Gendered rhetoric: Women's voices in academic discourse

Sandra Marie Gould

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A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements of the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Sandra Marie Gould
March 1993
GENDERED RHETORIC: WOMEN'S VOICES IN ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

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Faculty of
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ABSTRACT

Academic discourse, with its rhetorical base of classical reasoning, serves as the language of the academic community, and consequently, the vehicle of higher thinking and scholarship. Each college student must utilize academic discourse and establish a voice within its context, but an inherent bias may actually exclude more than half of the student population, the females. The traditional educational format needs to be modified to allow recognition and inclusion of female students and other marginalized groups. In the classroom, teachers can empower all students to find their voices within an expanded, non-gendered academic discourse.
To my gifted mother who unknowingly bequeathed to me her hunger for learning. Through me she is silent no more.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank Loralee MacPike for her help, guidance and unquestioning assurance that I was capable of reaching my goal. I also want to thank my daughters, Cindy Sawyer, Lindy Rigney, and Cassandra Rigney for their loving support and understanding. Finally, I want to thank Anthony Gomez for his encouragement and belief in me as a writer.
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Introduction

Many women have difficulty establishing an authentic female voice in traditional academic discourse because of cumulative factors which include an inherent male-identified rhetoric of the discourse itself, gender role socialization, and a male centered classroom paradigm. Academic discourse, the language of the educational community, is derived from classical reasoning and a worldview based on a male perspective. This gendered rhetoric is the medium in which all students must construct their voices in writing and academic discourse, but the process requires an extra step for women writers who must translate their own experiences into a gender-alien form which is intrinsic for male writers. But discovering or establishing voice is not an isolated development. In "Women's Ways of Knowing," Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule discovered not only that differing styles of learning accounted for some women's learning and writing difficulties, but also that the development of self, voice, and mind was extricably interwoven for most women (1986). These findings establish a connection between the concept of self in writing and the issue of voice in academic discourse. One's life experiences determines one's perspective on the world, but for some that reality is discounted. Elizabeth Flynn believes that women's
perspectives have been suppressed, silenced, marginalized, and written out of what counts as authoritative knowledge ("Composing As a Woman" 1988).

To discover how a male-dominant authority and rhetoric evolved, one must look at the ways in which women's experiences and voices were relegated to a secondary position of silence in society. In the past, gender-based roles placed women's lives in the domestic domain and the lives of select men in the public domain. One of the associated responsibilities of the males in the elite group was to rule those who were judged less able to rule, based on polarized hierarchical concepts of emotion and reason. The language of the society which evolved reflected the experiences of the ruling males. Thus the select male experience became the normative ideal and society itself was ultimately seen as male.

As society is reflected in its institutions, an educational system — and its inclusive language — was created with an inherent and inescapable male bias. When a woman enters this male dominant community, she is expected to think and react as a rational, objective male should even as she strives to find her female voice in academic discourse. This suggests that women must translate female concerns and perspectives into the male dominant language of academic discourse, thus muting the female voice. The issue of gendered voice is complex. Mary Kupiec Cayton
believes that for most women the issue of voice involves a question of identity itself and the language of the discourse community is often experienced as hostile to their self-definition.

To discover how females are prepared for the college level writing task, and to understand how males' experience in a masculinized world affects their college writing experience, one must look at the socialization of males and females from birth through the elementary and secondary educational process. Through this "second curriculum" (Best 1989) females learn to be silently invisible, and males learn to silence their emotional needs in place of objectivity and an aggressive pursuit of power. In college, females are expected to embrace the theory, practice, experience, and discourse of male scholarship as the universal norm, the ultimate achievement. In order to communicate in this foreign voice, a woman must still her own voice, the product of her female experience, which places a greater burden on female writers as they struggle with the identity construction required by academic discourse. If writing or speaking problems arise, the reasons are often assumed to be a natural female ineptitude for higher thinking, or more to the point, an inability to think and write like a man. For one group of males — straight, white, middle class — the college experience will be less restrictive than for females and the
marginalized males of differing color and class, and will actually support the acquisition of their voice within academic discourse. But being so favored will not lead to a nurturing sense of wholeness or a greater sense of self in relation to the world.

English composition instructors are in a position to create an unparalleled experience in academic discourse for women — and indeed for all students — by establishing a bias-free environment which enhances the stretching of traditional boundaries of thought and theory to discover connections between theory and personal experience. In this way, an expanded version of academic discourse can be opened to women and all marginalized groups, which can guide them in the acquisition of voice within, rather than against the grain of, an academic discourse which reflects the diverse classroom population of today's world.

Because of the limited scope of this project, I have focused on women's exclusionary silence, fully aware that additional marginalizing factors such as race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, and culture parallel that of gender. Since many women are marginalized by more than one factor, finding a way out of gendered silence may contribute to opening other doors as well.
Chapter 1

Classical Rhetoric as Basis For Academic Discourse

When students enter college in pursuit of education, the topics of study will be determined by the curriculum designed for their particular educational goals. Not included in that curriculum is a requirement that every student must nonetheless meet: the acquisition of academic discourse. While everyone must learn to speak the language of the academic community, and to find her or his own voice within its structure, the experience of doing so may vary depending on numerous elements, not the least of which is gender. Since "education reflects the values of our society and is to a major extent controlled by those values" (Florence Howe 1984 19), women's experiences with academic discourse parallel their socialization; men speak, women listen; men think, women accept; men act, women nurture and aid those who act. She is "other" in an official male culture. In academia, both male and female linguistic theorists claim that the medium of development and communication of academic thought is an androcentric language which forces women to express their thoughts in a language which devalues those very thoughts. Many instructors and students alike may recognize Adrienne Rich's description as she tells us to

[1]isten to a woman groping for language in which
to express what is on her mind, sensing that the terms of academic discourse are not her language, trying to cut down her thoughts to the dimensions of a discourse not intended for her...("Taking Women students Seriously," 243).

If Rich is right that the "terms of academic discourse are not her language," whose language is it? For an answer, we can turn to the writings of Plato and Aristotle which serve to illustrate the commonly held beliefs and attitudes that influence present-day rhetoric of academia. Reflecting the logic of Plato and Aristotle, this privileging essentialist view of one "'true' conception of phenomena and experience" centered in a male-based language assumes the existence of a universally defined discourse of logic and thought which is universally applicable; this consequently constitutes the basis of academic discourse (Bleich 1990 233).

Although Plato advocated equal education for women and men -- because he believed natural gifts might be bestowed on either sex -- he still made a distinction between those "naturally" qualified to be leaders (thereby worthy of education) and those who needed to be led. Thus if there were more male leaders than female leaders, more educated males than females, it merely indicated that more males received that natural gift of ability. Aristotle did not believe women should be educated, but if so, only enough to better serve male masters, because nature had determined woman to be essentially a flawed being, a biological
mistake.

Briefly, there are similarities and differences in the ways in which these philosophers deduced a naturally inferior status of women, an idea which permeates academic discourse and educational institutions and the unconscious of college-educated females. First, because the understanding of the human condition as determined by religious beliefs was a major component in philosophical thought at that time, a connection was perceived between valuation of souls and a preordained order of domination; some humans are more human than others. The determining factor is the ability to reason. While Plato believed that souls were made up of different parts -- higher: rational, lower: appetitive and emotional -- Aristotle did not. But Aristotle did believe that in some people the rational aspect of a soul prevails over the irrational and in others it doesn't.

For Plato, this meant that by nature, some people are meant to rule (most rational), others to assist them (rational, but to a lesser degree), and still others who need to be ruled (irrational). In Aristotle's thinking, nature gave women and slaves some reason (rational thought), but as Elizabeth Spelman points out in *Inessential Woman*, it was "...not the kind of reason found in the souls of their natural rulers" (men) (1988 45). Aristotle considered men the essence of humanity and women
a deformity of that essence, a deformity determined by nature. This mental construct posits an either-or style of thinking which has become the tradition in society; one gender must be dominant based on the fact that an individual is either rational or irrational, is either male or female — the "traditional Aristotelian law of noncontradiction: 'either A or not-A' "(Bleich 1990 233). Females as "not-A" become "other."

The competition between rational and irrational, reason and emotion, -- viewed by Plato and Aristotle as "natural" -- contributes to the basis of present-day academic discourse. In this frame of thinking, labeled by Janice Moulton (1989) as an adversary paradigm, polarized views are represented by adversaries who, through accepted logic sequences (which are taken from classical example), attempt to prove the validity of one of the opposing viewpoints. In order for this process to function, all participants must accept the uncontested validity of the premise upon which the polarized ideas are based. Questioning the proffered premise is not allowed. For instance, Bleich points out in "Genders of Writing" that "[a] mutual evaluation of premises is not considered part of the process and can, very likely, yield no 'winner' of a dispute" (1989 17). What might happen if the rules of logic were not followed, and no single "winning" view was presented? Instead of being locked into assumptions, which
restrict thinking, collaborative evaluation of given premises might result in a new perspective which creates a host of viewpoints, all valid and having an acceptable (if different) logic, and might even create a new premise. But academic discourse is restricted to the polarized basis of Plato and Aristotle's male dominant thinking.

Plato and Aristotle posited social domination theories that they believed were determined by nature. Consequently, they saw human nature itself, hierarchically arranged, as the basic factor in the politics of domination, a domination which "...served not simply the interests of those who were to rule but the best interests of everyone and the highest interests of the state" or society (Spelman 10). Through male control, everyone in society benefited; women gained protection of their domestic sphere -- theirs because of reproduction -- and women and slaves both gained the rulers they needed for guidance. Thus the public world of men served the encompassing interests of the state; and later, schools were created to prepare and empower males for that world.

Spelman goes on to explain that, in both Plato and Aristotle's thinking, "[w]hat finally separates those meant to rule and those meant to be ruled, is...characterized as masculine," indeed, an "ideal of humanity that is above all else a masculine ideal" of polarized rational over emotional thinking which creates the logical need for
domination (54). Society itself became characterized as male; Nancy Chodorow explains that "[p]ublic institutions, activities, and forms of association link and rank domestic units, provide rules for men's relations to domestic units, and the men to one another apart from their domestic relationships. Public institutions are assumed to be defined according to normative, hence social, criteria, and...it is assumed, therefore, that the public sphere, and not the domestic sphere, forms "society"...[and that] men's location in the public sphere, then, defines society itself as masculine (1978 9). Because language incorporates the underlying assumptions of society, an existing androcentric bias will be subtly interwoven into the discourse to reflect the reality of only half of humanity, the male half.

Bleich posits that this sexist ideology is reflected in the processes of knowing and in the institutions of learning where the "accepted way of life depends on the privileging of men" (1990 244). He supports the belief that one of the first indications of this inherent imbalance is contained within the language of the education community, academic discourse. This discourse, as evolved from classical scholarship in which a hierarchical positioning of reason (male) over emotion (female) is utilized to justify male domination and female subordination, is the discourse used in our institutions of
learning. As proof of inferiority, women's voices can be discounted as "emotional" — the opposite or opponent of reason and logic — an element which is thought to hinder or destroy the objective perspective considered necessary for the intellectual pursuit of truth.

Since dominant (i.e. white and middle- or upper-class) men as the rational members of society bear the responsibility of society's welfare, language reflects and reinforces their power base. Dale Spender tells us that naming is owning and points out that "[i]n the process of naming the objects and events of the world, men have used themselves as the reference point, as the center; they have labeled the world in the light of their experience and have checked with each other for verification and validation" (1982 32). This has resulted in a situation in which those not white, middle-class, and male are forced by necessity to use a language which excludes and demeans them; their reality must be expressed through a distorted mirror of academic discourse, for there is no direct means of its expression offered by the educational system.

Such an imbalance in discourse may have appeared valid in the past when only a select, elite group — ruling class males — made up the academic community, but now the world of learning has become more diverse. Now this concept can create a stunning silence in those who have been granted access to education but who are silenced by
its language, culture, socialization, and experience; they are placed in a position of "other" or deviant from the norm, and as such their voices are unacceptable or deviant. David Bleich has pointed out that "[s]exism, either concealed or open, has censored the language and thought of women" (236).

