Equalizing the composition classroom: A look at who and what we overlook and strategies for change

Jeannette Linda Riddell

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/786

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the John M. Pfau Library at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses Digitization Project by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.
EQUALIZING THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM:
A LOOK AT WHO AND WHAT WE OVERLOOK AND STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

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

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

by

Linda Riddell
June 1992
EQUALIZING THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM:
A LOOK AT WHO AND WHAT WE OVERLOOK AND STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

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

By
Jeannette Linda Riddell
June 1992

Approved by:
Loralee MacPike, Chair, Department June 1992
Susan Meisenheimer
Rise Axelrod
ABSTRACT

The premise of this thesis explains, from a feminist perspective, how educational equality in composition studies has been neglected and the important affect that neglect has on our students. The neglect is evidenced by the small percentages of appearances of feminist articles in professional journals such as College English and College Composition and Communication which future composition teachers and graduate students rely on for the most current progressive thinking and discussion in the field. The thesis explains how the neglect is also reinforced by some of the most progressive major feminist journals such as Feminist Studies and Signs which fail to address often enough composition classrooms in their discussions of women's issues in education. The conclusive point of the thesis states that colleges must rethink the assumptions they have drawn about equitable education for all students. The thesis offers suggestions and insight into some of the more progressive and successful curricula offered by feminist teachers followed by a partial bibliography selected to help move future teachers to think more progressively about equity in their composition classrooms.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It was extremely important to me to be surrounded by readers committed to the project unfolding ahead and that they believed faithfully in what I was doing and my need to share it. I would like to thank Loralee for her tireless commitment to excellence. She is truly the professional with a wealth of understanding about women's issues which forced me to hone my ideas, make explicit my assumptions and structure my thinking. Working with her has been truly inspirational and has resulted in some of my most rewarding moments in my graduate studies experience. My love and thanks are not nearly enough but they come from the heart. I would like to thank Susan Meisenhelder for her patience, reassurance and concrete and eye-opening suggestions which often brought me back to earth when it became quite clear that I needed to return. And I would like to thank Rise Axelrod for her genuine support, encouragement, and inspiration (which seeded itself in the shadows of our conversations). This committee represented an ideal model of those feminists who embrace the ideology for the elimination of oppressive and traditionally discriminatory and authoritarian pedagogy. Their loyalty to the importance of women's issues fueled my writing, and their very presence in my journey constantly offered great comfort. Thank you.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part One</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Two</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Cited</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

As long as the oppressed remain unaware of the causes of their condition, they fatalistically 'accept' their exploitation. In working towards liberation, one must neither lose sight of this passivity nor overlook the moment of awakening.

Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of The Oppressed* (51).

Paulo Freire realized that ignorance and lethargy are the direct product of the whole framework of economic, social and political domination and of the paternalism the dispossessed experienced. He refers to the dispossessed as the "culture of silence" and describes oppressed people in authoritarian societies as being denied their own voices and experiences by the imposition of the single dominant worldview of the oppressor (the teacher). Rather than being encouraged and equipped to know and respond to the concrete realities of their world, they are kept submerged in a situation in which such critical awareness and response are practically impossible. He believes that the whole educational system is one of the major instruments for the maintenance of this culture of silence (159).

It is possible to view women writers as a subcategory within Freire's theoretical framework if we view women as part of those dispossessed victims, "peasants," he speaks of. Freire theorized that the dominated consciousness of
the peasants explains their fear and their inefficiency (31). He asserts that the old, paternalistic teacher-student relationship should be overcome. But this assertion will shed no new light on women's oppression in composition teaching until the knowledge that women experience things differently than men has manifested itself in education's consciousness and becomes a means by which we automatically look at women's socialization of thought and language process. Only then will we understand its uniqueness from male development. That is when women's issues in composition will be taken as seriously as Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed has been.

This thesis will depend on two basic assumptions. The first is that women are equal yet express ideas differently than men and deserve, as do all minority groups, to have their differences valued in an unequal world which has silenced women.\(^1\) This assumption has been supported by a rich and active discussion in the feminist community for at least the last fifteen years.\(^2\) The theories discussed here

\(^1\) Pamela Annas, 1987, explores the relationship between feminist theory and writing theory which concerns restructuring of pedagogy and revaluing of the student and feminists' restructuring of cultural models and revaluing of the experience of women. She explains how certain forms of discourse and language are privileged. Her study questions the exclusion of alternate forms of writing discourse. See also Casey Miller and Kate Swift (1976), Elizabeth Abel (1982), Dale Spender (1988, 1989).

