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SOCIAL STUDENT BODIES IN THE IM WORLD: DIGITAL VERNACULARS AND SELF-REFLEXIVE RHETORIC

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Stacey Lynn Pigg
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ABSTRACT

Recent rhetoric, composition, and literacy scholarship has refocused attention on the body's role in reading and writing, arguing against abstracting literacy practices and texts from material situations, contexts, and the physical bodies who create them. This scholarship challenges descriptions and accounts of emerging media and digital writing situations as "disembodying." This thesis argues that in the "IM world" in which incoming college students learn to write by participating in online communities, their digital writing can be considered "embodied" as real-world, socially-situated practice. By actively participating in online communities, many incoming college students learn distinct online language practices outside of school; they acquire digital vernacular literacy practices that can be useful when they encounter school literacies.

To illustrate the importance of digital vernaculars for students growing up in the IM world, this project analyzes digital classroom writing from thirty-one students at the University of Tennessee. Writing online in blog and chat forums, these students drew from past digital rhetorical knowledge to produce identity-building writing with wide-ranging motives while negotiating present academic writing situations. The project concludes by suggesting that incorporating digital writing in classroom situations can help first-year writing teachers teach students to become self-reflective rhetorical practitioners, rhetors who use all available means across different writing situations and domains.

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PREFACE:

FROM STUDENT BODIES AND DIGITAL VERNACULARS

TO SELF-REFLEXIVE RHETORS

Teacher-scholars in rhetoric and composition see and interact with student bodies whenever they enter a classroom, yet recent critical work by Carolyn Marvin and Sharon Crowley points out that the body is often displaced in literacy theory and pedagogy. Especially in the twenty-first century where new media and digital writing newly complicate and draw attention to the relationship between the body, text, and literacy, it is important to question assumptions about these often nebulous terms, paying special attention to how our ideas and theories about them affect our pedagogies and the way we research writing, rhetoric, and literacy in the IM world.

Students themselves may be more connected intuitively than theorists to the ways their bodies affect learning processes, even if they have no reason to express the connections they recognize instinctively. Early in the semester, when asked to imagine and write about any theory of learning, several students from a study of first-year college writers at the University of Tennessee were quick to acknowledge body in their theories of learning. One student, Lauren, wrote, "When I think about ways of learning, I find it easier to remember things when I do more that [sic] just see it. If I feel something or smell it while I'm learning I tend to remember more about that object […] I find it easier when you use more senses." And, another student, Jenny, remarked, "If you are in a hot room with a bunch of people you do not know and are not comfortable around, then you are not going to be able to concentrate." Both of these descriptions, at some level, show that students recognize the ways in which the student body acts as an interface with the

environment, dictating how effective one can be at processing information entering from the outside.

Jenny's comment is initially the easier of the two to situate in terms of digital writing. She suggests that the body's role in learning rests on how it mediates between the environment and the brain, presumably where the "thinking" to which she refers happens. Applying this idea to the writing scenario and even the digital writing scenario much different from thinking about ergonomics and student's physical "comfort levels" or questioning how teachers can create the most physically conducive learning environments for students. Thinking of Lauren's comment in terms of the writing classroom—and, indeed, the digital writing situation as well—is a bit more difficult. When Lauren, a first-year pre-med major who spends a lot of her time in science laboratory classes, wants to "feel" and "smell" the things she's learning, when she wants her body involved in the sensual aspects of the learning process, she creates a bit of a dilemma for writing theories and pedagogies. How do we make writing situations, especially academic writing scenarios, something that our students can embody—can "feel," "smell," and really visualize?

Of course, we can ask students to write about experiences that allow them to exercise their senses, to perform and write about "hands-on" research outside the classroom in the way that Lee Ann Carroll describes in *Rehearsing New Roles* (2002) (xv). But, although these writing experiences might be valuable, they represent only one kind of literacy experience for students. I suggest that another way of engaging the student body in the writing classroom can build from treating the learning body as a social unit that talks, listens, communicates and interacts as it reads and writes in

different kinds of communities. Because the motives for digital writing are very often social ones, setting up digital spaces for student interaction—for students to embody writing—creates classroom situations that students can understand as more overtly socially situated and in which they can engage actively.

When thinking about student digital writing, it is easy to forget about motives and purposes. It has become a twenty-first century commonplace to assume that digital writing is bad: incorrect, informal, and wrong. And it is even more common to assume that students in the midst of learning advanced or especially academic literacy and language skills have the most to lose by practicing "bad" online literacies on their own time. It's also easy to imagine students' digital writing as divorced from real world consequences and removed from both social and material situations. When we didn't grow up practicing digital reading and writing on a daily basis, in our minds it's easy to think of students' digital writing as disembodied, purposeless babble floating around in that placeless space we call cyberspace.

What happens if we rethink students' digital literacy acts—when we imagine them from the perspective of the actual student bodies that produce them? When students write in digital domains, they use digital writing to communicate and interac not only with their friends but also as members of different social, political, workplace, and academic communities. To look at students' digital writing acts in the context of their motives and purpose for producing them is to see that their digital communication is most often social and interactive. Drawing on critical scholarship of Lave and Wenger and New Literacy Studies theorists, I will argue in this thesis project that one way of describing embodied writing is to identify it as writing that develops naturally out of

whole body interactions with the world—as writing and reading that individuals do as they establish relationships and join different kinds of communities. Following on this premise, I will offer students' digital writing experiences as embodied vernaculars, discourses learned out of desire and need, acquired as individuals participate in and watch others participate in digital communities.

To illustrate these ideas more concretely, I turn to digital student writing from a research project at the University of Tennessee called the Embodied Literacies project. As a co-principal investigator for this project, I worked with five other teacher-researchers, as well as five non-teaching researchers to study whether and how students' academic writing changed when they used oral and digital embodied activities as process assignments. In order to answer these questions, six teachers each taught one class according to conventional best practices for teaching first-year writing in our department and, at the same time, taught one experimental, embodied class, which featured deliberately planned oral and digital activities as process assignments leading to source-based essays.

Although the EL project provided a store of interesting material, my focus for this thesis project is on two types of student data. First, I consider student answers to survey questions that ask students to describe the kinds of digital writing they did during their high school years, as well as their attitudes toward different kinds of digital and non-digital writing. Although I take these survey answers from all students who became part of the Embodied Literacies project, for the second part of my data analysis I turn to the writing that students in experimental classes did in digital domains: in classroom blogs

and online chat forums. Turning to this student writing helps me show how students used the digital vernacular to negotiate their new roles as academic writers.

To invoke the digital vernacular in the terms in which I have described it thus far is to contend with assumptions on many levels about the nature of digital writing, the relationship of word-level digital stylistics to content and rhetorical purpose, and the potential for transfer between digital writing and other kinds of writing more traditionally associated with educational domains. As a result, my analysis is not only concerned with describing the stylistic features of digital writing that frighten mass media and bring out grammar rescue squads across the country. My approach to text analysis also includes looking at student writing on a word level and relating word-level choices that digital writers make to their larger rhetorical motives and purposes. Thus, the bulk of my data reporting recreates student examples to show the rhetoric students use when writing in classroom digital situations. In doing so, my study resituates the stylistic features so often judged negatively in student writing, paying particular attention to their social rhetorical situation and the purpose and their role in online identity formation. To help structure my rhetorical analysis, I draw on Burke's pentad, ultimately suggesting that students' own digital writing shows that the digital vernacular is a social vernacular and that students repeatedly show evidence of understanding digital writing as writing in social context.

Because students' rhetoric shows they understand digital writing as socially situated, I suggest that helping students learn to reflect on unschooled digital literacy experiences offers lessons for writing pedagogies in different situations. First, I think rhetoric and composition teachers can begin calling attention to the fact that students

make some of the same rhetorical moves naturally and effectively in digital writing that are often valued in academic writing: rhetorical strategies like building causal relationships, exploring hypothetical situations, building ethos by constructing credible personas, and tailoring arguments to the audiences to which they are directed. At the same time, students writing in digital academic domains are master codeswitchers, as evidenced by the constantly changing tone, style, and voices that writers assume as their writing motives and purposes shift in the digital academic rhetorical situation. I will suggest that helping students become more aware of their own socially-situated codeswitching practices can help them become, in turn, more self-reflexive, self conscious, deliberative rhetors: communicators poised to see and use all available means to persuade across the countless situations they face as readers and writers.

CHAPTER ONE:

STUDENT BODIES INTERACTING DIGITALLY

The "student body": a cliché worth unpacking, or at least worth scrutinizing when used casually to generalize about students as a collective. The words "student body" bring to my mind images of high school pep rallies with students excitedly but thoughtlessly chanting in one voice or assemblies in high-school auditoriums with one principal addressing a captive, disciplined audience. I associate the phrase "student body" with scenarios of students in massive, faceless, and nameless groups, with individual bodies lost in exchange for collective identity. Images like these reflect not only a displacement of individuality and identity but also a displacement of the body itself, the political consequences of which researchers and educators rarely consider when writing what Sharon Crowley calls "a phantasmic student body" into syllabi and research publications (178).

The irony that a commonly-used phrase built from the words "student" and "body" seems to ignore talk of individual students—and their bodies—extends beyond simple vernacular displacement. Recent critical work in rhetoric and composition has called on scholars to rethink the body as crucial to understanding how individuals read, write, and interact through language. To bring attention back to the inevitability that all writers and readers are embodied physically, Carolyn Marvin in "The Body of the Text: Literacy's Corporeal Constant" (1994) remarks that

> [p]opular and specialist notions of literacy alike conceive of the human body as physically and socially detached from literate practice. Though

> literacy cannot be taught or practiced without bodies, bodies have rarely been considered as a relevant dimension of literacy theory. (129)

Marvin's words not only announce how bodies have been ignored for literacy theories, but also point toward consequences for displacing students' bodies that extend beyond the panoptical imagery laid out in the opening sentences of this chapter. Allowing the student body to fade from literacy discussions can lead to literacy theories and pedagogical decisions ungrounded in the reality of students' day-to-day material experiences—their bodily realities in the lived world. Marvin would have literacy teachers and scholars rethink implications of the very physical realities shared by physical bodies creating language. As she says it, "In addition to putting pen on paper or finger to key, skin is pulled and scratched, nails, lips, and mustaches are bitten, noses, ears and faces are picked, fingernails are peeled, hair is plucked and twisted" (132). The raw, physical reality of language practice and its relationship to the bodies that create it must be addressed by literacy teachers and scholars creating theories of language and educating developing readers and writers.

At the same time, recent rhetoric and composition scholarship shows that questions of language and the body are connected closely to the stances or personas writers—even trained writers—assume when creating meaning in language and texts. In "Body Studies in Rhetoric and Composition" (2002), Sharon Crowley calls for reconsideration of how often rhetoric and composition scholarship leans heavily on "liberal-humanist models of the speaking subject," which she describes as "a sovereign, controlling disembodied and individual voice that deploys language in order to effect some predetermined change in an audience" (177). In Crowley's terms, rhetoric and

composition as a discipline clings to the idea that text, language, and "voice" can somehow be detached from material situation—and especially from the bodies that create it—to become itself an "autonomous" agent of persuasion[1]. To use the language often invoked by scholars investigating the relationship between body and language, Crowley would suggest that rhetoric and composition has often embraced the "mind" portion of the mind/body dualism, grounding scholarship and pedagogy on the assumption that creating text can somehow allow individuals to escape their own embodied realities through the work of the mind. Lester Faigley in *Fragments of Rationality* (1992) describes this historical concept as "[t]he modernist conception of the subject," which he associates with Descartes and describes as "the final reduction of the corporeal, ethical self of classic philosophy to the state of pure consciousness detached from the world" (8). The bulk of Crowley's chapter concerns itself with scrutinizing the scholarship of rhetoric and composition to determine how work from feminist and postmodern studies might change the way rhetoric and composition scholars treat the body and materiality when thinking about the writing situation. However, her argument has implications for pedagogy as well. If the scholarship of rhetoric and composition assumes itself to be disembodied and detached from the material conditions and the bodies that created it,

[1] See Geisler, Cheryl, *Academic Literacy and the Nature of Expertise: Reading, Writing, and Knowing in Academic Philosophy* (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994) for more discussion of the cultural ideal of the autonomous text, which Geisler describes as "a belief that a text can stand independent of its context of production or interpretation, that a text can mean the same thing to all readers in all ages" (4). According to Geisler, David Olson was first to use the term "autonomous text" to describe the way that print texts were supposed to function outside of any shared context, "unlike conversation, texts were expected to be understandable without independent knowledge of who was speaking, with what intention, and for what purpose" (5).

then is rhetoric and composition also advocating in its pedagogy an attitude that teaches students to negate and erase their own bodies from the texts that they produce?

In response to this problem, Crowley proposes that rhetoric and composition look to the "first deconstructive move" of scholars whose research has focused on body's relationship to language, a move which obviously redirects attention away from the "mind" portion of the mind/body dualism to refocus attention primarily on the body. This move is designed to correct the previous imbalance enacted by modernist conceptions of the subject. However, Crowley indicates that though this "move" may demonstrate the assumptions on which problematic attitudes toward text and writing have been grounded, still new ways to think about "mind" and "body" are needed. Crowley gestures to postmodernism as providing the means for "the second move" of deconstructing the modernist mind/body dualism "by displacing the body/mind dichotomy onto a continuum" (182).

Although the scholarship from interdisciplinary critical body studies and postmodernism Crowley identifies has been necessary to changing the way rhetoric and composition scholars may understand the so-called body/mind dualism, I want to suggest that, beyond deconstructing a separation between mind and body, it may be necessary to rethink totally what we mean when we use the words "mind" and "body," especially when thinking about the way that writers construct voices and identities through language. To illustrate this point, I want to dwell for a moment on the language that Crowley uses to define the body's relationship to rhetoric. Crowley describes the body as "both the site and the mechanism that allows a human being to represent him or herself in language and behavior" (182). Yet, what are the implications of talking about the body

as a "site" or a "mechanism." Is the body indeed a "site," a place, a location where knowledge is constructed? Is it a "mechanism" churning out meaning and language in assembly-line fashion? At the same time, is it fair to separate the idea of body from the idea of "human being" and to describe the body instrumentally, as a tool one might use to produce rhetorical effect? These are the types of questions that scholars attempting to understand and theorize the student body must undertake, and questions like these become increasingly complicated in the current cultural moment of digitization.

Bodies in the IM World: Complicating the Physical

Recent critical movement toward reassessing meaning-making and language learning as embodied is complicated by changes accompanying the cultural and social move toward virtuality and digitization. In what I call the IM world—the world of instant messages, dynamic fast-paced communication, and impromptu, on-the-spot virtual dialogue—new attitudes toward the body and new situations for interaction call for new solutions to the conventional problems of the mind/body dualism, while demanding new ways of discussing the relationship between the body and "new" literacies. Both digital enthusiasts and skeptical critics frequently have argued that online reading and writing environments, even more than paper-based writing spaces, threaten to erase the physical body from discourse because of the extent to which online readers and writers may construct their own virtual identities without ever acknowledging, or needing to acknowledge, physicality. For example, members of online role player games or frequenters of MOO's (multiple user domains, object oriented)[2] often use language to

[2] MOO's can be described most often as text-based virtual realities, which usually follow an architectural arrangement and are separated into "rooms." Although the two are

develop identities and bodies that are much different from those they use in the "real world." Individuals writing identities for themselves in these spaces report not only myriad examples of online "passing," such as writing themselves changes in sex and race, but also more imaginative and far-fetched masqueerading as animals and other fabulous characters.[3] The full title alone of Julian Dibbell's famous essay, "A Rape in Cyberspace: or How an Evil Clown, a Haitian Trickster Spirit, Two Wizards, and a Cast of Dozens Turned a Database into a Society," points to the collection of created virtual bodies present in one object-oriented multi-user domain and shows the ways in which online interaction can allow individuals to, in effect, change bodies when they enter virtual worlds.

Early proponents of the World Wide Web, in fact, pointed to the escape of body as one of the most positive aspects of new reading and writing technologies. Enthusiasts painted the Web as a utopic site for bodily escape, a frontier in which the bounds of gender, disability, race, and social class might be shed in favor of a meeting of the minds that eliminates conventional biases written on to physical bodies. John Perry Barlow, for example, in "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace" (1996) completely severs the virtual "mind" that he sees present in cyberspace interaction from the "body" of the physical, material world, constructing cyberspace as "the new home of the mind" and "a civilization of the Mind" (np). For Barlow, this escape from the body empowers

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similar, MOO's are different from MUD's, or multiple user domains, because participants in MOO's can program new objects or "rooms" into the online space they inhabit.

[3] See Dibbell, Julian "A Rape in Cyberspace" Village Voice (December 21, 1993) 36-42 and Nakamura, Lisa "Race In/For Cyberspace: Identity Tourism and Racial Passing on the Internet" Race in Cyberspace (Routledge, 2000) 15-27.

the subject in ways that can never happen outside of online space and even has potential for eliminating problems associated with physical social spaces. Addressing outsiders to new virtual spaces, Barlow explains, "Our identities have no bodies, so unlike you, we cannot obtain order by physical coercion" (np). Barlow argues that cyberspace simply "is not where bodies live": an assertion that forces a dualism much more significant than just that of mind/body—a dualism between online/virtual and real world life, knowledge, and meaning-making (np).

Other critics agree that online environments create a state of disembodiment, but argue that the disembodiment of cyberspace is negative because it presents a dangerous situation in which online words and actions have no "real-life" consequences. Beth Kolko in "We Are Not Just (Electronic) Words: Learning the Literacies of Culture, Body, and Politics" (1998) brings this discussion closer to the fields of rhetoric and composition studies:

> [C]ritics propose a disturbing theme: that the self in cyberspace is not just multiple but re-writable, somehow separate from the situated self behind the typist. While a certain fluidity of identity in text-based virtual realities is incontestable, the question remains as to how and whether the physical self can be completely masked by acts of linguistic passing. (65)

Viewing online textually-constructed spaces as disembodied and separate from the realities of the physical world, as Kolko describes, is especially interesting for rhetoric and composition classes concerned with showing the power inherent in words and the deep responsibility that comes with using them. If becoming an effective, responsible rhetor means understanding words and language as powerful and capable of changing

physical, material circumstances, then viewing virtual words as decontextualized and separate from material context is problematic for pedagogies that integrate online writing. Faigley, in particular, describes a classroom situation in which students interacting through pseudonyms in a synchronous online environment take control of the classroom environment, ignore teacher instructions and send out pointless "flaming" messages because of the lack of consequences they perceive with classroom conversation online in a real-time chat program (196-199).

Although this study is sensitive to the ways in which online spaces, often in utopian or dystopic fashion, have been thought of as disembodying, the remainder of this chapter is devoted to examining how rhetoric and composition scholars can think of online spaces as sites of potential embodiment: as locations that demand a more complex understanding of virtual bodies, textually-constructed identities, and online forms of expression. I will argue that these virtual, coded bodies, for students learning to read and write in the current digital context, represent very real, socially-situated ways of being in the world, rather than disembodied escapes from the real world, as they have often been touted. In this way, the raw physicality always involved with language production and construction still has a place in discussions of new media and digital writing; at the same time, a digitally expanded sense of what the body can mean allows that the primary scenes of reading and writing that take place in the IM world are clearly located within the realm of physical, relational, and socially-situated reality.

Toward Theories of Embodied Literacy

Marvin's call to reassess the physical, bodily realities of writers and Crowley's call toward reassessing writing subject positions in terms of dis/embodiment show that

new ways of defining the body and new ways of understanding its relationship to language production are needed for scholars in rhetoric and composition. At the same time, the dominating arguments about the disembodying nature of online spaces call out for new ways of talking about the body's relationship to online writing. If the body is indeed so closely concerned with questions of language practices, then our field needs new theories and pedagogical conceptions of "embodied literacies" to describe particular literacy practices that highlight the body's role in language constructions, especially in light of individuals' current dependence on reading and writing in digital environments.

In this study, I identify several ways in which we can think of students' reading and writing as embodied. The first comes when writers use their bodies physically in some way to perform or enact their writing. When writers orally take control of their writing, they "voice" their writing in a way that allows them to understand and perform the role that the writing situation demands, and they are able to insert their whole bodies into a writing performance. At the most literal level, for example, when students read their own writing aloud, they enact it at the level of their physical bodies, using their physical voice to intonate important phrases, using facial expression to signal irony or humor, and using gestures of the hands, shrugs of the shoulders, even stomps of the feet to mark important moments in their text. Anyone who has tutored writers one-on-one in a writing center or similar environment knows how helpful it is to have developing writers enact writing orally in this way. Having students read their writing aloud is such a successful tutoring technique because when students have the opportunity to voice and enact writing orally, they more easily can sense breakdowns in their writing texts: places that lack transition or require their readers to make a jump in logic. In the same way,

many FYC instructors regularly call on developing readers to use their bodies for the reading act by asking students to read texts aloud in class rather than silently to themselves. Much in the same way that reading their own writing aloud forces students to pay close attention to textual details, so too can reading others' work aloud or hearing others' work read aloud invites students to take control of the performance of written words.

In this way, even writers approaching writing situations seemingly most far from their own most natural voices and means of expression can embody text, even as newcomers to academia. When students learn to embody literate discourse physically by enacting it with their mouth, ears, and full bodies in this way, they enact literacy by making it do work grounded in their own lived realities. Despite the widespread avoidance of discussing the student body for literacy theory and pedagogy, instructors already regularly call upon the body and already ask developing readers and writers to embody written discourse in the classroom. Even in asking students to produce and comprehend the most academic kinds of texts, instructors often initiate activities that draw on the body. Part of my goal for this project is to draw attention to the ways in which students' performances of writing in digital environments can work in very similar ways to the oral embodied performances previously described. Even thinking of digital writing in the most instrumental way means acknowledging how physical bodies are part of that kind of writing performance—in their posture at the keyboard, while fingers hit the keys, as ears listen for the sounds of the software, and when eyes scan back and forth across the computer screen. However, in different ways, online writing environments also allow for very different kinds of writing performances that mimic some of the

embodied expressions of oral domains. For example, at the simplest level, online writers stomp their feet by writing in all capital letters; they signal humor or irony by inserting smiling or winking emoticons; and they signal pauses with ellipses. As such, the physical, sensory element of digital writing often shows itself in the actual texts that students create while writing in online mediums.

Digital Discourse: Relational, Socially-Situated, Embodied

The IM world, as a new primary site of student literacy practices, means that student are developing literacy skills in new places and in different ways. Current literacy learners are developing reading and writing skills when they use search engines to find information on the internet, stay in touch with friends via instant messaging programs, construct identities for themselves on online networking programs like Facebook or My Space, participate in online role player gaming communities, or even email teachers to find out more information about assignments in a typical (or online) classroom setting. To address the problem described earlier of how online communication can actually be "embodied" even in the absence of the physical body, I first suggest that modes of digital communication have in common with students' most overt methods of embodying literate discourse—oral communication. Because oral communication happens overtly in the presence of the physical body and because individuals communicating orally use their bodies openly in facial expressions, voice, and gesture, the body and orality share close ties. Of course, I do not mean to suggest reductively that all digital writing is simply "talk" or the digital reading has the same effects on student bodies as listening to oral speech does. Without a doubt, that line of thinking oversimplifies both means of expression. Rather, I gesture to similarities

between oral and digital expression to logically relate digital interaction—often considered disembodying—to the body.