After looking at the male dominant classical basis of education, it seems possible that women may in fact have to alter or silence their own voices in order to enter the realm of academic discourse. If this is true, it becomes an important issue for teachers of composition. In order to address the issue of women's voices in academic discourse at the college level, one needs to ascertain the diverse parameters of woman as student. To do that, we need to look at the socialization process of gender role development which begins at birth and in addition, we must consider the ways in which inclusion in this socially-defined identity affects the educational experience and, in turn, how the educational experience affects identity. Once the parameters of women's diverse experiential foundations are ascertained, methods which will address women's needs for learning can be formulated, for the educational process utilizes previous knowledge schemas to provide the reference structure needed in order to integrate new information. The issue is women's voices in academic discourse set within the context of gendered rhetoric.
Chapter 2
The Beginning

The socialization of males and females into gendered roles is begun at the moment of birth with the proclamation of either "It's a girl" or "It's a boy." Even within the first 24 hours of an infant's life, parents and other adults exhibit specific perceptions of and responses to the new-born based on gender; a subtle imprinting of sex-role delineation based on underlying assumptions of what constitutes the "norm." Florence Howe describes how differences in parental attitudes subtly program children into specific behaviors: "We throw boy babies up in the air and roughhouse with them. We coo over girl babies and handle them delicately. We choose sex-related colors and toys...and encourage the energy and physical activity of our sons, just as we expect girls to be quieter and more docile. We love both our sons and daughters with equal fervor, we protest, and yet we are disappointed when there is no male child to carry on the family name" (1973 8). This double message forms the basis from which boys and girls internalize the sex-role behaviors which are deemed appropriate and which validate their worth as social beings. Results of this message will be evident throughout life, with pronounced effects seen in the college composition classroom when the process of writing may reveal conflicts in self-concepts. Research has documented
many aspects of gender role socialization.

Phyllis Katz reports in "Developmental Foundations of Gender and Racial Attitudes" that one study, by Rubin, Provenzano, and Luria (1974) has shown pronounced differences in parents' views of infant size, intelligence, and physical strength, based on biological determination. For example, Rubin et al. "found that parents of day-old sons viewed their babies as bigger than parents of day-old daughters,...[when actually] the infants did not differ in either weight or length" (Katz 44). Another indication of gender-based response was observed when parents of girls chose words such as "softer," "finer," and "little," to describe their babies, while parents of boys preferred terms of "firmer," "more alert," and "stronger" (Katz 44).

In a study conducted by Katz and colleagues (Seavey, Katz, and Zalk, 1975) the same 3-month old infant was introduced as male to one group of non-parent adults and as female to a parallel group. Interestingly, when the infant was thought to be female it was described as "soft and cuddly," and "those who thought the child to be a boy commented on such things as its firm grip and absence of hair" (Katz 44).

Katz also found that sometimes specific infant behavior is labeled by adults according to gender, highlighting gender stereotyping. She reports that Condry and Condry (1976) found that when videotaped infants "cried
in response to a jack-in-the-box" the adults perceived the infant as "angry" if it was identified as a boy but "fearful" when the child was identified as a girl. One might wonder how this early experience translates to later self-fulfilling behaviors. There was also differential perception in relation to an infant presented with a male or female name, and in addition, Katz discovered evidence of similar results when a baby was dressed as either a girl or a boy.

Even though male infants are, in general, more highly desired and valued by adults (Baumrind 1973 63), female infants are touched and talked to more and receive more interactive involvement after the age of six months. This early on-going personal interaction with others that girls experience may provide the basis for their verbal ability and establish a proclivity toward personal connection and cooperation behaviors, which are seen as early as elementary school. For elementary age boys, their infant-age experience of less personal contact — which might be construed as a first step toward the personal distancing and objectivity seen in adulthood — could be the basis of their tendency to establish power hierarchies within their peer groups. These differing behavioral patterns, one of inter-connection and the other of hierarchical separation, can be traced throughout the educational experience and identified in gender-related behaviors in the college
Diane Halpern also found substantiating data of two parental sex-typing behaviors which relate to later cognitive abilities and educational experiences; female infants are talked to more, and parents of boys are more concerned with task mastery (1986 121). This concern with task mastery remains a priority for parents of boys and translates into Baumrind's finding that "[g]enerally parents have higher achievement expectations for boys than they do for girls" in regard to "college and...careers" (1973 65).

Through such research it has been discovered that adults treat children according to gender expectations, and Katz tells us that "[b]ehavior based on such expectations may subsequently become self-fulfilling in terms of its effects on children" (45). This process of teaching children socially acceptable ways of being male or female creates behaviors and response patterns which emphasize gender differences and establish corresponding self-conceptions. Thus, females are good and helpful; males are aggressive and independent. This early learning is reinforced throughout the educational process and is a determining factor in the later acquisition of voice within academic discourse.

Another important factor related to gendered roles is self-esteem. Elizabeth Fisher states that "[i]t is in the
earliest years that children form images of their worth, their future roles, the conscious and unconscious expectations placed upon them" and that these images may become determining factors of experience (1974 116). These gendered experiences tend to reinforce gendered role expectations and thereby create a false image of gendered behaviors and resulting self-worth. The connection between self-worth and socialized roles is manifested by both females and males, but with differing results. Generally, self-esteem in males will increase during childhood and self-esteem for females will decrease.

However, these differences are temporarily obscured as the initial immersion into a school environment creates a superficial homogeneous gender blending of needs.
Raphaela Best, a reading specialist, conducted a four-year study of elementary school students in an effort to discover the reasons behind the differences she observed between boys' and girls' reading achievement. While she recognized the probable validity of what the educational community accepted as determinants — environmental factors, the learning process and conditions affecting it, individual development factors, physical factors, and pedagogical factors — she suspected the etiology was incomplete. Because of her many years of experience in working with students' reading problems, Best postulated that there might be a connection between boys' low reading scores and the influence of the peer group on learning. In addition to confirming this theory, I believe the findings reveal an underlying process of language/voice acquisition which is different for females and males within the educational setting, and furthermore, that the resulting skills, behaviors, and expectations exhibited throughout the elementary and high school years affect the students' later experiences as college students.

Since Best started her study with the students when they were too young for paper and pencil tests, and because she wanted to avoid the role of sidelines observer taking
copious notes, she became a "participant/observer," which meant interacting with the children in "instructional projects, playing games with them in the classroom and on the playground, eating lunch with them -- perhaps the most intimate time of the day -- and being a friend when they needed one." While this method is dismissed by some researchers, Best perceived it as the only way to "obtain the information on the children's peer groups, friendships, and gender-role socialization patterns needed to answer the questions posed by this study" (2).

The Best study confirmed a similarity of needs between boys and girls when they first enter school. First, all young students need a lot of practical help from the teacher, such as finding their belongings or getting in line for the right bus. In addition, Best found that all students also need emotional support from the teacher; their academic and social experience is "characterized by a predominantly teacher-child rather than peer-child relationship" (10). But this parallel experience does not continue on through elementary school. Best discovered that this close relationship with the teacher changes for both sexes but at different times and to differing degrees; the boys made a pointed reversal of priorities during second grade when the peer group replaced the teacher in importance, while the girls maintained continuity of teacher dependence, merely lessening it in the fourth grade.
as they expanded their existing priority circle to include female peers.

Best reported that for the boys, the transition process from a teacher-oriented support system to a male-peer support system created a world view with a subsequent pattern of behaviors which affected everyone in the class; the process of qualifying as a male worthy of notice resulted in self-reflecting actions rather than group-cooperative actions. The procedure of separation from the female world is a part of boys' self-identification development. Nancy Chodorow, studying the role of socialization of gender in The Reproduction of Mothering, found a difference between the sexes which relates to Best's observation of the boys' anti-female transition. Chodorow explains that while girls' identification processes are closely connected to affective relationships with their mothers and others, a boy "tends to deny identification with a relationship with his mother and reject what he takes to be the feminine world; masculinity is defined as much negatively as positively" (1978 176).

Kim Thomas also found that "[m]asculinity is defined by what it is not; the term 'masculinity' does not make sense without a knowledge of the term 'femininity'" (1990 1). A boy must oppose that which is considered feminine in order to establish his masculine identity. This developmental opposition can influence behaviors throughout
the male experience which add to learning problems such as
the documented reading deficiency which prompted the Best
study.

Just as girls are socialized into gendered roles which
hinder their development into autonomy, boys too must
conform to culturally defined roles which work against
their development into wholeness. And this is true even
though the male role is accorded more privilege and
prestige in society. The pressure to stifle emotional
response and to be "men" is emphasized by derogatory labels
such as crybaby or sissy when fear or crying occurs with
normal childhood injuries and/or disappointments. This
negative response to natural human behavior is a common
tactic by which boys learn their socialized roles. This is
one of the first steps toward a state of separating oneself
from emotion and obtaining "objectivity," a level which
one must attain, as we have seen, in order to be a
"rational" thinker and which is so prized in male
adulthood.

The emphasis on masculinity was demonstrated by the
boys in Best's study. No longer were rewards from the
teacher most coveted; the esteem-building admiration of the
other boys became increasingly potent and satisfyingly
male. All of a sudden, the boys were involved in becoming
"men," and contests which would determine who were men and
who were sissies became increasingly important to them.
Best found that the contest arena included reading competency, with those in the higher reading groups earning a more prestigious position on the hierarchical scale, presenting a connection between language skills and behavior. Halpern and Kagan (1984) also found boys to be more concerned with situations in which they could display proof of achievement and mastery in competition as an emphasis of masculinity. Generally this proof was for male peers which further distanced the boys from "teachers and...from girls" in all-male groups (Best 16). The pattern of competition-determined worth produces emotional alienation from those the boys most want to impress as they struggle to acquire a male identity.

The boys' reversal of positive association to the female teacher corresponds to their search for male role models. Because fathers are generally absent from the home due to employment, and because mothers are commonly responsible for child care, boys may lack male adult role models in the home. This dearth of males continues when they enter school where the majority of teachers are female. Consequently, boys turn to their peers for examples of masculine behaviors and for the chance to practice what they've learned as they strive to earn the coveted confirmation and acceptance as "male." But since those of the peer group are products of the same conflict-ridden system, the masculine ideal they present is
distorted. Thus are males located within a gender socialization process in which they adapt or possibly even invent behaviors, often based largely on TV and/or teenagers, without the natural correctives which come from close regular contact with real human males, who sleep and cry and get tired and experience fear.

Ruth Hartley found in her study of "Sex-Role Pressures and the Socialization of the Male Child" that even kindergarten boys know what is expected of them and actually "...restrict their interests and activities to what is suitably 'masculine,'" turning away from spontaneous reaction (1974 186). She too found that the fear of deviating from this normative behavior is emphasized through ridicule which creates a great deal of emotional stress. Hartley adds that the anxiety produced by this process of learning what not to be "frequently expresses itself in overstraining to be masculine, in virtual panic at being caught doing anything traditionally defined as feminine, and in hostility toward anything even hinting at 'femininity,' including females themselves" (187). In this way boys are directed toward an exaggerated concept of masculinity, a "macho" image which is held as the ideal. This situation, when placed in the context of a society which delegates child care to females, also creates a conflict of emotion as boys are taught to devalue the feminine aspect of humanity but at the same time placed
under the care and jurisdiction of females. Negative feelings would seem to be a natural response within this context, and the evidence is that boys exhibit hostility toward females, both in attitude and deeds, to the point in many cases of physical abuse (Hartley 1974, Spender 1982, AAUW Report 1992).