\(^2\) Carol Gilligan (1982), a forerunner in the feminist community, discusses different modes of thinking and the relationship of these modes to male and female voices. She notes how women do not fit existing models of human development. Her
throughout can also be applied to other minorities as a way to move from thinking about education as one standard for all students to a higher level of educational standards which values difference in all students. This is not to suggest women or other groups require special treatment, but rather that women's differences, like other groups', be acknowledged in the materials we present them with and by the classroom facilitators whose responsibility it is to see that each student obtains equal education.

The research these discussions stem from shows how women's and men's experiences provide them with a separate but equal set of expectations, values, and ways of viewing events which cannot help but be manifested in the way they write. These discussions generate new avenues by which we can look at the field of composition and at how theory serves our students; this discussion is not, however, considered the final word on composition theory.

As with differences in general, this thesis also assumes women write in a different voice than men. Based on focus is on the distinctive differences between the two modes of thinking and not on sex generalizations. Her assertions provide us with a basis to generate new theory. See also Belenky et al (1986), Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (1980). See Robin Lakoff (1975) and Barrie Thorne and Nancy Henley (1975, 1983) for language differences and how they affect our thinking.

Elizabeth Abel demonstrates how gender informs and complicates both the writing and reading of texts. She suggests we interrupt male tradition and acknowledge a more critical approach to writing and sexual difference. See also Miller and Swift, Marks and de Courtivron.
substantial research generated by the feminist community, one basic assumption arises over and over: that traditional channels for expression (which are basically Eurocentric and male, and white middle-class) may not fit the voices of women and other minorities and non-middle-class people.\(^4\)

Although this thesis looks at women's differences specifically, an incorporation of feminist pedagogy, like Paulo Freire's radical pedagogy, could break through silence and passivity and empower subordinated groups of all types. Teaching could then value all dialogue with an engaging and intense interest, inciting enthusiastic conversations among members of any social group so that all students can approach their writing unencumbered by conditioned silencing and resulting self-censoring.

While women must alert themselves to traditional assumptions, post secondary educators must also accept a great deal of the responsibility for that conditioning. It is not until these educators acknowledge that what is taught about writing comes out of a time when education was for and by privileged, middle- and upper-middle class males and alter their current curricula accordingly that women can pursue unbiased acceptance as writers. And we cannot be misled by token women's studies courses designed to honor

their uniquenesses. While these courses are valuable to women, these specialty courses, like ethnic study courses, suggest that women's issues are outside mainstream education and should be dealt with separately. But women, like other less privileged groups, are a part of all that makes up education, and they are entitled to equal education if education is to fulfill its commitment to honor all human experiences.

Supporting the silence prevalent in women's writing still today are the assumptions made by teachers who create the curriculum from which they teach. But before changes can occur which encourage voices of all members in the composition classroom, we must accept that these assumptions limit students' power. Freire talks about destructive assumptions and offers a legitimate alternative to traditional teaching.

Composition teachers depend on current dialogue and methods discussed in composition journals to inform them of the latest developments in composition. But although feminist dialogue in composition is gaining momentum, it appears too infrequently and only along the periphery of major composition publications. Teachers looking toward changes which respond to the differences between their male

---

5 Elaine Showalter argues that the goal of feminist research should focus on "the study of gender differences into the central pursuits" 1989. See also Elizabeth Meese 1990.
and female students receive relatively little information to encourage them.

Perhaps the reason we see so few journals address feminist theory is simply that feminist studies are not yet taken seriously enough. Indeed, over the last ten years, acknowledgment has appeared only sporadically. Part One of this thesis examines how infrequently feminist issues appear in some respected composition journals and texts used in graduate training programs over the last ten years. This examination reveals a negligible commitment to change which will empower the full range of our nation's students dependent on the universities for obtaining knowledge in composition (first by connecting this change to the universities where research occurs).

Change is threatening at best. But with the continuing enrollment of women in the universities, reteaching teachers to adopt methods of teaching designed to cultivate a climate which supports a gender equal environment is necessary to ensure education of a diverse student body. Part two of this thesis will outline specific curriculum changes occurring throughout post-secondary education and working toward incorporation of the fullest range of students voices in their writing.
Part One

How do we recognize the shackles that tradition has placed upon us? For if we can recognize them, we are also able to break them.

