

IDENTIFYING AGENCY: THE CONSTRUCTION OF RHETORICAL AGENCY

IN FOXFIRE

By

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Abstract

In this dissertation, I explore the implications for rhetorical agency and teaching writing that emerge from current critiques of the notion of human subjectivity. I call these implications, “the challenge of rhetorical agency.” Through the exploration, I will argue that one productive way of managing the challenge of agency is evident in the Foxfire project’s approach to teaching writing because it provides insight concerning agency as it emerges from identifications encouraged by Kenneth Burke’s notions of form laid out in *Counter-Statement*. In Foxfire, identification is at the crux of forming agency, and it emerges as Foxfire gives voice to both a culture and individuals within that culture that have been previously (and to some extent still are) subjugated to silence. Looking at the discursive *products* of Foxfire thus provides a way in which we can start to come to terms with issues of indeterminacy that seem to be at the core of debates over subjectivity and agency and have been the source of much contention. Such management, or coming to terms, is particularly important in writing pedagogy because the implied indeterminacy has serious implications for the effectiveness of the way teachers of writing and rhetoric approach their students.