Male defiance as a form of power and control is but another element in the development of a male identity, and most obvious when directed against females. Chodorow not only found that one of the tenets of the male role, machismo, is emphatically non-female -- the only way to be male is to be non-female -- but that one way to be non-female is to be anti-female. Dale Spender tells us in Invisible Women that the fact "[t]hat boys do not like girls, that they find them inferior and unworthy -- and even despicable -- is a conclusion hard to avoid when observing and documenting the behavior of boys towards girls in schools" (63). Kim Thomas also reports that "research evidence shows that, in mixed-sex schools, girls are consistently subjected to harassment, sometimes sexual, by boys, and that this harassment is either ignored or treated as harmless" by adults (1990 17). Many teachers tend to view boys' negative behavior towards others as normal, dismissing the issue with a "boys will be boys" attitude (Thomas 1990 17). This attitude adds to the girls' powerless silence of invisibility.
While boys react to the stress of their competitive experience with behaviors which gain them attention, being the focal point of the classroom doesn't guarantee academic success. In fact, the conflict that boys experience in this power struggle can negatively affect their academic performance. Best found in her study that many boys experience reading problems in conjunction with their stressful efforts to acquire acceptance and approval within their male peer group, a validation which is a part of their gendered role development process (1989 49).

Mirroring the Best study results, Carole Joffe found in her study of male gender socialization that boys experience a great deal of stress in conjunction with the group process, for "...although the group is looked to as a primary source of companionship, it is also the constant source of rejections," as members "drop low-status friends for higher ones" while vying for superior positions (1974 104). This further substantiates Best's theory that the boys' reading problems were tied to the stress of their peer relationships.

It becomes more evident that, as Betty Levy points out in "Do Schools Sell Girls Short?," girls are not the only victims in a gender-biased classroom; "[t]o see gender differentiation as only affecting girls is to misunderstand it." (1974 148) The boys' problems are compounded because "the school's expectations often conflict with traditional
sex-role expectations, resulting in a confusing double message: Be aggressive, active, achieving, and independent (be masculine), but also be passive, quiet, and conforming (be a good pupil)" [be feminine] (143). This double message creates another conflict related to gender identity.

In the Best study, the boys' defiance of female peers and female/establishment accomplished two things: first, it gained them the admiration of peers, and second, and perhaps most important, the act of defiance put each boy "in charge of his own actions," his own life, if only for a brief time, an experience which would be reinforced and enlarged upon in many ways until it became internalized as a self-fulfilling need (Best 15). Male defiance seemed to be an experiment of power-wielding which brought attention and affirmation from peers that increased the need for more. This introduction to a form of controlling one's own life circumstance was not experienced by the girls.

One might expect student defiance to have negative results which would discourage its occurrence and encourage cooperative behavior. But instead of creating less response, male defiance actually increases response, which adds to a situation in which teachers already invest more time and attention in boys. Spender notes that surprisingly, defiant behavior creates "more positive attention that enhances the image of boys" (1982 55). This
occurs as teachers respond to the negative behavior in ways needed to cajole the boys into cooperation. This, in turn, serves to create a self-reinforcing cycle of positive feedback which "adds to the confidence of the boys (who go on to say more and demand more attention)" (55).

Levy found parallel evidence of positive effects resulting from negative behavior in her study of how schools treat girls and boys. She also reports that a boy "...can get attention and respect from his teacher and his peers for nonconforming behavior. Thus, teacher criticism, a seemingly negative response, may actually lead boys toward greater independence, autonomy, and activity" (1974 144). Boys make their presence known through behaviors which focus attention on themselves and their needs. It seems ironic that both positive and negative attention fuel masculine egos, while girls are devastated by and tend to avoid negative attention. This pattern will be seen to be significant in regard to patterns of gender behavior and response in the college classroom.

Boys' attention getting defiance can be seen as a necessary component of seeking inclusion into a dominance hierarchy of a group. In this regard, Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) see group size as a determining element in establishment of dominance patterns. They believe from their varied research that small groups can avoid dominance ranking, while "[l]arge social groups cannot so
easily function without a dominance hierarchy" (Quoted in Best 16-17). But Best found in her study that competitive jousting for positions of importance within the small male groups in classrooms also promoted hierarchical patterns of behavior that the boys integrated into all interaction relationships and which continued into high school. This practice of hierarchical thinking became part of the underlying structure of learning. Alliance within the group was created by joining together in defiance of the teacher/establishment.

Following this line of thought, one might postulate that the reason the girls didn't establish hierarchies in their interactions was because they were not allied in a group. But that conclusion could be misleading. For upon further study, the fact that girls were not allied in a group against a common enemy — the "female/establishment" — as were the boys, could actually be a sign of advanced development; the girls had established a system of cooperation which didn't require defiance and hierarchical competition. Substantiating this possibility, the AAUW reports in "How Schools Shortchange Girls" that when children enter the educational group setting, girls may have already achieved competency in areas which enable them to participate in and benefit from group instruction and interaction, while boys require further "impulse control training...and language enhancement (1992 18). This could
reveal a competence in the girls which went unrecognized and unrewarded by the teachers in the Best study and continues to be rendered invisible by our culture.

Girls' alternate method of interaction can be recognized in the differing language patterns within male play groups and female play groups as documented in a study by Marjorie Harness Goodwin (1980). She found that boys incorporate verbal aggression in jockeying for leadership roles, and construct their communications (or directives) "as imperatives or requests," for example:

(23) Tokay: Can I have some hangers?
    Michael: Put that thing back

(26) Tokay: Anybody wanna buy any rubber bands?
    Michael: Put em in your pocket. Cuz you gonna pop em

Thus Michael, the leader of the group, not only controls the others' activities, but also controls the language by issuing an imperative in place of the expected sequential response, which precludes further interactive communication.

In contrast, Goodwin found that while boys use imperatives for their directives, girls "phrase theirs as proposals for future activities and frequently mitigate even these proposals with a term such as 'maybe'" (Goodwin 168). This practice promotes communication.

(45) Terry: Maybe we can slice them like that (Discussing obtaining bottles)
Another difference noted was that while girls would "tend to leave the time at which the action being proposed should be performed somewhat open," -- allowing collaborative suggestions -- a boy usually "states that he wants an action completed 'right now'" (Goodwin 168). The boys' competitive attitude curtails cooperation.

An observed syntactical pattern was that the boys separate hearer and speaker, while the girls' pattern was one in which the speaker is "usually included as one of the agents in the action to be performed" (Goodwin 168). The equalization of hearer and speaker acts to further increase collaboration.

Goodwin concludes that although girls structure their talk in less aggressive and non-hierarchical ways, it does not mean that they are unable to utilize aggressive directives or are less skillful in their employment, or that their chosen structure puts them at a disadvantage to boys. For girls did choose aggravated directives when the situation required their use, such as conflicts and confrontations with peers, being in charge of younger siblings, or playing house or school. This ability was ascertained in a subsequent study in which Goodwin et al. reported that "girls are not only just as skilled in argumentation as boys but have types of arguments that are
both more extended and more complex in their participation structure than those among boys" (1987 200). It is of major significance that although girls are able to structure communication and interaction like that of the boys, "the structure of talk they use among themselves constitutes...[a] systematic procedure through which a particular type of social organization can be created" (Goodwin 1980 172). Thus they exhibit a choice of collaborative interaction in place of a hierarchical one, which by the time they reach college age is firmly in place and affects their experience in a setting which may favor a hierarchical system of communication. Attitudes created in the early school experience determine girls' overall confidence in themselves and their subsequent experiences as writers in the college setting.

In the classroom, the girls' collaborative attitude creates cooperation among peers and teacher, while the boys' struggle to win a position on a hierarchical power scale within a male group creates a distressful situation of physical and emotional distancing from those outside their group. To promote cooperation, teachers give boys the majority of "praise, criticism, and remediation," which for the overlooked girls creates "interaction patterns [which] may result in lower levels of achievement, career aspirations, and self-esteem" (Sadker and Sadker 1990 179). In this way, the separation process the boys
experienced affected not only themselves but the entire classroom, because the teacher had to constantly develop ways by which to address the boys' defiance while continuing to teach the required academic lessons to all students. This has a direct effect on the amount of active teaching the instructor is able to provide, which includes "setting goals, assessing student progress, making active and clear presentations, and giving instruction for both class and individual work" (Sadker and Sadker 1990). Thus is the teacher forced to forgo lesson plans designed for all students, and Spender tells us that as a result, "lessons are designed to cater for male interests" instead of an equitable focus of direct instruction (1982 54). In order to keep the male students engaged in the topic and therefore less defiant and disruptive, the teacher must present activities which will catch their curiosity and attention. As a result, girls get far less classroom attention. According to the AAUW report, "males receive more teacher attention than do females" (1992 68). This situation was documented from preschool through high school, from twenty years ago to the present.

Sadker and Sadker also found that teachers "paid more attention to the boys and praised them more often" (1985 123). Teachers and boys alike played a part in setting up this imbalance of male-student/teacher interaction ratio. Spender reported that one way boys got the teacher's
attention if it was focused elsewhere was to call out answers without waiting for their turn, forcing the teacher to respond to them.

The AAUW report adds not only that "boys...called out answers eight times more often than girls" but that while teachers listened to boys' comments, they censored girls' unsolicited contributions with responses such as "Please raise your hand if you want to speak" (68). This gender-biased response pattern is of major significance when considering female reticence and lack of voice in college classrooms. In addition, it becomes clear that success or lack of success in the classroom does not always parallel ability.

Sadker and Sadker (1990) identified four types of evaluative feedback by teachers which play a part in student achievement. The four types are as follows:

1. Criticism -- explicit indication that a response is wrong. Responses such as "No," "That's not correct," and "You're not paying attention" would be classified as criticism. Criticism need not be punitive and harsh, but it explicitly indicates that a student comment is inaccurate. Less than 5 percent of evaluative feedback at all levels of education is critical in nature.

2. Praise -- positive evaluation and reward for successful accomplishment. Comments like "That's a fantastic insight" or "Good" are classified as praise. Praise constitutes less than 10 percent of instructor feedback.

3. Remediation -- corrective comments designed to improve a student response. "Try this formula, Linda" or "Remember -- the rule is i before e
except after c" are classified as remediation. About a third of instructor reactions are remedial.

4. Acceptance — nonevaluative reaction which recognizes that a student has responded. Fairly typical acceptance responses would include "OK," "Uh-huh," "Yes," or silence. More than 50 percent of responses made by teachers at all levels of education fall into this category.

It is important to note the high percentage of acceptance responses in relation to the other forms; the prevalence of this non-response creates a barrier to interaction because it prevents further response. Another important finding is not only that male students receive more of all evaluative feedback, but that they receive the majority of "praise, criticism, and remediation." For the women in this situation, their secondary status can serve to reinforce their feelings of invisibility.

In regard to academic success in stereotypically "male" subjects, it has been concluded that "[s]ex differentiated treatment in the classroom could be directly responsible for or contribute to sex differences in mathematics and science achievement" (Halpern 123). This parallels other research findings concerning teacher expectations and student performance (Sadker et al. 1990, Sears and Feldman 1974). Teachers have the opportunity to influence students' confidence in their learning ability through sex-differentiated response patterns; it is therefore important to note from the AAUW report that "math
confidence has been found to be more highly correlated with math performance than any other affective variable" (28).

Is it coincidental that many girls exhibit low math confidence and that many are shortchanged in the classroom? This strongly suggests that teachers' behaviors can help determine academic success or failure for some students regardless of innate ability.

The teachers included in the Sadker study all responded that they did not treat boys and girls differently, an evaluation contrary to observed evidence. While it is assumed that teachers do not want to discriminate, and usually sincerely believe that "they treat both sexes equally," studies have proven that in reality, what they rate as "equality" and "fairness" actually accords males more attention (Spender 1981: 54). Not only are most teachers unaware of their unequal treatment patterns, but many, both male and female, resent the issue of gender equality and react with hostility when it is raised.

Teachers may feel that existing interaction patterns are a natural result of human behaviors. In light of the fact that boys are generally more aggressive, Jean Berko Gleason says that "[i]t should not surprise us ...to find adults uttering more negative statements " in an attempt to control them (1987: 189). But Pauline S. Sears and David H. Feldman researched the issue of gender-biased
teacher/student interaction and reported finding more teacher interaction with boys than with girls in all four major categories of teaching behaviors, which takes the issue beyond a control technique. The categories of behavior are similar to those used by Sadker and Sadker: "approval, instruction, listening to the child, and disapproval" (1974 139). As before, the majority of the teachers in the sample did not think they reacted differently to students by gender.