The centuries-old, unquestioned and unchallenged traditional beliefs which subject certain classes to society's repressive roles must be eliminated. To do so, one of the oldest and most traditional institutions—education—must change; and one of the major changes must be to allow women to claim the culture of their own language in the composition community. Composition classrooms can and should develop theories of rhetoric which include rather than exclude women as writers; such new approaches to writing will insure women a place in future academic communities. We only need to read the current composition journals and writing teachers' sourcebooks to determine what the latest conversations are in the field of composition. The picture is dim.

The *College Composition and Communication* journal, (published four times a year), covers current discussions and developing theories. Teachers and graduate students depend on CCC for some of the most progressive research in composition. However, of the approximately 762 articles
published between February 1981 and February 1991, only seven (or .9 percent) were devoted to women's issues. In 1981, for example, of the 68 articles published that year, only one (or less than one percent) addressed women's issues. In that article, Mary DeShazer ("Sexist Language in Composition Textbooks: Still a Major Issue?" February 1981) finds it undeniable that "the English language is male oriented." She states that linguistic bias should be of concern to composition teachers and cites an impressive array of scholars who have written extensively in this area (57). Composition teachers should be made aware of and should expect to see continued conversation on linguistic bias in professional journals on the topic. But that hope has not been fulfilled.

Of the 63 articles published in 1982 none dealt with feminist scholarship. One article of the 62 published in 1983, however, resulted in a mere .62 percent of the overall coverage on women's issues for that year. A.M. and Charlene Tibbetts responded in a counter statement to DeShazer by comparing DeShazer's argument, to avoid sexist language in the texts we offer our composition students, to the "attack on evolution by 'creationists' and offering no explanation for their comparison. They suggest that if "he-hunters, like any other bowdlerizer intent on burning whatever offends him, happen to burn a whole book because of one para-
graph—who is to blame" (489)? This is a careless analysis of DeShazer's article considering that she made no such suggestion to "burn books" which include the generic "he" pronoun. In fact, contrary to that very idea, DeShazer suggests fair and unbiased access to information presented to all students with the exclusion of none as she restates from her 1981 article in her "reply" to Tibbetts and Tibbetts in this same issue (490-91). Tibbetts and Tibbetts are an example of the ongoing resistance to the inclusion of feminist material in the area of composition studies.

Of the 54 articles published in 1984, 69 in 1985, 75 in 1986, and 89 in 1987, none were devoted to feminist scholarship. Elizabeth Flynn's article, "Composing as a Woman," appeared in the December 1988 issue. She argues that "the newly-emergent field of composition studies feminizes previous conceptions of the nature of the composing process but that, unfortunately, the field has not engaged feminist research and theory in any sustained and systematic way" (425). She also argues that "feminist work on gender differences in social and psychological development, especially Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering*, Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice*, and Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger, and Jill Tarule's *Women's Ways of Knowing*, are useful in examining student writing and in suggesting directions that a feminist investigation of composition might take" (425-6). Although these positions
are supported by many of the major feminist scholars in the field today, nothing in feminist scholarship was printed in CCC in 1989.

Flynn's appeal for more feminist research was ignored until, ironically, she defended her own 1988 article in the February 1990 staffroom interchange, "Composing 'Composing as a Woman': A Perspective on Research," after an "anonymous reviewer" accused her of using no extensive empirical research. Her controlling premise is that we must include feminist inquiry in the field of composition and by doing so we "alter it and call into question its assumptions and procedures" (89). Her article represents only .7 percent of all published material committed to feminist scholarship for that year.

Of the many books reviewed in the CCC during this decade, two reviews in particular offered interesting insights. In the December 1990 issue, Louise Wetherbee Phelps reviewed Edward M. White's latest book, Developing Successful College Writing Programs. Based on the title, we should expect consideration of various contemporary perspectives on college writing by White, a writing program director. However, according to Phelps, "His book does not deeply engage or even contemplate the possibility of radically different positions within composition" (475). In fact, she says, White limits his study of developing successful writing programs to two approaches to teaching composition--
Hillocks' construct and his own study, the California construct (476). Phelps also argues "he does not envision being outflanked . . . by Marxist, feminist, and deconstructive alternatives to his liberal, individualist ideology" (476).

