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Professor Perry

First Year Writing, section #6

10/15/18

### The Importance of Credibility and Identity

Identity is an important aspect of writing, allowing the writer express who they are and their credibility. In high school, we had to write response papers to articles, and had to write without an identity. As my classmate Peter Stefos puts it, “Teachers always taught us to never put our opinions in our writing” (Stefos), which is true for some teachers. When I was in high school, I had to write a research paper regarding a topic of my choosing. When grabbing sources, I was taught that in a non-fiction book there was not an apparent bias, but there is one because different information can be omitted. This is the same with identity, even if the author did not intend to have one, it is still present and is necessary for writers to express their identity to help strengthen their writings (Stefos). In “Pay attention to the man behind the curtain: The importance of identity in academic writing,” Bronwyn T. Williams writes to academic writing instructors so that they understand that credibility and identity is key for writing an academic piece. In order to achieve this aim, he uses two moves: revealing his identity and quotes from experts. I can speak for most of us, as students, that identity is needed to allow us to express who we are and what we believe in.

Williams reveals his identity in various ways with the purpose of establishing credibility and experience regarding the subject for his audience. He reveals his identity by telling his audience about his personal experience reading academic writing. This is shown when he sets up his main argument for the paper. “I heard again all the arguments about how objective, rationalistic, academic literacy leaves no room for issues of identity” (710). Williams gives his

**Commented [AP1]:** Good title.

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**Commented [AP2]:** Why not **quote** him instead of **paraphrasing** him?

**Commented [AP3]:** This sentence is no longer necessary in this draft. (delete)

**Commented [AP4]:** Really effective Introduction with several clear, well-chosen moves designed to get what you want from your audience. My only concern is that I'm totally sure (yet) who your audience actually is. (Still somewhat vague.)

readers this bit of insight to help setup his main purpose regarding identity. In doing so, he reveals a part of his identity, which allows his audience to relate to subject, in turn relating to Williams. For example, when I have had to write papers based on academic writings given to me by my teachers, usually did not express my opinions and were more summary analysis than anything. Additionally, his identity is revealed by moving from common sense to his claim, changing how his audience views him and his credibility. Williams uses this method when he is talking about the presumed identity of an author. “When we pick up a piece of academic writing, without explicit descriptions about the identity of the author, we often move to our cultural default setting of whom we assume the author to be. In the West, there is a cultural image of the scientist as a white man in a labcoat (or in the humanities, as a white man in a tweed jacket)” (712). Williams discusses that one’s presumed identity of an author may or may not be true. In order for identity to be clear in one’s writing the author must add their own experiences and what they are trying to convey, both key aspects to establish trust between themselves and the audience.

Williams uses quotes and paraphrases with the purpose of establishing his credibility and purpose with his skeptical audience. He uses a variety of sources to help support his claims, especially when using quotes from experts. When talking about readers presuming the identity of an author, Williams paraphrases an argument made by Spack, an English professor at Bentley University. “But we make assumptions about the identity of the author that rest on dominant culture ideas and images, which for scientists and scholars are white, male, and professional class” (712). Here he paraphrases this quote to allow him to further his argument. With this he allowed the reader to understand that he has credibility and is able to find evidence to support his claims. He also commentates on pieces of academic writing from other people. He shows this when referencing Watson’s book *The Double Helix*. “What is compelling in *The Double Helix* is

**Commented [AP5]:** You do a great job in the beginning of this paragraph really taking your time and developing a clear process of **coming to terms** with Williams’s purpose, but then you only give yourself a single sentence to comment on him.

You need to **slow down** and give yourself the same amount of time and attention as you just gave to Williams. Develop YOUR **forwarding** move in more depth here.

**Commented [AP6]:** Too much Williams in this paragraph and not enough YOU! ☺

**Commented [AP7]:** All of your **topic sentences** to this point have focused solely on Williams, when this draft is supposed to be focused on **YOUR purpose**. What idea of YOURS can your topic sentences reflect instead?

the combination of Watson's distinctive personality with a breathtaking passion for his work" (712-713). Williams uses the word "passion" to describe Watson's work. Passion means a strong emotional desire toward an object. In the context of the quote, Williams believes that because Watson is passionate about his work he can easily add his identity to the piece; therefore, it produces a stronger argument and bolsters his credibility. An author's credibility is important for their arguments to be believable to their audiences. If their audiences do not believe them, then their arguments will not resonate with the audience. Thus, the quotes that an author chooses can help define what should be perceived as important and worthwhile.