Yet Elizabeth Burn found that when teachers talked openly about classroom management, the topics of "boys demanding teachers' attention and their disruptive behavior" were repeatedly mentioned (1989 148). Spender also reported that "as most teachers acknowledge, if males do not get what they want, they are likely to make trouble" (1982 54). But interestingly the acknowledgment of inequality did not lead to questioning the effect this situation might inflict on the cooperative "others" who shared the classroom and teacher.

This attitude of acceptance might be explained by previous learning. Barbara Thompson reminds us that teachers are also products of the unequal system and that their "[t]raditional attitudes towards gender that have been formed from home, peer groups, media, and school experience remain, in many cases, unchallenged and intact (1989 69). One teacher's statement that "If you treat
children as individuals all will be equal" represents a common belief in the issue's relative unimportance and the equally common belief that any imbalance will somehow magically disappear if just ignored (Thompson 1989 73).

One might expect female teachers to be free of gender bias, but it must be remembered that these educators were as girls enculturated into the concepts of gender bias in general, and conditioned to function within its structure in the classroom. They too were taught to view discriminatory patterns of oppression as normal and acceptable; they too are victims of oppression, taught to accept their status and to sustain the system through education of the young.

Michelle Stanworth (1981) reported in her study of sexual division in the classroom that many students themselves were well aware of the imbalance within the classroom even if teachers were not. It should be noted that the boys who did notice the unequal dynamics usually attributed it to the belief that the girls didn't have as much to say anyway. The study reports that students perceived that boys received more attention and positive response from teachers. This was borne out through observations which revealed the following situations:

In classroom discussions...boys predominated: for every four boys who participated, there was only one girl. When teachers asked questions they asked two boys to every one girl, and when teachers
provided praise and encouragement three boys received it to every one girl....[B]oys asked twice as many questions as the girls and made twice as many demands of the teachers' time. (Quoted in Spender 1982 55)

This inequality even existed within classes in which there were more girls than boys. In this environment both girls and boys perceived that teachers are more concerned with and admiring of the boys academically and personally. The classroom becomes an environment in which one gender dominates. Andrew Windass comments on the issue of boys beginning at an early age to "own the classroom" and adds that "[t]he longer-term consequences are clear as girls learn not to expect to win, while the boys expect, and indeed achieve, victory (1989 43). This "winning" message of male privilege tends to bolster boys' self-esteem and the "rightness" of masculinity, while undermining the self-esteem of the girls and of femininity itself. Gender bias affects learning.

Levy also notes that "...the strong, consistent pressures on girls to be 'feminine' and 'good pupils' promote characteristics that inhibit achievement and suppress females' full development" (1974 143). Jenny Bull calls attention to the premise that the good student is "passive, does it the 'right way,' is neat, follows directions, [and] says what the teacher wants to hear," attributes which also define proper female behavior (1974
215). The cumulative effect of silent acquiescence which stills the inner voice is what must be dealt with at the college level, especially in a composition class where self-identity and self-esteem are vital components of the writing process.

The female internalization of silence as parallel to being a "good student" is abetted by the situation in which the teacher's attention is focused on the boys thereby reinforcing the girls' peripheral position in the classroom as "other," and they, out of necessity for survival and being conditioned toward relational processes of cooperation, continue to help by not resisting. Chodorow locates female lack of autonomy within the classroom in behaviors defined as part of the female identity: "Conformity to behavioral rules and external authority, predictability and dependability, the ability to take on others' values and goals as one's own" (1978 186). Because of this altruistic base, the situation in which male concerns are of primary importance does not seem inappropriate to females. As a consequence, a teacher's biased responses are accepted as logically correct and normal and serve to reinforce the ongoing lesson of female silence.

Evidence that girls adapt their reality to oppression is found in Best's observations that despite being placed in a secondary position in the classroom, girls were still
closely connected to the teacher's guidance and approval through helping in the classroom and applying themselves to their academic studies. This follows Chodorow's findings about girls' gender identification development as parallel to "their ongoing relationship with their mother" (176). Another indication of adaptation is that Best discovered they even accepted the idea that "all boys were smart while only some girls were as smart as boys, ... contrary to their own observations that in all grades the children who experienced difficulty in learning to read were boys..." (62). Girls and boys alike learn from experience that males are considered smarter and more important than girls, an attitude which is reinforced in society and education and which also plays an important part later in women's search for their voices within academic discourse at the college level.

The idea of boys as more visible and of primary importance was extended beyond the classroom to the playground and lunchroom. Best found in her study that on the playground boys were allotted more space for their games; "it was made quite clear that specific blacktop and grassy areas were designed for ball games — viewed by teachers and children alike as boys' games (games in which girls were not allowed to participate) — while the fringe areas were deemed sufficient for hopscotch and jump-rope, games assigned to girls" (16). Restricting girls to the
edges of play areas reinforces their secondary role as active participants even as it reinforces a conceptually limited sphere of actions.

Leslie Holly reported that the 10-year-old girls in her study "thought the boys took up the most space in the playground, and that they also perceived this as unfair" (1985 54). Of interest was the girls' reaction, or specifically, non-reaction; while they judged their treatment as unfair, the girls, nonetheless, did not make their feelings known. Awareness of the situation did not include the option of opposition, and their silent acceptance served as evidence of sex-appropriate behavior for both genders.

The issue of space continued in the lunchroom, as Best found the boys in second grade claiming one end of the class-assigned table for themselves and by "third grade the boys would run to the cafeteria to claim one lunch table for 'boys only,' and girls, having no choice, sat at the other" (16). One must assume that the girls silently acquiesced to this segregation, although no mention is made of the girls' reactions in Best's report.

Best believes that "[t]his persistent theme -- more space for boys, less space for girls -- unchallenged by any teacher, corroborated the girls' view of themselves as inferior and supported the boys' image of themselves as superior and important" (61). Girls' lack of space and
place reflects their status as non-entities; with no adult to speak for them in their voiceless, invisible situation, girls are enculturated into a pattern of discrimination acceptance. These silent girls grow up to become the silent women in college classrooms.

In conclusion, Best did find a connection between learning and peer-group association for boys in her study of elementary children. In first grade, learning to read became a rite of passage which guaranteed acceptance into the male circle; in higher grades, being accepted into the esteemed circle seemed to be a predictor of academic improvement (1983). Gender role socialization and its effects on academic performance play a negative part in boys' educational experience because striving to fulfill the rigidly defined parameters of masculinity produces the loss of true autonomy; while granting a position of privilege, being so honored restricts learning to a narrow definition of knowledge.

For the girls, being good readers and students parallels their socialization and leads to teacher acceptance and good grades. These unacknowledged benefits are a high price to pay for the resulting loss of both creativity and independent thinking, replaced with silence.

The Best study also found evidence that girls and boys have very different experiences in school. More boys than girls exhibited problems with reading skills and social
adjustment skills. The interweaving of the language/reading difficulty and the self-reflecting behaviors which elicit teacher attention and girls' collaborative attitude foreshadows a continuing educational pattern. Unfortunately for the girls, in this situation their advanced collaborative social skills contribute to their silence.
Chapter 4
High School

The process of gender-role socialization which begins at birth, a process Best calls "The Second Curriculum," parallels the academic curriculum through the entire educational program (4). As students begin high school, the previous lessons of male dominance and implied superiority again find a hospitable environment for expression. Just as Best found elementary grade boys struggling to fit into a hierarchical power scene, Leila and Susan Suleiman report that when boys enter the first year of secondary school, they are at "the bottom of the pile...[and]...in order to establish positions of dominance" they must struggle again. Some methods of seeking a dominant position include "... banding together in gangs, demonstrating physical strength and control over others by intimidation and violence, and dominating the arena of the classroom" (1985 79). These oppressive behaviors are but an emphasized continuation of the negative patterns seen in the early grades. After the previous conditioning, most girls resignedly accept a subordinate position within the classroom, but Spender reports that in many situations, "...even when a girl did try to speak, the boys were quick to interrupt, ridicule her, and silence her" (1982 63). In situations where a teacher would ask a specific female student for a response,
several boys might call out an answer (many times an incorrect one) either before she started to respond or loudly enough to drown out her voice. Confronted with the boys’ unchallenged freedom to dominate both in and out of the classroom, the girls are further subordinated into passive, silent roles.

The generalized female image of inferiority and or invisibility which is experienced first hand in the classroom is reinforced by gender-biased educational texts and teacher-selected readings. In these materials, males are most often portrayed as the protagonists around whom the action of the story revolves, and the female characters, if any are included, are depicted in roles which enable the protagonist’s story to unfold. Alleen Pace Nilsen cites examples in which "the boy does all the explaining, ... waving, ... complaining, [and] the girl does all the listening [and] smiling." Nilsen sees this situation as detrimental to the female reader’s self esteem as she follows the story in which the boy does "all of everything and the girl isn't even visible" (1973 201). To identify with the female character means to identify with the invisible.

This stereotypical image is created from a classical male perspective of either/or thinking — as a non-male, the female cannot function as a rational, autonomous entity — and is perpetuated by the male-dominant teaching
materials which represent males as the doers and females as the helpers or antagonists. This has a profound effect on self-image; Florence Howe tells us that when "the schoolgirl cannot find herself in history texts or...in literature," she "may ultimately discount the question of female identity as unimportant" (1973:12). This lack of a reflected image may ultimately affect her experience as a participant in the academic discourse of composition.

While gender-bias in educational texts has begun to change at the elementary level, Robert Rothman reports that according to "A Study of Book-Length Works Taught in High School English Courses" (research conducted by the federally-funded Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature in 1988), the "'canon' of required literature in public secondary schools differs little from what was in vogue 25 years ago" (1989). Despite all the research in the 70's which uncovered gender bias in curriculum and materials, "...these findings suggest that efforts to broaden the canon to include more works by women and minority authors have been 'ineffective.'" This means that in literature classes "...the lists of most frequently required books and authors were dominated by white males...:" even valid research did not challenge traditional selections. As a result, males continue to find identity enhancing-images in educational readings, while females are robbed of the opportunity to find their
own life experiences reflected and validated in the classroom material. This void transmits an influential message of powerlessness to female readers which is incorporated into their conceptions of personal ability. Having an attitude of intellectual inability can determine ability, as discussed and documented earlier.

Elizabeth Burn agrees and concludes that "[a]ttitudes that are developed at primary level ensure that by secondary school girls undervalue their abilities and underachieve in physics, math, computer studies and technology. Boys are able to obtain more teacher time and monopolize certain materials in many classrooms" (1989 147). Thus do boys learn the gendered norm of claiming power and girls learn the gendered norm of powerlessness as part and parcel of their A B C's. In such a setting, females will be silenced as they experience learning from a perspective of invisibility within the educational canon.

With boys and girls learning polarized gendered roles in elementary school, it is not surprising "women students do not perform as well in mixed-sex classrooms but that men students perform better" (R.R.Dale 120). From Spender's research it would appear that boys need the assurance of feeling superior to someone in order to facilitate acquisition of academic knowledge. If this is true it would explain boys' enhanced academic performance in mixed-sex classrooms. This theory leads Spender to an important
question: if boys learn better in male-dominant mixed-sex classes, "what happens to the boys in single-sex schools?"

She lets teachers answer:

It seems to me that the boys create an inferior or outside group and level the abuse at them that they would otherwise direct at the girls. The least "manly" boys become the target and are used as substitute girls in a way.

In an all-boys school a group of "not-real-boys" gets created. They are called the poofsters and the sissies and are constantly likened to girls. The sexual hierarchy gets set up but some boys have to play the part that the girls would take in a mixed school. But of course they are still all boys and so the results of the pseudo-girls still stand as the results of boys.

I used to think that the abuse boys handed out to boys in single-sex schools was just awful. It was nearly always sexual...I don't want to repeat it...but now I'm teaching in a mixed school I can see that there's probably just as much sexual abuse but it's not as noticeable when it's directed at girls.

(1982 121)

Evidently the hierarchical environment must be maintained in order for many boys to interact in the manner required for their gendered identity development and academic success; if there are no girls to represent the "other" half, "sissy" boys must be designated to fill the girl-less category. Many people also view mixed-sex classes for boys as a necessity in order to reduce homosexual contact and, in addition, believe that girls act as civilizing influences on boys' "natural" rough behavior. Clearly, these facts present an example of one way a
gender-biased educational system retards the human process toward wholeness for males as well as females.