The most obvious metaphor pointing to the relationship between orality and digital interaction is the word most often used to describe synchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC), which, of course, is "chat." Like oral communication and talk, digital writing can be inherently social and conversational. Most oral and digital practices exist because of relationships formed, created, and maintained in different kinds communities. Again, I do not state this premise without realizing the potential irony of the statement. Certainly I accept the extent to which the student who immediately upon leaving the university classroom avoids interacting with classmates because she picks up her cell phone and calls friends or parents with whom she is already comfortable. At the same time, I understand that individuals who have not grown up experiencing digital discourses may find them to be extremely alienating and isolating, and I do not ignore the teacher narratives that describe how students can become isolated and glued to the computer screen when learning in computerized classrooms. However, I believe that many high users and even many occasional users of digital technologies have come to rely on digital discourses precisely because they allow them to connect to social communities of various kinds, both communities that crossover overtly into the "real world" like school and social networking or "friend" communities, and those that exist solely online, like in role player game communities like *World of Warcraft* or *Knights Online*.

Thinking of current digital activities as community-based and socially-driven takes on new significance when viewed in light of the theories of learning outlined in

Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (1991). Lave and Wenger propose that we think of learning not as something that happens when an individual "internalizes knowledge" but instead as "the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice" (47, 29). The main premise of Lave and Wenger's argument for rethinking learning as socially situated, community based, and process-driven resides in the idea of learning through what they call "legitimate peripheral participation":

> By [legitimate peripheral participation] we mean to draw attention to the point that learners inevitably participate in communities of practicioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community. (29)

In Lave and Wenger's conception, new learners begin on the outside—the periphery—of any type of community and then through action and participation earn status as community members, while also learning the skills and behaviors needed to exist as a member of the community. When viewed in this light, the implications for how digital realms offer individuals chances to join communities for a variety of purposes—and even to maximize their ability to join communities by recharacterizing themselves and their bodies by changing voice and physical descriptions through language—become much more significant for investigating connections between the body, learning, and digital spaces.

Following Lave and Wenger's logic, students—or any individuals for that matter—learn when they practice community membership actively by becoming

immersed in its language and communicative practices. In this formulation, learning is intimately connected to identity because individuals learn by taking note of how communities interact and forge different types of relationships. Through practice, then, people become members of the communities they observe. Digital writing practices, I want to suggest, provide very real ways in which the current generation of college students is learning to forge different kinds of relationships as members of different types of communities. On a basic level, students use digital communication not only socially with their friends, but also formally, even professionally, to meet the needs of different social, political, workplace, and academic communities: to make appointments or ask questions of professors, to practice different kinds of political activism, to participate in activities associated with jobs, or to purchase different things valued in social groups. Even when the purpose of digital writing is not to effect a change or achieve a predetermined result, digital communication makes some connection or works to build identity in a community.

Words in digital writing become voiced through mediums that allow for and even assume overt communication with one's audience. If a student composes an email to ask a teacher for an extension on his term paper, he assumes a reply. In the same way, if an individual sends an IM message to a friend and does not hear the "ding" signifying an incoming response, then his message has been sent for nothing. No one sends an IM message or joins a chat conversation unless he or she has hope that a response will be shortly arriving to repay the effort taken to write. And even though they may usually document only one individual's writing, blogs very often work in this way as well, with comments from outside readers becoming a key motivation for writing. Social

networking software like My Space and Facebook work in the same way. Individuals who create a textual, graphic space and online persona for themselves do so in the hopes of being contacted by others who want to befriend them. Even more specifically, Facebook invites students to join different groups, thereby explicitly relating their digital writing to the joining of communities online. Although students almost certainly do not think of it this way, as Lave and Wenger put it, "[L]earning as increasing participation in communities of practice concerns the whole person acting in the world. Conceiving of learning in terms of participation focuses attention on ways in which it is an evolving, continuously renewed set of relations" (49-50). Self-sponsored digital writing is a manifestation of students' efforts to develop and maintain relationships in different kinds of communities.

I argue that we might describe this shared relational, interactive quality of both oral and digital discourse as "embodied." This word, of course, already carries assumptions with it, especially in light of recent critical work within rhetoric and composition studies. Scholars across the fields of rhetoric and writing instruction have begun to draw upon multiple senses of the word embodied in order to account for some sense of material writing subjects. Of course, to speak of activities like talk or digital composing as forms that allow embodiment might suggest that I view the body as existing primarily as textually bound itself, a common metaphor in postmodern discussions of body. However, rather than seeing the body as subject to confines of text, I want to attribute agency to bodies as producers of discourses that define relationships in communities. Thinking of digital discourse as embodying without arguing solely for postmodern definitions of the body as discursively constructed, of course, begs for new

ways of thinking of the body itself. As Crowley remarks, using energy to "challenge the distinctions we like to make between bodily insides and outsides as well as our habit of attaching our sense of identity to the presumed limits of the body" (183). Kolko, too, argues for reconceiving the very idea of body in our attempts to trace embodied pedagogy: "The body is not just a physical object but also a social machine: the self is not a biological or even an ontological creation; it is a social creation" (69).

By viewing learning as actively driven by social contexts and relationships, Lave and Wenger offer a new way to talk about the "body" and its relationship to language practices. Rather than viewing the body as a "site" or a "mechanism," if we define each body as a social unit, which exists in relationship with other bodies, we open the door to new ways of seeing digital interaction as embodied. Lave and Wenger take issue with any theory of learning that "establishes a sharp dichotomy between inside and outside, suggests that knowledge is largely cerebral," and they posit that their theory of relational, socially situated learning "dissolves dichotomies between cerebral and embodied activity, between contemplation and involvement" (Lave 52). Instead of thinking of digital reading and writing as "cerebral" activities that allow individuals to escape their bodies, then, we can examine the extent to which the relational quality of online interaction is very similar to the social quality of individuals' communicative experiences in the "real world,"—not an escape, but instead a very real portion of everyday bodily social interaction and involvement.

Following this line of thinking, reconceiving the body's relationship to language production as something that involves the whole body, or "comprehensive understanding involving the whole person" as Lave and Wenger describe it, moves us away from the

need to relate digital discourse to the body by describing its effect on only one of the five senses (33). Scholars as diverse as Jay David Bolter in *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print* (2000) and Gunther Kress in *Literacy in the New Media Age* (2003) have argued that the movement toward digitization is actually accompanied by a primary movement away from orality and aurality and toward visuality. In detailing how digital realms involve eyes more than ears, Kress claims that the image is displacing the word as the dominant mode of public communication and that, similarly, the screen is replacing the book as the dominant communicative medium. Like Kress, Bolter agrees that print writing relies heavily on the aural, while electronic writing depends more on the visual. I certainly do not deny the involvement of the visual, or what I might call spatial, orientation in new media and digital literacy practices; however, my conception of virtual bodies as active social units offers a new way to think about the body and new media. The visual and spatial elements that engage the eyes in new media do not have to eclipse the interactive, relational elements that relate digital communication to whole body interaction in the way that Lave and Wenger describe it. In short, the experience of digital reading and writing is not only embodied in multi-sensory ways, but also in socially-situated actively relational ways.

This project attempts to rethink and recharacterize conceptions of embodiment based on new recognition of the socially situated, multi-sensory experiences of readers and writers in online spaces. Digital reading and writing practices, even as they provide opportunities for textual experimentation, do not have to be characterized as disembodied in their relationship to the physical body. Physical, breathing, material bodies create virtual bodies, and virtual and physical bodies always exist in tandem: they cannot be

split or separated, and therefore they must be understood as socially-situated, relational entities that exist because of interaction in communities. In an intellectual sense, isolation through the virtual body is certainly possible; however, in social reality, virtual means interactive, even if the interaction must be defined in ways that are different from those we have worked from in the past.

CHAPTER TWO:

STUDENT-BORGS AND EMBODIED DIGITAL VERNACULARS

The cyberbody, the virtual body, the digitized body: these terms are nice to throw around when reading and writing cyberpunk fiction or while watching science fiction flicks, but how can they become concrete and important for the work rhetoric and composition scholars do? To pause on this question for a moment, I will recount briefly the experience of one instructor teaching in the Embodied Literacies research project. Each day before class began, one particular student entered this teacher's FYC classroom with iPod blaring—visual evidence provided by the notorious headphones placed securely in ears. After he walked into the classroom, he always surveyed the room, and proceeded to sit in the same desk, leaving headphones on and music still blaring as he removed from his backpack needed materials for the day's class. Upon sitting, he delayed removing his headphones, still listening to the mp3 player while the instructor prepared to begin class. Then, each day in ritualistic fashion, the student seated behind him ripped the headphones out of his ears at the last possible moment before class began, signaling to him the need to leave his virtual world and bring his attention back to the "real world" class about to begin.

I call attention to this story, first, because it provides an interesting example of how technology that seems most liable to isolate a student from his peers, proves a catalyst for social interaction between two students in a classroom setting. Even more importantly, though, I pause on this anecdote because the ripping of the headphones from the ears of the listening student is such a blatantly physical act, an act so connected to both digital spaces and the physical bodies of both students involved, an act that

foregrounds and confirms the physical nature of the digitized student body. Cyborgs and digital bodies are not just the stuff of William Gibson's *Neuromancer* or "Johnny Mnemonic" anymore; digitized bodies—student-borgs, to give them the cyberpunk flair that might get them noticed—enter college classrooms everyday, and increasingly more often.

Understanding the realities of incoming college students in terms of digital embodied literacies, then, means first identifying common or potentially important digital embodied literacy practices that students practice on a daily basis in school and outside of school and then trying to understand how embodied literacies already impact students' advanced literacy practices in the IM world. It is easy to fashion radical claims about how the body relates to the language practices of students in online realms and beyond; however, a serious theory of embodied literacy must consider students' own experiences from their own points of view. Any major claims about digital language use and the body must relate concretely to real students today, and I will attempt to show this relationship by analyzing and sharing the experiences of the Embodied Literacies students at the University of Tennessee, students whom I have affectionately called "student borgs."

Twenty years ago Donna Haraway (1985) first embodied what she called an "ironic dream," a "political myth," and a "blasphemy" in the figure of her border-crossing cyborg: an entity neither fully human nor fully robotic, whose body blurred lines between humanity and technology (149). Interesting to my discussion is the fact that Haraway from the beginning identified her cyborg with writing, explicitly positing "literacy" and "cyborg writing" as key manifestations of the cyborg's power. Exactly

what kind of "writing" Haraway imagined her cyborg composing has been heavily debated, especially within rhetoric and composition where cyborg writing has been associated most often with new forms of writing such as hypertext that materialize from new fragmented postmodern subjectivities.[4]

While cyborg theories provide a perspective from which to consider how even the bodies of current students are changed by their experiences with technologies and new media, relying on cyborg theories as they have been previously interpreted keeps students themselves at a distance. Thus, to shift Haraway's theoretical metaphor of technological embodiment to a more practical one, I posit that many of today's first-year college students already come to college as cyborgs in a sense. Whether or not they have actual, mechanically enhanced bodies (e.g., braces, contact lenses, hearing aids), incoming college students are constantly using, carrying, and wearing new technologies. As illustration of this point, think for a moment about how often composition instructors joke about the new technologies "grafted" onto the twenty-first-century student body: the incessantly ringing cell phone equipped with an extensive digital text messaging service and "click and send" digital camera, the laptop computer bringing what seems like limitless access to information and interactive communication options, and the mp3

[4] See Olson, Gary A., "Writing, Literacy, and Technology: Toward a Cyborg Writing," *Journal of Advanced Communication.* 16.1 (1996): 1-26. Olson conducts an interview with Haraway in which she expounds on the idea of cyborg writing, calling scholars to focus on the density and materiality of language and to resist discourses of mastery. See also Ratliff, Clancy. "I Cannot Read This Story Without Rewriting It": Haraway, Cyborg Writing, and Burkean Form." Master's Thesis, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 2001. Ratliff argues that writing and technology scholars have operated under an unnecessarily limited definition of cyborg writing, equating it only with hypertext and ignoring Haraway's implications for the always political content of cyborg writing.

player constantly blasting messages across sound waves. Students encode, transmit, and receive messages via new media facilitated by new digital technologies, which are very often carried or attached somewhere on the student body. In their use of and daily dependence upon digital technologies, student writers who enter composition classrooms in the twenty-first century are quite literally cyborg writers.

Part of what is interesting about pointing to incoming students as "student-borgs" is exposing a major flaw that has the potential to keep digital literacies and rhetorics from the study they deserve—these "borgs" can seem ridiculous to those of us who did not grow up exposed to the same technologies and the same reading and writing mechanisms. Older generations often come into contact with the ear-bud wearing, cell-phone carrying, laptop toting students: most definitely "connected," but for all intents and purposes, "disconnected" from the classroom or the physical reality most of us know. When this happens, the result is most often eye rolling and joking, accompanied, of course, by the occasional yanking of ear-buds. New media have the disadvantage of thoroughly perplexing those of us who did not grow up developing fluencies in using them. Thus, we can find it difficult to take them seriously because on some level they are ridiculous to us. As a result of this, we prevent ourselves from connecting the new media reading and writing that students do with the academic writing that they are expected to compose in FYC.

However, the truth in the IM world is that students are learning to read and write as a result of the interactive and relational communicative practices they experience through new media and relationships they form while interacting through them. Understanding language learning as socially-situated, relational, and embodied is at the

heart of my call to reconsider how digital reading and writing practices are important and can be formative to the types of reading and writing we expect students to produce in university settings. The current group of incoming college students represents a new literacy demographic—a digital demographic—that scholars and teachers in rhetoric and composition can no longer ignore.

Although simply gazing upon the current student body provides plenty of room for speculation, there is inherent danger in theorizing the student body without first considering current students' own attitudes toward reading and writing—and without concretely identifying what new literacy activities students actually practice within and as a result of their digitally enhanced experiences. As detailed in the opening chapter, the student body as collective is a dangerous myth, and this chapter will even more clearly show that every body develops its own literacy path into the FYC classroom. To effectively consider new reading and writing practices from current students' points of view, rhetoric and composition scholars must reconnect with literacy, especially New Literacy Studies (NLS). Foregrounding literacy opens the door for rhetoric and composition researchers to consider how multiple reading and writing practices brought to the forefront by new student-borgs should influence the first-year composition classroom.

Using Literacy to Understand Digital Vernaculars

Thus far, in advocating the digitized body as integral to students' language learning, I have employed terminology used by literacy theorists to describe students' constructive, interpretative, and communicative language practices. Literacy as a term, as a concept, and especially as a field of study has undergone swift and drastic change

within past decades, and scholars such as David Barton, Mary Hamilton, and Roz Ivanic (2000); John Paul Gee (1987); Harvey Graff (1995); Colin Lankshear and Michel Knobel (2003); Brian Street (1995); and The New London Group (1999) have been among those not only influencing, but also recording and documenting those changes. Their work has resulted in two significant trends in the definition and study of literacy. The first trend iis a movement away from viewing literacy as an isolated, functional skill set toward identifying multiple literacies—multiple ways that people use different kinds of languages and symbolic systems—socially embedded and associated with the different domains and discourses that individuals inhabit (New London Group, 1999). This movement toward multiplicity can be seen as correcting an older, singular view of literacy, which was especially detrimental in educational contexts. According to Brian Street in *Social Literacies*, viewing literacy as a single, isolated set of necessary cognitive skills has manifested itself in "educational contexts upon 'problems' of acquisition and how to 'remediate' learners with reading and writing difficulties" (1). In turn, literacy in the past was identified primarily with nontraditional educational remediation, not with advanced language acquisition—a fact that remains influential to the way relationships between literacy and pedagogy are currently received. In educational contexts, literacy understood under this framework was most often defined by its instrumentality—as important because of its necessity as a tool that opened the door to other types of learning, not because of any intrinsic importance or relationship to individuals' lived experience (Lankshear 4).

Although viewing literacies as multiple rather than singular still leaves room for cognitive approaches, the second trend in NLS can be described as the movement from a

view of literacy as a "'neutral,' technical skill" to "an ideological practice, implicated in power relations and embedded in specific cultural meanings and practices" (Street 1). By considering this socially and culturally implicated view of the way people use reading and writing, literacy researchers and instructors can consider both what literacy choices individuals make and which social factors determine and situate those choices, broadening definitions of what counts as reading, writing, and literacy.

Beyond trends toward multiplicity and social embeddedness, Lankshear and Knobel distinguish two senses in which the new literacies studies are, in fact, "new": a paradigmatic sense and an ontological sense. The previous paragraphs have described how new literacy studies represent a paradigm shift in the movement from studying literacy as singular and cognitive to multiple and socially embedded; however, in an ontological sense, NLS can be described as "new" because of "changes [that] have occurred in the character and substance of literacies associated with changes in technology, institutions, media, the economy, and the rapid movement toward global scale in manufacture, finance, communications" (Lankshear 16). For reasons related to both senses of "new," the theoretical framework initiated by NLS illuminates intersections among current students in the IM world, their reading and writing habits, and the current FYC classroom. The paradigmatic shift toward viewing student literacies as products of larger social and cultural practices or ideologies allows researchers to validate and examine the reading and writing activities that students bring into the classroom from home, work, high school, online, and social environments. At the same time, it points to ways in which reading and writing practices are directly connected to identity construction and the way the self is viewed in the world. And, most obviously,

the ontological sense of new literacies allows researchers to consider how changing technologies located so physically near individuals create and demand changing literacy practices. This opens the door to exploration of how the IM world and especially first-year writing classrooms within the IM world function as cultural sites of interaction for students' digitized bodies, which has the potential for influencing students' later rhetorical language practices.

It is worth dwelling for a moment on the terminology set forth by new literacy studies to describe how individuals use language in this paradigm. Barton and Hamilton, outlining a theory of social literacy, argue that "literacy is best understood as a set of practices; these are observable in events which are mediated by written texts" (9). Literacy scholars use the term "literacy practices" to distinguish the ways of using literacy that individuals develop to deal with the challenges posed by different environments from the non-situated skill set denoted by conceptions of literacy that assume all individuals should posses identical, inherent reading and writing skills (Barton 7). Practices, then, is a purposeful term that "straddle[s] the distinction between individual and social worlds" by linking "observable behavior" with underlying structures of power, ideologies, and cultural exigencies controlling language usage (Barton 7-8).

Likewise, the new literacies concept of "domains" highlights the idea that people practice different literacies within different contexts. According to Barton and Hamilton:

> [D]omains are structured, patterned contexts within which literacy is used and learned. Activities within these domains are not accidental or randomly varying; there are particular configurations of literacy practices

> and there are regular ways in which people act in many literacy events in particular contexts. (11)

Thinking of different domains of literacy allows scholars to make distinctions between those actions and behaviors of reading and writing practiced "in distinct discourse communities" composed of "groups of people held together by their characteristic ways of talking, acting, valuing, interpreting, and using written language" (Barton 11). Further critical work on discourse by John Paul Gee maintains that individuals always naturally acquire one primary discourse from the people or community with whom they grow up, and that all other groups of language users with whom they come into contact form "secondary discourses" distinct from their primary discourses. To follow, Gee argues that "literacy is control of secondary uses of language (i.e., uses of language in secondary discourses)" so that literacy always involves becoming proficient in understanding and reproducing conventions of a discourse that is not one's own (56). For example, in digital domains, language users learn conventions that enable them to communicate gesture or emotion in the absence of their physical bodies, conventions such as specific uses of capital letters, emoticons, or punctuation that would not make sense in other environments. These conventions would not be gained in the discourses of school interaction but instead come through digital experience as individuals interact within that discourse and learn which conventions are used by members of that community.

Examining students' struggles to gain proficiency within multiple discourse communities is, of course, by no means a new concept to scholars of rhetoric and composition. The idea that college language learning is at least in part a result of understanding the conventions of and becoming adept at working within academic

discourse communities is one that has received ample attention and debate within the fields of rhetoric and composition. [5] In particular, scholars in rhetoric and composition studies have given close consideration to the code-switching that students learn to do as they move from home to school and into academic discourse communities[6] This work has been crucial to social-constructivist composition theories directed toward the recognition of students' familial discourses brought in from home domains.

To describe the types of literacies that individuals develop as a result of learning experiences in various domains, Barton and Hamilton briefly propose a theory of vernacular literacy that I believe may be applied directly to the types of reading and writing that students now do in digital domains:

> Socially powerful institutions, such as education, tend to support dominant literacy practices. These dominant practices can be seen as part of whole discourse formations, institutionalized configurations of power and knowledge which are embodied in social relationships. Other vernacular literacies which exist in people's everyday lives are less visible and less supported. This means that literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others (Barton 12).

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[5] See Bartholomae, David, *"Inventing the University." When A Writer Can't Write*. Ed. Mike Rose. (New York: Guilford, 1985) 134-65. See also Bizzell, Patricia, *Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousnes (* Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1992).

[6] See Rose, Mike, "The Language of Exclusion: Writing Instruction at the University." *College English* 47.4 (1985): 341-59; Elbow, Peter. "Reflections on Academic Discourse: How It Relates to Freshmen and Colleagues." *College English* 53 (1991): 135-155; and Smitherman, Geneva. "CCCC's Role in the Struggle for Language Rights." *College Composition and Communication* 50.3 (1999): 349–76.

Barton and Hamilton use this idea of vernacular literacies to contrast literate fluencies gained through one's own experience from the particular literacies that schools value and then attempt to "teach" students. Although they spend little time further detailing a theory of vernacular literacy, Barton and Hamilton make it clear that these types of literacies individuals gain through self-sponsored activity are most definitely "learned" but not necessarily "taught."

Just as Barton and Hamilton argue that school literacies tend to be exclusive and to neglect vernacular literacies existing alongside, Harvey Graff in *Labyrinths of Literacy* (1995) outlines a series of hasty generalizations, unexamined assumptions, and untested beliefs that he calls the "legacies" and "myths" of literacy." Though Graff's myths and legacies extend to many facets of literacy, especially interesting for this study are the myths that Graff associates with the literacy practices associated with the domain of school or the academy. According to Graff, "School literacy, predominately textually based and biased, is often cut off from other modes of verbal communication which are evaluated as inferior regardless of their place in everyday life" (327). In the same way, Brian Street argues that a social view of literacy forces further investigation into why schools teach the type of literacies that they actually do teach. In the end Street argues that "[m]uch, then, of what goes with schooled literacy turns out to be the product of western assumptions about schooling, power, and knowledge rather than being necessarily intrinsic to literacy itself" (110).

Following the logic of Barton, Hamilton, Graff, and Street, I see students' online reading and writing practices as a "vernacular literacy," one that serves real communicative purposes in many of our students' everyday lives and embodied social

interaction, but that is often overshadowed by the more dominant literacies supported by powerful institutions. While it is true that many students' online writing practices hold value for them in their lives and especially socially, when they enter school domains, these vernaculars are often rejected, or more commonly, never acknowledged as real parts of their daily lives and their reading and writing realities. I believe that current rhetoric and composition scholars should draw on previous work on home languages and literacies along with a new conception of embodied vernacular literacy in order to direct renewed attention to the literacy practices students develop in digital domains. More critical study is needed to consider what literacy practices students use in digital domains and to determine whether or not and how these literacy practices transfer to or inhibit students' ability to gain proficiency in the literacies students use in academic settings, particularly those literacies that FYC teaches.

