' own resources over those of the academic community.

Elbow says that the implementation of these techniques will assist teachers in using their authority in their institutional settings "to create […] spaces that can heighten discovery and learning (Bartholomae and Elbow 89). He says that he feels that he "must leave students more control, let them make as many decisions as they can about their writing—despite the power of the culture. He must call on some faith in the ability of students to make important choices, decisions, and perceptions of their own (Bartholomae and Elbow 91). Therefore, if our goal as teachers is to get our students to think for themselves, we can't think for them. We have

to renounce the idea that the students' mission is to accomplish *our* (academics') goals and simply let them enjoy writing.

In Elbow's explication of the importance of journal writing, he stresses process writing. He says that every time he has his students turn in an important assignment, he has them turn in a process letter or writer's log/journal where they give "movies of their mind. What was going on in my writing in this paper? How did I write it? What worked well for me? Where did I struggle? They have to look at their own writing process and notice what worked and what didn't work, where they got lost and when things broke down" (Bush). This practice and assistance in process and journal writing helps the student discover who they are as writers and work through their thoughts.

Thus, blogs (as contemporary forms of journals and process writing) are useful teaching and learning tools because they provide an electronic space for students to publish their thoughts and understandings. Sherry Turkle says that students gain a voice and identity while writing online. She suggests that, "Computer screens are the new location for our fantasies, both erotic and intellectual. We are using life on computer screens to become comfortable with new ways of thinking about evolution, relationships, sexuality, politics, and identity" (634). Thus, blogs become a way for students to establish personal *and* intellectual ownership while they visualize and interact online.

Thus, we should remediate the traditional journal and implement weblogs into the FYC classroom. With the exception of the essay and the research paper, there is conceivably no element of the FYC course that is more ubiquitous than the personal journal. Most composition textbooks contain a section on journal-keeping and several place journals at the core of the

FYC writing course. Journals afford students the opportunity to take control of their writing and to engage in personal exploration.

THE HISTORY OF JOURNALS IN COMPOSITION INSTRUCTION

The intentions here are to examine the history of the commonplace book and diary as used in teaching, to relate this history to the advent of the pedagogical journal and now the weblog. I hope to show that certain teaching strategies can make the journal not only a vehicle for authorial voice in expressive writing, but also a valuable means for exploring the mix of public and private impulses found in weblogs. It is the intention of this section, in other words, to suggest a rhetoric of contemporary journal writing or a rhetoric of weblogs.

Historically, the commonplace book and the diary have served two very different purposes: one was used to connect the self with the community, while the other was used to individualize the self (Autrey 76).

The commonplace book was a staple of rhetorical education for centuries. Ancient Greek commonplace books, or *hypomnema*, were repositories of observations, ideas, quotations, and maxims that the speaker or writer maintained as source material (75). Michel Foucault links these idea books to "culture of the self," the Greek urge to achieve self-mastery and self-understanding. He says that these books were kept with the intention of defining and modeling the self on the basis of shared cultural knowledge and values. Commonplace books were made up of actual passages to be memorized or drawn upon in speaking. Speeches could, in effect, be stitched together from choice passages found elsewhere.

The commonplace tradition, then, gave way to the Middle Ages to a more formulaic rhetoric, particularly in letter writing and preaching. Students were expected to be familiar with

a variety of forms, but there was "less emphasis on the discovery of arguments from an accumulated store of conventional wisdom" (Autrey 76). Then, in the Renaissance, as formulaic rhetoric faded out of favor, there was a resurgence of interest in the use of the commonplace book as a means of gathering ideas from various sources.[4] Romanticism brought with it an accompanying emphasis on personal insights rather than societal norms. Only occasionally since then have commonplace books been touted as aids to successful writing (Autrey 76).

Like the commonplace book, the diary is at least as old as the Ancient Greeks. For example, researchers found the autobiography of Libanus, the Roman orator, in which they found "diary-like passages, filled with petty personal details" (Autrey76). They also report finding treatises on dreams or dream diaries and "night books" (Autrey 76). These self-revelations had no direct pedagogical purpose. Unlike commonplace books, they were not intended as aids to invention and thus were never integral to rhetorical education. However, diaries were very present throughout history[5] and facilitated mechanisms for self-knowledge and self discovery.