Girls, on the contrary, fare much better in single-sex schools than in mixed-sex or coeducational schools. Dale Spender (1982) found that in contrast to the conventional classroom, where "...female influence appears to be negligible in the presence of males, [where] female students stand in subordination both to teachers and to their male classmates," the single-sex educational experience offers females the opportunity to "express and validate their own experience, to develop some autonomy, to build some confidence" (118, 121). For without the dominant behavior of boys to contend with, girls receive the teacher's needed attention and response. With no boys in the classroom, girls can abandon their subordinate position for one of active participant in their own "learning,...the ultimate human power" (Florence Howe 1984 xi).

In this protected environment, females are freed from the necessity of coping with the males' negative perceptions; there are no boys to judge them as unfeminine if they are not passive; they are not placed in the position of needing to be either silly or silent. Nor do they feel forced into pretended stupidity, a subordination much too common in coed classes. Research has also shown that graduates of women's colleges are disproportionately
represented among women going to medical school, winning fellowships for graduate studies, and appearing in Who's Who.

Florence Howe has studied what she calls the "myth" of coeducation since the 1970's and sees mixed-sex classes and schools as detrimental to girls' and women's education because "[e]ducation that teaches girls and women to accept their subordinate position in a male-centered world does not offer educational equity to them" (1984 x). This situation has a negative effect on the males also, for as Jenny Bull points out, "[m]anliness which depends on the submission of another person is oppressive and lacks humanness" (1974 217). Oppression of others is a learned trait.

In mixed-sex schools, girls continue to view themselves as inferior to boys as they enter successively higher grades, even when they earn higher evaluations of subject mastery. This distorted perspective is shared by teachers also. Kathy Clarricoates found that teachers invariably maintained the belief that boys were brighter than girls, and enjoyed boys more as students, despite lower male academic performance (1978 361). In regard to a causal effect between intelligence and grades, Diane Halpern found in her research that "...girls get better grades than males" but cautions that "...this does not prove that there is a smarter sex" (1986 46).
Unfortunately, many teachers indeed believe there is a smarter sex; but contrary to the grade indicator, believe it to be boys. In addition, Dale Spender found that both boys and girls perceived that boys were smarter from actual classroom experiences, and that consequently, "teachers are more concerned about boys, they consider boys more conscientious and capable,...more authoritative, more deserving and worthy of attention" (1982 55).

With the teachers' behavior as a model, it is no wonder then that girls and boys alike disregard the evidence of female academic superiority when it surfaces. Everyone in the classroom joins in the conspiracy of silence as these lessons are integrated into students' self-images.

Another area of gender bias concerns curricular topics of interest. When Spender questioned female students about what happened in the classroom if male-favored topics were not pursued, one student said that "[t]he boys get upset if we try to talk about girls' things...I suppose it's only right." When Spender queried her about girls' reactions to doing boy things she said, "It's not the same. We don't mind doing their things. Sometimes we get upset but we don't say much" (58, 58). They had learned their lessons of female silence well. Spender adds that as the boys' behavior took teachers' attention and time, the girls' confidence was undermined and they "react[ed] by saying
less and by attracting less attention" (55). The stage was set for girls to become voiceless, invisible entities within the classroom, a reinforcement of an ongoing message.

In addition, as girls enter puberty, they are pressured to change or conceal their successes to fit social expectations. This change reflects an overall shift in attitude from the pre-pubertal stage when girls were not as concerned with sexuality-based issues, and generally answered yes when asked if they liked math and did well in it (Elizabeth Fennema 1980). Spender reports that "during adolescence many of the girls changed their opinions...and repudiated their own experience and took on the perspective of the boys, when, it seems, they reached the age at which boys' opinions became important" (1982 83). They could not risk inappropriate behavior during a phase of development in which sex role conformity is vitally important. This conflict parallels what Simone de Beauvoir explains as a process by which the female's sense of self as "subject" is undermined at puberty when the developing sense of sexuality defines her as "object" (De Beauvoir 333-336). In order for sexual development to occur within the existing social structure, girls must place themselves outside active participation as autonomous subjects to inhabit the prescribed role of passivity as the opposite of the male norm.
Girls have learned by adolescence that boys don't like smart girls, and as sexual development continues many have indeed "camouflaged positive performances, if not to all boys, then most definitely to their boyfriends" in order to appear more desirable (Spender 1982 81). Baumrind also found that males and females "...alike equate intellectual achievement in women with loss of femininity" (1975 60).

This situation is not new: Jenny Bull reported that females often reacted to a conflict of success motivation in one of two ways: either they become very "feminine" or they tried to become like males intellectually. She went on to explain that to be feminine meant to play dumb, for everyone knew boys didn't like smart girls; the tragedy is that this game playing can eventually persuade females that they truly aren't as smart as boys (1974 215). Halpern concludes from her research that "[t]he sex role message for adolescent girls is clear: It isn't feminine to be smart" (1986 127).

During this stage of sexual development, academic achievement differences between girls and boys become more apparent. For instance, Halpern relates that at adolescence a "verbal sex difference favoring girls" becomes clear (1986 47). There is also substantial evidence that starting at approximately age thirteen, males outperform females on mathematical tests (Halpern 1986 57). This math difference may occur because of socialization, but it is
also possible that a basic female/male difference in visual-spatial ability is a contributing factor. This ability, which is linked to mathematical achievement, is described by Halpern as:

the ability to imagine what an irregular figure would look like if it were rotated in space or the ability to discern the relationship among shapes and objects. (1986 48)

One question is whether this ability is biological or learned. If it is learned, children must ingest the concept through day-to-day activities, such as playing with toys, a process which promotes development of interconnected skills. The types of toys and games boys are encouraged to choose are primarily those which incorporate visual-spatial ability, for instance, building blocks, tinker toys, erector sets, model building, and football. These activities may actually create and enhance visual-spatial skills.

Elizabeth Burn, a teacher and parent interested in changing sex-bias at her school, observed an association between toys and behaviors in her students' play. As a result, she conducted a toy survey in 1986-87 with 363 girls and 323 boys, from four schools in her district. She discovered marked differences in the toy selections of girls and boys, with girls selecting dolls or passive soft toys, while boys selected cars, construction materials.
computers and electronic toys. From the earliest age, boys were developing spatial ability skills through play. She tells us that "...[t]hese results echoed a major mathematics report published in 1982" (Cockcroft Report), which indicated that "...boys are given significantly more spatial ability developing...toys..." than the girls, which "may have an effect on mathematical attainment." In addition, she found that both teachers and parents believed that gender specific "toys developed aggressive, independent behaviors in boys and passivity in girls," patterns which are also associated with later mathematical performance (1989 142-144).

Halpern (1986) reports that studies have shown that spatial skills can be taught, and that preschool through eighth grade children improved their scores on spatial ability tests when given training with typical male preference toys. More recently, the AAUW report stated that it has been found that "girls and boys gained equally from instruction in spatial-visualization skills, despite initial differences" (1992 25). Halpern points out that even though these skills can be taught, the possibility of a biological connection is not automatically disproved. She reasons that it is possible that boys are able to learn spatial skills more readily than girls, and if so, there may be a "genetic-environmental interaction" involved (133). This would seem to indicate a need to ensure girls'
participation in visual-spatial development activities beginning in infancy in order to prevent possible later gender-related discrepancies in spatial ability skills and subsequent mathematical performance differences between the sexes.

Spender (1982) sees a connection between the phenomenon of girls as "other" and the supposed "inherent deficiencies in the mathematics and spatial ability of girls" (126). The fields of math and science are assumed to be male subjects because they require the classical male attributes of "objectivity" and "reasoned logic," an assumption that if not male, one is "other" — emotional and lacking reasoning ability. Spender's idea of a cause-and-effect relationship between socialized gender-role and mathematical achievement was borne out in research when she discovered that in a high school where boys' and girls' entry math scores were almost equal, "by the end of the first year the average test score of the boys was significantly higher" (126). This would suggest that even when spatial ability difference was not indicated by lower test scores, environmental forces determined mathematical success. An environment in which one might expect lower scores would be one in which "the girls are less likely to ask or answer questions," a reality demonstrated by gendered silence in too many classroom situations. Spender posits that females learn to keep their place, silent and
peripheral in a male-dominant classroom, in order to be feminine (126).

As a result of the math score differential mentioned above, the school decided to create a single-sex class of mathematics for a percentage of the girls, while continuing the mixed classes for the remaining girls and boys. The results were informative; the average score of the girls in the mixed set had fallen well behind that of the boys in the same set. The girls in the single-sex set, however, achieved a far better average score than the girls in the mixed set and were only slightly below the average score achieved by the boys (126). This would suggest that environmentally determined self-image can lead to a distortion of ability, as low scores occurred in relation to a situation which was stressful to the girls.

In her study, Elizabeth Fennema (1980) found that mathematics teachers followed a predictable pattern; if a female student earned a good mark, it was thought to be because of luck, with an assumption that she probably wouldn't do as well next time, while poor marks were considered proof of "natural" feminine mathematical ineptitude. So even when their mathematical performance was high, many girls received no positive reinforcement.

The teachers' skewed perception was not limited to evaluation of the girls' academic performance. Fennema found that when boys received a good mark, it was
collectively accepted as an affirmation of ability; when they received a poor mark, it was not considered as an accurate reflection of ability and it was understood that the performance would be better next time. Dale Spender points out that in many classes "poor performance was not allowed to interfere with the premise that boys are more proficient" (1989 102). When teachers believe students' achievement capability is high, success tends to become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

From kindergarten through high school, both females and males have studied a double curriculum; they completed the mandated academic objectives, and they internalized gender-based socialized standards of behavior. The subtle behavioral messages they receive in the classroom exert more influence on the continuing experience of learning than any academic strategy. For the white, middle class, (straight) male academic lessons blend with self-confirming socialization to provide the base necessary for the development of a voice and an assured audience within the academic discourse of college.

For those outside the privileged category, the outcome is conflict. For the female, academic lessons are circumscribed by socialization as a lesser being. First, she learns her place in the world, in the classroom, in the writings which make up her required reading lists: she, as not male, as other, finds herself forever at the periphery
of reality. She learns to read as a male, blanking out her femaleness in order to fit the role of reader of male text. She learns how, as other, to still her inner voice and speak the language of patriarchy's men of wisdom. She learns the habit of the perpetual smile. She submits to the learned men's description of her psyche, her intellect, her body, her emotions, her life, and how the aspects of each decry her deficiencies. Most of all she learns how not to question, to be endlessly silent.

Thus prepared, a female enters society as an adult. Many have come to accept this role as natural; some resist. In many, an unnamed and unrecognized desire for the wholeness that truth and knowledge create leads them on. If a female decides to go to college, she may expect to gain entrance to that sacred realm of thinkers and scholars as an academic equal to anyone of similar scholastic standing. But this idea may not coincide with reality.
Chapter 5
Learning From An Andocentric Base

The college-level experience embodies a shift in focus from that in early education, from an emphasis on behavior to one of a new language and scholarship of academic discourse. As institutions of higher learning, colleges and universities are assumed to offer equal access to that learning for everyone qualified to enter. The enculturated image of these institutions includes a belief that within such environs a pure, tradition-proven, unbiased, rational level of thinking is used in the pursuit of a universal human truth. This belief reflects the classical foundation of learning. One might assume that anyone with the required level of intellectual ability could enter into the academic discourse of learning, that only a lack of such ability could prevent joining one's voice to the ongoing discussions of higher thinking. But what if the institution's valued discourse is in actuality structured for only one segment of the educational population? What if the required style of logic and reasoning is but one possible pathway into knowledge and what if the touted universal truth is only true for some people? Finally, what if the traditionally valued classical truth translates into a tradition of exclusion, by race or sex or cultural background? Kim Thomas tells us that higher education does
not overtly discriminate; rather, through an acceptance of particular values and beliefs, it passively and subversively makes it difficult for some people — among them women — to succeed (1990 179).