To make it more clear how students' digital writing in the IM world can be an embodied vernacular, I would like to pause for a moment to look at an exchange between Embodied Literacies Students writing online in a chat forum. In this four-person chat, the big topic of discussion is the play *The Laramie Project*, which these students had been reading to prepare to write a source-based essay. What's most interesting about this chat is the prior reading and writing knowledge—even behaviors—the students call upon. Specifically, students in this forum discuss the unique situation of *The Laramie Project* in which the actors and actresses in the play must perform as real, living, breathing citizens of Laramie. One student, Stuart, remarks about the weird possibility of playing oneself in a dramatic production, and the conversation progresses from that hypothetical into an

intense discussion of how people already “perform” public identities that match what they think is expected of them:

> Stuart: I think I would be freaked out to play myself in a play.O.o
>
> Lucas: definitely
>
> Amber: yeah
>
> Jasmine: If i had to be myself, I probably would not act the same
>
> Stuart: *lol*
>
> Lucas: i don't act myself over half the time already
>
> Jasmine: who ever really does
>
> Stuart: *nod*
>
> Amber: i don't
>
> Stuart: Most people try and act how they think they should act.
>
> Jasmine: yeah
>
> Lucas: it's sad
>
> Amber: yeah
>
> Jasmine: u would be suprised about what goes on behind closed doors
>
> Stuart: Yep. But you gotta love makin' fun of drooling Social Zombies.^^
>
> Jasmine: lol
>
> Amber: lol
>
> […]
>
> Stuart: Perhaps that's why love is so confusing a emotion. You
>
> Stuart: 're so used to playing the social mask that you don't know how to be yourself.

Amber: true

Jasmine: i agree

Jasmine: but once u get hurt, it makes it even harder to open up to someone else

Stuart: or you're afraid the other person only likes your mask and not the face beneath it.

Lucas: same reason why many gay people feel they have to play straight

Amber: i agree

Stuart: yep

Lucas: several of my friends came to college and came out

Jasmine: thats the "American" way to be

Jasmine: wife, husband, and kids

Jasmine: alot of mine did to

Stuart: What is[:] fat, lazy, and stupid?

Lucas: football on thanksgiving

Jasmine: lol

Lucas: hahahahhaa

Amber: lol

Almost every other line in this exchange is an embodied phrase, a performative word or set of words that enacts an embodied response that the writer makes behind the screen so to speak. When a student types “lol” on the screen, he or she makes a laugh happen in this conversation, whether or not the students’ physical body actually laughs. In the same way, Stuart’s “*nod*” embodies agreement—it enacts his embodied response to the

conversation. Students are certainly saying substantive things in this chat session: thinking through assumptions about what it means to be American, questioning why people might hide queer identities, and describing identity performances and how they can become tricky when individuals enter relationships. But, to be sure, the most striking thing about this conversation is that it takes place in a classroom setting. The way students are interacting in this exchange is not something they have learned from teachers in high school or college; they have pulled the strategies they use in this conversation from their past rhetorical knowledge of what it means to interact socially online—they use the digital vernacular to negotiate an academic writing task.

The class session in which this exchange took place was an online class session in which students could participate from any location they chose as long as they could access the Internet, whether from their personal computers in their dorm rooms, from a dorm computer lab, from their family's house, or from a library computer lab. Although these students regularly chatted together in a small group and regularly met face to face in class, when they met to talk in this chat forum they knew each other only by their screennames and never, at least to the teacher's knowledge, matched screennames to real world names or identities. I would suggest that the writing and the exchange between these students are far from disembodied, though. Their digital vernacular strategies infuse their writing with action and allow them to create virtual bodies and identities even when their real world faces, bodies, and names are hidden.

Student cyborgs like Stuart, Jasmine, Lucas, and Amber bring with them to FYC reading and writing experiences within online genres such as instant messaging, email, and online gaming and networking communities that have served useful purposes for

them in communicating and interacting with peers, colleagues, and fellow students. In turn, recognizing literacy practices that have developed in response to distinct rhetorical situations embedded within students' experiences in the IM world might offer lessons in teaching rhetorical concepts important to academic literacy, concepts like audience, voice, and persona that take new forms in the digital domains of the IM world but have related counterparts in different discourses, even those of the academy. Accepting that writing instruction is now situated in a technologically changing cultural moment demands that we better understand the digital vernaculars with which students enter composition classrooms. In the same way that scholars from years past have argued that social justice demands that we value students' home literacies and oral vernaculars, I now propose that digital literacies constitute a new kind of vernacular that demands more attention and more value as a formative literacy.

Student Cyborgs and Their Academic and Digital Literacies

Even if rhetoric and composition scholars determine that digital reading and writing should be taken seriously as a formative literacy, then it is still critical to understand whether or not students themselves think these literacies are important—and to determine just how many students actually practice digital reading and writing and how they practice digital reading and writing. In order to better understand one group of students' digital and academic literacy practices and their attitudes toward them, I now turn to examine survey responses from 197 students involved in the Embodied Literacies project. Although all students enrolled in the twelve classes associated with the Embodied Literacies Project completed this survey, 197 students consented to have their results reported, and this chapter will examine the responses of only those students. These

students, who nearly all came straight from high school to college, completed these surveys on their own time during the first and second weeks of the Fall 2005 semester of classes by accessing an online software and survey-housing site called Zoomerang.com.

How do these student-borgs, who had just left their high school worlds for the university, see themselves as readers and as writers? Generally, a higher percentage of these first-year students felt more confident with themselves as readers than with themselves as writers—likely a product of a limited and instrumental definition of what college reading actually entails. Specifically, 29.9 percent of students reported that they felt "high" or "very high" levels of confidence as writers, while 46.2 percent of students reported either "high" or "very high" levels of confidence as readers, with a full 15.7 percent of student reporting "very high" levels of confidence in reading.

Digging deeper into students' reading confidence levels, relationships between written and spoken text entered into survey results in very interesting ways. When asked to report how confident they were in understanding verbal arguments that they have read and listened to, students generally reported higher levels of understanding when listening to rather than reading verbal arguments. This manifested itself in 44.6 percent of students reporting "high" or "very high" levels of understanding of arguments they read, while 57.9 percent of students said they had "high" or "very high" levels of understanding when they listened to arguments. Although there is no easy way to answer why students believe they understand oral arguments better than written ones (all the while seeing themselves as better readers than writers), interesting options present themselves. At the same time, their responses point back to how students feel more fluent in those methods of reading and writing that involve the body and vernacular most overtly.

Again, not surprisingly, when it comes to technology, and to computers specifically, incoming college students at this large, land grant institution are generally well stocked. Over eighty-seven percent of responding students own "their own" computers, and 98 percent—all but three consenting students—come from families that own computers. Apparently these students are familiar with seeing computer technology in their high school learning environments; 98 percent reported that their high school "had computers that [they] used." Of course, the survey did not measure whether or not students had access to the latest versions of computer hardware and software through personal ownership, their parents, or their high schools, nor did it measure internet usage or methods of Internet connection. Although results might initially lead to the conclusion that digital "haves" far outweigh the "have nots" currently entering first-year composition classes at this institution, the truth is undoubtedly far more complex.

Although these findings present some general context about the students entering FYC classes at UT, student results and responses eventually lead me to four related conclusions concerning the schools, digital literacies, and student cyborgs represented in this study of student literacies. Though our eyes tell us that student-borgs obviously use and are influenced by new media technologies, survey results suggest that many students enter FYC classrooms with significantly limited definitions of reading, writing, and literacy. Ultimately, these students help dispel myths that "bad" or nonstandard online reading and writing is taking over the way that students perceive academic writing or even writing in general; in fact, these students reveal that FYC instructors would benefit by raising student awareness of their own self-sponsored online reading and writing practices in ways that make students more self-conscious users of their own online and

print discourses. At the same time, results point to shared digital vernacular reading and writing experiences that many incoming students share. The survey results lead me to believe that we need for pedagogies in the FYC classroom that recognize but do not totalize past student writing experiences, inviting students to build from their own unique past literacy practices. These pedagogies should aim to teach students to be self-reflexive and self-conscious about all reading and writing experiences, even those that that take place in online spaces.

Students do share self-sponsored online vernacular literacies broadly.

Although it is quite true that students' literacy practices vary widely, it is also true that certain online literacies demanding specific reading and writing skills outside of school are practiced by large percentages of the students who completed the survey. Not surprisingly, 91.9 percent used email for reasons other than school during their high school years. Notably, 85.8 percent of reporting students used instant messaging (IM), 66 percent report writing in chat rooms, and 50.8 percent of students practiced gaming outside of the classroom. At the same time, 21.8 percent of students did blog writing outside of school during the years leading up to their arrival at college. These genres, among others, help form the outsider digital literacies that students are likely not "taught" but acquire during their own experiences reading, writing, and interacting in online environments before they come to college[7]. These different digital mediums provide

[7] Our survey was written and approved before the explosion of social networking software like My Space and Facebook and, therefore, did not ask how many students read and write in those particular types of online spaces. I believe that right now social networking spaces may be the single most used medium for digital reading and writing on college campuses.

very different writing experiences for students, yet they are linked in that they are all socially situated ways that students have interacted before coming to college.

Students have widely varying experience with online writing genres.

Roughly one-fifth (21.3 percent) of students who entered this cross section of UT's incoming first-year class created web design or hypertext outside of school-motivated situations. At the same time, nearly two-thirds of students (66 percent) did not compose a web page or hypertext at all and presumably have no knowledge base for doing so. I use this statistic as an example to show that students entering today's college classroom, despite nearly all claiming to have access to computers, do not possess identical online writing experiences. Although this point may seem obvious, it is worth dwelling on the fact that in terms of experience with digital literacies, incoming college students represent a virtual collage of different ability and experience levels with technologies and new media and have very different experiences with reading and writing in digital spaces. Directly next to the student who became proficient in coding websites by learning it for school (15.2 percent) may very well sit a student who has absolutely no experience even in writing email (5.6 percent). Cynthia L. Selfe (1999) outlines the extent to which technology has become so caught up in the language of literacy that those who are "technologically illiterate" are now subject to the same stigmatization that once accompanied those who lacked the functional language literacies of the status quo. To speak of our students on the surface level as student cyborgs as a group must now allow us to miss how markedly different are their online literacy experiences.

The high schools that incoming student-cyborgs attended used few genres of digital and online reading and writing in class, but did expect computers to be used as tools in the writing process.

According to student feedback, computers are absolutely implicated in students' high school writing process. Responding to the prompt, "In high school when I had a writing assignment I used a computer to do the following," students showed not surprisingly that digital technologies were crucial to every aspect of their ability to complete school writing assignments. It is hardly surprising that 95.9 percent of students reported using computers for typing papers, but 92.4 percent reported using the computer "to look up information assigned by my teacher," a phrase which leaves room to be interpreted as completing online research assigned by the teacher or initiating self-sponsored online school research to elucidate material given by the teacher. A full 60.9 percent of students reported using the computer "to develop ideas for papers," which ties the computer to processes of invention in ways that our surveys of necessity left unexplored, and 78.2 percent reported using a computer "for revising papers." Of all 197 students, not one single student chose "not at all" from the list of ways they used computers for high school writing assignments. As a tool not only in the sense of production but also as epistemic guide, these students' writing was influenced at nearly every stage of their composing process by computer and digital technologies.

However, when the online genres that students use in school are viewed alongside the online genres that students use outside of school, interesting trends become apparent. In school or for school assignments, students did not report using a large number of online reading and writing genres. Email, not surprisingly, was the genre used most

consistently across in-school and out-of-school lines, yet a large gap still remained between school and out-of-school uses of the medium. About 46 percent of students used email for school, while 91.9 percent used email outside of school. An especially large gap between for school and out-of-school uses existed with genres associated with synchronous discussion and interaction. Chat writing was a genre that 66 percent of students said they used outside of school, while only 7.6 percent used it for school. The numbers for instant messaging are even more striking; 85.8 percent of students practiced instant messaging reading and writing outside of school, while only 5.6 percent used IM for school purposes. Gaming, which our survey did not define specifically as either online computer gaming or console gaming, was used by only 4.1 percent of students for school, while 50.8 percent took part in gaming activities outside of school.

The one online medium that students did find themselves using extensively inside school and much less frequently on their own time was Microsoft PowerPoint slide shows. Eighty-one percent of students reported using PowerPoint for school, while 21.8 percent of students used the medium on their own time. Of those online genres listed on the survey, PowerPoint thus becomes by far the most highly reported in-school digital literacy practice, most likely used as a tool to aid public speaking. Students' data seems to support what Stuart Selber in *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age* (2004) describes as the "instrumental view of technology so often pervading English departments" (11). Viewing technology as a tool according to Selber often leads in educational settings to an attitude that ignores how technology and writing affect learning, but "celebrates technology, but only insofar as it can support the more traditional goals of textual studies" (11).

This data confirms the idea that many or most of the digital reading and writing experiences that students bring with them to the FYC classroom come not from their experiences in school or in the classroom, but instead from their own self-sponsored interactions and for purposes meaningful to them for reasons other than school education. I do not dwell on this in order to judge whether or not high schools should be teaching online reading and writing or to suggest that they should introduce students to the digital domain. Rather, I introduce these statistics in order to reinforce the idea that digital reading and writing most often can be classified as a vernacular literacy because students develop the skills associated with digital reading and writing in their own time for their own purposes, whether or not schools teach them to use these genres.[8]

Students hold traditional ideas about what makes "good" writing.

One of the surveys' most fascinating student responses came in response to the question that asked students to pick the genre of writing they "do [their] best writing in." Not surprisingly, since the survey was administered as part of a classroom curriculum, a comparatively large group of students chose school genres as the genres in which they did their best writing. The largest percentage of students choosing any one genre chose "research paper (with information/sources you had to find)," which gathered 16.2 percent of student votes. Close behind was summary, which 11.7 percent of students chose as the genre or mode that provoked their best writing.

[8] Survey results did show that many students who created websites or learned coding did gain that skill through school classes or for school purposes. According to survey results, 17.8 percent of students wrote for a web text or hypertext in school, 21.3 percent wrote web or hypertext outside of school, while only 66 percent did not do this at all.

As shown in Appendix A, students also chose creative writing genres frequently, with general creative writing the genre third most commonly chosen, and poetry the fourth most chosen. Perhaps surprising to those who gaze often upon the student cyborg, online writing received far fewer votes from students; email was the most popular online choice with still only 3.6 percent of votes, and other online genres received even fewer responses. The implications of students' answers to this question are very interesting because they help to illuminate what current students understand as "good" or "best" when considering their own literacy practices. Though many students when given space to provide an ending to the sentence, "Good writing is writing that…" provided an answer relating to self-expression, honesty, or audience appeal, when asked to choose the genre in which they write the best, many students were quick to choose standard and formal academic genres, those genres for whom teachers are most often the only overt audience. Student responses to this question suggest how powerful school and dominant literacy practices and attitudes are, even to cyborg writers. Students' widespread avoidance of online genres as their "best" does seem to suggest that students do see differences between online and academic writing, perhaps alleviating some widespread fears about the horrible stylistic repercussions that online writing might transfer to students' academic writing or more formal discourses. What begins to become clear through student data is this: like many of their teachers, student-borgs generally see more formal writing as better writing.

What is FYC to do?: Toward a Foundational Pedagogy of Embodied Literacies

When asked to identify how important reading and writing are to various facets of life, students revealed that they believed the ability to read and write effectively to be

most important for school, less important for work environments, and much less important for personal life. Nearly seventy-two percent of students reported that writing for school was "very important" and no student reported that writing for school was "not important at all" or "not very important." On the other hand, the same question applied to "personal life" resulted in only 32.5 percent of students choosing "very important," while several students—fifteen in all—described writing as either "not important at all" or "not very important" to their personal lives. Student answers to this question make me wonder whether students even realize the amount of writing that they do in their personal life and the purpose it often serves in fostering social relationships and allowing them to get information.

Just as when students most often defined good writing as school writing, these statistics suggest that students associate writing most concretely with the things that happen at school, and that, in turn, the literacy practices students perceive as most important are the ones valued in school. This also suggests that students identify writing most concretely as a means to an end, important when it involves a grade report or a paycheck, but not as concretely so when used only to communicate a needed message or respond to an exigency within a rhetorical situation. If indeed literacy learning and writing are developing because of participation in non-school communities and digital interactions outside of school, then it appears that students may not even consider writing as important to these activities, or they have not yet begun to be self-reflexive in those practices.

Although it is not necessarily surprising that students did not pick online or creative genres as examples of their best writing for our survey, students' survey answers

suggest a gap between the writing they actually do in a range of genres, discourses, and for a variety of purposes and what is evaluated and valued at school. In addition, students do not seem to value personal writing as important, which leads me to believe that students may need to be taught to value home, primary, and digital literacy practices and to see the rhetorical complexity, skill, and purpose involved in them. Students taking the survey were much more conscious of writing as writing and reading as reading when they happened as part of literacy events associated with the school domain, although these were not the literacies that students reported practicing most frequently on their own time within out-of-school contexts and situations. Students' outlooks on literacy are very much connected to the reading and writing practices that school says are important, and students, because they are so influenced by school discourses, do not treat digital literacies self-reflexively or overtly understand them as situated rhetorically. Instead of understanding and recognizing the ways in which they already intuitively know how to meet the demands of rhetorical situations in digital domains, it appears that students devalue online writing in favor of definitions of reading, writing, and literacy as what takes place in school domains. In short, student cyborgs are as much a product of dominant and "school" views of literacy as they are subject to unique online reading and writing opportunities. Teaching students to be rhetorically self-conscious users of multiple discourses means taking this as a starting point.

CHAPTER THREE:

DIGITAL VERNACULARS IN AN ACADEMIC DOMAIN

Scholarship breaking the ground of social networking communities like Facebook, case study ethnographies detailing individuals' digital literacy practices, and new critical studies of online gaming communities and their related message boards are some of the newest, most exciting critical work that current computers and writing researchers have to offer those with a stake in better understanding digital vernacular literacy practices.[9] While I certainly take great interest in the methods gaining new ground in understanding where, why, and how students' digital literacies are forming in the IM world, I also sense the need for more scholarship addressing relationships between digital vernaculars and classroom spaces. If rhetoric and composition teacher-scholars are to understand implications of digital vernacular literacies for teaching writing across literacy domains and discourses, then we need more sustained analyses of student digital writing from classroom situations, analyses that document what happens when digital and academic literacies meet and overlap.

With this exigency grounding my research, I turned to look more closely at digital writing produced by students in six first-year writing classes taught as part of the

[9] See boyd, danah. "Friendster and Publicly Articulated Social Networks." Conference on Human Factors and Computing Systems. Vienna: ACM, April 24-29, 2004. boyd uses what she calls "ethnographic fieldwork" to trace the social context of the Friendster social networking software and individuals self-sponsored participation in it. In addition, Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher have done digital literacy ethnography case studies for the past several years including those details in their *Literate Lives in the Information Age: Narratives of Literacy from the United States.* Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004.

Embodied Literacies research project at the University of Tennessee.[10] Specifically, my project analyzed writing students produced in classroom weblogs and chat forums in order to answer the following research questions: 1) How do students call on digital vernacular literacies in their online writing?; 2) What are potential relationships between the vernacular writing students produce in digital domains and the academic, sourced-based writing they are asked to produce in college?; and 3) How might an FYC pedagogy grounded in rhetoric best utilize the digital vernacular to help students improve writing across different writing domains and in different situations? In this chapter, I sketch the methods and purpose for my rhetorical analysis of digital student writing by describing the student and teacher participants in my research, briefly overviewing the course content that students studied while enrolled in EL courses, explaining how I collected data, and then detailing my methods of text analysis, which began by identifying syntactical markers of rhetorical moves in student texts. Both the process of looking at the statistical comparisons of blog writing to source-based essays and the process of closely examining digital writing through focused word searches and text analysis gave me the opportunity to begin to understand how students in this group of writers called on the rhetorical knowledge they already had about writing in digital realms—their vernacular literacy skills, I would say—to make arguments in their classroom digital writing.

As I have begun to explain, the digital student writing I now turn toward is a product of the classroom rhetorical situation. And the students whose writing I

[10] The University of Tennessee is a state-supported, land grant institution with a total enrollment of over 25,000.

encountered in the EL classroom blogs and chat forums, of course, were well aware of this fact. For example, one student, Abby, demonstrated how connected the digital writing of the EL class blogs was to the classroom situation when she said almost mid-thought in her blog, "Class is over, so I am abruptly ending this." As this posting shows, the online writing I turn to analyze comes from students' negotiations of what to them is a new academic situation, and their writing, even in digital domains like blogs and chat forums, must be examined as a product of their participation on that new community periphery. When Abby proclaims the timely end to her journal entry, she really proclaims her role—and gives herself a certain kind of identity—in the classroom community by showing her teacher and classmates that she is not the kind of student to write more than she needs for a school-sponsored writing task. Although her teacher probably wished that Abby and fellow students would jump at the chance to write whenever they had the opportunity, the truth is that Abby knew the rules of the classroom writing situation, and she played by them, ending her blog posting when class ended. The classroom situation, without a doubt, is still a rhetorical situation for students, still a socially-situated site that invites students to define their own identities in language. As this example already hints, my analysis will show students using digital writing within classroom communities in ways that teachers focusing on academic literacies do not always notice nor take the time to consider.

Because my study is situated at the intersection of digital and academic literacies and discourse communities, it is necessary to address some of the potential assumptions and possible oppositions that ground the way relationships are conceived between "digital" and "academic" writing, especially when initiating a discussion about digital

vernaculars. When digital and academic domains cross and overlap with one another in classroom spaces, several oppositional binaries are operative. First, speaking of relationships between digital and academic literacies requires that we revisit the forced dualism often placed between that which is "academic" and that which is "digital." In a way that I have come to see as unnecessary and potentially harmful, there is a pervading assumption in academia that digital reading and writing cannot really be academic; at least not unless the digital medium in question is most clearly remediated[11] from print, like an online journal containing linear, academic essays. Although this may be slowly changing as digital activists push for recognition of digital writing for academic tenure reviews, teachers, departments, and institutions continue to assume a separation between the academic and the digital, even as we publish in online journals, read and write academic blogs, and conduct our most serious business over email.

In the same way, one need not read farther than Geneva Smitherman's scholarship (1977) to see discussion of the established precedent for assuming that alternative discourses characterized as "vernacular" very often find themselves placed in opposition to academic discourses. Although there is obviously great difference in discussing black vernacular English (BVE) and digital vernacular literacy, a similarity lies in the fact that alternative, unschooled discourses are often seen as something that must be "overcome" in order for those who grew up using them to learn academic literacy practices. And those of us teaching academic literacies have a long and troubled history of struggling to understand how to help students mediate between acquired home and learned school

[11] Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin use the term *remediation* to describe the processes by which new mediums transform older mediums.

discourses. Most of the traditional students who now, in 2006, enter first-year college classrooms were born between the years of 1985 and 1989; they have had access to Internet in schools and, for many of them, at home since the mid-nineties when many of these students were barely ten years old. Many of these student-borgs grew up choosing the computer over the phone for talking to friends online; since they first started to research, they were finding out things they needed to know through search engines; and they chose the computer for entertainment, playing online games in school and at home. Since they were very young, incoming college students have relied on digital discourses.