This statement contradicts White's own critique, in the February 1990 issue of CCC, of Sharon Crowley's book A Teacher's Introduction to Deconstruction (Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 1989). Here White praises Crowley for raising questions that "profoundly challenge the usual way of going about our business" (96). As Phelps explains, however, White does not challenge in his own book the usual way of going about our business. To do so he would need to address those "new theories and political shifts [which] are dramatically changing the [composition] climate. . . ." and "transforming circumstances . . . and problems of writing programs" (476) as White himself pointed out.

These reviews reveal an omission of that changing climate as both the reviewers sense a need for consideration of feminist research and the lack of such consideration in the most read major texts and studies. This omission cannot be ignored. Research scholars admit we need to address new theories and political shifts, yet openly disregard the progressive and intelligent "thinking" which would move us toward that changing climate.
1991 showed another busy year for CCC with 80 articles, most of which, however, were reviews. From this number, we should have been able to expect broader coverage of the tremendous volume of expert feminist scholarship. But of these 80 discussions, only four were committed to feminist thinking, making 1991 the high point of the decade with .5 percent. In "Beyond Argument in Feminist Composition," Catherine Lamb (February) responds to Flynn's essay, "Composing 'Composing as a Woman'"A Perspective on Research." Lamb openly explores how the study of negotiation and mediation, as forms of oral discourse, can be adapted for a feminist composition class. Her intent is to offer all composition teachers a way to enlarge the sphere of feminist composition by including an approach to argument without having the writer be in conflict with the audience (11). Lamb's theory offers a contemporary approach to traditional pedagogy. And "Gender and the Autobiographical Essay: Research Perspectives, Pedagogical Practices" by Linda H. Peterson offers an intimate study of classroom practice. (I will discuss Peterson's perspectives in Part Two).

A "Staffroom Interchange" by Janice M. Wolff also appeared in the December issue, "Writing Passionately: Student Resistance to Feminist Readings." Wolff discusses the resistance and anger from her, as a teacher, and from her students as they experience a consciousness raising about the ideologies presented in textbooks regarding the insti-
tutions of education, religion, politics and so on (484). She discusses her endeavor in her composition classroom to meet curriculum's need to cultivate cultural diversity by adding to that diversity a study of women's position within these institutions. The assumption here is that composition teachers are aware of women as a cultural issue and are addressing the issue in the classroom, an assumption most teachers cannot make considering the limited availability of research regarding women in the classroom. In this same issue is a "Counterstatement" by Julie M. Farrar, Laurence E. Musgrove, Donald C. Stewart and Wayne Cosby to Catherine E. Lamb's article, "Beyond Argument in Feminist Composition." Although these scholars offer some resistance to Lamb's theories (493-498), they all admit to her innovating ideas and as Cosby states, she is a "respected feminist leader."

These arguments, about what constitutes feminist scholarship, which is what most of these scholars are resisting, and the acknowledgment by Lamb in her own reply following these counterstatements, are evidence (and the first continuous conversation in CCC in the realm of feminist scholarship) that CCC can be a place where composition scholars can meet and discuss intelligently what constitutes equitable curriculum for our composition students. And this discussion suggests that although we may not always agree, we can
move toward understanding in the composition community about feminist issues.

The rise in the percentage of feminist scholarship evidenced in the December '91 issue offered hope that acknowledgement of women as a viable concern for curriculum development has finally made its way to the conversations in composition and that this upswing would suggest a trend toward higher communication between traditional and more current theoretical thinking. However, if the first issue of CCC for the year 1992 is any indication of what the present year offers for feminist scholarship in composition, women's issues will continue to be ignored. For again, only one feminist article appeared in the first issue, February, 1992.

It is important to note here that reviews of books on the most current discussions in composition are on the rise with as many as 18 in February 1981, 18 again in February 1983, 25 in May, 1987, and 14 in October, 1987. CCC averages about 10 reviews per issue which represents approximately 40 reviews per year. With all of the new scholarship in print on women's issues in education, and more narrowly in composition, teachers should expect to be kept abreast of this scholarship. And yet, less than one percent of the reviews in CCC for the ten-year period addressed feminist scholarship.
It is too early at this writing to determine whether these progressive and useful alternative pedagogical insights will elicit any further dialogue in composition journals, but the message is clear: While feminist scholarship is sporadically making its way to the CCC, feminist theory which addresses the "political shifts" and the "changing climate" of gender issues in the field of composition is lagging far behind traditional-based research. With CCC one of the major journals our teachers depend on for the most current conversations in their field, the statistics clearly show that they are getting only half of the picture.