We might expect that the increased emphasis on personal writing and the popularity of diary-keeping in the nineteenth century would prompt rhetorical theorists to consider the diary as a mode of practice or self-discovery. However, few major rhetorical texts of that era recommend the diary or commonplace books for that purpose. It isn't until twenty three years later (in the 1930's) that the diary log is considered a source of ideas. Then, finally, in 1965 (the most traceable link to the journal's ascendany in the classroom), Gordan Rohmann's "Prewriting: The Stage of Discovery in the Writing Process" recommends the journal along with mediating and forming analogies as techniques for invention. This is often cited as an

influential article in the shift toward process-oriented composition. This is a view of writing as more complex and recursive, as seen by the modern expressivist camp. Whereas in the 1960's and 1970's the journal was seen as purely a mode of invention, today's theorists view it as a mode of learning, a means for digesting and learning material in various disciplines.

Although we can theoretically differentiate diaries, commonplace books, and notebooks, in practice these categories run together, and the term *journal* is useful in that it encompasses all of these. We can explain to our students that the personal pedagogical journal has evolved out of diary and commonplace traditions. This means showing them the examples of both genres and discussing the uses of each. In exploring options for the journal with students, we might show them how writers often mix various functions. Tackling this issue will help us more thoroughly address that weblogs can do what journals *used* to do and can do it better. But, why do blogs do it better?

JOURNALS VERSUS WEBLOGS

The Internet seems to be particularly well suited to the personal diary/ journal, insomuch as it allows the perfect stage for brief texts, daily entries, pictures and photos, biographical information, etc. The current trend in writing studies is to see online writing as an extension of writing on paper, particularly in the case of what some call online diaries or weblogs. The cyberdiarist or cyberjournalists, if you will, is exposed to several new facets of self-discovery when writing online.

Although there are two main differences between the weblog and the paper journal (those being instant publication and an expected audience), the weblog shares with the paper journal a powerful tool for self-expression. Both offer a space (be it private or public) for the

writer to discover his/her authorial voice. Weblogs provide a forum for people to write their day-to-day experiences, social commentary, complaints, poems, prose, thoughts and any content that might be found in a traditional paper diary or journal. The author learns how to use his/her own experiences as credible sources for the reader, much like Peter Elbow suggests.

New media spaces, such as weblogs, have created opportunities and novel ways of recording and archiving narratives of communities, cultures and societies. The ability to personalize and publicize on the web presents new avenues for understanding and expressing one's personal experiences and history; thus, placing the authority of learning to write and create authorial voice in the blogger's hands.

Weblogs provide students with the chance to go beyond that of the traditional journal, to discover who and what they are or what they want to become through their writing online. Succinctly, blogs can be used for a variety of purposes. They can be used as personal journals. They can function as a bulletin board where several participants may comment and respond to the posts of others. They can even be used for reader response exercises and process writing. Also, blogs can extend beyond just text. Many are capable of handling images and hyperlinks for an extended explanation of thoughts and emotions.

USING WEBLOGS IN FYC

As we are teaching students the importance of expressing a projected identity into a virtual space such as weblogs, we might help them to see themselves as "plugged-in techno bodies" as Sherry Turkle suggests (644). Virtual media, such as weblogs, provide them with the opportunity to explore and to express multiple aspects of the self. Due to the Internet's ability to allow everyone with a computer to construct facsimiles of themselves and post them, blogging may provide an opportunity for people to virtually change their gender, personality,

interests, etc. "For some people it is a place to 'act out' unresolved conflicts, to play and replay characterlogical difficulties on a new and exotic stage. For others it provides an opportunity to 'work through' significant personal issues, to use the new materials of cyberspaciality to reach for new resolutions" (Turkle 644).

Thus, the identity expressed and projected while blogging is influenced in the following four ways:

1. **Freedom of Expression.** The freedom of expression is important. "Blogs are often understood to be democratic in action because they allow any person who can use the software to express a view and debate with others" (Rak 172). Thus, the value and rights of the blogger remain at the core of blogging[6].

2. **Blogger Biography.** All blogging websites provide a "biography" section where the blogger can provide personal information about him/herself. The blogger may choose to include personal photographs, e-mail addresses, etc. As a result, this opportunity to self-disclose personal information comes down to a toss-up between how much trust the author would like to instill in his/her audience and the authors need to feel secure. Julie Rak calls this a semi-private environment.

3. **Blogger Interests and Links.** Blogging, then, depends on the bloggers willingness to divulge information about their "life and interests." This "highlights both the blogger's belief that he/she is more anonymous online than offline as it builds community between bloggers who trust each other as they share experiences and opinions together" (Rak 173).

4.   **Blog Design**. The design of a blog is representative of the blogger and the impression that he/she wants to make on the reader.

All of these types of individual representations are significant to identity expression while blogging. Insomuch as bloggers are assumed to be unique individuals telling the truth about themselves and their interests and opinions; such personifications of the self can be used to clearly shape First-year students' offline identity with that of their online identity.