Identity and understanding your audience are key for writing strong pieces of writing, but not all of us have been taught how to include identity. We all have been taught that the standard five paragraph essay analyzing only the given reading or topic. More specifically using a "hamburger" like formula to write these said essays. With the intro and conclusions "fluffed up" representing the buns, the evidence and analysis paragraphs representing the burger, lettuce, and cheese (Scarfone). This was standard for most English classes and students, including myself, were taught not write with an identity. These resulted in bland paragraphs talking only about analysis, but this resulted in receiving A's as a grade. I did not begin writing with an identity until my Junior year of high school. For one my assignments I had to write in a style similar to N. Scott Momaday's book *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, where I talked about my family's history and my response to these events. This resulted in my personal identity being shown and produced a stronger response, while still receiving an A for that paper. To tie it back to the "hamburger" analogy this "special sauce", or personal identity, is key for enhancing and strengthening pieces of writing. Though a five-paragraph essay may not be the best approach for writing, but if one adds their own personal identity into their writing this creates a unique piece of writing.

**Commented [AP8]:** While well-written, this paragraph focuses on nothing but Williams. You are spending WAY too much time **coming to terms** with Williams. Remember, this is supposed to be a draft where YOU **respond** to him by **forwarding/countering** his ideas.

**Commented [AP9]:** This is the first real time in this draft that **YOUR voice** has emerged. I don't think it's a wise move to wait this long into your papers to finally use your voice. This needs to be happening **throughout the entire draft**, not just near the end. (This is YOUR paper, not Williams's.)

**Commented [AP10]:** This belongs in a detailed **trail marker**.

**Commented [AP11]:** LOVE that book! ☺

**Commented [AP12]:** Excellent paragraph!  
How can you make ALL of the paragraphs in this draft like this one?

Identity is an essential part of any paper, allowing writers to develop a unique writing style and being able to express their opinions. Identity, for some people, is better expressed when writing about subjects they are passionate about. For example, in this piece of work, I had the ability to write about my personal experiences in dealing with adding identity to a writing assignment. In this paper, I talked my experiences, but more importantly I was able incorporate my identity into the piece. I was able to write more passionately, resulting in an insight to my identity as person and as a writer. When writing about a subject that disinterests you, it becomes more difficult to draft your own opinions and apply meaning to them. During my Junior year, I wrote a research paper on a topic that did not peak my interest, as a result, I struggled with writing the paper and being able to formulate opinions based on the information I found. Consequently, I had to reach out for help from my family and peers, to help provide the basis of the essay, since it was difficult to incorporate the information, while maintaining my identity throughout the paper. Adding identity to your writing leads to it being more passionate, captivating, and impactful.

Where is your Works Cited page??

**Commented [AP13]:** I feel like this would be a much more effective response to Williams if you placed this last paragraph at the beginning of the essay with some modifications), rather than at the very end.

What might this paper look/feel like with THIS as your new starting point, and YOUR voice incorporated throughout the whole draft?

**Commented [AP14]:** Required for this assignment.

Nicholas,

While you make a number of interesting and important points in this draft, as you can see from most of my marginal questions/comments, I'm really hearing YOUR voice that much in this paper, not until the very end. As a result, your source's words, ideas and voices drown YOUR voice out, which needs to be the most prominent one in the paper, since this is YOUR essay. This is actually a well-written essay, if the assignment was asking for nothing but a close focus on Williams and his ideas (which was the last draft). But in this assignment, I'm looking for YOU to enter into a conversation with Williams. Here's the deal: you need to be incorporating YOUR voice more explicitly *throughout* your drafts. You need to mention ideas (key terms) that Williams discusses in his article and then, right there in the moment, discuss them by forwarding and/or countering them with YOUR response. This is how conversations work. One person doesn't talk for 20 minutes while you wait to have your say (or in this case, have no say at all). It needs to be a back-and-forth. This draft has everything that it needs, you just need to put the spotlight on what YOU have to say through forwarding and countering (which isn't really happening until the very end), not so much on your source materials. I also don't really get a very clear sense of the audience you are trying to reach, and these specific moves you are targeting them with.

Grade: 78/100