*College English*, a "forum in which scholars working within any of the various subspecialties of the discipline can address a broad cross-section of the profession..." and in which an "attempt is made to maintain a balanced coverage," is also one of the most important forms of communication in composition for graduates and teachers. It publishes monthly, and of the 600 articles published from 1981 to 1991, only 29 or less than 5 percent were devoted to feminist issues.

"Those We Still Don't Read" by Florence Howe appeared in the January 1981 issue. Here Howe calls for a transformation which includes a restoration of women's writing history to the curriculum in composition and survey courses and M.A. reading lists where there are so few women. She
calls for careful course labeling. One of her examples: "Swift, Pope, and Addison' would be titled 'Male Writers of the Early Eighteenth-Century in England' " (16). She makes clear that token inclusion is not her point.

In the February 1981 issue, of the eight articles published, only Jean E. Kennard ("Personally Speaking: Feminist Critics and the Community of Readers") addresses women's issues. She grapples with the idea of new feminist critics writing about finding their voices in old established formats. She states that "[n]ew material is poured into old molds without much questioning of critical method and style" (142). Her assertions suggest an injustice teachers of composition should be concerned with.

Carol Carpenter ("Exercises to Combat Sexist Reading and Writing," March 1981) suggests that if students recognize "the powerful sexist conventions in thought and language by developing their language skills, they are in a position to question, even change, the culture that has shaped them" (300). However, we should ask how students might obtain information in order to recognize those sexist conventions.

In the April, 1981 issue, Judith A. Spector, in "Gender Studies: New Directions for Feminist Criticism," addresses the issue of feminist criticism as a separatist activity therefore excluded from mainstream criticisms. She asserts that discussion should be on difference rather than similar-
ities. She states that "men and women are equally influenced by differences in perspective which result from gender-related differences in culture that makes men and women 'equally different,' and it is only a short step from there to separatism" (377). Of the 63 published articles for 1981, only these three (or 5 percent) offered discussion of feminist scholarship in composition—a low two percent average for the year. No other feminist articles appeared in College English for this year.

In 1982, an article addressing women's issues did not appear until the October issue. Margaret M. Cote ("Now That We Have a Room of Our Own, Are We Throwing Away The Key?" 606-611) addresses the issue of appealing to a wider audience. She speculates in her article about the unequal education of those students outside of English Departments who take courses by professors who believe the "feminist issues" will be "dealt" with in Women's Studies classrooms. And in the November, 82 issue, Rose Kamel ("Women's Studies and the Professional School: A Contradiction in Terms?" 685-691) argues the difficulty of teaching women's studies courses in professional colleges where students have deliberately chosen a career plan that includes years of listening quietly, taking tedious notes, memorizing large volumes of material and regurgitating it onto instantly correctable scantron sheets. Their courses are patriarchal by nature, and these students suspect any discussion which questions
that patriarchy. Current curriculum offers these students no other options. Of the 58 articles published for 1982, these two averaged only about 3.5 percent of all scholarship addressing women's issues for the year.

In March 1983 "Gender and Reading" by Elizabeth Flynn appeared in CE. In this article, Flynn suggests that further research may support her contention that women are considerably more confident and competent readers than they are speakers, and, as a result, "we may discover that women have interpretive powers which have not been sufficiently recognized" (251-252). Also in this issue Marcia McClintock Folsom ("Gallant Red Brick and Plain China: Teaching A Room of One's Own" 254-262) discusses her purpose for teaching Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own. Her intention is to get students beyond their assumptions that a work of this caliber seems at first "self-indulgent, distracted and puzzling." She hopes students will come to see the main ideas Woolf intended: that, in spite of Virginia Woolf's own exclusionary cultural assumptions and the fact that she was privileged compared to the "average American woman" of her time, "women have been excluded from education, power and money, and have been denied experience, and therefore, impoverished as artists" (255). In the April 1983 issue, Elizabeth S. Sklar reviews education's progress since Julia Stanley's article "Sexist Grammar" appeared in CE (39-1979, 800-811) where Stanley's premise of "grammatical history" is
that "English grammars have always been written by men for the edification of other men, purveying male concerns from a male point of view" (Stanley 800, Sklar 348). Sklar concludes, after reviewing a number of grammar texts, that overall although our thinking about linguistic gender has changed, our motivation has not. She observes that the "generic" masculine is simply another "disclaimer" and that the rules we teach tend to be "rules of selection" and continue to endorse the idea that the masculine is preferred to the feminine (358). These three feminist articles of the 57 appearing in 1983 represent only 5 percent of all composition scholarship published for that year in CE.