Many unacknowledged factors play a crucial role when a woman decides to pursue higher education. As a female, she is outside the male-centered group of academe; therefore, her experience is determined not only by her personal abilities, expectations, and enculturated assumptions, but also by inherent elements of the educational institution itself, which is structured on classical beliefs. In addition, her cumulative school experiences intertwined with socialization of gender determine her expectations and assumptions; how she interacts with subject, pedagogy, methodology, and ways of thought is primarily established.

In "Sexism in Academic Styles of Learning," David Bleich explains that the world of academia is one in which "discourse styles and classroom styles...are affected, in far too great a degree, by values of classical sexism" (231). The teachings of Plato and Aristotle inform the scholarship of today. But there are additional elements at work. Kim Thomas adds that higher education is not "...the end of a process..., [but] a process [in itself] which plays a crucial role in the creation and reproduction of gender difference" (1990 7). As a result of the experiences from kindergarten through high school in which
females learn their cooperative place in the classroom and their silent position in learning, a female enters a higher education community which she believes offers equal access to education for everyone but which may in fact present her a less than balanced opportunity based on its value foundation of male dominance. As Thomas has suggested, that dominance may in fact be included as an integral element of the curriculum. Cheris Kramarae and Paula Treichler also concluded from their study of gender and power relationships that "...male dominance may be taught in part by the structure of the classroom itself" (1990 56).

Bleich says that this problematic situation is exacerbated because "...these values are so deep -- so ingrained in the general culture -- that it is even difficult for well-meaning men and many women to detect that this is the case..." (231). This includes even those who are alienated by the system. If true, that means that everyone in the institution -- students, faculty, staff, and administration, both male and female -- operates from an often unrecognized enculturated belief and behavioral system which perpetuates male dominance. Because educational institutions are products of society, that society's value system will be found replicated within its educational structures and will be assimilated by students through a circumscribed language norm. We have seen
evidence of the subtle and not so subtle messages presented to boys and girls in elementary and secondary schooling which reinforce society's prescribed gender roles.

Sanctioning a language norm which includes unacknowledged bias adds to the problem of unchallengable bias, for by advocating a normative correctness of academic discourse, we imply the supremacy and universality of its inherent and unexamined traditional view of reality. But is this discourse and reality perspective superior and universal? After all, it was shaped by the thoughts and experiences of an esoteric group of people. For those students who belong to the narrowly defined group of white, middle-class male citizens, assimilation of academic communication will be an extension of their language/thought paradigm through which they will find their individual and social group experience reflected. Also, since their language and behavior fits the norm, their enculturated ways of being help them to succeed. The reflection of one's existence serves to validate one's personal thought and experience, which in turn strengthens one's self-identity and one's social identity. Thus is one guided into academic discourse through the reflection in the educational system of one's own self-concept.

But for those students defined outside the unquestioned parameters of value by race, class, or gender, the process of discovering their academic voices will be
very different. Barbara Henning tells us that those students "whose language and experience differ from their teacher's" will have to "narrow...their cognitive processes" in order to speak and write in the "language of the academy." She adds that silence is often the result when students are required to accept a foreign perspective as truth (1991 676). It will be necessary for them to turn away from their own perception and to adapt the preconceived notion of reality in order to function within its structure. This means an integration of foreign paradigms which in effect places them in a position of "other," as deviant from the norm. When a person must shift from a personal perspective to a differing one, a corresponding state of anonymity and silence may be produced.

Males who belong to the elite group may discover their voice through a naturally occurring sequence of learning based on a masculine perception of the world found in the curriculum, the instructor's teaching style, the materials, the language, and peer interaction. In addition, most college literature is written by males and features male protagonists, a situation which welcomes male identification. For example, Peter Schwenger describes how literature provides for males "experiences which, though artificial, may be the common property of millions; it contains insights which, though unsystematized, are still
valid: it provides words for perceptions which, until named, may not even be recognized" (1989 101).

In contrast, females as deviant from the elite will not be afforded validating reinforcements toward the discovery of voice, and will in fact need to still their innate voices in favor of a masculine conception of female voice. Schwenger points out this void in literature where women "are reflectors of masculine sexuality; or they threaten it; or they only stand and wait..." presumably for a male-based experience of validation (109). Joanna Russ found that in literature, women "exist only in relation to the protagonist (who is male) [which means] they do not really exist at all. At their best they are depictions of the social roles women are supposed to play and often do play,...at their worst they are...fantasies about what men want, or hate, or fear" (1990 29). The resulting language for women is only that which mirrors the male experience. Thus, when a woman enters academia, instead of finding positive reinforcement of her female experience in a mutually feminine/masculine world, she enters a world dominated by a male perception of that world and presented and analyzed in a language which reflects that male view. This is actually a re-entry; she has had the same experience in her earlier academic situations. Not only does women's silencing through language empower men, but as Dale Spender says in Man Made Language, it also perpetuates
the myth of male superiority (1980).

This myth within language came about because of social roles which centered women's lives in the home and family while men lived a public and political life in which they "created our art, literature, science, philosophy, and education, as well as the language which describes and manipulates these areas of culture" (Schulz 1975). Accordingly, they quite naturally created a language to fit their perspective of the world, which included their belief in their own value. This valuation is but a reflection of self in a magnifying mirror, not a biological truth. But when this valuation, and only this valuation, appears in almost every novel, text, poem, speech, and lecture, it comes to seem inevitable, inalterable, true.

This distorted view did not come about because women could not and did not think, reason, or explore their reality. Even though their realm of existence was constrained, they too created art, literature, science, philosophy, and education, all reflecting their perspectives of the world. The resulting voices/languages are not equally prominent in the written artifacts of Western civilization because of the male-dominant control of what was deemed valuable. As a result, most of the evidence recording women's life experiences has been swept aside, and their voices within language were ignored. The language reflected but half of humanity.
In such a male-based language, women may be subtly and easily overlooked by the much-used masculine substantives, such as the generic "he" which supposedly represents both male and female. Also, as Nilsen reminds us, linguists point out that "English is perhaps defective in not having singular pronouns equivalent to the plurals...[of] they, their, and them" forcing users into an either-or choice of he or she (1975 203). In a male dominant society, "he" became the normative choice.

A male dominant view pervades materials utilized for learning; in "Freshman Textbooks," Jean Mullen reports that in an informal survey of 133 Freshman anthologies she found that over 90% of all "the reading and study material available for stylistic imitation, inspiration, and stimulation of ideas...is prepared by men" (80). (This means white middle-class men, which excludes not only the female gender, but all other races and classes as well.) Of this material which serves education as a window to the world, does the view encompass all perspectives, or just that of the male preparer? Mullen found that women were generally excluded from most texts, with an average representation of about 7%, and of those, women were usually "represented in narrative or descriptive material" and less often in "expository prose or logical argument" (80). When stylistic examples of excellence were provided, "male writers predominated...98 %," and when included,
"women's writing was...used for specific examples of diction, metaphor, allusion, order, and emphasis" (80) rather than as generally excellent. The assumption was that "men...were the writers to emulate, while women writers could illustrate useful techniques" (79).

The pattern of connecting male writers with models of mastery and higher thinking and women writers with technical skills was found also in linguistic matters where women writers were not represented at all in discussions of "the changing language, linguistic theory and history, or authoritarianism vs. relativism in language usage" (80). They were represented minimally in subjects such as "control of tone, levels of usage, audience awareness, and spoken vs. written language" (80).

Mullen also found that in the various areas of subject matter contained in texts -- personal identity, topics relating to the individual and society, and moral principles -- women's voices were almost non-existent. Significantly, in the category of personal identity, there was a small percentage of women writers represented in themes of love and marriage, while there was 0% in the area of higher education. These are examples of the unnoticed, subtle and yet damaging sexism which plays an important part in guiding people's expectations. Thus, even in the discipline of English, "often considered a 'woman's subject,' females face situations which adversely affect
their self-image...and doubts about their own ability" (Thomas 1990 156). The undermining of female self-image at the college level is a continuation of the pervasive indoctrination seen through the elementary and secondary school experience.

In "The Prisoners of Texts: Male Chauvinism in College Handbooks and Rhetorics," Candace Helgeson reports prevalent sex discrimination in college texts which she sees as doubly dangerous because of "[t]he subliminal nature of the prejudice that often films [the] pages like a semi-transparent skin, usually undetected but restricting and distorting the images of women" (396). Such prejudice can exist unseen and unchallenged when woven as a thread of traditional assumptions about gender roles into the overall fabric of feminine and masculine behaviors. It is assumed that women are naturally less capable of serious thought, that they are childlike and need care, or that they embody a mysterious evil power which threatens others. In these capacities they are presented in subservient roles as helpers of men or the force against which men must strive to succeed.

Through these unacknowledged assumptions, "...women [have] been rendered invisible as individuals," and formed into generalized faulty reflections (396). Unrecognized, bias cannot be addressed and corrected. Helgeson found sexism so intertwined in writing texts, so "unobtrusive
that only a study of the entire book makes it unmistakable" (397). Along with the college composition lesson, students are presented with a lesson in gender-role socialization, just as Best found in elementary grades; the "Second Curriculum" is part and parcel of the academic curriculum.

Helgeson identified four generalized sexual stereotypes in the eleven texts she examined: "the Sex Object, the Passive Nourisher, the Perpetual Child, and the Invisible Presence" (396). She views the fourth stereotype as the most insidious because it is the way in which women's very existence is "literally ignored," which is a powerful method of silencing women's voices (396). These stereotypings are woven into the rhetoric in theme and discussion topics, sample sentences and words for grammar and usage exercises, definitions of style, and models of business letters. It is also present as sexist language. It is interesting to note that the overall imaging of women as "overemotional, irrational, unintellectual, dependent, devious, superficial," which supports evidence of male superiority, leads back to Best's observations that little boys define their maleness, their superiority, by non-femaleness (400). In order to appear masculine, boys must strive to avoid those characteristics associated with the female image. This imaging is continued through college texts, perhaps as needed reinforcement of masculine strength.
Added to this is the equally damaging assumption of textbook writers "that the student poring over the page is male" (Helgeson 397). How does this approach affect the female student? In order to enter this male-based text, a female must suppress her reading self and read as a male. Elaine Showalter explains that females "...are expected to identify as readers with a masculine experience and perspective..." (1974 319). Emphasis is added to this alienation from the self by the fact that this masculine perspective is "...presented as the human one;" to identify with the universal human perspective, one must identify with the male perspective (1974 319). Just as Spender found that females in secondary grades were required to put aside their own interests for topics of male interest, this process completely ignores and thus eliminates female experience which further hinders the development of women's academic voices (1974 319). For if female students cannot find their life experiences reflected and validated within their educational experience, they must identify with the presented male view. Since finding one's academic voice depends on a connection between self-identity and the academic material, females encounter the male perspective as a barrier in their pursuit of academic voice.
Chapter 6
Writing From an Androcentric Base

It has been determined that texts and materials used in the classroom are often sexist, but what about the instructors who decide how these texts are used? Alice Freed focuses attention on the fact that while "suggestions on how to handle ambiguous, inaccurate, stereotypic, or discriminating references to women and men in scholarly writing" abound, the problems of sexism in those who utilize these materials is seldom addressed. Furthermore, just as in elementary and secondary grades, few college instructors recognize any connection between themselves and "sexist language and the teaching of composition" (1987:82). For teachers and students alike, composition studies are closely tied to each person's world view translated through language; therefore, if an instructor's language reflects male dominance, that sexist language creates an unacknowledged curriculum of privileged world view. This means that females must discount their personal view in order to accommodate the one reflected in the gendered language the instructor models. Women end up forced to adopt and reproduce sexist thinking in order to appear mainstream in their writing style and subjects. This is not accomplished without sacrificing authentic voice.

There are many ways in which the instructor plays an
important part in the student's development of an authentic voice within academic discourse. Through this guide/evaluator, personal biases will be reflected in the inclusion or exclusion of approaches which reflect current research and theories of teaching diverse groups of people. In addition to the choice of either sexist or non-sexist language as a guiding standard, theirs is the decision regarding required texts, handbooks, and supplemental materials. Each must structure the classroom management; some are more comfortable with a hierarchical model and others minimize their role as instructor by adopting a teacher-as-guide method. Another important aspect will be the instructor's belief in either a product- or a process-oriented writing program. In combination with these variables, the instructor's awareness of cultural multifariousness within the classroom determines whether and how diverse voices are heard, recognized and valued.