Both discussions of separating that which is digital from that which is academic and that which is vernacular from that which is academic become even more complicated when we consider how "digital academic" discourse develops. In other words, if vernacular literacies develop as individuals learn reading and writing practices associated with interacting in various kinds of communities, then we can assume that those individuals interacting within digital academic communities are developing a discourse of digital academic literacy. Students that produce digital writing in classroom rhetorical situations are, through the process of their digital reading and writing, gaining entry into academic discourse communities. They are writing as new participants on the periphery of academia.

Analyzing Digital Vernaculars With Help from Embodied Literacies Students

The student writing produced in the Embodied Literacies project can serve as a case study for seeing digital and academic literacies of various kinds play out in student writing, and, at the same time, the project also illustrates some of the assumptions and most complex binaries that come when trying to understand digital vernaculars as

important and formative for academic literacies. The larger purpose of the Embodied Literacies study, in which I participated as co-principal investigator, was to learn whether and how students' advanced, academic literacy practices changed or improved when they had the opportunity to rehearse or perform—to embody, as we called it—academic discourse through oral and digital mediums prior to approaching academic writing tasks.[12] To find answers to this question, researchers designed a study in which six writing teachers each taught two different kinds of writing classes. One set of six classes followed a syllabus that replicated the most common or standard best practices for teaching FYC in our department, and another set of six classes followed an experimental syllabus that made orality and digital writing a deliberately planned part of the academic writing process. For purposes of studying the digital vernacular in student writing, I followed digital writing produced by students from the experimental, embodied course sections who consented to be part of the EL study—those students who wrote online in blogs and online chat forums during their academic-literacy learning process.

The Embodied Literacies study demonstrates that we must understand students' advanced literacy learning as complex and non-linear. Initially, while students were producing digital writing in blogs and online chat forums for Embodied Literacies classes, teachers and researchers viewed that digital writing primarily as process work

[12] The study was particularly concerned with assessing how incorporating oral and digital embodiment might help students become rhetorically savvy at building source-based academic arguments that detailed the experiences of others. Taking cues from early childhood literacy studies explaining children's need to involve the whole body in language learning, by orally using or signing language before writing it, the study sought to determine whether similar activities might stimulate new ways of learning in FYC contexts. Members of the full group study presented initial findings at the 2006 Chicago CCCC convention and are drafting an article outlining findings of the full study.

designed as a stepping-stone to academic writing in more formal genres like the source-based academic essay. The theoretical grounding of the EL project removed digital writing from academic writing by conceptualizing blog writing and chat discussion only as places of academic discourse rehearsal, as sites in which students would start thinking about academic ideas and begin using academic language that they would later "clean up" and present more formally and with more rhetorical skill in more traditionally academic realms. Although teacher-researchers may have taken this attitude while conceptualizing the project, however, the process of closely analyzing student writing across traditionally digital and traditionally academic domains showed researchers that something much more complicated happens as students use their knowledge of the digital vernacular within classroom situations. Students sometimes coupled arguments that would be at home in academic settings with digital vernacular stylistic features, and they carefully negotiated their online social context, while constantly using their writing interactively to build an identity for themselves and to share and receive information from their classmates.

Embodied Literacies Teacher-Researchers

Other researchers in the EL project are important to my study because they taught and helped frame the embodied courses from which I took the student writing I analyzed to identify the digital vernacular. The group of six teachers who incorporated blog and chat writing into their classrooms was very diverse. It included two experienced writing teachers: co-principal investigator, Dr. Jenn Fishman, who is a current Assistant Professor at UT, and one Ph.D candidate, Bill Doyle, who had extensive teaching experience both within UT's FYC program and in other college settings. While these

two teacher-researchers brought extensive teaching experience to their classrooms, four of the six EL instructors were first-time college instructors (myself included).[13] While the instructors had varying levels of teaching experience, they also had very different levels of self-sponsored technology use and different levels of interest in digital pedagogies. For example, two teachers were planning Master's thesis projects involving digital pedagogies (again, myself included); however, there were also teachers in the research group who would not normally include technological teaching methods in their classroom and who admitted feeling less comfortable with incorporating digital reading and writing into their instructional methods.

In order to prepare all teachers to use blogs and chat forums and to keep goals and approaches normed, the community of six teachers, along with the project coordinator (who organized and maintained all student data and confidential material during the course of the project), met weekly to discuss assignment sequences, to anticipate and discuss previous challenges in the classroom, and to reflect on the week's teaching and research experiences.[14] The teaching-researching group had planned at the beginning of the study to complete detailed written instructor logs that might later be analyzed for teacher observations from each class during the semester, but, with two-

[13] All four of these teachers, Miya Abbott, Devon Asdell, Amanda Watkins, and I, had completed UT's teacher training program in the previous semester, which in addition to extensive mentoring and writing center tutoring, meant taking the Teaching First-Year Composition course with Dr. Fishman, and many of the project's new teachers were drawn to the project while taking this course. In addition, two more Graduate Teaching Assistants who were mentored by the experienced teachers in our project joined the study and helped perform all teaching tasks associated with the project

[14] Participants in the project focus on the experience of teaching and conducting research within this community during a presentation entitled "Embodying Literacy in FYC" at the 2006 CCCC convention in Chicago and are expanding their discussion in an article currently in the drafting process.

hour-long weekly meetings a priority, teachers soon found that instructor logs were replaced by the oral dialogue conducted at those meetings, which served at once as debriefing sessions for the previous week of class and planning sessions for the upcoming teaching and research work to be performed.

Non-teaching participants from across UT's campus performed a number of roles that helped teachers bring digital writing into the classroom and eventually helped give me access to the student surveys and digital writing that I analyze in this project. Within the English Department, department chair, Dr. John Zomchick, and First-Year Writing Director, Dr. Mary Jo Reiff, helped researchers access funds needed to provide support for data analysis, and Kim Gottschall, Dinah Brock, and Judith Welch provided countless kinds of support that allowed us to conduct this study. In addition, the EL project received help from several project participants outside the English Department. Chris Hodge, a Sunsite representative at UT, built blog sites, provided server space for our students' blogs, and even attended EL group research meetings and class meetings to facilitate the process of implementing blogs into the classrooms. And, finally, an internal Faculty First Grant awarded to Dr. Fishman enabled Alec Riedl and Kathy Bennett from UT's Innovative Technology Center to provide both technical support and hands-on support developing online surveys, helping project members contemplate hardware choices, and providing other assistance with technology throughout the semester.

Embodied Literacies Students

The students whose digital writing I analyze are students who enrolled in six specially designed and pre-selected first-year writing classes taught by the six teacher-researchers I have described. These students come from a class of students at UT that has

gained distinction for several reasons. Presumably because the HOPE scholarship led more students from Tennessee to stay in state who might have gone out of state to colleges in years before, students whose work I analyze come from the incoming college class at UT that had higher test scores and grade point averages than any class in the University of Tennessee's history—the average ACT score was 25.6 and GPA was a 3.54 (UT Enrolls). Even twenty-nine percent of the Fall 2005 incoming class graduated high school with a 4.0 grade point average. In addition, minority students made up 16 percent of the incoming freshman class at UT, which was a higher percentage than any year in the past, and UT enrolled 26 percent more Hispanic and 16 percent more Asian students in Fall 2005 than in Fall 2004 (UT Enrolls np).[15]

Methods for Obtaining Student Participants

The students whose writing I analyze were students who self-enrolled in one of the six pre-selected experimental Embodied Literacies classes. During the first week these classes met, each EL instructor explained that the course was a part of a research project and outlined details of data collection, storage, and analysis to their classes. After explaining that consenting to the study was voluntary and that participants would have no extra work above what the course normally required, instructors gave each student two

[15] The specific students who chose to join Embodied Literacies were almost perfectly divided between males and females, and a quick scan of student birthdates of tells us that they were a very traditional group of students in age, with nearly every student coming straight out of high school. In fact, only three students participating in the study had birthdays before 1986. Students who chose to participate in the research had majors that ran the gamut from Interior Design to Aerospace Engineering to Accounting to Nursing. And their long-term goals ranged from "working at a tropical resort" to law, med, vet, and culinary school to working at an "automotive speed shop." Of course, many consenting students were undecided about their majors and long-term career goals.

institutionally-approved Informed Consent documents,[16] one which asked for their consent to become members of the study and another one that asked for permission to archive their data for future research purposes.[17] After students decided whether or not to consent to the study and text archive, researchers placed a high premium on maintaining students' confidentiality and following the institutionally-approved protocol for avoiding student risk.[18]

Initially, 232 total students consented and became student study participants, and slightly less than half, 106, of these students were original members of the embodied classes, which, because of the digital writing they did, are the focus of my project. The number of students who completed the courses and whose writing I had access to for analysis is significantly lower than this, however, because several participating students withdrew from the course during the semester. Although I compiled survey results from all students who originally enrolled in the courses, I only analyzed digital writing from

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[16] See Appendix B for an example of both Informed Consent Statements used, the EL Project Consent Form and the EL Text Archive Consent Form.

[17] Students read documents these two consent documents in class, chose whether or not to participate in the study, and then place consent documents in labeled envelopes—signed if they chose to participate and unsigned if they chose not to participate. Instructors repeated this routine in subsequent class sessions in order to give students adequate time to consider whether or not to consent to the study.

[18] While classes were being taught, only the EL project coordinator knew which students had consented and joined the study. During this time, the EL project coordinator assigned codenames to consenting students and maintained a database that held matching names and codes. After final grades were complete, co-principal investigators gained access to the list of consenting students and protected student confidentiality by removing student names from all documents associated with them and replacing them with codenames. Original e-copies and, in some cases, hard copies of student work retaining original names and other identifiers were kept accessible only to the project coordinator and co-principal investigators, which enabled them to verify codenames and to track individuals in different course sections when necessary.

students who completed the entire semester in the classroom because I felt it was important to have the ability to trace the movement of student writing over the entire semester. In addition, the initial number of consenting students dropped because some students had not filled out Informed Consent Statements completely and had left out a required signature or their initials. In the end, there were 201 total students who completed the semester and consented to have their writing analyzed. Ninety-three of these students form the experimental classrooms, who are my focus in this study.

Courses, Sections, Readings, Syllabi: Teaching Embodied Literacies Classes

When the study began, the University of Tennessee's first-year writing program was in the midst of changing and norming curricular goals, and the embodied classes whose writing I analyzed worked under the new curricular revisions, which stressed the goals of 1) reading rhetorically, 2) rhetorical and contextual analysis, 3) taking a stand, and 4) producing arguments using multiple sources.[19] The teachers for the courses I analyzed chose to teach students these rhetorical goals while they read and rhetorically analyzed unique texts that asked students to interact with texts that would purposely ask them to consider—and step into the shoes of—the situations of other people with backgrounds and experiences likely very different from their own. Researchers felt that a syllabus that asked students to read and identify with the stories of individuals with such diverse backgrounds would give students opportunities to use online mediums for a number of different kinds of rhetorical tasks.

[19] See Appendix C for a sample syllabus associated with the experimental section of our course.

Teacher-researchers divided courses into three units. My project focuses on the second and third units of our course, during which students wrote in classroom digital domains.[20] For the process leading up to the terminal assignment in Unit Two, the embodied student sections maintained course blogs created through the open-source Content Management Software, Drupal. Although researchers debated about whether or not to mimic public blogging in a more private medium like Blackboard, our university-provided course-management software, in the end we decided that the public aspect of writing on a blog available to the reading public through the Internet was an important part of giving students writing spaces in the digital domain. Researchers also made the decision to have blogs be "community" based, rather than individual. In the community blog setup that teacher-researchers chose to use, each post was displayed on a community frontpage, but, at the same time, all students' writing was collected simultaneously and could be viewed on their individual blog page. In essence, the blog was organized as a collaborative, community space, even as it could be viewed as a collection of individual blogs sites.

Beginning in unit two, Embodied Literacies teachers used the blog in the classroom primarily to give students a space to discuss, debate, and research issues

[20] During the first unit of our courses, when students worked through issues raised by Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, orality figured strongly into our embodied sections' process assignments. Our embodied course sections performed their writing ideas orally in small group presentations, long before their drafting process began. Although these oral performances were the featured embodied activity of this unit, smaller daily class activities incorporated orality as well. For example, instructors often asked embodied sections to read works aloud in class during rhetorical reading instruction, and peer review for the embodied class centered on discussion between students prompted by teacher questions.

related to *Persepolis*, the story of Marjane Satrapi's childhood growing up in revolutionary Iran, as they worked toward producing a formal, academic essay. Although exact prompts for the blogs varied from classroom to classroom, instructors created "categories" to guide blog postings. These categories included "journaling," which was broadly conceived as a place where student would respond to teacher prompts and write longer academic postings; "inquiries" were spaces for questions and answers of any variety; "freewrite" was left open for self-sponsored student writing on any topic; and "after class" was a space that encouraged students to continue face-to-face discussion from the day's class online on the blog.

The decision to use teacher prompts to help students focus their digital writing was a deliberate one. This decision was motivated in part by studies like the one Robert P. Yagelski and Jeffrey T. Grabill outlined in "Computer-Mediated Communication in the Undergraduate Writing Classroom: A Study of the Relationship of Online Discourse and Classroom Discourse in Two Writing Classes" (1998), which suggested that classroom context and teacher framing is one of the most important factors in determining whether or not students see digital classroom writing as relevant and important. Interestingly, one of the most common complaints with computer-mediated communication that Yagelski and Grabill identified in student surveys was that students did not "know what to talk about," or saw their online writing as divorced from context and social situation (22).

Instructors gave prompts for blog writing to encourage students to grapple with issues raised by the complex text in an interactive forum, to jump-start students' Internet research, and to facilitate the posing and answering of text related questions. For

example, most instructors gave a prompt that asked students to ask a question that would help them understand something that puzzled them in *Persepolis*; almost all students did some kind of online research work to help them understand the historically-situated rhetorical context of the work and then reported it in a blog posting; and almost every student analyzed a specific image or set of images from the blog. In addition, more specific blog prompts included things like "Write about anything to do with *Persepolis* that you would like," or "What's going on in contemporary Iran? Search a newspaper web site to find out, post the link to the story and offer a comment on it. Please be mindful to post different information than others in our class," or "Respond in a thoughtful and substantive way to at least one other post by someone else in the class." Instructors had the option of assessing blog entries as they saw fit; however, none of the six instructors assigned "formal grades" for posting. At least two of the instructors did monitor and give students participation credit based on students' completion of a required number of postings.

During the unit that incorporated blogging, classes had the option of meeting inside a computerized lab that allowed each student access to a networked personal computer. Because classes had access to these labs, students could write in blogs during classtime and instructors used some prompts for in-class blog writing. However, instructors also assigned writing for students to complete after they left the classroom, as homework assignments to keep them thinking about course material between formal classes. While students from all six blogging classes produced some blog entries of all these kinds, blogs, of course, did vary from classroom to classroom. In particular, the way one class of students used their blog is much more in the fashion of synchronous

digital communication like chat, which meant that the extended commentaries and rehearsal spaces for academic writing which characterized many of the other blogs simply were not present on this particular classroom blog. This particular class blog featured, instead, many similar features to the IM writing that students did in other classes.

If teachers had specific plans for how students would use the blogs, then students also had room to personalize, plan, and control, to some extent, their digital spaces. The blogs also gave students many different ways to personalize their online space and to build identity online in ways that would likely be familiar to them from their other previous online experiences. For example, students chose online pseudonyms to use while writing in their blogs, an initial identity-building move that all students made. Some students chose to use their real names to represent their online identities, but most selected screennames that did not reveal who they were outside digital domains. It is also certainly true that even though most instructors shared prompts and assignments and discussed blogs together in weekly meetings, all six different classes had blogs that looked different and that that contained different types of student writing. Students and instructors created unique online spaces and they did so not only by choosing unique names for their blogs, names like *Persian Pride, Hot Mamas, Cool Daddies, and Wet Chalk*, and *Getting Crunk With Blogging* but also by posing and answering different types of questions and researching different subjects. Although there were a few visual design aspects to the site that students could manipulate, students primarily personalized their blogs through their words—by how they named themselves and their sites and in the type of writing they produced.

In the third unit, teachers continued assigning blog prompts that allowed students to probe another complex text and to report findings of initial contextual research, while working to produce a longer researched paper. During this unit, the classes introduced another kind of digital writing: oral, face-to-face class discussion was supplemented by online chat and IM writing. Using either America Online Instant Messenger or Blackboard, our students discussed issues that they made contact with through reading *The Laramie Project*, a play which dramatizes reactions to the death of gay college student, Matthew Shepard, in Laramie, Wyoming. In some classes, students continued to write using the online digital identities and screennames they had created while blogging. In other classes, where students used the Blackboard Virtual Classroom interface, students chatted using their real world names, since that software required it.

The discussions that happened in chat forums started with prompts and assignments from teachers, but students often found themselves working into tangential subjects related to their own beliefs on homosexuality, gay culture, and hate crimes in America. As with writing in the blogs, specific instructor prompts for class chatting varied across sections, but most students chatted on a few common topics such as their initial responses to *The Laramie Project*, collaborative cultural and contextual analysis about the ways GLBTQ people are treated, and discussions about their research topics and questions. In addition, some teachers decided to conduct individual or group conferences with students using IM.

Data Collection and Storage

For this project, I looked at two types of student data: questionnaires and student digital writing. Each student enrolled in all EL classes completed a set of questionnaires

designed to have students reflect on past and current language experiences inside and outside the classroom. Instructors assigned a total of four surveys to all students,[21] one during the first week of class, and subsequent surveys after students completed the terminal academic writing assignment for each unit. The first survey, which I discuss and analyze in Chapter Two, asked students specific questions about technology use and asked them which digital genres they had used for writing both for class and outside of class during their high school years. Subsequent surveys asked students to reflect on their digital writing experiences within our classrooms, and, especially, asked them to self report how they saw their digital writing working within their process of academic writing. Although all students enrolled in the classes I analyzed completed the surveys, only the data of students who consented to the study was exported into Microsoft Excel format and associated with their project codename.[22]

My data collection process for student digital writing worked in tandem with the group collection of all student writing produced during the semester. Project members chose to save all student data possible in electronic form in order to preserve reusable backup copies. Consenting students' blog writing, preserved on the server space provided by UT's Sunsite representative, Chris Hodge, was collected and transferred to Microsoft Word documents for easy storage. Co-principal investigators downloaded blog

[21] See Appendix D for typed examples of the survey questions that students completed in online format.

[22] Students completed these questionnaires in online format using form software available at Zoomerang.com. Researchers chose to ask students to respond in online format to simplify the process of data entry and paper usage for survey data because Zoomerang information exports directly into Excel. In addition, researchers believed most students would find surveys less time-consuming and easier to complete if in online, rather than paper format.

writing to project computers and replaced blog aliases with the codenames that had been assigned to students, in order to protect their online identities. To save chat sessions, teachers, during the semester, recorded chat sessions and saved them in Microsoft Word documents, which were stored, again, on project laptops. The academic, source-based writing students produced was also coded and collected in a similar manner.[23] To provide backup hard copies of writing, each student in all of the classes turned in a final portfolio of writing, which coincides with regular teaching practices in our department. These portfolios contained all process and terminal assignments completed over the course of the semester and served as hard-copy backups, in case any electronic digital writing was lost.

Data Analysis

Like my data collection, my analysis began by working with the initial group Embodied Literacies analysis of student writing from the embodied classes. In this preliminary analysis, researchers chose to look closely at five key pieces of writing from consenting students in the embodied classes, including their three final terminal writing assignments, their blog entries and recorded scripts from orally recorded, two-minute audio essays that students produced. Because a larger than expected number of students consented to the study, researchers limited the number of students whose writing was analyzed. Co-principal investigators chose a randomized third of embodied students by,

[23] Students' other assignments were collected in special email accounts developed for project data storage at gmail.com. Gmail, because of its huge storage capacity, unique organizational abilities, and password-protected status served as data storage unit for all papers still associated with students' actual names. After the semester ended and grades were assigned, co-principal investigators downloaded consenting papers from Gmail onto project laptops, replaced student names with codenames, and removed from papers any evidence that could compromise student confidentiality like instructor or section names.

first, placing instructor names in alphabetical order and alphabetizing students corresponding to each instructor within their own classes. After creating this alphabetized database, researchers created a stratified sample by choosing every third student from the database. The students chosen became the sample students for data analysis. Researchers also limited the number of paragraphs analyzed to the first, middle, and last paragraphs of each text or the first, middle, and last blog posting, which allowed researchers to judge the coherence and use of rhetorical moves throughout the course of student writing.

The initial, preliminary global analysis of student writing, including the blog postings, began during a reading conducted by twenty-five readers trained in a rubric developed by Embodied Literacies researchers. The rubric was developed to allow researchers to identify specific linguistic markers that signal students' attempt to make argument-building rhetorical moves.[24] Co-principal investigators explained the rubric to potential readers as a mnemonic device named THINK, which looked specifically for the following kinds of rhetorical moves in student texts: transitions; hypotheticals; integratives, specifically the context-building language associated with locating, referencing, establishing causality, and comparing; negatives; and, finally, what we called "kickers," which were when students stated their own opinions as fact.[25] Although our rubric obviously could not include all the ways in which students make rhetorical moves, these particular ways of using language correlated with the critical thinking and analytical

[24] The Embodied Literacies rubric owes much to Shirley Brice Heath, who originally posed THINK as a possible mnemonic for the language devices we wanted to identify in student writing.
[25] See Appendix E for a copy of the reading rubric given to participating readers.

skills associated with building academic argument and, at the same time, were moves necessary to make when detailing the experience of others.

Readers at the initial, twenty-five-person reading scanned the first, middle, and last blog entry from each consenting student and circled words that signaled students' attempts at making the specific rhetorical moves that our rubric was designed to find. After reader reports were complete, I read every reader response text associated with the blog writing and recorded into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet every word string that readers associated with each part of the rubric. This generated a comprehensive list of word strings that readers had associated with students' blog writing.[26]

This list compiled formed from reader reports then guided a more comprehensive computer analysis of texts using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. Researchers chose NVivo to perform the global text analysis allowed for coding changes to take place during any phase of the analysis, contained a search mechanism that allowed for easy data retrieval, and contained an additive feature that allowed researchers to add coding "nodes," as NVivo calls them, at any stage of the research process. Combining the rigor of computer analysis with the nuance and variation of our human reader responses in the end gave our group the us the greatest chance of accurately assessing the large-scale differences—or the lack thereof—between the writing of students associated with the embodied and conventional syllabi.

My analysis of students' digital writing began by working from the findings of the initial Embodied Literacies reader responses in two different ways. To begin, I worked

[26] Readers completed the same process with students' academic, source-based essays, and researchers compiled a comparable list of words readers had associated with the THINK rubric categories.

with the other co-principal investigator, Dr. Fishman, using NVivo to examine students' first, middle, and last blog entries to look for specific words that our readers had identified as organic to students' source-based, academic writing. That is, instead of searching for words I already knew students were using in the blogs to make rhetorical moves, I first searched to determine whether they were using words that had been identified as particular to formal essay assignments. This initial search mined students' blog texts for the list of rubric words organic to students' academic writing, which helped us determine how often students made the same rhetorical moves in the blog writing that our readers identified as natural to use in their academic, source-based essays. The purpose of this exercise was to begin to understand relationships at the level of language and syntax between digital writing and the more traditional academic writing students composed later in source-based academic essays.