The Rhetoric of Weblogs

Thus, I propose that a section of the FYC course be dedicated to modern journal writing, as it has proven to be a viable means for self-discovery and self-knowledge historically. The long history behind today's weblogs, a history encompassing commonplace books and diary traditions, has every right to be a part of the FYC classroom. Weblogs should, then, not only be used as a means of free-writing and brainstorming, but as a retrospective study. Such a rhetoric of weblogs would tackle such issues as genres and uses, process and product, and audience.

1. Weblogs genres and uses

   Studying the various dimensions of journals is an awareness which can give students not only a fuller appreciation of the genre but also a grasp of how textual conventions of all kinds are subject to sometimes subtle political, personal, and professional constraints. The commonplace book has historically provided a means of placing the self with a broader cultural context which can be useful when writing for professional and academic purposes. The history of diary writing, on the other hand, may become beneficial when students think about personal discovery.

2. Audience

The overall assumption is that the journal is written to the self, perhaps the future self. However, with the implementation of weblogs into the FYC classroom, the expected audience has changed. The journal is no longer personal or simply a one-on-one conversation with the teacher. The private space has been made public. Therefore, when instructing students on the usefulness of weblogs, audience awareness is key. Students must consider their purpose and tone.

3. Process and Product

In addition to making students aware of the private and public voices that resonate in all writing, study of the weblogs and its history can yield new insight into a well-worn dichotomy in our profession: process and product. As modern journals or weblogs can be seen as a record of events (product) and a repositiory of ideas (part of a process), students may have difficulty exploring their weblogs for ideas in subsequent writing. We, as FYC instructors, should then demonstrate how this process can work. After allowing the students to free-write in their weblogs at the onset of the class period, the teacher might instruct the students to review their work for patterns and themes that can reinforce the importance of their efforts.

Practical Uses of Weblogs in First-year Composition

In order to gain more knowledge about the questions surrounding the pedagogical use of blogs, their significance in authorial voice and the writer's empowerment, the following practical suggestions for classroom blog assignments may assist those who are still skeptical regarding the usefulness of blogs or those who would like to implement weblogs in their classroom. These examples may provide a good environment for successful blog integration.

1. Blogging can motivate student empowerment through traditional journal writing activities. Let the students write about what's on their mind. Teachers might provide their students with a prompt or a blog of their own. For example, ask the students to write about what they've read recently (book, magazine, newspaper, etc.); about controversial topics they've heard or read recently; about what they are learning in a specific class; what excites them about college; or what they dislike about college.

Small exercises such as these motivate the students to see themselves as writers who have something to contribute. Although this is a rather conventional, tried, and true exercise, by adding a new electronic medium, students become a tad more excited about it.

2. Blogs provide students with the unique opportunity to express themselves creatively through various digital media. Teachers might encourage their students to post a message in a particular digital media of choice (video, video game clip, sound bite, clip art, artwork, poem, etc.) to their portfolio or weblog.

As a result, such digital displays further identify personal characteristics about the blogger. Ask the student to further elaborate on why they identify with the digital post so well.

Overall, the inclusion of weblog exercises in the First-year Composition classroom proves to provide new opportunities for our students to discover and to express their identities as writers. Through the promotion of self-exploration in the sample exercises suggested, students may gain a new zeal for writing. Whatever the comparison, whatever the exercise or assignment, there is no doubt that weblogs have great potential for educational use in the First-year Composition classroom. Through the incorporation of various weblog exercises, weblogs can indeed be essential in assisting students in discovering and expressing their authorial voices and identities.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

Expressivism and Constructivism: Identity and Digital Rhetoric

In this thesis, I have developed the claim that the authorial voice, as an important dimension of the act of writing, can be taught as either a socially constructed ethos or as an expression of an unique identity. Although I have treated the two approaches separately, I argue that they can both be implemented in the contemporary First-year Composition classroom with positive results. First-year Composition teachers may find it useful to discuss these two very different approaches to writing instruction with their students, as any discussion of—and problematization of—authorship, authoritativeness, and authorial presence will help to create critical awareness of one's identity as a writer, which might be the first step towards effective writing.

The aim of this thesis has been to foreground how digitial forms of communication can be used as legitimate pedagogical sites of authorial invention and expression. Although this thesis has only concentrated on two forms of online communication (e-mail and weblogs), I would suggest that all existing and emerging digital technologies would, likewise, provide fruitful forums for teaching students how to construct, as well as to express, identities as writers. Further, given the fact that our students are most likely regular users of various forms of online communication, our attention to the rhetorics of such forms is not an "optional extra" for a FYC curriculum, but central to the development of our students as writers in this technological age.