Of these responsibilities, the one most capable of empowering all students is the one of language use. A gender-biased language represents only one sub-group of middle-class males; a small segment of the diverse group which usually constitutes the population of a classroom. Even though belonging to an elite group creates a privileged state, it also creates an encapsulated existence. This is not a state of wholeness nor a determiner for learning, but nevertheless, if that isolated
state is the only basis of social and individual power, it will become the normalized pattern, one necessary for all students to emulate.

As a rebuttal to the claim that "isms" in language affect everyone equally, Alice Freed points out that while it is true that some sexist language does diminish men, English language, "as evidenced in particular by the masculine generic and as seen by the social interpretation of many sexually unidentified nominals, views 'male' as the norm" (1987 88). Marjorie Swaker writes in "The Sex of the Speaker as a Sociolinguistic Variable" of an enculturated assumption that "male speaking patterns have established the norm and that women's language is a deviant form based on it" (1973 77). This is but another version of Aristotle's view of woman as a flawed male.

Marguerite Duras writes that when a male oriented "conceptual scheme" is imposed on the experience of women, for instance through language, "the experience is extinguished" (quoted in Belenky et al. 203). If the male experience is the norm base of language, then the female as non-male must be abnormal, or deviant; she is "other" than the norm, and exists separated from the language. In an effort to overcome this separation, many women construct their writing upon the male norm, and write as they think is expected. This hinders the development of authentic voice within academic discourse. Freed points out that
sexist language in the classroom not only can serve to continue women's silence and men's non-awareness of alternate ways of learning, thus disempowering students, but can "contribute to and [actually] teach sexist thinking" (1987 88). So instead of helping women to make sense of their experiences, sexist language separates them from that experience. Without awareness of sexist language use, females must learn to write, not through a reflection of their own world view and language, but by way of those foreign to their experience.

Women also encounter an unseen barrier in education because of a hierarchical classroom structure. While based on the classical reasoning model of male as action and female as emotion — reason vs. emotion, either/or thinking — it is possible that this paradigm of learning represents but one of various options. What is the response of students whose perspectives of and responses to the world differ from this basis for learning? What happens to the possibilities of discovering the whole view, the comprehensive truth?

Having but one view presented, such as the adversarial, either-or classical version, may determine what will be seen. The hierarchical classroom environment is based on rhetoric that Adrienne Rich calls a "masculine adversary style of discourse," a concept which parallels Moulton's adversary paradigm (1979, 138). As such, it
creates an adversarial positioning of learners. Because most males have been practicing a competitive style of relating to people and information since childhood, they generally adapt readily to its inclusion into academic rhetoric, while women are not as comfortable or successful with this type of learning. In the early grades, girls display both collaborative and argumentative language skills. But perhaps because of the socially constructed propensity for collaboration, the adversarial reasoning of argumentation is not developed to the extent it is in boys. By college age, the result of women's early training is seen as the inability to think and reason but may only be a different way of problem solving. The advanced skills of collaboration may feel more natural to females and actually accomplish as much as to be adversarial and separate oneself from the argument, to distance oneself by becoming objective.

Kim Thomas reports that while men "particularly enjoyed the cut-and-thrust of debate" in classrooms, many women "felt very reticent about participating" (1990 156). This would explain why "[w]omen's sense of inferiority is heightened and re-created...[when] they find themselves in an environment "which [favorably] rates articulacy and even aggression," behaviors they tend to find uncomfortable (1990 158). Belenky et al. found in their study that even in classes where women students were explicitly encouraged
to engage in critical debate, they were reluctant to do so because for a female to take a stand against others "means to isolate herself socially" (1986 65). This relates to Goodwin's findings about the choice of collaborative enhancing language by young girls as a preferred means of communication.

As further explanation, Thomas adds that in higher education "a woman who appears 'feminine' is unlikely to be taken seriously...while a woman who tries to shake off her 'femininity' in order to be taken seriously will be derided as unattractive," an image by which others judge her worth as a human being (1990 22). Just as in adolescence, some women go "so far as to 'play dumb' when they [are] with male students because they know that the men [don't] like clever women. Cleverness and femininity [are] seen as incompatible" (Thomas 1990 21). When a woman experiences such conflict, her strained self-esteem can undermine her ability to think, to know, even making her unsure of the validity of her own reality. Wendy Goulston tells us that women's socialization which "produces internalized oppression explains this dilemma: women are often not sure of their own ideas, especially when asked to express them in rhetorical forms that have traditionally been used almost exclusively by men" (1987 19).

Underachievement is not always an indication of lack of ability; rather, it can be a product of socialization
and institutionalized prejudice. For example, if a female learns through sex-role identification that being "mathematical" is a male trait, she may silence her natural curiosity of things mathematical and thus silence an aspect of her reality. Elaine Showalter says that "[w]omen are estranged from their own experience and unable to perceive its shape and authenticity because it is not mirrored and given resonance in the materials or interactions in the classroom. Since they have no faith in the validity of their own perceptions, rarely seeing them confirmed...or accepted...can we wonder...[if]...women students are so often timid, cautious and insecure if we exhort them to 'think for themselves' ?" (1974 319). The language mirror does not reflect the existence of women, adding to the perception of invisibility. Spender adds, "Can we wonder if they begin to believe in their own anonymity?" (1982 75). The little girl who learned her lesson of silence so well becomes the college woman who has forgotten her former skills of communication, whose ignored voice is just a whisper.

Because females have been taught throughout their school years that the male view was of most importance, they usually do not trust their inner voice. In fact, by the time they enter college, many do not even recognize that they have stilled their voices, and look upon their thoughts as flawed or invalid in some unknown way. They
have been led to discount their view of the world as they
know it, creating a sense of disharmony in the search for a
voice within academic discourse.

In most classrooms, students encounter an authorial
paradigm, with the instructor as the one who possesses
knowledge which is to be transferred from him/her to the
students by way of academic discourse. Sometimes, other
items are included on this agenda. Jane Tompkins shared a
personal realization concerning her role as teacher in
"Pedagogy of the Distressed." She explained that instead
of seeing her job as helping her students to understand the
materials of study, she actually had been focused more on
three things: "a) to show the students how smart [she] was,
b) to show them how knowledgeable [she] was, and c) to show
them how well-prepared [she] was for class" (1990 654).
This underlying aspect of a teacher's motivations may be
present in many educational settings.

Basically, the instructor has a concept in mind for
the students to learn — the instructor's view of a
particular truth — through lectures and selected
materials, which the students are then required to present
back to the instructor through tests and papers, with the
products consequently evaluated and graded by the
instructor. There is usually not much interaction among
students; they are actually in competition for the
instructor's favor and attention and best grade. This
situation creates what one student described as alienation, not only from each other but from education itself as they "read extensively, digest[ed] the various facts and ideas, and organiz[ed] them into lengthy, well-documented essays," all without feedback (Schneider 1974 281). In this traditional, isolated atmosphere, there is usually not much discussion at all other than what occasionally occurs between the instructor and random individual students. In such discussions, the instructor directs all inquiries, references, and verbalized attention back to the ideas or concepts he or she has presented for all the students to learn.

In Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Paulo Freire describes this type of instruction as the "banking concept of education" where "[e]ducation thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositaries and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat" (1990 58). Their ability to retrieve this information from memory and to repeat it either verbally or in written form defines the quantity of knowledge gained.

The assigned papers that the students produce for the instructor's evaluation are returned with lots of red marks -- indications of errors. Usually, students are assigned a composition topic and the completed product is submitted to
the instructor by a specified date, to be graded and
returned. Students spend a great deal of thought in
deciphering what the instructor wants in regard to each
assignment. (And in most assignments, students must adopt
either a point of view implicit in the assignment or one
from the teacher, but not their own.) If there is any
discussion of papers, it is after grading. This
educational hierarchical style of product over process,
reason over emotion, objectivity over connection — which
seems to be a hallmark of higher education — may be seen
as parallel to male development of self when one considers
the early socialization of males whereby they distance
themselves from "female" emotion and connection in favor of
the "manly" attributes of objectivity and factual
reasoning. Even though this hierarchical mode of learning
is often stressful for both female and male students, more
males are successful in striving in this accustomed manner
for their own voice in academic discourse because of the
groundwork of previous learning.

Belenky et al. discovered through their research that
females have a particular way of knowing and learning —
connection and collaboration of instructor, students, and
materials — which is very different from the hierarchical,
linear paradigm utilized in the majority of college
classes. This contrast of epistemological grounding reveals
a possible explanation of why so many female students are
uninvolved in the traditional classroom, so alienated from their own opinions, so invisible, so silent.

Another basic difference that Belenky et al. uncovered is that females need a learning environment which is conducive to and encourages questioning of the issue at hand, while eliminating judgemental conclusions. They found that most female students have a deep-seated distrust of logic and theory as the dominant vehicles for knowing; these systems offer no possibility for integration of varied life experience in the evaluation of a truth. Instead of receiving knowledge, as in Friere's banking system, they need to construct knowledge through questioning, evaluating, discovering underlying reasons, and building on the existing connections. This type of learning promotes human interaction, in contrast to the "objective," either-or stance required in the classical method which necessitates suspension of subjective involvement of the learner.

Utilizing "female paradigms" of learning does not mean that the classical view of logic and reasoning is valueless; rather, recognizing options opens the concept of education to the integration of the two systems. For women are not the only ones harmed by the traditional system; men must pay the price of emotional detachment from others and from their own experiences in exchange for a privileged position within the social structure.
I have looked at the ways in which gender role development for both males and females affects their learning experiences from birth through college. Because of the male-centered social and educational systems, many males establish the skill base they will need for the development of voice prior to entrance to the traditional college composition classroom. But for many females, the socio-educational system has rendered them silent and they need the opportunity to break their enculturated silence and develop their voices in academic discourse within a non-traditional framework. This is not an easy task, for as Goulston explains, "for many women, learning to write as a strong-voiced, confident individual uncomfortably jolts one's sense of self and one's female stereotype; it involves more than simply learning writing skills" (1987 21). Murray tells us that "[w]riting means self exposure...and that...to have faith in the draft means to have faith in the self" (1980 19). Duras adds that "[w]omen have been in darkness for centuries...and when [they] write, they translate this darkness" (1973 174). Writing may thus create conflict and uncertainty for women. In contrast, when men write, "[t]hey begin from a theoretical platform that is already in place;" the words they need for expression of thought and experience are there waiting (174).

After examining the socialization process females
experience which silences their voices so profoundly, and taking into consideration the basis and exclusionary logic of traditional academic discourse, an important question arises: is it possible for females to find their voice, their place within traditional academic discourse?

Mary K. Cayton writes that the task of establishing oneself within a discourse is "virtually an impossible one" for someone outside the privileged community. In order to write academic discourse, one must already be an equal member of the academic discourse community one wishes to enter (1991 652). And traditional academic discourse excludes females. Cayton includes an example of one student's personal experience and subsequent rejection of traditional academic discourse as a language "that favors theory over personal experience, answers over questions, monologue over dialogue, and logic and objective linearity over a more intuitive and subjective creativity" (653).

Instead of a knowledge-creating language which would encompass all these elements, academic discourse rejects half; by doing so, it rejects half of humanity. This student presents the possibility that opposition to traditional academic discourse as the only discourse may be the only solution. To empower her self, her voice, she had to turn away from the gendered rhetoric of academic discourse. The enormity of the idea creates a momentary void; if the known is discarded, what will take its place?
Obviously, research is the only resource for creation of a new discourse. But in the meantime, composition teachers must continue to find ways to bring marginalized students out of silence through an enlarging approach to the traditional discourse structure of the college classroom.
Chapter 7
Creating Discourse

Upon accepting that the traditional approach to seeking knowledge and ultimately universal truth privileges one group while ignoring the existence of others, the question of what constitutes knowledge itself becomes the next issue. When we question who decides what counts as knowledge and defines truth, we challenge the perspective of domination. Knowledge is not a preserved static entity which was divined and recorded at some time in history by men of wisdom, to be retrieved from official texts and minds, dusted off and fed to students; rather, knowledge is created as each student integrates established learning with personal experience. This process of connecting theories and personal truths enables students to develop wholeness and discover their own voice within a context which includes but is not limited to academic discourse. The traditional discourse will be transformed into one which is accessible to all.