It was central to my project to determine what rhetorical moves were organic to students' digital writing, so that I could point to rhetorical features of the digital vernacular. With this in mind, I returned to initial reader responses a second time. Using the list created from reader reports of blog writing, I expanded my sample of blog writing by including all blog postings (rather than first, middle, and last only) from the thirty-one students in the original stratified sample of students. For analyzing this larger group of texts, I used NVivo once again, but this time to search for the language and word strings that readers had found present in the blog texts they analyzed for our rubric. In this reading, I chose to focus my analysis on how students in the blog texts used hypothetical, causal, and transitional language, because comparing word lists from the blog texts to word lists from the academic, source-based essays generally showed the most variation in

words coded by readers for these three categories of our THINK rubric. I also expanded my criteria by adding rubric categories grounded in the blog writing. These included self-referentials, conversational markers, and blog references.

While features of blog writing allowed me to be rigorous in my analysis, chat and IM writing presented problems for large-scale text analysis. Because IM and chat conversation nearly always happened between consenting and non-consenting students from the EL study, I could not analyze chat writing in a global way because I could not separate consenters from non-consenters without losing the interactive quality that distinguishes synchronous interaction. Although problems with consent and confidentiality made it impossible to perform a comprehensive analysis of chat, I have collected chats from each classroom and have used chats involving consenting students to help illustrate the digital vernacular. Although not a stratified sample, looking at even a small amount of chat writing allowed me to point to ways that the characteristics of the digital vernacular common to blog writing might or might not occur across different digital writing mediums, so that later research might take up this question in more comprehensive ways.

The THINK Rubric and Additional Coding Categories

Although I mentioned the coding categories I used to classify types of rhetorical moves students made in blog writing, I should further explain what I mean by the six rubric categories on which I chose to focus my analysis of digital writing: transitions, hypotheticals, causals, self-referentials, conversationals, and blog references. Transitions, for the purposes of the rubric were words that simply designate the movement from one idea or set of ideas to another, without necessarily establishing a

specific type of relationship between the ideas. Common examples of transitions identified include word strings like “in fact,” “also,” and “another.” Hypothetical language for the rubric is simply any language that students use to enter into the realm of the possible or posit a scenario that had not actually happened factually. The most common examples of hypothetical language marked by readers included “if/then” constructions; however, hypotheticals also included student mental state verbs such as “picture” or “imagine.” Causals we consider a type of integrative language because students use them to build context for ideas within their text. Causal language such as “because,” “due to,” or “so” help students build rhetorical moves that established cause and effect relationships.

In addition to searching for these original rhetorical markers of the THINK rubric, I established new coding categories for “visual” and “conversational” markers of self in the digital texts. By “visual” markers of self, I refer to the ways that students use markers other than words to insert themselves into a text, especially using ellipses or emoticons. By “conversational” markers, I refer to language such as “well,” “I mean,” or “hey” that students employed rhetorically in their digital writing. Because markers of self became so noticeable and interesting within the digital and source-based academic writing, I chose to use NVivo to search the same larger sample of blog writing for the pronoun “I.” At the same time, coding the word “you” helped show how students interacted, and whom they address in their writing.

Finally, as I noticed students constantly using the blog to reflect on or narrate the experience of using the medium itself, I also ran a search for “blog” using NVivo and coded the passages in which students refer to the blog itself in their writing. Also,

students were strking in narrating their initial experiences using the blog, and so it became important to search the blogs for incidences of "first" to allow a closer inspection of how students described their own initial writing experiences on the blog.

The Emerging Digital Vernacular: What the Language Shows

Although my analysis focused attention on the specific words that students used in their writing, this approach charged readings of student texts that did more than just point to dead, disembodied words on a computer screen. The bulk of my data reporting, then, rather than just giving lists of words and how often they appeared in the blog writing, will use students' own words to illustrate their rhetoric. In order to show how students' language in the blog writing is rhetorically situated, purposeful, and motivated, I turn to a Burkean frame of analysis. Kenneth Burke, in the opening of *A Grammar of Motives* (1945) asks his audience to consider the question, "What is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?" (xv). Burke responds by offering the five elements—the pentad—of dramatism, which he suggests in their overlap and even in their slippery nature that makes them difficult to pin down, help to provide a method of analysis for beginning to understand the motives behind any give situation. Burke explains the pentad as "five terms [which act] as general principle of our investigation. They are: Act, Scene, Agency, Purpose" (xv). Further, Burke suggests:

> In a rounded statement about motives, you must have some word that names the *act* (names what took place, in thought or deed), and another that names the *scene* (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred); also, you must indicate what person or kind of person (*agent*)

> performed the act, what means or instruments he used (*agency*) and the *purpose*. (xv, emphasis his)

A close look at students' rhetoric in the blog writing suggests that these particular blogs and their unique socially-situated context inside both academic and digital domains created a *scene*, to use Burke's language, or a background that allowed for very interesting kinds of traceable emerging student writing and ideas, which manifested themselves in the language *acts*—or the blog postings—student *agents* created within the blog scene. Students, used rhetoric—their "means," their "instrument," their *agency*—when they produced writing acts within the blog scene.

On one hand, reaching for Burke's pentad helps pin down and stabilize the multiple elements in play when students wrote in EL classroom blogs. It helps show how the scene for student writing remained relatively stable, even as it contained overlapping elements of both digital and academic rhetorical situations. Burke's framework also helps pinpoint the acts going on in this scene—the blog postings, which for these students were essentially text bound and almost totally comprised of words. On the other hand, using Burke's pentad to talk about students' blog writing helps show its dynamic nature by drawing attention to different elements of the blog writing that were constantly in flux: shifting repeatedly as students' purposes, means, and even the identities from which they wrote changed. In the end, even as the pentad provided a stabilizing framework, what the pentad really highlights is students' rhetorical play.

CHAPTER FOUR:

INTERSECTIONS OF DIGITAL VERNACULAR AND ACADEMIC LITERACIES: EXAMPLES FROM THIRTY-ONE STUDENTS' DIGITAL DOCUMENTS

When students' digital words do the talking, perhaps not surprisingly, they show rhetorical strategies that reinforce the importance of the social nature of the digital academic scene. Students used rhetoric to assess, negotiate, and create their social context, and they showed awareness of multiple audiences reading their work and speaking both directly and indirectly to other agents in their writing scene. Embodied Literacies students' digital rhetorics in this classroom writing scene suggest that students bring an awareness of digital domains as social domains with them from past digital vernacular experiences.

Reflecting On/In Digital Vernaculars

Embodied students' language suggests a complicated relationship between digital vernaculars, reflective writing, and the social. Over and over, the way students reference the blog in their posts gives insight into how they—as student bodies—viewed it as a scene for writing. Over thirty-one students' postings, the word "blog" was used a total of 126 times, and their commentary suggests that many associated blog writing with oral dimensions of class discussion. Gabby's blog, for example, comments: "I kind of think of these blogs as a class discussion online so it is pointless to be repetitive." And, after reading some blogs from Iran, Mark says, "I just think it's interesting to see the contrast between how the purpose of blogs goes from a cove[r?] for interesting discussion to vital components of idealistic movements [in iran]." In their reflections comparing blog

writing to oral discussion, these student writers show they understand a social and interactive function for the writing done there. They suggest the blog space is closely related to embodied, oral communication, and they show that the writing acts produced within this blog are written for a community, "out loud" so to speak, so that others can "hear" them.

The process of turning from lined notebook paper or even word processing interfaces toward the blog made Embodied Literacies students more aware of their writing scene, of the medium-specific context that influenced their writing acts. The blog itself and its position in the writing classroom seemed to create a motivation for reflective writing, especially for reflection about what it is like to post on the blog. Christina Hass in *Writing Technology: Studies on the Materiality of Literacy* (1996) suggests that although most "[w]riters do not notice most of the technologies they employ, simply because those technologies are always there," it is when writers move from one writing technology to another that they are more likely to notice material writing contexts (xi). As Haas explains, "The materiality of writing becomes profoundly obvious when technologies change—when writers move from the heft of the manuscript and the feel of a new Blackfeet pencil, to the bright, wired-up, whirring box and clicking keyboard on the desk" (24). Embodied Literacies writers, as Haas suggests, did seem very aware of writing technologies when in mid-semester they shifted to writing in digital mediums; however, the shift did more than simply alert students to the physical differences of writing online, which in itself was new to many of them. Students' language reveals that they began to see social differences between writing in other domains and within the digital blog scene.

We know from surveys and examples presented in previous chapters that many students had never practiced blog writing before their classroom experience with the EL project. Although these students obviously could rely on previous rhetorical knowledge of blog writing to understand the medium and social context of that scene, quite often they refer to experience with other online mediums as they explain that they lack familiarity with the blog. Students who admitted they were new to blogging often pointed out other digital fluencies, as Rachel does in this entry:

> I am new to this stuff they call "blogging." I've heard about it before through friends, and they are addicted to it, like I'm addicted to facebook. It's confusing at first how to get things set-up and started, but like most things, the more you do it the better you get at it. I do like doing this because it's something completely new to me, it's different than being in a classroom, and you get to say what you want and let the world know your opinion.

Rachel, in this post, makes several noteworthy observations about the blog scene, while she shows that other digital discourses are second nature to her. First, she ties blogging as a medium to another online writing scene with which she is more familiar: the social networking software, Facebook, which she claims to be "addicted to." Although Rachel does say she is "completely new to" blogging, the newness of the blog scene seems to be what invites her to make observations about what it is like to write in the medium. She contrasts it immediately to more standard academic classroom situations, remarking that "it's different than being in the classroom." Although Rachel does not enumerate exactly what makes *writing* on the blog so different from *being* in the classroom, her final words

evoke audience and the public nature of online writing in this medium. She likes it that she can "say what [she] want[s]" and let "the world" hear it.

When students like Rachel write about blogging, they reveal how students themselves perceive the blog functioning within the classroom and the course as a whole. Some students' perceived purposes and motive for using the blog in class actually had very little to do with reading or writing—and for some of them the medium did not match up to their expectations about what the role of digital media should be in the classroom. Their blog entries reflect their confusion about what online writing should be for in the the digital/academic scene. Andrew, for example, in a post entitled simply "Blackboard" comments, "It might just be me, but I really dont like getting on this blog stuff to see whats up with class...I liked the old way of getting on black board and checking class stuff instead of changing on us and using this confusing blog thing. I dont get it...." It might not be completely surprising that Andrew "didn't get it" if he expected to use the blog only for "checking class stuff," rather than for posting his own ideas and reading other students' writing. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that Andrew writes his critique of the blog as a posting on the blog; whether the online forum meets the needs that he thinks it should, he sees it as a writing space where he can reflect on the way he understands limitations of the blog writing scene.

To say that students develop digital vernacular literacy practices in past situations writing with technology is not to say that students enjoy or feel comfortable using every digital medium, and it certainly does not mean that every student has advanced experience on computers or enjoys using them. In her blog Natalie says, "I stay confused on the blogging!! Im not good with computers nor bloggggs!!" These students, even

through their complaints, though, hint at the social nature of students' digital writing. Natalie's comment literally screams her frustration, much in the performative, embodied fashioned that I described students' chat exchanges earlier in this project. Further, when she plays with the spelling of "bloggggs," she changes how her readers hear her writing, which is infused with the tone she wants to express in her writing act.

Already, one thing that I hope these students' writing shows is that it was not just one or two students—and not just the most experienced bloggers—who produced interesting texts on the blog. Although a glance at classroom blog log files shows that some students were high users and others visited the blog less often, even the students least familiar with the blog used it reflectively, and many of their narratives give the most insight into the blog as a scene for writing. When Jake says about the blog, "i have never bloged before, but i think that bloging is helpful because at any one time you can see anybodys answer or opinion to any thing that has been posted about.and this exchange of ideas is very helpful," he calls attention to the blog's interactivity. Using "anybody" here to stand in for the people in his class, the people actually writing on the blog, Jake references the social community of writers of which he is a part, and identifies "exchange" between people—agents writing to each other—as a feature of what it means to be in this writing community.

Whether or not they realized it when they were writing, students like Natalie, Andrew, Rachel and Jake demonstrate that the blog was at once a reflective space and a social space for students that called their attention to the technologies of writing, that helped them publicly articulate relationships between writing scene and writing acts, and that allowed them to do this while "talking to" other writing community members using

similar means for similar purposes. Just as writers like Haas point to the often hidden relationship between writing, technology, and materiality, so also new blog writers notice how the blog scene affected the kinds of writing they produced when they wrote in it.

Room For the Self: Digital Rhetorical Situations and Social Student Selves

Burke suggests that just as "the agent is an author of his acts, which are descended from him," so also "conversely, his acts can make him or remake him in accordance with their nature. They would be his product and/or he would be theirs" (16). Students' blog postings, as writing acts within their situated digital academic scene, could be described as inventing students within the social blog space every bit as much as students as agents invented the blog postings collected under their pseudonyms. Especially since many of the students kept their identities and their writing on the blog separate from their real world names and faces, their writing acts constructed their identities for the class and for whatever bigger public might access and read their sites. For students writing online in this scene, using the first-person, or rhetorically grounding an argument using "I," meant creating that "I" in words, it meant making a mere word on a screen into a living, breathing, thinking body—a virtual body, and one constructed carefully and purposefully.

Although it might seem possible that students writing in this situation would want to preserve online anonymity and would, thus, avoid writing about themselves, the opposite is actually true. When we compared the frequency of students' use of the word "I" across the different assignments they were given in the Embodied Literacies study, students were statistically more likely to use "I" in blog writing than in their academic

essay assignments.[27] Of course, the fact that students refer to themselves more in blogs than in academic essays—and that they do so in the simplest and most overt way by using the first-person pronoun—is not particularly surprising or interesting on a surface level. Even though teachers were assigning prompts for the blog designed to push students toward academic literacy, informal process writing leading up to academic writing is typically more self-reflexive and accepting of personal opining and commentary than is academic essay writing, at least for undergraduate writers. And doubtless many academic writing teachers do all they can to remove the first person from students' academic writing. However, in this digital scene the abundant "I" does more than just carelessly opine or state uncontextualized beliefs. At once, the "I" creates identity and ethos for students—builds their very virtual presence—while helping them resituate tough class material in a way that puts them in social context with it.

For example, one specific type of reflective writing that required students to construct a self within the blog postings happened when students worked through subject matter by relating it to their own past personal experiences and histories. Part of the work of telling other people's stories in the blog scene meant inventing a virtual persona that could identify with the stories students needed to tell. Although students almost certainly did not think of their writing as crafting a virtual self, students' writing acts that fall into this category seem to be as much about self-discovery and definition—about inventing the "I" they use—as they are about putting new information in the context of

[27] After entering frequency data into the statistical analysis software SPSS and performing a number of parametric tests, researchers found that students used the work "I" significantly more frequently in blog postings than in source-based essay paragraphs.

their own backgrounds. In a post entitled "Something to Write About," Kayla invents herself for her blog audience using a discussion of Satrapi's *Persepolis*:

> Well being that i am a woman and my personal freedom along with all the other women around the globe mean SO MUCH to me, i think that i will address the issues of feminism that Satrapi displayed in Persepolis. I think that her main purpose is to one uplift the woman because it is a fact that we have come along way from where we used to be, and two to also make it an ultimate awareness that women were treated as subjects to the males. *Our* job was to be obedient and subservient to the men not only in our lives but also to the government. […] It is not as if this issue is non-exsistant, because *we* are still looked at as inferior to men in the eyes of some, but i think this is just a general awareness of what is really going on. (italics mine)

Here Kayla starts out by identifying herself—or at least classifying herself—for her blog audience. She identifies herself first as a woman, and then as someone concerned with women's rights on a global level, and finally as someone who shares in the discrimination Satrapi describes. She continues throughout her post to describe Satrapi's discussions of women's rights as issues that affect her, even using "we" and "us" to include herself in the same social situation as the women of Iran described in *Persepolis*. She never overtly explains any relationship to the women discussed, but she expects her readers to sense identification because of the way in which she has constructed herself. Part of understanding the situation and part of telling their story in this medium, it seems, for this student means putting the situation in the context of her own.

Digital writers often called on themselves—even their unidentified selves—as rhetorical strategies in the electronic texts I analyzed, and often this move was accompanied by references to personal experience, which students used to situate themselves socially within the context of the new conversations they entered. Digital writers used themselves to provide context for ideas that were hard to understand and even more difficult to write about. For example, when Paige worked to understand the "odd" beliefs of the Iranian writer Marjane Satrapi, she first situated those points of view against her backgrounds and history. Paige, coming to terms with a set of beliefs very different from her own, wrote in the blog:

> When I first started reading Persepolis, I realized that although some of Satrapi's "beliefs" were justified, they were somewhat odd. However, after putting my own ethnocentrism aside and listening to Satrapi's interview, I realized that when you view the occurences happening in Satrapi's environment from her own point of view, I realized maybe she is right...in her own sense. Satrapi mentions that what went on during the revolution was "not the choice of the people". This alone sort of makes her odd actions and beliefs justified. After growing up in a place where I have complete "freedom" in my decisions, I can understand how people can feel cheated, betrayed and discriminated against by the government[.}

In some ways, Paige's post is more about herself than it is about Satrapi and Satrapi's "odd" ideas. The "I" in this text is an "I" beginning to understand that multiple points of view exist beyond her own and that opening herself up to them means leaving "ethnocentrism aside."

Similar things happened when blog writers used the first-person and called on their own experience to offer cultural analysis and criticism. Becca, in her post of nearly 700 words entitled "Underneath the Veil," uses her past personal experience as well as reflection on a class experience—visiting an exhibit of photographs entitled *Girl Culture* by Lauren Greenfield—to launch a critique of the expectations placed on young women and girls:

> As I walked through the Girl's Exhibit, I think that for the first time I truly opened my eyes to the ridiculous expectations that America gives women. I work in an hunting and fishing store with a bunch of dirty, old men, so I know just how boarish that can be. However, nothing really struck home about women and their self-image until I saw those images.

Becca here uses her own personal experience on two levels to begin writing, but she does not stop there. Instead, she uses the experience justified by her credibility, and, building on her opening strategies, she extends her personal experience into a critique of "Westerners" by suggesting that "Westerners need to be careful on what priorities they have when judging a person for what they really are. We look to Hollywood and models and magazines and celebrities to determine what makes a woman beautiful." While the prompt for this blog entry asked Becca to describe her own reaction to the exhibit as well as to make connection between the *Girl Culture* exhibit and *Persepolis*, Becca does more than simply describe. She, like Paige, situates a difficult-to-understand scene from *Persepolis* in the context of a problem she can understand from her own personal background. In the end of her long entry, after moving from her personal experience to a

critique of Western ideals, finally Becca brings her analysis to *Persepolis* and Marjane Satrapi:

> Her situation is different then our's in America, but an influence from pop-culture determining what is "cool" made her want that jacket so bad that she was condemned for it. And in her country, the MEN in the government were telling the women was and wasn't appropriate for them. What a crock!!!

Becca's analysis is informal, and it is more emotional and evaluative than that which we could expect her to produce in an academic, source-based paper. But, at the same time, the work she does in the post is pretty complex. She articulates a problem she sees in her own culture, extends its reach beyond the borders of what is most familiar to her, and then produces a reading of a scene in *Persepolis* based on a causal relationship that she sees—the idea that the same concern for what is "cool" that causes extreme and dangerous behavior in American women motivated the character Marji to take risks to acquire things valued by popular culture, a concept difficult for most students to grasp. Becca begins this whole reading based on her own authority and experience, and she grounds it on her credibility and her virtual "I." The blog as a scene for writing provided Becca and others like her a way to put themselves in close contact with the material they wrote about.

Interactivity: A New Kind of Parlor?

As much as students made the blog a social space by using the first person to identify themselves with other people's stories, even more clearly students showed their social motives for writing when they quite literally used the blog to talk to one another.

At least in this set of classes, interactivity connected multiple writing act and agents, as students used writing acts to reflect on things that had been said before in the blog, to pose direct questions and give pointed advice, and even to conduct social business as simple as finding friends to lunch with.

Students' writing in the digital blog space made it clear from the beginning that they understood different audiences for their online writing. For example, in Dave's memorable first blog entry, he wrote, "I am going to have a cheeseburger for lunch. If you would like to have a cheeseburger with me, let me know." Blog postings like this one made it clear that along with inserting themselves into blog entries, Embodied Literacies students were inserting their audience directly into their writing, pointing to, referencing, and addressing the people they saw as readers—agents who most often were their fellow writers as well. These posts, among others, were unprompted posts and, more than any other posts, they show students calling on past digital writing practices and expectations of how digital writing could connect them socially with other students.

In the case of Dave's call for friends to share his lunch, the pronoun "you" marks the moment of interactivity, the point when he acknowledges not only that someone is reading his writing, but also that his audience is reading as he is writing and could respond in time for lunch that day. Students in the blog used the pronoun "you" quite frequently, with "you" occurring a total of 322 times across the large sample of student blog writing. Again, as with the pronoun "I," "you" is a word that most frequently students have been taught to weed out of academic writing. The generalized "you" that academic writing teachers are so accustomed to hearing students fall back on when making unclarified, uncontextualized, and unresearched claims can doubtless create real

problems for beginning academic writers. Although the generalized "you" was rampant in student blog writing as a way to generalize about other's experiences, the you of interactivity is nonetheless a striking feature of students' digital voices. To give another concrete example of this, notice how Cameron explains this very issue to another student while giving feedback about an academic draft. While Cameron gives his reader a mini-lecture on why the pronoun "you" is too informal for this students' academic writing, he uses you effectively to speak directly to his reader:

> Try to stay away from using "you" as much as possible. Substitute words like "one," "oneself," "readers," even "the audience" to make *your* point. The words *you* use are correct and effective, but try not to use so many to say one thing...just say it in one word if possible: example: instead of "The extremes that the people of the government went to are simply not able to be comprehended" say "are simply incomprehensible." *You* say a lot more when *you* say less, and IT SOUNDS BETTER, TOO! (italics mine)

Cameron deploys the second person as a method for explanation, in this case, so that, ironically, he can effectively explain why the second-person is ineffective. Although this is an extreme version of how students rhetorically deployed "you" to point to and address their audiences, this often happened in digital student writing: the "you" is transformed from the overgeneralized displacing of one's own experience onto one's audience to the direct acknowledging of audience and interactivity with peers and classmates.

