How Do We Write Now?:
Transforming How We Teach Voice with Social Media

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How do you define voice?
Our study

Purpose:
- Determine how social media writing influences academic writing.
- Examine whether we should teach writing voice differently.
- Consider how to integrate social media writing into class discussions and assignments.
Masters of Authentic Voice?

Benjamin Franklin Frank McCourt Stephen King
Jeanette Walls Azar Nafisi Alexandra Fuller Samuel Pepys Ralph Waldo Emerson Mark Twain Maya Angelou Alice Walker Louise Erdrich Barbara Kingsolver Raymond Carver Dave Eggers Paul Auster Vladimir Nabokov Art Spiegelman Ernest Hemingway George Orwell Joan Didion Mary Karr Maxine Hong Kingston Tobias Wolfe William Styron Gabrielle Hamilton Binyavanga Wainaina James Wolcott Cheryl Strayed Julia Child

Jimmy Carter Bill Bryson Tina Fey
Traditional Aspects of Voice

- Authentic quality versus disguised/created
- Voice representational of writer
- Authority asserted by voice
- Singular authentic voice
- Representational of a writer expressions of ideas (blunt, optimistic, dry, sarcastic, etc.)
- Builds a connection between reader and writer
- Equate voice with tone/style
**Revolution in Teaching of Writing**

- *The Way One Sounds*... (T.S. Eliot); combo of Tone/Style Techniques
- 1960s Self-Expression Movement moved students to use a writing process and develop their own voices.
- Free Writing to coax writers to express themselves and to write honestly and openly.
VOICE CONFLICTS

At odds are the absolutes surrounding voice.

Do we have a voice?

or

Are our voices malleable which means they can change to fit different situations?
Writing with voice is writing into which someone has breathed. It has that fluency, rhythm, and liveliness that exist naturally in the speech of most people when they are enjoying a conversation...Writing with real voice has the power to make you pay attention and understand -- the words go deep.

--- Peter Elbow ---

AZ Quotes
Peter Elbow’s Take on Voice

- Audible Voice
- Dramatic Voice
- Distinctive/Recognizable Voice
- Voice with Authority
- Resonant Voice/Presence
HOW STUDENTS WRITE THEIR VOICE

OUR STUDY PARAMETERS

• 75 students, median age 20
• Survey questions on voice and social media use
**Students’ Understanding of Voice**

- Content-based expression
- Tone and Style
- Singular Authentic Voice
- Self-Representation
- Representative of How One Sounds

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<th>Students Refer to Voice as…</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Vocabulary</td>
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<td>Tone (vulgar, professional, blunt)</td>
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Voice of social media: individual or collective?
Voice of social media: Individual or collective?

Traditional ideas of voice at the outset

Does the voice of a writer matter to you as a reader?

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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
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Voice of social media: Individual or collective?

Do you think about the presence of voice in social media the same way you think about voice when reading or writing a traditional book or article?

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<td>Y&amp;N</td>
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**Voice of social media: individual or collective?**

“I think voice in social media is a lot easier to pick up because everyone's profile name and picture are linked to everything they post, which forces the reader to hear the poster's voice in their posts; however, I feel people on social media (Twitter especially) all sort of strive for a similar voice. They post things to the public in hopes that others will like it/them a lot of the time, so the voice their changes to be one they think the public will most easily respond to.”

“No because lots of people are telling the people writing social media what to write and it is not the voice of one specific person but it is the voice of many.”

“No, voice in social media is the product of many people, where as when you read a paper, it is usually composed by one person's ideas, so it is more personal.”
**Voice of social media: individual or collective?**

**Audience**, from hypothetical to immediate and vast.

<table>
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<th>How Many Refer To…</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Expression (feel, opinion, thoughts)</td>
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<td><strong>Audience (viewers, readers)</strong></td>
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<td>Multimodal</td>
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CONFUSION: INDIVIDUAL OR COLLECTIVE?

Individual, at first

97% Said they could distinguish unique individual voice among their friends on social media.
CONFUSION: INDIVIDUAL OR COLLECTIVE?

Collective, in action

Survey Question:
Write how you would share this information on Facebook and then Twitter:

Seeing a famous movie actor at a place your frequent. (Fill in these details as they best apply to you.)
Seeing a famous movie actor at a place your frequent. (Fill in these details as they best apply to you.)
Went to Carl's Golfland today. Saw Nicholas Kronwall from the Red Wings!! We chatted for a bit...No BIG DEAL....he's a nice guy. Cannot believe I just saw (famous movie actor) Just saw (famous movie actor) #unreal Guess who I just saw today!? ;) Thank goodness I could keep my cool and just gaze admiringly from afar. No spilled beverage to cry over when there's a stunning actor in the vicinity! Just saw Halle Berry at kroger!! OMG I JUST SAW HALLE BERRY!!! :O“ OMG! You would never believe who I just saw at the mall! OMG!!! I just saw that actress from the one movie.. I cannot believe she was just here. You won't believe who I just saw at Oakland University! Robert Downey Jr.! :D I wonder if Iron Man is going to save the campus today?!?! Holy s***! Just saw Jennifer Aniston at Kroger! @JAniston was at Kroger! #Unexpected“ Just saw a famous movie actor at the mall today! Best day ever!! Just a regular day at Somerset Mall with Edward Cullen... No big deal. Edward Cullen at Somerset Mall= Life Complete. #Twilight #TeamEdward #NBD omg just saw so and so! my life is complete :D Just saw Channing Tatum at the movies! Just saw Angelina Jolie at my school. :) OMG I just saw __ at __!!!!! I cant believe it!!! :0 :) OMG everyone I just saw Ryan Gosling! I got a picture of him and everything! Day Made!!!! :) OMG!!!! I just saw Taylor Lautner at Tim Hortons!!!! He said excuse me when walking out as I was walking in!!!! HE TALKED TO ME!!!! I'm totally serious!!
PEDAGOGIES FOR TEACHING VOICE
ISSUES WITH PEDAGOGY