Such a language of knowledge is constructed only by removing the barriers which official knowledge creates; to question the validity of polarized, either/or positions opens the way to change. Kenneth Burke writes that to "attain a higher order of truth" one must deal with "reconciling opposites in a higher synthesis" (1950 53).
Students need to be taught to resist the strictures of either/or thinking and discover a knowledge-building connection between a logic of exclusion and personal experience or identification, and from this synthesis form theories of logic. The resulting dialectic of knowledge incorporates the established hierarchical style of learning with a connected, collaborative approach to create an equitable educational environment to which each student brings an equally authoritative voice. But what would this new egalitarian education entail? In 1938 Virginia Woolf explored the contrast between the traditional college and one which was centered on educating the whole individual in the following excerpt:

What should be taught in the new college, the poor college? Not the arts of dominating other people, nor the arts of ruling, killing, of acquiring land and capital. They require too many overhead expenses; salaries and uniforms and ceremonies. The poor college must teach only the arts that can be taught cheaply and practised by poor people; such as medicine, mathematics, music, painting and literature. It should teach the arts of human intercourse; the arts of understanding other people's lives and minds and the little arts of talk, of dress, of cookery that are allied with them. The aim of the new college, the cheap college should not be to segregate and specialise but to combine. It should explore the ways in which mind and body can be made to co-operate; discover what new combinations make good wholes in human life. (Thirty Guineas 62)

In more recent times, Dale Spender focused on what is needed to correct the gender bias girls experience in the
existing educational system, and her view is much the same as Woolf's:

[F]or girls to receive the same advantages as boys would entail many changes in schooling. They would need a system designed for them and one which validated and reinforced their own version of experience. They would need knowledge by and about women. They would need to devise their own "standards." And education would look very different... (1982 94).

And the difference would empower both females and males, for creating equity in a composition class means to create an environment in which all students regardless of gender, race, or socio-economic group can explore their own connecting relationships to the text, to other people, and to the world through writing; to combine human experience into wholeness as a common denominator. In light of this goal, teachers need to guide students toward the integration of objective reasoning and subjective thought paradigms, through questioning the seemingly natural structure of academic discourse. This balancing process would promote idea-linking instead of idea-ranking, thereby creating an interweaving of established theories and personal perspective into the value realm of academic discourse. This would expand the assumed boundaries of thought, thereby enriching the search for knowledge. As Diane Brunner tells us, "[b]y dislocating boundaries associated with official knowledge and with the power ascribed to those who legitimate such knowledge...spaces
Establishing equity by "dislocating" traditional boundaries does not mean replacing the androcentric structure with a gynocentric one; an equitable learning environment means that instead of a hierarchical ranking of one perspective over another, difference is to be recognized and valued. Equity is not the "intellectual fad" of a university system that Bloom (1987) envisions as failing its students by shifting the focus away from the classics to subjects which deal with cultural diversity (341). Contrary to some academicians' negative expectations, equity does not result in the lowering or "compromising of academic standards in the name of egalitarianism" (Caywood xi). In response to the issue of lowering standards, the first question which occurs is, whose standards are being lowered? Julia Penelope suggests that this fear expressed in regard to intellectual downgrading may actually embody resistance to change on the part of those who stand to benefit from the maintenance of the status quo. For "admitting women and men of various ethnic and racial groups will alter the nature of the student body, the content of courses, and ways of teaching and grading" (1990 xxxvi).

But sophisticated intellectual thought does not require conformity in order to exist; it is possible that
the touted "academic standards" are in part but academic stiflers used to maintain the traditional "natural" male gender dominance. While the debate continues about whether intellectual standards are being undermined by feminist teaching methods and by feminist goals to include students formerly excluded, teachers can strive to create an environment in which all students have equal access to the practice of higher level thinking skills through inquiry.

The composition classroom with its student diversity and an enlightened "practitioner" can create a setting in which, according to Stephen North, "practice becomes inquiry" (1987 33). He writes of this happening in the traditional classroom only under special circumstances, but these special circumstances describe what occurs as regular practice in an equitable environment:

(a) when the situation cannot be framed in familiar terms, so that any familiar strategies will have to be adapted for use; (b) when, although the situation is perceived as familiar, standard approaches are no longer satisfactory, and so new approaches are created for it; or (c) when both situation and approach are non-standard. North 33

As the instructor works toward establishing a classroom free of bias, it must be recognized that eliminating gender dominance does not eliminate gender difference; the manifestation of gendered differences within the classroom is to be expected. Eliazabeth Flynn tells us in "Composing as a Woman" that "[f]eminist
research and theory emphasize that males and females differ in their developmental processes and in their interactions with others" (425). Thus each gender has a thought construct tailored by differentiated experience which guides classroom behaviors (Chodorow 1978, Gilligan 1982). As a consequence of this added insight, new questions can be formulated concerning the ways in which males and females learn, revealing strengths which all learners need to have at their command in order to fully engage the subject.

The study by Belenky et al. (1986) found that female learning is increased in collaborative small groups and in ways that incorporate personal experience. These findings reinforce Gilligan's interpretation of women's web imagery of relationships "which inform different modes of assertion and response: ...the wish to be at the center of connection and the consequent fear of being too far out on the edge" (1982 62). Out on the edge is where silence grows. Out on the edge is where the traditional or classical mode of education places females.

The feminist approach of connected teaching and learning parallels the concept of teaching writing as a process by incorporating personal experience and collaborative activities with the learning objective. Donald Murray tells us that the process of writing is one of discovery in which written language is used to find out
what we mean and know (1980 20). When this experience is
shared through collaboration, knowledge is created. While
the cooperative method is associated with a female style of
learning, it benefits everyone in today's culturally
diverse classroom. To understand why, one need only
contrast collaborative learning techniques with the
traditional teaching method which favors a prescribed step-
by-step writing procedure, whose final product is evaluated
by the instructor with the only feedback in the form of red
marks on the paper. This lack of communication and
interaction is a sharp contrast to the collaborative
method, and it usually leads to students' attempts to guess
what meaning and conclusions the teacher "wants" to hear
instead of a true quest for information. While difficult
for a wide range of students, the female experience within
the traditional learning environment is a continuation of
her lessons in silence. For males it increased alienation.
Silence and alienation preclude any discovery of meaning or
voice through writing.

The treatment of writing as an isolated act conflicts
with Murray's view that writing is a "process of
interaction, not a series of logical steps." In this
process the symbols of language merge with thought to
create new meaning (1980 3). We could also add that the
thought referred to could be that of personal
identification through resistance to oppositions, as Burke
suggested. This perspective on writing as a process also transforms the role of the teacher, for rather than being considered the knowledge authority, the teacher will be "more of a collaborator" as each student strives for meaning and voice and composition skills (Caywood xiii).

Interaction with the instructor is of critical importance in learning for all students; direct instruction increases student achievement (Sadker and Sadker 1990). Interaction among students is also important in creating knowledge. Since teachers are the gatekeepers in classroom interaction, they have the power to determine students' active engagement in learning or students' peripheral positioning as observer. Through the instructor's intervention, students achieve either active involvement or silence.

There are ways in which instructors can provide equal access to knowledge acquisition for all students. Sadker and Sadker (1990) suggest that the first step in creating an unbiased classroom is observation and feedback of individual faculty members' teaching effectiveness and equity achievement. With this goal in mind, they created a system by which each instructor can self-diagnose if the institution does not provide an organized system of evaluation. This method first requires that for each class, a seating chart be made which records student placement and gender. A coded tally is kept each time
student/teacher interaction occurs, recording whether the students raised their hands or called out an answer, or if the teacher called on them when they didn't volunteer. In this way, a determination can be made as to which gender gets the most attention, which students are silent and which ones aggressively grab time to interact.

Another factor which can be assessed by this system is whether there is a gender-bias in quality of interaction between teacher and students. This is done by keeping a tally of which students are asked questions which require higher order reasoning and which are asked lower-order or factual questions. Teachers can also ascertain the types of teacher response each student receives. These responses are coded by the four-category feedback form described in the elementary school section of this paper.

Sadker and Sadker conclude that "[b]y assessing instruction and then taking assertive measures to call on and involve all students, professors can attain equity in class instruction" (1990 185). Thus, after determining what occurs within the classroom, faculty members have the responsibility to rectify any imbalance related to gender.

Another important element in creating a balance of classroom interaction is space. Just as in elementary school where boys were allotted more physical space than girls, care must be taken in post-secondary classes to prevent the occurrence of females being relegated to the
periphery of the classroom from where they observe education in progress instead of participating. One preventive measure is to eliminate row seating in favor of placing students in a circle if possible, creating a situation more conducive to interaction. When the instructor joins this circle instead of assuming an authoritarian position at the front of the class, the climate becomes even more favorable to collaboration and everyone benefits.

The issue of sexist language should be a part of the instructor's self-assessment. It is the instructor's responsibility to make students aware of sexist language in texts, discussions, and their own writing in an effort to eliminate its use as much as possible. As with the faculty self-assessment, students also need to become aware of their personal use of inappropriate terminology through self-assessment. After increasing student awareness of sexist language and its impact, the instructor should provide them with a guideline of alternative vocabulary such as the one from the National Council of Teachers of English, or The Nonsexist Word Finder: A Dictionary of Gender-Free Usage which provides "[a]n accessible, easy-to-use guide that gives alternatives, explanations, or definitions for over 5,000 sexist words and phrases" (Maggio 1988). The use of non-sexist language should be a requirement for all writing assignments. An additional
item to be utilized in helping students become aware of language inequities is a non-sexist dictionary, such as A Feminist Dictionary by Cheris Kramarae and Paula Treichler.

Various teaching methods can be used in teaching composition in an equitable manner. One basic source for several good models is Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition, edited by Donovan and McClelland. Instructors can choose the one which best suits their way of teaching, or try one completely new — all will fit a bias free class.

The writing workbook for women, Word Play/Word Power, by Kimberley Snow is a good source of activities which promote writing fluency and lessen feelings of powerlessness through a process of writing personal anecdotes. She believes that combining writing and introspective memory can expand thought limits, integrate change, and guide one toward personal growth. This process can increase self-esteem through language and is perhaps the first step in the development and discovery of one's voice in academic discourse. Belenky et al. found that when women became involved in establishing a personal voice, that voice educated them further (1986). Snow adds that "[t]hrough writing...we are able to develop a personal language that fills out the hollows and blank spaces in our lives, to make sense of and give reality to our experience" (14). This is what the disenfranchised need to eradicate
the pattern of silence. The opposite of silence is the knowledge that our "perceptions count...that we must choose our own words for naming, our own methods for expression" (14).

There are many excellent sources for ideas and guidance in eliminating gender bias in the learning environment. Creating a composition classroom free of gender bias presents an opportunity for true teaching and learning and benefits both males and females in the acquisition of voice within academic discourse.

In conclusion, the traditional gendered rhetoric of academic discourse, constructed by men for men, does not allow for the inclusion of women's voices. A woman must think, read, speak, and write as a man in order to join the ongoing discussion within the academic community. To open the language to women -- and anyone else previously excluded -- would necessitate the expansion of the discourse to reflect a re-vision of the world. This enrichment would entail new, many-faceted truths constructed from the diverse perspectives of today's reality. The quality of thought and scholarship would deepen as the restrictions of a limited perspective were expanded. Not only would women and all those formerly on the outside have the opportunity of a voice in academic discourse, but those from the formerly privileged group
would find, through connection, a voice of wholeness instead of one based on fragmented separation. All would have equal access to scholarship through their voices in academic discourse.

The establishment of equity in the composition classroom is a first step toward equal education. Teachers of composition are involved with students as they interact with academic discourse, and therefore closer to possible solutions. We must change education to end women's silence.
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