Burke's oft-quoted parlor metaphor from *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (1974) might be the first metaphor we would expect to reach for to describe the interaction between students in the digital scene. Addressing his reader directly, Burke writes:

> Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pauses and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you al the steps that have gone before. You listen for a while until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, dependent upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress. (110-111)

Although Burke of course means the parlor to serve as a metaphor for intertextuality and textual interaction, students interacting in the digital scene enact Burke's metaphor in concrete ways. First, Dave and his cheeseburger remind us of the immediacy, the dynamic social nature of the writing that extended directly many times from text to embodied, face-to-face social activity. Writing like this shows that the life of the virtual bodies constructed in text on the blog and the physical bodies sitting at desks in a computer lab or in the dorm or library in front of their personal computers were always overlapping, always crossing over. Especially when interactivity became synchronous talk, students did not see themselves holding highbrow conversation in a parlor (how many of our students really have conversations in parlors, anyway?) but in closer

quarters, where bodies were real and their hunger (or desire for companionship) could motivate a writing act just as much as the desire to put academic research in dialogue. The scene of the blog is grittier, more real—more embodied—for Embodied Literacies students than how any of them could conceive of an academic parlor at that point in their academic literacy development. In the interactive writing scene they created on the blog, there was less personal space and more boundary crossing than in the parlor as they might conceive it.

While the dynamic, synchronous nature of students' words signals interactivity and often meant that students were interacting in very embodied ways, they did not neglect careful negotiation of audience expectations. The interactivity of the blog was more than just parlor talk because students understood in very real ways that they had to deal with values, strong feelings, and emotions in their digital writing—even if they could not see their audience's faces while they were writing. In other words, rather than "flaming" or ignoring consequences for their words, students' writing on the blog often displayed awareness of how their reading audience would react to the things they said. Again, even with pseudonyms giving students the possibility of separating their online words from their "real world" identity, students were careful to frame ideas that they felt might be radical or different from the majority in terms that would help ensure that they did not offend classmates. Embodied Literacies reader reports characterized the word "sorry" as a transition in the blog entries because students more than once started sentences with phrases like: "I'm sorry but […]." Students, however, did not seem to deploy the word "sorry" most often in a way that helped establish movement from one idea to the next. Rather, when students adopted an apologetic tone in their texts, it

seemed to do the work of acknowledging how one's own opinions or ideas might differ from those of the writer's audience. The word "sorry" was used seven times throughout the larger sample blogs—not a high frequency, but complex audience negotiation is present even when the word that readers were looking for is not. For example, Abby, although she never uses the word "sorry" in this post, does carefully negotiate the complex territory that comes when her beliefs might be considered controversial or outside the majority. She writes:

> For the record, I would like to say that I am a Christian like George Bush and that I consider myself to belong to the "independent" party, but I'd have to agree with Satrapi. America is a secular country, and you are taking away people's right to have their own religion by enforcing Christian ideals on them. As much as I wish that everyone was a Christian, it's simply not fair to force your beliefs on people that don't share the same beliefs as you do.

Only after Abby has self-identified as "a Christian like George Bush" does she proceed to suggest a Christian bias in the American government. She builds ethos and asserts identity overtly as part of her argument-building strategy. This, of course, is not the same kind of interactivity as the student who asked his classmates to join him for a cheeseburger, but it still shows a careful consideration of audience and of the social ramifications and social consequences for writing in the academic blog scene.

Even as they showed signs of thinking hard about their writing audience, in this embodied space, students were rarely afraid to address each other directly and advise each other pointedly on issues ranging from helping each other with academic writing to

giving more general advice on widely varying topics. In a later blog posting Becca, who had used her personal experience and her virtual "I" to conduct cultural analysis and launch a critical reading of one scene in *Persepolis*, also ended another journal entry by offering her advice to those reading her posting:

> I believe Satrapi is saying that if everyone just stops worrying, takes a deep breath, and sits back and rolls with the punches, then everyone will be so much happier and alive. Live everyday to its fullest. Hey, if you screw up, then dust yourself off and try again. Don't get too bogged down with right and wrong, good and evil. The only way to learn and to determine happiness is to live. Live like there is no tomorrow.

General and uncontextualized, it is difficult to understand exactly what is the purpose for the "life advice" Becca offers her readers here; interestingly, though, this tone of advice giving comes alongside students making other more practical attempts to help one another. When students saw others struggling with the medium, many times they offered their own suggestions for how to help navigate the blog more easily. Seth, for example, says "The little bar on the left really helps...i just click on the most recent ones that I havent read and then re-read the post that the comments were made under." Giving advice meant taking an authoritative tone and expecting a real audience to take writing acts seriously. Again, this tone is more pointed, more direct, more dynamic than a parlor for these students at this point in their advanced literacy development.

Interaction in the blogs and chat writing was certainly complex, and students wrote to more audiences than they realized. The audience that students most often acknowledged through blog writing was the audience they were interacting with most

clearly on a social level: their classmates. Although we do our best to teach students that even academic writing is interactive, most incoming first-year students have not developed the confidence and authority yet to see academic writing as interactive in a way that is related to agency and control. When a writer understands the academic situation, he or she always has the ability to be selective about what to listen and respond to, choosing, in effect, whom to interact with. On some level, the blogs operated in the same way. Students were able to decide which things written in the blogs were worth responses and which ones could just be ignored. At the same time, though, the nature of the interactivity was not unlike synchronous talk, which directly addressd its audience when needed. All the while, students show that they understood the social context of the blog in such a way that they were able to mediate context and make rhetorical decisions based on their audience. This leads me to wonder how understanding how the interactivity created through the blog could help students better grasp the academic "parlor" to which we would like to introduce them.

Understanding "Punctuation Pyrotechnics": Visual Markers and Digital Writing

Just as students intuitively brought with them an understanding of the blog as a social medium, they also brought along what they knew about the word-level stylistic conventions appropriate to it and to other online digital situations. As might be expected in a study where digital writing was being used primarily to facilitate writing in academic discourses, some teachers sometimes tried to keep a tight check on the style that students used to write online. For example, one teacher added a post to the class blog that said:

> In our blog, we're trying to keep the emoticons (like :-) and :-( ) off the site. Also watch what we might call the use of exuberant punctuation, like

> multiple exclamation points. In a blog like this, the choice of words and phrasing should be the way you add emphasis. Save the !!!! and ???? for Ims, chat rooms, facebook, and text messages.

This teacher asked students to model their discourse on "thoughtful personal blogs that don't use punctuation pyrotechnics to develop ideas." Even in this posting, this teacher acknowledges a place for digital stylistics in "IMs, chat rooms, facebook, and text messages," and essentially asks students to practice codeswitching in order to make the blog a more academic space. Students did codeswitch, whether prompted by teachers or not—but they still used visual markers to reinforce style and tone in their digital academic writing. The blog as scene, and as socially-situated space for interaction with attached conventions and expectations meant that many students brought with them knowledge about conventional stylistics in these mediums, and the ones who did not bring that literacy history with them looked around and learned conventions as they participated in the community.

What visual stylistic features might we expect that this group of students used brought with them from previous digital vernacular experiences? Emoticons were used fairly infrequently in this sample of student writing. The simple smiley face emoticon was used only four times throughout all the blog entries of sampled students. Although, of course, some teachers publicly advised against using emoticons, others left this subject untouched, so, if students rely heavily on emoticons in their digital vernacular literacy practices, they sensed a reason not to let them overtake the digital academic scene. When students did choose to use emoticons, often they were at the end of the most interactive, social, self-sponsored posts, in which students addressed each other directly or responded

straightforwardly to something that had been said. For example, consider this post by Hunter, which responds to an ongoing conversation about the real world identity of one student who called herself "volgirl." Volgirl announced in her first blog posting that she was about to get engaged to her real world boyfriend, and students in her class were determined to find out her real world identity:

> ok, whoever volgirl is just needs to come out ASAP so the rest of us girls do not have to worry about Jacob's accusations--oh and for the record, Jacob, this is Hunter, so as you can tell, Volgirl ISN'T my s/n! try again...I told you it wasn't me! shoot, I'm not getting married for a LONG LONG time!!! Too much fun to be had before that :)

This blog posting could have come from any digital community, not just an academic one. Hunter is actually using the blog scene to make a joke in this post. He starts by grouping himself with the women in the class as "us girls" before revealing his real-world name and unmasking himself. The vernacular is related to interaction, to Hunter's positioning of himself within the classroom community and the blog scene—in short, it reinforces the social nature of the blog interaction and "speaks" to his audience.

Later, in a post less stylistically vernacular, Erica, who calls herself a "visual learner" uses an emoticon to add tone to her posting about why she liked *Persepolis*:

> I really liked the book. I felt like the pictures only added to Satrapi's content and allowed the reader to actually enter in to the text. They also gave the reader a sort of visual narrative into her mind. Because most of the book was pictures, with very little actual writing, they played an important role to allow the reader to understand what is going on and how

she feels. I am a visual learner so I guess the pictures really stood out to me, and that's why I am writing so much about them and what they portray :).

Erica's visual marker in this posting does little to add to the content of what she has to say, except to reinforce the visual nature of her argument.

Although students kept their writing mostly free from emoticons, one of the most striking uses of punctuation in this group of students' writing came when they used ellipses. In the larger sample of blog writing, there were ninety-seven total uses of ellipses. Ellipses, it seems clear, are part of the vernacular of digital language and seem to serve a couple of purposes and advance more than one type of rhetorical move. In part, students use ellipses in their posts to do the work that ellipses are traditionally supposed to do in standard, formal academic writing. That is, they use ellipses to replace something they have left out, often a more formal word connector. In this way, students writing digitally use the ellipsis often to introduce a list, and it stands in for colons or language like "such as" or "for example." Students also occasionally deploy the ellipsis as a place filler when they are confused or are not sure how to respond, but know they have to tentatively throw themselves in anyway. When trying to offer advice about another student's academic writing, Abby says hesitantly, "Maybe you could use "openly" or something like that in the conclusion...I don't know. I told you it was kind of stupid." To me, this use of the ellipsis is fascinating because it shows another way that students use the digital vernacular to negotiate tricky writing situations. Instead of forming unreadable discursive syntax, as students often do in more formal academic

genres, students call on their past knowledge of the ellipsis to move past problem areas in their writing, which enables them to mark those areas and move on.

Often the ellipsis, though, functions more as a speech indicator, as a place where a reader should pause in the text and emphasize the rhetorical move that is made directly before or after it. In this case, the ellipsis stands in for punctuation that does not seem strong enough, or acts as a marker of time. For example, Paige uses an ellipses this way when she says, "I'll admit, when I was young...I couldn't wait to be a woman and I couldn't wait to be grown up. Now, I'd give anything to be that little 16 year old girl again.'" Paige uses the ellipses to visually mark a shift of contrast: "It's good to show the "dark" side of people...but most of the time people have an other side, too." Becca's ellipses here seems to indicate a moment of deliberation for the right word or the right idea:

> Her government dictated every right that her family, friends, and fellow citizens possessed. Therefore, she does not understand why in America where we do get the choice and liberty... people take these rights for granted or judge others for demonstrating and excersising these rights.

Ellipses, like these, were the most frequently used visual markers in Embodied Literacies student papers, and worrisome "punctuation pyrotechnics" did not seem to pervade the blog sites, even those that contained no teacher warnings.

Oh wow, I mean…like…hey, **Persepolis** *is so cool!!!!: What Could Be Rhetorical About Digital Conversationals?*

Along with the visual stylistics of punctuation, the students writing in the blog brought with them certain types of words that do not show up as often in formal academic

writing. Moreover, the readers for the Embodied Literacies project reading noticed something about student blog writing right away: students used conversational language for rhetorical purpose. The blog word list formed from reader responses, for example, for transitions lists words like "sorry," "well," and "oh wow" as words that signal students' attempts to move from one idea to the next. Looking at these bits of language closely, however, I am not convinced that the rhetorical work they do is related to transitioning readers from one idea to the next. Instead, these words establish tone and act as throat-clearing oral pauses before students state something they hope others will listen to. Conversational markers in the text announce students' authority to say something and they mark reactions within the text. Becca says, for example:

> Wow!! Marijane Satrapi's interview is such an eye opener at viewing just how different countries are from one another. Americans get so caught up in our way of life and society that often times another country's culture and society seems so wild to us.

Here Becca uses "Wow," a word that would not be expected in more formal writing, to indicate her surprise or her realization that things are very different in other cultures than they are in hers. "Wow," of course is not a word particular only to digital writing, but it sets a particular tone and situates the writing act socially.

From Rehearsal to Play: Multivocal Writing and Spaces for Experimentation

Even though the blogs showed many signs of digital vernaculars, students did a lot of serious work and serious writing in them: they questioned their own belief systems, critically analyzed cultural assumptions, and questioned and advised one another. Yet, it is also clear that the academic work students did did not happen in

isolation from the embodiment and dis(play) of multiple voices, voices that students have heard in digital domains, but also at worship services, at their jobs, on the TV, in advice columns, and in conversations with friends. The language of the blog was multivocal in ways that no one involved with the Embodied Literacies project predicted. Even as the blog scene was socially-situated, it also was fluid and adaptable, allowing students to experiment with different means of making digital academic arguments.

When students played with voice and tone in their blog writing, many times they synthesized the things they knew about conventions of digital writing with what they knew, or were learning, about academic writing. For example, responding to a prompt that asked him to write about something he "felt strongly about," instead of writing about political or faith issues like many of his fellow students did, Stuart chose a topic a bit more universal—a topic that let him play with his argumentative skills, but that, at the same time, he knew would be socially entertaining to his blog audience. In his post entitled, "Choose your leggings!," a detailed encomium to, yes, pants, Stuart begins, "You know, I've always been fascinated by pants. There are few things so universal. I don't just mean pants as in jeans or breeches or things that cover the whole leg. I mean anything that covers your unmentionable unmentionables(including your whitey tidies!)." In this opening to his posting, Stuart starts with a direct reference to a reading audience. If his "you" in the first line of his post is not an interactive "you" that points to a specific class member reading the blog, still neither is it an overgeneralized "you" that mislabels or misidentifies his audience. Rather, Stuart seems to know exactly to whom his "you" refers; his choice to deploy it is one of deliberateness and control. In the same lines, Stuart explains why his topic is so striking—because it is "so universal." This phrase

comes almost as an afterthought in Stuart's post, but, in fact, his logic makes incredibly good sense. His topic is humorous and interesting precisely because he has his audience in mind and chooses a topic with which they all could identify.

Stuart continues to use humor in his extended list of "different types of pants: jeans, dockers, chinos, jodhpurs, boxer shorts, bastard pants(also known as Capries), bloomers, lingerie." He remarks, "Now think of all the subcategories within each of those, and you have a frigin' army on your hands." But, all the while, underneath the funny tone and the references to audience he uses to keep his piece interesting and conversational, Stuart sneaks in subtle references to what we might think of as more traditionally academic issues of consumerism and fashion as symbol. For example, he writes "Now, we've all heard the saying that the cloth[e]s make the man. The statement really holds true, and for now we're even ignoring the corporate mask that most clothing retailers employ. Everybody's pants are making a statement."

His language is informal—and purposefully so. After making a joke about the precious things pants hide, Stuart returns to his subject with a very self-conscious rhetorical question that gets him back on track. And, interestingly, here he shows again that the purpose of the blog entry is both to entertain his readers and to showcase his analytical and argumentative skills:

> Anywho, where was I? Ah, yes. The guy with the huge sagging jeans is saying, "Yeah, buddy, I'm someone's ass-bitch." The ladies with the tight leather pants is showing off her ass, and the gentleman in the loincloth lives has lived in an isolated jungle environment for his entire life and he

> doesn't know any better. Our pants might not be the first thing that people see, but they are an underl[y]ing force that cannot be ignored.

In another post earlier in the semester that was more overtly academic in tone than this one, Stuart had described in great detail and had given examples of the ways in which human beings form stereotypes based on appearance. In this related blog posting, Stuart experiments with a tone that is at once conversational but also notably different—less self-consciously funny—than that of his "pants" post. In that earlier posting entitled "In Stereo" Stuart describes stereotypes as "in their base form, a quick and dirty way to get information about someone," and then he uses very similar examples to the ones he uses in his pants post to describe and give examples of common stereotypes. He writes in that earlier blog posting, "The girl with the skirt line at her hips is promiscuous, the guy with the earring and the baggy pants is a thug, the men in the truck with a giant Confederate flag on the hood are ignorant red-necks." The examples here could almost be interchangeable with those in the "pants" posting, and, I would argue, their purposes were the same in the blog entry.

Although his "pants" post outlines the same ideas as his earlier post about stereotypes, the means—the packaging, the audience awareness—is drastically different and nicely situated within the digital medium. Comparing the two posts shows Stuart clearly taking a risk with his tone and voice, his methods for establishing ethos, and his strategies for connecting with his audience. Stuart ends his encomium to pants by inventing several anecdotal reasons for why his general readership should appreciate them. He writes, "And think of the name of the garment: pants! A plural noun for one item. It is a two in one; a symbol of balance and purity. No wonder ancient cultures

referred to the leader of the household as the one with the pants." After this, once more he invokes his audience by using "you": "So remember, even if you don't realize it pants are one of the most powerful forces on the planet. Respect them! Farewell, and my the jockstrap be with you!"

How do we describe a blog posting like this one? Above all things, I suggest, this blog posting by Stuart is a rhetorically effective piece of writing. This writing act is the product of an agent who knows how to make arguments on multiple levels. While on a surface level, he humorously works to show why pants are so important, he is actually showing off his wit and inventing himself for his audience all along through his voice. At the same time, though, the posting is filled with subtle argumentative strategies that force his audience to think about what they really value and how important clothes really become to the opinions or stereotypes people form. In addition, there is a tongue-in-cheek element to this blog posting that perhaps even Stuart was not aware of as he crafted his argument. And therein lies the challenge: how do we make students rhetorically aware of the moves they make, so that they might repeat them purposefully?

CHAPTER FIVE:

SELF-REFLEXIVE STUDENT BODIES: HELPING STUDENTS "SEE AVAILABLE MEANS"

Blog postings like Stuart's humorous, argumentatively savvy, "Choose Your Leggings" beg the questions: How can we more effectively teach students to call on their digital vernacular knowledge to produce arguments? Further, how can writing teachers help students build bridges between digital literacies and academic writing, which remains a mystery to many of them?

First, rhetoric and composition teachers can help students understand how they already make some of the same rhetorical moves in digital writing that are valued in academic writing: rhetorical strategies like building causal relationships, exploring hypothetical situations, building ethos by constructing credible personas, and tailoring arguments to the audiences to which they are directed. At the same time, teachers could tap students' conscious knowledge of digital domains to help better introduce and explain concepts as diverse as academic interactivity and codeswitching. However, for any of these theories to become visible and useful, they must first be grounded in teaching students to be self-reflexive rhetors who revisit, reflect on, and critically review their own digital literacy practices: writers who think about those practices in the context of both particular rhetorical situations and how they might reuse or adapt rhetorical strategies to fit other situations.

In particular, I want to explore how digital vernacular literacies can be compatible with the first-year composition classroom, which Kathleen Blake Yancey describes as a "nearly universal experience at colleges and universities across the country" (322). With

digital writing histories and experiences becoming just as universal, FYC teachers not only have much to gain from understanding the pedagogical situations in which digital vernaculars can play a role but also, as students come into writing classes more and more affected by digital writing, teachers cannot afford not to understand and contemplate how these literacies might be used to help teach students to write in other domains. When Yancey addresses teachers of writing in her 2004 CCCC address, she asks, "Don't you wish that the energy and motivation that students bring to some of these other genres they would bring to our assignments?" (298). While Yancey is right—we should wish that students would bring the same rigor and purpose to our classroom that comes from their digital writing—we should also look to their rhetoric and help them find ways to transfer effective rhetorical moves from situation to situation.

Rhetorical Moves: How Are Digital Arguments Compatible With Standard Academic Ones?

Embodied Literacies student writing suggests, first, that students often use the same rhetorical strategies in digital spaces that are valued in other discourses.[28] As examples from previous chapters have indicated, conversational writing and writing that relies on knowledge of digital vernacular literacies often show elements of academic rhetorical moves. Take, for example, the strategic way in which Olivia explains how she

[28] When the sample of blog writing statistically analyzed at the language level for the three original academic rubric terms in the blog writing—transitions, causals, and hypotheticals—students were no less likely to use these terms in their blog writing than they were in the source-based academic essays they completed later, after writing online in digital domains. That is, according to initial parametric testing, when we analyze first, middle, and last blog posting alongside the first, middle, and last paragraphs of students' source-based essays, there is no significant difference the frequency of transitional, causal, or hypothetical words that signal rhetoric-building in student papers.

makes decisions about what to post and what not to post on social networking spaces like Facebook. Olivia says, "if my mother would be disappointed in me, my grandmother would roll over in her grave or i wouldn't want it to headline the news, then i probably shouldn't be involved in it." This statement looks very simple and the lowercase "i" immediately marks the passage as informal vernacular, but, in fact, in this sentence Olivia sets up a complicated hypothetical relationship between ideas and does it much more gracefully than many Embodied Literacies students do in their academic writing. By taking advantage of how often digital forums serve at once as 1) scenes where students naturally practice rhetorical strategies that cross discourses and domains and 2) as ways to capture large amounts of student writing, teachers could use online writing spaces for a range of puposes: to capture student writing, to help students revisit and assess their own rhetorical strategies, and to find ways to implement similar strategies in discourses in which they have less previous experience.

Classroom Community as Social Community

If the rhetorical moves present in digital writing point to opportunities for teachers to talk with students about transferring rhetorical moves, the highly social and socially-situated nature of digital rhetorical situations offers different implications for the classroom. Students' digital texts show us that students like to engage one another in digital spaces, and that, even when unprompted, they interact in ways that cross social boundaries and complicate hard and fast lines between personal and interactive classroom communication. Their digital habits remind us that the writing classroom is a social community for students, even as it remains a personal spaces. Combining this notion of blogs with theories of genre, Carolyn R. Miller and Dawn Shepard in "Blogging as Social

Action: A Genre Analysis of the Weblog" seek to understand the *kairos* that makes the blog a repeated strategy for responding to reocurring rhetorical situations. Miller and Shepard suggest that "two themes" describe writing on weblogs: their concern with both "self expression" and "community development" (np). Miller and Shepard write:

> Because the personal form of the blog is what seems to both motivate and satisfy the readers and writers of blogs and thus to have particular evolutionary survival value, we suspect that the generic exigence that motivates bloggers is related less to the need for information that to the self and the relations between selves. (np)

Although Miller and Shepard's work was not intended to examine pedagogical uses of blogs, but rather to determine the exigencies to which blogs respond, their theories both help explain the social and personal writing Embodied Literacies students produced in their class blogs, and point to implications for why blogs in particular might be useful tools for helping students reflect on personal past literacy experiences while producing public, social writing for different audiences.

Although the classroom blogs used in the six Embodied Literacies classes seemed to invite genuine interactivity and social exchange, not every teaching experiment using blogs has garnered such results. Steven Krause in "When Blogging Goes Bad: A Cautionary Tale About Blogs, Email Lists, Discussion, and Interaction" (2004) describes his disappointment with the level of interactivity his graduate students displayed in blog writing. While he attributes partial blame to the open-endedness of his assignment, he primarily blames the blog itself, concluding:

> Blogs do not work well as a facilitator of dynamic discussion and interaction between between members of a specific discourse community (a writing class, for example), and […] in terms of writing pedagogy, they do not have the truly interactive or 'collaborative' writing potential of an electronic mailing list. (np)

There are several differences between Krause's classroom blog use and that of the Embodied Literacies students, who were given specific prompts about which to write. In addition, first-year college students arguably enter online classroom contexts with different past digital literacy experiences than older students taking graduate classes. Importantly, younger students are likely to see digital mediums as social and interactive in more widespread ways than students entering college even four or five years ago.