Since students better understand the importance of voice now more than ever, writing instructors have a great opportunity to employ different strategies rather than teaching writers to mimic other writers’ voices.
NEW METHODS TO TEACH VOICE?

• Avoid teaching voice
• Use social media to emphasize rhetorical situations that digital genres create
• Emphasize the notion that writers have more than one authentic voice that changes
• Stress that voice should be flexible and move away from the concept of one monolithic academic voice to a voice that fits audience, purpose, and platform
• Allow student writers to conform or resist
ASSIGNMENTS OPTIONS

Use a variety of assignments that employ the opportunity to create different voices for different platforms.

- Blog posts
- Tweets
- Forum Responses
- Wikis - collaboration
- Different voices: personal, persuasive, dramatic, authoritative, etc...
Blogging exercise

Memoir:

Brainstorm ideas for a short memoir. You may have been a participant in the event or a mere observer; the memory may be from your childhood or something that happened yesterday. Explore how you can shape and share this idea, so that it will be cathartic for both you and your reader.
First sentences

• Back when I was sixteen, I decided to stop talking. I don’t remember what exactly happened that convinced me it was a good idea.
• I can't remember what my mother looks like now, but what I do remember is her smell, a simple and light melange of strawberries and Apples.
• She drove off in the middle of the night, out into a massive rain storm nonetheless, without even saying goodbye.

Everything is temporary
DIGITAL GENRES
CLASS ACTIVITY & DISCUSSION

1. Identify text digital genre.
2. Rework text of one excerpt for three other digital genres.
3. Discuss writing decisions in each genre.

WRT 150 Objectives
- Analyze and understand rhetorical situations ... in a variety of genre and media.
- Develop strategies for interpreting, evaluating and responding to visual, electronic, written and verbal texts.
Dear Colleagues:

You may already have it on your calendars, but I wanted to remind you of a very important academic and cultural development in the campus life of Oakland University.

Whaaat? When am i ever silly?

“Just in time for Banned Books Week, here’s a story about a school district attempting to block the teaching of Capote’s In Cold Blood.”

Dear Colleagues:

Last weekend I ran away from Bathurst and spent the weekend being looked after by the wonderful women who belong to Wentworth Quilters. This group is HUGE and every second year they hold an exhibition to showcase their talents.
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“Area Man Does His Best Thinking On His ATV”

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Class Activity & Discussion

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A Weekend with the Wentworth Quilters

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Some oppose teaching 'In Cold Blood' at Glendale High School

Since its publication in 1965, Truman Capote’s “In Cold Blood” has been widely recognized as a seminal work in American literature, frequently appearing on high school and college reading lists. But the contents of the nonfiction novel, which detail the...

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BroadCast: A Campus Community Event

Dear Colleagues:

You may already have it on your calendars, but I wanted to remind you of a very important academic and cultural development in the campus life of Oakland University. A brand new series of performing arts events are being offered by the Department of Music, Theatre and Dance. The Thursday Arts-After-Work series will feature the exceptional work of highly accomplished faculty members, talented students and guest artists in every discipline of the performing arts.
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Class Activity & Discussion

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Why do you (or others, if you don’t) use Facebook, Twitter, or any of these other digital media?

- How do you use these media well?
- What informs what you decide to write?
- How do you decide how to write what you write?
Writing on Social Media
Comp 2 Presentation alternative

New Media Interpretation
New Media Interpretation
“Flip the Script”
Future Study and Limitations

- Evidence for improved mastery or understanding of voice
- Analyze data further
- Continued exploration of aspects of voice in writing
- What allows some writers to employ voice in writing but proves to be challenging for others?
- Do we send students mixed messages as they move through their curricula?
- How do we help voiceless students?
CONCLUSION

● Two writing acts make up the vast majority of our students’ writing: papers and coordination (Pigg et al., 2013).
● Consider opportunities to transfer academic content to popular contexts.
● Offer students low-stakes writing opportunities.
● Continue to teach quality writing standards

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Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition: Communication from Ancient Times to the Information Age. Theresa


Pigg, Stacey, Grabill, Jeffrey T., Brunk-Chavez, Beth, Moore, Jessie L., Rosinski, Paula, & Curran, Paul G.