TENSIONS OF UNRESOLVE

In the preceding chapters, I have discussed the "Great Debate" between the expressivist's and the constructivist's models of authorial voice as they relate to the purpose of writing instruction, and specifically as they relate to the place of digital rhetoric in First-year Composition. I began the thesis by introducing the two approaches of thinking about writer identity: a writer's discovery of a pre-existent self while writing (expressivist), and a writer's construction of a self through a discourse community (constructivist). In each chapter I make specific claims about the digital nature of authorial voice and how it is connected with these two aspects of writing instruction, thereby raising one very crucial question: how do we take expressivism and constructivism into the realm of digital rhetoric?

Chapter 2 expounds upon this question by linking the art of letting writing to the practice of composing e-mails. Working out of a constructivist approach to identity creation, this chapter proposes that e-mail writing provides a new component for academic and social identity formation. The chapter suggests that students can be taught to construct an authoritative identity while writing e-mail messages. Chapter 3, on the other hand, adopts an expressivist approach to identity discovery, and links the practice of writing journals with online weblogs.

Overall, both chapters do not attempt to resolve this "Great Debate" but rather to suggest that either or both approaches, which have theoretical and pragmatic precedents in the history of Rhetoric and Composition instruction, can be featured in the FYC classroom via digital rhetoric.

Online interaction (of any kind) can become a basis for identity expression or construction insomuch as the principles for performance shift from the confines of the paper text to a public virtual web.

THEORIES OF IDENITITY COMPLICATED BY NEW TECHNOLOGIES

As this thesis suggests strategies for the implementation of e-mail and weblogs into FYC as a means of student identity construction, it is of central importance to communicate the remediation of these older writing practices and theories. As shown in previous chapters, FYC teachers may simply transform the art of letter writing into the art of e-mail composition, or the writing journal into the weblog. These writing practices remain crucial to the history *and* the future of Rhetoric and Composition, as they provide strategies for producing efficient and empowered writers, whether adopting an expressivist or a constructivist approach to teaching authorial identity.

Nevertheless, digital rhetoric may, itself, complicate the very notion of authorial identity, and thus is perhaps not fully theorizable by either side presented by the "Great Debate." As mentioned in earlier chapters, digital communication presents several new contexts for identity construction (instantaneous publication, pictures, video clips, and links). Student writers are no longer limited to composing words on a relatively stable and static page, but are now able to compose more fluid texts: digital texts with no set "beginning" or "ending," with no set boundaries, even, between the reader and writer (Walker par. 8). Unlike the traditional text, the distance between self and audience is dwindling, complicating the notion of the author—whether constructed or discovered. Sherry Turkle underscores this when she notes that an online identity is not "unitary and solid" but rather multiple, a veritable "array

of our inconsistent personae" (257). She further claims that "when people adopt an online persona they cross a boundary into highly-charged territory. Some feel an uncomfortable sense of fragmentation, some a sense of relief. Some sense the possibilities for self-discovery, even self-transformation" (260). Hence, the very media of digital rhetoric revolutionizes and complicates the notions of identity construction and authorial voice. It is, therefore, important that writing instructors keep this in mind when implementing digital media in the classroom. Teachers must communicate and deliberate with their students regarding their writing process as their identities shift and change while creating e-mail messages and weblogs. But, as this thesis has argued, these forms of digital communication provide writing instructors with important forums for teaching students about a writer's identity: whether rhetorically constructed or rhetorically expressed.

ENDNOTES

[1] Ethos (from the Greek word *ethikos*, meaning to show moral character) is one of the three artisitc proofs or modes of persuasion discussed by Aristotle. There are three categories of ethos: *phronesis* (practical skills and wisdom); *arete* (virtue and goodness); and *eunoia* (goodwill towards the audience). It is important to note that ethos does not belong to the speaker, but to the audience. So, the audience determines whether the speaker/writer is credible.

[2] See Orlikowski and Yates and Kamkaanrata for more information on e-mail genres.

[3] A 2004 Pew Internet & American Life Project noted that at least 3 million Americans have created blogs, with similar numbers being seen world wide.

[4] Erasumus, Vives, and Francis Bacon, among others, recommend the keeping of such collections (Autrey 75).

[5] Diaries of Samuel Pepys, John Evelyn, and John Mannningham in the seventeenth century and those of James Boswell, Frances Burney, and Henry Fielding in the eighteenth century are evidence of this genre's continued importance (Autrey 77).

[6] See Lawrence Lessig's *Code Version 2.0* (123).

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