From Krause's failed experiment, however, there is valuable advice to be taken. Teachers should not assume all digital mediums accomplish the same goals in the classroom. When EL students interacted socially in chat forums particularly, for example, they found productive and respectful ways of negotiating conflict and disagreement, which writing teachers may find useful for the FYC classroom. For example, one classroom chat moved from a discussion in which students all agreed that gays and lesbians are discriminated against today to a discussion in which students' disagreed about related topics:

> Stuart: Back in the day(talking ancient times) homosexual behavior(technically bisexual) was not an uncommon thing,nor was it looked down on.

Lucas: i just think alot of ppl who say they are christians fear homosexuality because they are told it's wrong in church but they dont understand why,so they sit back and hate

Stuart: Most people don't think about their religion, they just accept.

Jasmine: well it really was not accepted in acient days

Lucas: i know i think about my religion, thats the only reason i do accept

Teacher: Well, I think most religious people come to a point where they question and then make choices.

Jasmine: it was more like a punishment

Teacher: question the dogmas of their faith

Teacher: hmmm??? [to Jasmine]

Lucas: not accept, but love anyways

Stuart: History and Homosexuality [linked to website]

Jasmine: why did you put the link up?

Stuart: It contains links to and information on homosexuality in ancient times.

Lucas: yeah

Jasmine: oh ok

The first two statements of this exchange by Stuart and Lucas begin threads for discussion that weave through this chat. Stuart starts stating a historical claim quite simply: "Back in the day(talking ancient times) homosexual behavior(technically bisexual) was not an uncommon thing,nor was it looked down on." The specific historical discussion Stuart tries to initiate becomes woven into the discussion that Lucas begins

about religion and homosexuality. In the discussion about religion and homosexuality, Lucas opens by suggesting that many religious people "sit back and hate" gays and lesbians because they do not understand how to reconcile them with the things they hear in church. Almost simultaneously after these opening claims, two counterclaims—two blatant disagreements—are made to the original statements. To the first historical discussion of homosexuality, Jasmine replies by disagreeing clearly with what Stuart has just said about homosexuality in ancient cultures, and shortly after Lucas begins the discussion on religion, he makes a counterclaim answering Stuart's suggestion that "most people don't think" about their religion by suggesting that it is just that—thinking very hard about his religion—that makes him more tolerant. Within this short overlapping, sometimes fragmented, exchange, the disagreement remains a part of the discussion. Stuart even makes the move to use another source, his link to the History and Homosexuality website, to support his claim and persuade the group, especially Jasmine, that they should pay attention to his claim.

Disagreement and the clashing of beliefs and value systems is inevitably a part of any social situation, but not always a positive or productive part of the classroom situation. Many EL students saw disagreement as a natural part of the social classroom situation, and making claims that countered others' arguments and posited new possibilities was a very real part of their writing experience. In this particular chat meeting, the students who displayed strong disagreement ended their conversation just moments later with as much ease as if they were leaving a formal parlor, with Jasmine even using a common chat room abbreviation ("ttyl") to tell the group that she would talk to them later:

Stuart: But it seems to be 8:50, gents and ladies.

Jasmine: ttyl

Teacher: Thanks, guys.

Stuart: Shalom!

These students' language is, of course, very informal and, as Jasmine illustrates, they call on the stylistic writing practices they are familiar with from their past digital reading and writing experiences. But even when the writing acts look different and when students show agency differently from how we expect them to in most formal, academic writing situations, their writing does rhetorical work, even as it builds identity and situates them as part of the classroom community.

Codeswitching, Rhetorical Situation, and Play

Albert Rouzie in *At Play in the Field of Writing: A Serio-Ludic Rhetoric* (2005) describes what he identifies as a forced binary between ideas of work and play, especially as they manifest themselves in rhetoric and composition in our current institutional context. According to Rouzie, "a normative ideology of work, reality, seriousness, practicality, and adult behavior continues to rule postsecondary institutions, blinding most educators to the significance of the play already occurring in their classrooms, preventing them from addressing it as an interesting phenomenon in its own right" (27). Rouzie's sentiment in itself is playful: of course, on one hand writing teachers want students to practice "adult behavior," yet on the other hand, we also want to encourage experimentation, risk-taking, even conflict and disagreement. As evidenced by writers like Stuart, students in Embodied Literacies classes frequently used digital writing as an opportunity to play with language, to experiment with how they might use it to build

identities, to question assumptions, to persuade one another. Rouzie says that as a writing teacher he has noticed "playful discourse in IC was not merely playful or silly or irrelevant. Rather, it seemed to play a more important role in the inevitable conflicts of this discoursing, sometime spurring conflict, sometime appearing to resolve it" (5).

Signs of students playing with shifting discourses in Embodied Literacies student writing were often more subtle than Stuart's "pants" encomium or mediated conflicts in chat forums. Within individual blog postings, students played with codeswitching and shifting discourses. Take, for example, this blog from Marissa, which she writes in response to a prompt that asks her to explore blogs written by Iranians:

> After reading about blogging in Iran, it makes you appreciate your freedom of speech. In Iran, one can be arrested and subjected to torture chambers just for simply expressing themselves. If a blogger were to criticize any government officals or laws, they would immediately be arrested and bail could be more than $200,000. In one blog that I read, a young girl expresses how happy she is that an Iranian finally won a Nobel Peace Prize (October 2003). She later talks about an Iranian human rights activist that was detained. She states, "Behzad Zarrinpour, Iranian poet and journalist had been detained in an unknown place […].

Codeswitching is evident here, as Marissa moves from a generalized, informal "you" in the first sentence to much more formal "one" in the second sentence, which she follows soon after by positing a hypothetical about what could happen to anti-government Iranian bloggers. The more academic-sounding discourse she takes up in the second sentence is the dominant one in this posting; Marissa's main motive for the post in the

end is an academic, critical one. Nevertheless, the shift from the first sentence to the rest of the posting is noteworthy.

In their blog entries, student writers experimented with changing voices—even assuming fictional ones and playing with different roles, personas, and identities. In an assignment near the end of the semester, some teachers prompted students to take advantage of how the blog invited codeswitching and multiple voices by asking students to write in the voice of one character from *The Laramie Project*. In a way, this kind of assignment complicates the way we understand the agents we see writing on the blog, by calling attention to the fact that online personas are constructed personas, and that rhetoric always means creating the "I" on which a writer builds an argument. Paul, for example, voices an I that is not his own when he writes as a middle-aged gay character from the play. In this scenario Paul actually quotes what his character Jonas Sloaker said in the play and then he elaborates:

> My name is Jonas Slonaker and I am a forty five year old Laramie resident. When those play people came through asking us all those questions about Matthew, I really didn't know what my reaction would be. You see, there are two different sides of Laramie. On one side are the "normal" citizens; those who "live and let live." And on the other side you find a somewhat smaller group. This group makes up Laramie's gay residents. It is not easy to be a homosexual in Laramie, and, contrary to popular belief, the best way to deal with it is to just keep your mouth shut. When they asked me about what had changed since Matthew's case, I told them, "You know, its been a year since Matthew Shepard died, and they

> still haven't passed shit in Wyoming...at a state level, any town, nobody anywhere, has passed hate crime legislation, nobody has passed anything here." I think that is a true representation of Laramie. A town with an increasing number of homosexual[s]; a town with a brutal murder; but mostly, a town where nothing has changed. Don't believe everything you see in this play. It has been edited, and the town you imagine as Laramie is far different from the ideas portrayed by its "normal" population.

Much like Stuart did in his "pants" encomium, Paul writing as Slonaker uses conversational rhetorical techniques, gesturing to his writing using the pronoun "you" especially in phrases like "you know" and "Don't believe everything you see." He uses this conversational tone clearly to argue in the voice of Slonaker that despite all evidence to the contrary, Laramie, Wyoming, is a town that has not yet taken Matthew Shepard's death seriously enough to do anything about it.

Paul's blog posting is pedagogically interesting if only because of the extent to which it complicates notions about the expressive nature of blog writing and shows how far student online identity construction can go if pushed. The blog entry also helps demonstrate students' codeswiching abilities when viewed alongside the academic writing that followed it. In his formal, source-based essay entitled "Eye For An Eye: (Except for Minorities)," Paul helps us see in a completely different form many of the same ideas he works through as Jonas Slonaker on the blog. To open his paper, Paul writes, "Is it realistic for all of human kind to overcome impulses infused within us from the beginning of time?" and goes on to give a dictionary definition of prejudice and to offer the idea of prejudice as "a mere source for unexplainable, unacceptable and

sometimes unimaginable crimes." In this introduction to his paper, Paul seemingly begins quite far from his blog entry. However, in a more general sense, the ideas of prejudice and hate with which he begins are intensely related to what Jonas Slonaker experienced in the play and those feelings that Paul must have considered as he grappled with how to write from Slonaker's perspective in the blog posting.

As Paul draws in nearer to the subject matter his paper really deals with, we can hear echoses of the blog writing . Describing details of Matthew Shepard's death, Paul explains that "this single event would spark a storm of media coverage, religious discussions and bias crime legislation that still continues today." From this point onward, though Paul's paper circles around the issue of bias law and hate crimes and their definitions, he also considers issues very closely related to the ones that he discussed as Jonas Slonaker. Although his own voice is more tempered, Paul still wants to discuss why "they haven't passed shit in Wyoming":

> Wyoming first attempted to institute bias crime laws in 1994, two years after Congress established the classification of a hate crime, and it has been unsuccessful in passing any such bill since. When Matthew Shepard was brutally beaten, many bias crime law support[er]s saw a critical moment to push for the passing of such laws, but their valiant efforts have failed each time any bill has come up for vote. In 1999, several House Bills were moving closer to being passed, but yet again, law makers had problems voting for a bill to guard homosexuals.

Here, Paul betrays his feelings about bias crime legislation when he describes the failed efforts of bias law legislation supporters as "valiant," but—and far more academic—than

the voice describing and analyzing Wyoming's legislative battle is one far different from the one Paul used to voice Jonas Slonaker.

Whereas in his short blog posting Paul charged his argument by creating a credible, sympathetic, emotion-filled voice, to make an argument in his extended, source-based essay, he becomes more analytical, developing several reasons for the lack of action taken in Wyoming to legislate bias crimes. For example, first he attributes the lack of legislation to an isolationist stance and quotes Wyoming's then governor to help him prove his point:

> After Shepard's death in 1999, Governor Geringer asserted that Wyoming, "can and will deal with this properly on our own" (59). The aggression for bias crime legislation from outside sources has played a large role in both the failure and success of any bills brought before legislature, but the fact of the matter is that Wyoming clearly wants to be left alone.

And Paul also points to a large religious base that he feels has both much control over state legislaton and much disdain for gays and lesbians. Paul says, "the churches of Wyoming have controlled the whole situation from the beginning. They fear that including sexual orientation in a [bias crime legislation] bill is promoting the interests and well-being of homosexuals."

Paul's formal, academic paper shows a number of relationships between the digital writing that he did in the voice of a character from *The Laramie Project* early in the writing process and the academic research he later performed and source-based writing he produced. Whether or not writing in character allowed Paul to enter into his chosen issue to assume an insider perspective, he really makes the same argument in the

blog that he eventually makes in his academic writing. At the same time, he shows that he does not confuse the style and socially-situatedness of writing done in the digital domain with that of the academic domain: there is a clear difference in the voice, tone, and even many of the rhetorical strategies he uses to defend his claim. Although we see hints of strong feelings about his writing topic creep into his analysis, Paul enters the parlor at least trying to be relatively polite and objective. In short, Paul's general argument and rhetorical purpose transferred from the blog posting to the academic essay, even as he switched codes, means, and agencies for making it.

Rhetoric and Self-Conscious Language Use

How do we facilitate the kind of rhetorical transfer that Paul accomplishes for students less rhetorically astute than Paul? And, how do we insure that when students do codeswitch that they do so consciously, using rhetoric most appropriate to the situation? The shifting social voices logged in the blog postings and chat room transcripts show an incredibly diverse cross section of writing that displays myriad rhetorical moves, but teaching students to recognize these moves as rhetorical strategies or understandings that they might deploy in different mediums is a task much more difficult. Rhetorical theory, of course, already has a longstanding tradition for discussing the awareness and consciousness with which individuals approach situations in which they use language. Drawing from the classical western rhetorical tradition, Aristotle's famous definition of rhetoric as the ability to "see the available means of persuasion in each case" still remains pertinent to understanding the role that self-conscious deliberation plays in employing language rhetorically (Kennedy 35). Even today, Aristotle's definition helps us understand the role of making calculated language choices based on a thorough

understanding of the "means" of persuasion available in each purpose-bound "case" a rhetor approaches.

Aristotle's goal to schematize and simplify rhetoric by describing the particular cases in which a rhetor might need particular moves might seem impossible given the current contexts in which students find themselves. The school, home, work, and digital, "cases" that demand students' self-conscious language use are complex situations in which social, political, and cultural exigencies meet and overlap in ways that neither teachers nor students can always fully understand. Yet, if students are to become self-reflexive practitioners, then it is crucial that they be able to identify the exigencies and contexts surrounding and inviting their rhetorical acts. Following this logic, then, the first step in teaching students to consider their language practices more critically should come in having them connect often in writing classes with theories of the rhetorical situation. Lloyd Bitzer in "The Rhetorical Situation" (1968) famously first outlines the concept of the rhetorical situation, which he elaborately defines as:

> a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence. (304)

Bitzer's focus upon the factors external to the rhetor's body that evoke an utterance and his insistence that the utterance must have the *potential* to effect change in those external factors can help students pin down what it means to have different "cases" in which rhetoric can be active and perform.

Next, urging students to critique Bitzer's—and even Aristotle's—limited notions of what "cases" or "situations" might invite rhetoric by having students critically analyze their own or their classmates' digital rhetorics and vernacular practices can help open students' eyes to the rich, varied, playful rhetorical strategies they already deploy in their digital writing. Bitzer, of course, qualifies his notion of situation—and, in turn, of rhetoric—time and time again by qualifying what sorts of situations can actually be rhetorical and by referring most often to very formal occasions like political speeches. The Embodied Literacies students' digital writing shows that the "cases" or "situations" in which we might see rhetoric in use are varied, they are complex, and they demand that rhetoric and composition scholars look more closely at where rhetoric can be found and what work it can do. Teaching students to realize this and to identify their own situation-specific rhetorics is a crucial step toward self-reflexivity.

Now, in the IM world, however, it is much harder to teach students to see "cases" or "situations" for rhetoric as predictable, unchanging, or easy to identify. Situations where we can see rhetoric in use are simply much broader and much less stable than the courts of law that Aristotle refers to in *The Rhetoric* or the high political speeches that Bitzer uses to reference situations for rhetoric. Instead, Embodied Literacies students show that situations for rhetoric are fluid, and they assume widely-ranging voices or personas when acting rhetorically, even when their voices are not "their own." The IM world refocuses attention on the constantly shifting places, occasions, and moves associated with rhetoric. To follow, in a world in which the occasions for rhetoric are multiple and shifting, we need to teach students that the educated rhetor does not and cannot simply obey a strict set of rules constraining language use, but instead must move

through countless opportunities for rhetoric that are neither predictable nor always rehearsable. A rhetorical education that sees only the most formal and the most academic situations as opportunities for rhetoric ignores many of the ways rhetoric is already applied in situations daily. Instead of teaching students a few recognizable language rules, a rhetorical education must train students to notice and move across a multitude of situations as self-reflexive, deliberate, and self-conscious communicators poised to see moments of *kairos* and to use all available means to persuade across the countless shifting rhetorical situations they face as readers and writers.

In the chapter entitled "What writing teachers should know about rhetoric" in *A Rhetoric For Writing Teachers*, Erika Lindeman remarks that the "the brief exchanges between people engaged in informal conversation usually do not have a rhetorical purpose" (42). This statement illustrates just some of the stuggles at work in teaching student self-reflexive rhetoric. Our challenge as rhetoric teacher-scholars is to help students understand that any exchange can be a rhetorical exchange, that even digital writing is rhetoric-based and works through concepts like ethos, voice, and persona. The fact that students so intuitively play with these concepts in digital writing situations can only work to our benefit as teachers if we take the time to first teach students about rhetorical theory and the rhetorical situation. Students will benefit by realizing the amount of writing that they as cyborg writers with unique literacy backgrounds already do on a daily basis and the extent to which they already understand how to conform to the conventions of different genres that respond to different rhetorical situations.

Acknowledging Rhetorical Histories: Implications for Digital Vernaculars

If first-year writing needs new pedagogies that teach students to be self-reflexive and self-conscious about all reading and writing experiences—even those that that take place in online spaces—then there are several practical issues yet to be fully addressed by the field. How does this affect the pattern of setting up an FYC class? How does it affect how we define and assess good writing in the college writing classroom? How can looking at Embodied Literacies student writing help us question assumptions that currently ground the way we conceive of student writing? Yancey argues that in the way the first-year composition classroom is currently conceived "the classroom writer is not a member of a collaborative group with a common project linked to the world at large and delivered in multiple genres and media but a singular person writing over and over again—to the teacher" (310). Embodied Literacies students show quite clearly that students use digital mediums to create writing publics in the classroom. As Yancey challenges rhetoric and composition to find new ways to conceive of classroom purposes and dynamics, Embodied Literacies students challenge us to rethink what we value in FYC, how we create sites for active engagement, and how students' past digital literacy histories should influence both of those endeavors.

Although this project is not of scope to suggest all possibilities for developing specific assignment sequences based on students' digital vernaculars, I want to conclude by stressing the importance of having students read, reread, and reflect on their own digital writing—both of the self-sponsored and classroom variety—in order to begin to treat it and their writing in other discourses reflexively. Writing teachers might highlight many different rhetorical strategies and practices common when students call on digital

vernacular knowledge, and have students read their own—or their classmates'—writing to trace these rhetorical concepts. For example, teachers might ask students to revisit their persona and identity construction in online writing, and they might then follow this activity by explaining how ethos-building strategies are always necessary in order to develop a credible voice that identifies with its audience in any type of writing. To teach an even more practical concept, teachers might have students revisit something as simple as their use of the word "you," in order to study a very mechanical problem with which many incoming college writers struggle. Scrutinizing the use of "you" in digital domains could help students better understand the difference between the general, uncontextualized "you" that does not often help students identify with their audience and the conversational, interactive uses of "you" that actually can be very effective ways of reaching out to an audience, as several Embodied Literacies writers demonstrated. Or, teachers might have students look at how their descriptions of online mediums show their socially situated and interactive nature, which could lead into a discussion of how advanced writers see academic writing as interactive in ways very comparable to online domains. I think the possibilities are endless, and the challenge is for rhetoric teacher-scholars to identify new ways of building bridges between digital vernaculars and other discourses.

Doubtless more study is still needed about what happens for students as the concepts of digital, vernacular, and academic overlap in the IM world. We need additional studies of digital writing in classroom spaces to help us understand whether working to make students more aware of their own digital writing practices and focusing on the role of shifting rhetorical situations can actually have any concrete effects on their

ability to write across situations and for different purposes. And, finally, we need to continue to interrogate power struggles and assumptions that can occur when digital discourses enter the academy, and we should continue to ask how this affects students entering first-year writing classrooms.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

STUDENT SURVEY QUESTION #53

I do my best writing in (pick one)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	other	5	2.5	2.6	2.6
	summary	23	11.7	11.7	14.3
	description	12	6.1	6.1	20.4
	book report	8	4.1	4.1	24.5
	Lab report	2	1.0	1.0	25.5
	letter	9	4.6	4.6	30.1
	business letter	1	.5	.5	30.6
	personal narrative	9	4.6	4.6	35.2
	email	7	3.6	3.6	38.8
	blog or online journal entry	2	1.0	1.0	39.8
	chat	2	1.0	1.0	40.8
	analytical essay	12	6.1	6.1	46.9
	research paper (with information/sources give to you)	4	2.0	2.0	49.0
	research paper (with information/sources you had to find)	32	16.2	16.3	65.3
	web design (including coding)	1	.5	.5	65.8
	PowerPoint slide shows	5	2.5	2.6	68.4
	resume or cv (curriculum vitae)	2	1.0	1.0	69.4
	journalism	7	3.6	3.6	73.0
	creative writing	20	10.2	10.2	83.2
	poetry	13	6.6	6.6	89.8
	spoken word	4	2.0	2.0	91.8
	short stories	7	3.6	3.6	95.4
	long fiction	1	.5	.5	95.9
	song lyrics	8	4.1	4.1	100.0
	Total	196	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		197	100.0		

APPENDIX B:

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENTS

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Embodying Literacy: Examining Teaching and Learning
with Multiple Mediums in First-Year Composition

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a study that involves human research. This study will examine how composing in different mediums, including oral and digital mediums, affects the writing students do for academic audiences in first-year composition. The purpose of the study is to provide teachers and scholars with facts and data that will improve their understanding of college writing and will help them teach writing and teacher training more effectively in the future.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

Should you choose to participate, you will be involved in the study from 24 August 2005 through the end of the fall semester on 19 December 2005. (The analysis phase of the project will continue until 1 August 2007.) If you participate, you will not be asked to spend any extra time on the study above the regular requirements for your English 101 class, but you will give Embodying Literacy researchers permission to use your audio-taped interview, your survey responses, and your written coursework for purposes of the research project.

RISKS

There are no significant risks involved in this study: Participation in this study is not in any way related to your grade in English 101, and your instructor will not know whether you have decided to participate in the study until after final course grades have been assigned. In addition, to preserve your confidentiality, all data that you provide to the study will be identified with a pseudonym, and your name will at no time be directly associated with data you submit.

BENEFITS

Since the goal of the study is to increase knowledge about writing and to determine best methods for teaching first-year composition, your participation in this research project will give you an opportunity to help improve both scholars' understanding of writing and the quality of first-year writing instruction. Should you choose to participate, you will not only contribute helpful examples of writing, but you will also contribute your ideas and opinions about how writing is taught, and that information can have a direct impact on future writing instruction at the University of Tennessee and beyond.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information in the study records will be kept confidential. During the course of the study, which concludes formally in August 2007, data will be stored securely in 408 McClung Tower and will be made available only to project researchers unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link participants to the study.

_____ Participant's initials

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or procedures, you may contact the project's principal researchers: Dr. Jenn Fishman (408 McClung Tower/ jfishman@utk.edu/ 865.974.6958) and Stacey Pigg (311 McClung Tower/ spigg2@utk.edu/ 865.974.5401). You can also talk with your course instructor, [TBA], at [office TBA] ([phone number TBA] or [email TBA]), and you can contact the Director of First-Year Writing, Dr. Mary Jo Reiff, at 310 McClung Tower (mreiff@utk.edu or 865.974.6936).

If you have questions at any time about the study or procedures (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study), you may contact co-principal investigator and researcher Dr. Jenn Fishman (408 McClung Tower/ jfishman@utk.edu/ 865.974.6958). If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at 865.974.3466.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read and understood the above information, and I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Participant's printed name _____

Researcher's signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's name _____

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Embodying Literacy: Examining Teaching and Learning
with Multiple Mediums in First-Year Composition
Text Archive

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to contribute to a research archive that involves human research. This archive will contain electronic and written texts produced by participants in the Embodying Literacy study. The purpose of the archive is to provide scholars in composition and related fields with a historical resource that can aid them in the ongoing study of college writing.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

Should you choose to participate, writing that you consent to contribute to the Embodying Literacy study will be placed in the study archive after 1 August 2007, when the Embodying Literacy research project formally comes to an end. If you decide to contribute, none of your time and no extra effort on your part will be required, but you will give the Embodying Literacy researchers permission to retain your written coursework for purposes of future research.

RISKS

Contributing to the Embodying Literacy archive is not in any way related to your grade in English 101, and your instructor will not know whether you have decided to contribute. In addition, to preserve your confidentiality, all data that you provide to the archive will be identified with a pseudonym, and your name will not be directly associated with any data you submit.

BENEFITS

Since the goal of the archive is to provide a resource that can increase knowledge about writing, your participation will give you an opportunity to help improve disciplinary knowledge of writing and first-year writing instruction, both at the University of Tennessee and beyond.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information in the Embodying Literacy archive will be kept confidential. Materials in the archive will be made available only to original project researchers and to qualified researchers in rhetoric and composition and related fields. Researchers wishing to consult the archive will apply for permission by offering proof of identity and legitimate scholarly interests. Permission to work with the archive will be granted by Dr. Jenn Fishman, co-principal investigator and researcher, or the current Director of First-Year Writing, and will require a signed statement promising to honor participant

confidentiality. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link participants to the study. Data will be stored securely in the Writing Program Office.

_____ Participant's initials

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or procedures, you may contact the project's principal researchers: Dr. Jenn Fishman (408 McClung Tower/ jfishman@utk.edu/ 865.974.6958) and Stacey Pigg (311 McClung Tower/ spigg2@utk.edu/ 865.974.5401). You can also talk with your course instructor, [TBA], at [office TBA] ([phone number TBA] or [email TBA]), and you can contact the Director of First-Year Writing, Dr. Mary Jo Reiff, at 310 McClung Tower (mreiff@utk.edu or 865.974.6936).

If you have questions at any time about the study or procedures (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study), you may contact co-principal investigator and researcher Dr. Jenn Fishman (408 McClung Tower/ jfishman@utk.edu/ 865.974.6958). If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at 865.974.3466.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study and your contribution to the archive is voluntary; you may decline to contribute without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study and you may request your materials be removed from the archive at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you choose not to submit your materials or if you choose to remove them at any time, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read and understood the above information, and I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Participant's printed name _____

Researcher's signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's name _____

APPENDIX C:

SAMPLE EXPERIMENTAL SYLLABUS

English 101: Embodying Self, Community, and Culture
University of Tennessee
Fall 2005
MWF 8:00-8:50
HSS 70

Instructor: Stacey Pigg
Office: South Stadium Hall 323
Office Hours: Monday and Thursday 10:00 am-12:00 noon and by appointment
Email: spigg2@utk.edu (always the best way to contact me)

Welcome!
Welcome to English 101! Generally, this course is designed to introduce you to the rhetorical reading, critical thinking, and analytical writing skills you will need in the college academic community and beyond, and this specific 101 course is designed as part of a research project that will work to evaluate different teaching and learning methods for first-year college writing. We will focus on discovering, evaluating, and analyzing the ways in which different writers work to persuade their audiences—or present arguments—in a variety of texts. In addition to evaluating the arguments of other writers, we'll work to implement those rhetorical strategies that we identify in our own writing. By the end of the course everyone should be able to do the following:

- Critically read texts and analyze the situations that motivate writers, the choices that writers make, and the effects of those choices on readers
- Analyze how writing employs content, structure, style, tone, and conventions appropriate to the demands of a particular audience, purpose, genre, or context
- Develop and articulate a position clearly, thoughtfully, and persuasively
- Write persuasive arguments, developing and deploying support and evidence appropriate to audience and purpose, and considering counterclaims and multiple perspectives.
- Respond constructively to drafts-in-progress, applying rhetorical concepts to revisions of their own and peers' writing
- Analyze multiple modes of communication and the ways in which a wide range of rhetorical elements (visual and verbal) operate in the act of persuasion
- Evaluate sources and integrate the ideas of others into their own writing (through paraphrase, summary, analysis, and evaluation)

But What's All This About Self, Community, and Culture?
In addition to focusing on the rhetorical reading and writing skills detailed above, our class will dedicate itself to reading and analyzing texts that give us a glimpse of life from points of view that may be radically different from those we encounter on a day-to-day basis here at UT. A key to success in this class will be your ability to step into the shoes of a young autistic boy, a teenage girl from Iran, and a whole community recovering from a hate crime that occurred within its city limits. Please realize that the texts we read and subjects we discuss will often be controversial and will require maturity, an open mind, and the willingness to engage with material and with questions that may be difficult in more ways than one.

What Will Be Expected of Me During Class Time?
Trust me, hardly anyone enters an English or composition class feeling absolutely confident with his or her writing. That's why we will constantly work collaboratively as a class to share ideas, invent paper topics, and revise and edit work together, putting all of our individual strengths together to produce better work. This class is NOT a lecture class, but instead will operate as a workshop in which you will be expected to enter into conversation with your fellow classmates and me in class discussion, online forums, peer review sessions, and in your writing. All writing, after all, can be described as a conversation of sorts, so the more you are willing to talk and interact, the more you will see your writing improve this semester.

Required Texts:
Haddon, Mark. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time.*
Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis.*
Kaufman, Moises, and The Tectonic Theater Project. *The Laramie Project*.
Glenn, Miller, Webb, and Gray. *The Writer's Harbrace Handbook Brief*
Fishman, Jenn, Stacey Pigg, & Devon Asdell with Miya Abbott, Bill Doyle, Amanda Watkins. *Self, Community, and Culture: Readings in Multiple Literacies.*

Grading Scale and Breakdown

A	90-100
B+	87-89
B	80-86
C+	77-79
C	70-76
NC	Below 70

Participation:	30%
Take-home Essay	5%
Unit #1:	15%
Unit #2:	20%
Unit #3:	25%
Final Portfolio:	5%

Your participation grade is separated into 3 parts: listening actively in class and participating in class discussion (10%), completing everyday writing and homework (10%), and giving in-class presentations (10%). Please keep in mind that you must complete every assignment to pass this course, and that **no assignment will be complete (read: you will not receive credit for it) until you have completed the questionnaire**

that corresponds to it. I will consider giving incompletes only in extreme cases and only if all assignments for Units 1 and 2 have been completed in full.

Revision
You will have the chance to revise/rewrite your final papers for Units 1 and 2, and I will average your new revision grade with your original grade. **Revisions for Unit 1's final paper will be due on or before the end of Unit 2, and revisions for Unit 2's final paper will be due on or before the end of Unit 3.** You should note, however, that revising does not just mean editing! If you turn in a rewritten or revised paper, you should first meet with me to discuss your paper and then make significant changes to its argumentation and organization before I will consider adjusting your grade.

Attendance
Because this course is a workshop class with a strong emphasis on collaboration, your attendance is absolutely crucial to everyone's success. You will be given 3 absences to use at your own discretion with no questions asked. **After 3 absences, however, I will lower your final grade by one half letter for every absence, meaning that 8 total absences for the class is an automatic NC.** If for any reason (sports, institutionally-affiliated extracurricular activity, etc.) you know that you will need to miss more than 3 class periods, please see me immediately to discuss your options. **Please also know that 2 late arrivals to class equals one absence.**

Blackboard or Online@UT
You can access your Blackboard site by visiting online.utk.edu and then logging in using your UT Net ID and password. This class will use Blackboard extensively to record all assignments and for various elements of class discussion and peer review. We will discuss the details of how to use Blackboard later, and you can email me with questions anytime you have a problem with or question about the site.

Late Papers
Late papers should not be an issue for our class because class time will focus on the process of writing them. You **will upload all assignments to our Blackboard site before class, complete the online questionnaire that corresponds to the assignment, and submit hard copies of the assignment to me at the beginning of class on the date the paper or project is due**. Unless I have granted you an extension in advance, late submission of papers or projects will result in a 10-point deduction per class day.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism
Hilltopics gives the following guidelines regarding academic honesty:

> Students shall not plagiarize. Plagiarism is using the intellectual property or product of someone else without giving proper credit. The undocumented use of someone else's words or ideas in any medium of communication (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge) is a serious offense, subject to

disciplinary action that may include failure in a course and/or dismissal from the University. (10)

Just so that we are completely clear on this, here are specific examples of plagiarism taken from UT's website:

- copying without proper documentation (quotation marks and a citation) written or spoken words, phrases, or sentences from any source;
- summarizing without proper documentation (usually a citation) ideas from another source (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge);
- borrowing facts, statistics, graphs, pictorial representations, or phrases without acknowledging the source (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge);
- collaborating on a graded assignment without the instructor's approval;
- submitting work, either in whole or in part, created by a professional service and used without attribution (e.g., paper, speech, bibliography, or photograph).

Basically, use your common sense, and if you have questions about citations or receiving outside help, just ask me ahead of time. I do not tolerate plagiarism, and if you are found guilty of plagiarism, your penalty could be an F for the paper or a grade of NC for the course.

Conferences
At least twice during the semester we will meet briefly outside of class in my office to discuss your work. **These conferences are mandatory and will count as two class absences should you choose to skip one that you've scheduled**.

Disability Services
If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a documented disability or if you have emergency information to share, please contact the Office of Disability Services at 191 Hoskins Library at 974-6087. This will ensure that you are properly registered for services.

A Few Tips
- Always, always ask for help at any point in your papers or readings. Email me your questions and take advantage of office hours to talk with me in person about your reading and writing.
- Definitely visit the **Writing Center in Room 211 of the Humanities and Social Sciences Building** for help with your papers. The Writing Center is a resource that can help you with all aspects of your writing, especially if you visit them at the earliest stages of forming ideas for your papers. Trust me; these guys are really good, and even the most confident writers will benefit from talking with them.
- If you want some extra attention with your writing, or feel especially less than confident, you should consider signing up for English 103, the companion course

to 101. See me for more information. English 103 will also help a lot if you have trouble with putting off papers until the last minute!

- **Reading in college is not like reading in high school**. In high school most often you were expected to read just to get the basic facts or take away information from a text. Now it is your responsibility to do more: to read "against the grain" and question texts, to think about why the author makes the choices he or she does, and to create your own knowledge and ideas based on what you read. I will expect that you have approached a text this way every time we discuss something you've read.

Embodying Self, Community, and Culture Course Guide	
Week 1	**Unit 1: Reading Curiously, Reading Rhetorically**
W 8/24	Course Overview
F 8/26	Read "The New Theory of Learning" in class Assignment: Take-home essay (due electronically by 8:00 am Saturday, 8/27)
Week 2	**20-minute conferences from 8/26 to 9/1**
M 8/29	Work with take-home essay in class Text: *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*
W 8/31	Reading rhetorically Text: *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*
F 9/2	Reading rhetorically Text: *Curious* and a reader selection
Week 3	
M 9/5	Holiday—No Classes
W 9/7	Reading rhetorically/identifying rhetorical stances Text: Reader selection(s)
F 9/9	Identifying rhetorical stances Text: *Curious* and reader selection(s)
Week 4	
M 9/12	Identifying rhetorical stances Small group presentations
W 9/14	Identifying rhetorical stances

	Small group presentations
F 9/16	Identifying rhetorical stances Small group presentations
Week 5	
M 9/19	First drafts due electronically In class: Discuss revising rhetorically *Text: Persepolis* and reader selection(s) from *Everyday Use*
W 9/21	Revising rhetorically Continue *Persepolis* intro
F 9/23	Final Paper 1 due Continue *Persepolis* intro
Week 6	**Unit 2: Self, Context, and Community**
M 9/26	Discuss/embody *Persepolis* with reader selection(s)
W 9/28	Discuss/embody *Persepolis* with reader selection(s)
F 9/30	Blog workshop in computer room—HSS 202
Week 7	
M 10/3	Continue work with *Persepolis* and blogs
W 10/5	Continue work with *Persepolis* and blogs
F 10/7	Workshop: synthesizing perspectives
Week 8	
M 10/10	Continue blogging about *Persepolis* and reader texts
W 10/12	Continue blogging about *Persepolis* and reader texts
F 10/14	Fall Break—No classes

Week 9	
M 10/17	Draft due Workshop activity + start blog peer review
W 10/19	In class grammar day + blog peer review due Introduce *Laramie* and blog assignment
F 10/21	Final drafts of Paper 2 due, last day to turn in revisions of Paper 1 More *Laramie* introduction
Week 10	**Unit 3: rhetorical analysis, contextual analysis, working with sources**
M 10/24	Discuss *The Laramie Project* unit
W 10/26	Discuss *Laramie* and contextualizing identity
F 10/28	Workshop on Studio software and audio presentation
Week 11	**Group conferences on opinion essays this week**
M 10/31	Working with sources/contextualizing identity Opinion piece drafts due
W 11/2	Working with sources/contextualizing identity
F 11/4	Working with sources/contextualizing identity
Week 12	
M 11/7	Workshop connecting opinion essay and final essay Introduce rhetorical problem concept
W 11/9	More on rhetorical problem concept
F 11/11	Rhetorical problems and *Laramie*
Week 13	
M 11/14	Rhetorical problems and *Laramie* Audio essay should be recorded by today

W 11/16	Rhetorical problems and *Laramie*
F 11/18	1st drafts of Paper 3 due
Week 14	
M 11/21	Workshop 1st drafts
W 11/23	Workshop continued
F 11/25	Thanksgiving Break—No Classes
Week 15	
M 11/28	2nd draft of Paper 3 due
W 11/30	Revision workshop
F 12/2	Final drafts of Paper 3 due, last day to turn in revisions of Paper 2
Week 16	
M 12/5	* LAST DAY OF CLASSES * * MANDATORY ATTENDANCE * Portfolios, final surveys due
Week 17	Final Exams!

APPENDIX D:

TYPED INTRODUCTORY SURVEY QUESTIONS

Name:
English 101 course section:
Gender:
DOB:
Major/intended major:
Minor/intended minor:
Post-college plans:

1. In addition to going to school, I also:
   - work or intend to work ___ hours a week;
   - volunteer or intend to volunteer ___ hours a week;
   - participate or intend to participate in extracurriculars sponsored by UT (clubs, frats, arts groups, sports) ___ hours a week;
   - participate or intend to participate in extracurriculars sponsored by groups outside the university (community, religious, etc.) ___ hours a week.

For questions 2-10, use the following scale to make your answers: 5=very high; 4= high; 3=average; 2= low; 1=very low.

2. My confidence overall as a writer is: 5 4 3 2 1
3. My confidence as a reader is: 5 4 3 2 1
4. My confidence as a researcher is: 5 4 3 2 1
5. My confidence speaking spontaneously in class discussion is: 5 4 3 2 1
6. My confidence in giving prepared oral reports & presentations is: 5 4 3 2 1
7. My confidence in my ability to understand verbal arguments that I read is: 5 4 3 2 1
8. My confidence in my ability to understand verbal arguments that I listen to is: 5 4 3 2 1
9. My confidence in my ability to understand arguments that use combinations of words, images, movement, and/or sound is: 5 4 3 2 1
10. My confidence in my ability to understand nonverbal arguments that use only images, movement, and/or sound is: 5 4 3 2 1

11. In high school, I did the following kinds of writing for school assignments:

    Summary
    Description
    Book report
    Lab report
    Letter

Business letter
Personal narrative
Research paper (with information/sources given to me by teacher)
Research paper (with information/sources I had to find myself)
Email
Listserv
Online discussion board
Instant Messaging
Blog or online journal entry
Blog or online journal response
Chat
Web page text or hypertext
Web design (including coding)
PowerPoint slide shows
Journalism
Creative writing
    Poetry
    Spoken word
    Short stories
    Long fiction
    Creative nonfiction
    Song lyrics
    Other (please specify)

12. In high school, I did the following types of writing outside of class (including on my own and/or at work):

Letter
Business letter
Email
Listserv
Online discussion board
Instant Messaging
Blog or online journal entry
Blog or online journal response
Chat
Web page text or hypertext
Web design (including coding)
PowerPoint slide shows
Resume or CV (curriculum vitae)
Journalism
Creative writing
    Poetry
    Spoken word
    Short stories

Long fiction
Creative nonfiction
Song lyrics
Other (please specify):

13. In high school when was given writing assignments, my teacher(s) required me to start by writing some ideas and thoughts about my topic

most of the time
often
sometimes
occasionally
never

14. In high school when was given writing assignments, my teacher(s) required me to make an outline of my paper

most of the time
often
sometimes
occasionally
never

15. In high school, my teacher(s) required me to revise writing assignments

most of the time
often
sometimes
occasionally
never

16. In high school, my teacher(s) gave me feedback on my writing when I was required to revise

most of the time
often
sometimes
occasionally
never

17. In high school, I was required to read and comment on other students' writing, and other students read and commented on my writing before we turned in final drafts of our assignments

most of the time
often
sometimes
occasionally
never

18. In high school, friends read and commented on my writing outside of class and class assignments before I turned in final drafts of my assignments

most of the time
often
sometimes
occasionally
never

19. In high school, family members read and commented on my writing before I turned in final drafts of my assignments

most of the time
often
sometimes
occasionally
never

20. In high school, a tutor read and commented on my writing before I turned in final drafts of my assignments

most of the time
often
sometimes
occasionally
never

For the following question (#21), please answer using the following scale: *5=extremely helpful; 4=somewhat helpful; 3=made little difference; 2=unhelpful; 1=extremely unhelpful; n/a=not applicable.*

21. In high school following activities were helpful to me as a writer:

writing thoughts and ideas	5	4	3	2	1	n/a
writing an outline	5	4	3	2	1	n/a
revising	5	4	3	2	1	n/a
receiving teacher feedback on my drafts	5	4	3	2	1	n/a
receiving comments from peers in class on my drafts	5	4	3	2	1	n/a
receiving comments from peers out of class on my drafts	5	4	3	2	1	n/a
receiving comments from family on my drafts	5	4	3	2	1	n/a
receiving comments from a tutor on my drafts	5	4	3	2	1	n/a

22. I own my own computer:

Yes
No

23. My family owns a computer or computers:

Yes
No

24. My high school had computers that I used:

Yes
No

25. In high school, when I had a writing assignment I used a computer to do the following (check all that apply):

To find topics to write about
To develop ideas for papers
To look up information assigned by my teacher
For typing papers
For revising papers
Other (please specify)
Not at all

26. In high school, I did the following kinds of writing (please check all that apply):

Blog postings	for school	outside of school	not at all
Chat	for school	outside of school	not at all
Instant Messaging	for school	outside of school	not at all
Email	for school	outside of school	not at all
Listserv	for school	outside of school	not at all
Gaming	for school	outside of school	not at all
Online Discussion Board	for school	outside of school	not at all
Web page text or hypertext	for school	outside of school	not at all
Web design (including coding)	for school	outside of school	not at all
PowerPoint slide shows	for school	outside of school	not at all

27. During high school, I had opportunities to participate in class discussions

most of the time
often
sometimes
occasionally
never

28. During high school, I had opportunities to give prepared oral presentations (including PowerPoint slide shows) in my classes

most of the time
often
sometimes
occasionally
never

29. During high school, I performed writing one or more times in the following ways:

I acted in a school drama (play or musical):	yes	no
I participated on a debate team:	yes	no

I recorded something I wrote for radio broadcast: yes no
I recorded something someone else wrote for radiobroadcast: yes no
I talked live from notes for radio broadcast(s): yes no
I participated in another performance activity/ other activities: yes no
If yes, please specify:

30. When I write school assignments, I think about the person or people who will read my writing (check all that apply):
--when I am coming up with my ideas for writing
--when I am first starting to write
--when I am looking for information and things to write about
--while I am writing
--when I go back to revise what I have written
--when I am proofreading my writing and correcting for mistakes
--when I read my own finished writing
--other (please specify)
--not at all

31. When I write outside of school, I think about the person or people who will read my writing (check all that apply):
--when I am coming up with my ideas for writing
--when I am first starting to write
--when I am looking for information and things to write about
--while I am writing
--when I go back to revise what I have written
--when I am proofreading my writing and correcting for mistakes
--when I read my own finished writing
--other (please specify)
--not at all

For questions 32-39, use the following scale to make your answers: 5=very important; 4=somewhat important; 3=important; 2=not very important; 1=not important at all.

32. In school, the ability to write effectively is:	5	4	3	2	1
33. In school, the ability to read effectively is:	5	4	3	2	1
34. At work, the ability to write effectively is:	5	4	3	2	1
35. In work, the ability to read effectively is:	5	4	3	2	1
36. In personal life, the ability to write effectively is:	5	4	3	2	1
37. In personal life, the ability to read effectively is:	5	4	3	2	1
38. In my experience, the ability to write effectively is:	5	4	3	2	1
39. In my experience, the ability to read effectively is:	5	4	3	2	1

40. I do my best writing in (pick one):
Summary
Description

Book report
Lab report
Letter
Business letter
Personal narrative
Email
listserv
Blog or online journal entry
Blog or online journal response
Chat
Analytical essay
Research paper (with information/sources given to you)
Research paper (with information/sources you had to find yourself)
Web page text or hypertext
Web design (including coding)
PowerPoint slide shows
Resume or CV (curriculum vitae)
Journalism
Creative writing
    Poetry
    Spoken word
    Short stories
    Long fiction
    Creative nonfiction
    Song lyrics
Other (please specify):

Descriptive questions:

41. What do you like most about your writing and why?

42. What would you like to change about your writing and why?

43. Good writing is writing that (finish the sentence)

44. A good writer is someone who (finish the sentence)

45. A good reader is someone who (finish the sentence)

APPENDIX E:

THINK WORD LISTS

T		In fact, In short, As such, When, Then, Further, Furthermore Whenever, Moreover
H		If…then, Hope, Imagine, Think, Wish, Speculate, Picture, Assuming
I	**I/l**	When, Whenever, Then, Before, After, Throughout, While, Overall, In (this paper), During, Here, There, Finally, In general, In particular, So far, Up to now
	I/r	According to, _____ says, As, Such as
	I/caus	Yet, Because, Therefore, Since, As a result, Thus, Due to, As long as
	I/comp	Similarly, The same as, Whereas, Equally, Greater than, Just as, In comparison, Whether, Like
N		Different than, Between, In opposition to, Rather than, Never, Not, Nevertheless, On the contrary, In contrast to, Instead of, Unlike, Neither/nor, On the one hand/other hand
K		***these words **may** help signal a kicker: Clearly, Essentially, Obviously, Must, Is, In conclusion

VITA

Stacey Lynn Pigg was born in Nashville, Tennessee on July, 28, 1981 and grew up in Cornersville, Tennessee, where she attended elementary, middle, and high school. After high school, Stacey studied at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee, majoring in English and Spanish while completing editorial and public relations internships. Following graduation from Lipscomb, Stacey completed her M.A. in English with a concentration in Writing at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where she studied intersections among critical cyberculture and writing, rhetoric, and literacy studies. In August 2006, Stacey will begin doctoral coursework in Michigan State University's Rhetoric and Writing program.