Another article addressing women's issues did not appear again until the February, 1984 issue in which Alleen Pace Nilsen ("Winning the Great He/She Battle" 151-157) confirms Sklar's contention that changing language changes thinking and suggests that "sex-fair" language is still problematic in that so many educators simply find it too troublesome to individualize pronoun usage. She contends also that as long as individuals are male and female, we can sensitize ourselves to the appropriate male or female pronoun. In the March 84 issue Jonathan Z. Kamholtz and Robin A. Sheets contend that if feminist scholarship and criticism is to change the way our students think, then feminist studies must influence all levels of curriculum instruction ("Women Writers and the Survey of English Literature: A
Proposal and Annotated Bibliography for Teachers" 278-300). These writers conclude with an impressive and lengthy bibliography as a guide to move curriculum development in that direction.

A third feminist article appeared in the October 1984 issue, "Transforming the Canon with Nontraditional Literature by Women" by Marianne Whelchel (587-597). Whelchel discusses the importance of involving students in the process of recovering and creating non-traditional literature. She believes doing original work of this nature "extends students' critical skills and understanding" (593).

"Tattle's Well's Faire: English Women Authors of the Sixteenth Century" by Elizabeth A. Nist (702-716) appeared in the November 84 issue. Nist denies the myth that women did not write in the sixteenth century and discusses eleven of the many important messages written by women in this time. She states that women did write but that they were unknown to readers and scholars. These four articles which present women's issues in composition represent 7.5 percent of the 59 that appeared for the year.

Another feminist article did not appear again until the April issue in 1985. In "Style as Politics: A Feminist Approach to the Teaching of Writing," Pamela J. Annas questions whether we can teach writing to our students in a way that validates who they are, and she offers concrete suggestions as to how teachers can effectively incorporate her
ideas. Anne Dalke ("'The House-Band': The Education of Men in Little Women") discusses Nina Auerbach's feminist interpretation of *Little Women* (*Communities* 58,61,55) in collaboration with her own interpretation as a way to look at traditional literature from a feminist perspective, (October 85). With 56 articles published in 1985, these two represent only 3 percent of those devoted to women's issues.

In the March 1986 issue, Susan Hardy Aiken sheds light on women's exclusion from the literary canon in "Women and the Question of Canonicity." She suggests we "deploy rather than deplore marginality, and by affirming the power of the periphery, we can begin opening doors of all the monuments and expand boundaries" (298). This feminist inquiry represents 1.5 percent of the 75 articles published in CE for the year 1986.

In 1988, two more feminist articles appeared. In March, Robert de Beauprande's "In Search of Feminist Discourse: The 'Difficult' Case of Luce Irigaray" offers an exploration of the importance of deconstruction to feminist discourse. de Beauprande proposes that to "mishear" the feminine as sameness is to block an "energizing impetus toward a genuine renewal of language and all that rides upon it" (272).

"Sexchanges" by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar appeared in the November 88 issue. They explain that their position in their book *The War of the Words* is that "sexual battles are associated with radical 'sexchanges' as well as with
sexualized visions of change and exchange in the lives and works of both literary men and literary women specifically: sexes battle because sex roles change, but, when sexes battle, sex itself changes" (768). Of the 69 articles which appeared in CE in 1988, 3 percent of them were devoted to feminist scholarship.

Another article committed to women's issues did not appear again until March of 1989. In "On the Subjects of Class and Gender in 'The Literary Letters,'" Linda Brodkey questions how to read what students write and asserts that at issue is that unquestioned power of a pedagogical authority that insists that teachers concentrate on form at the expense of content (126). And Brodkey writes an opinion essay, "Transvaluing Difference," in the October issue where she speaks about post-structural theories which challenge the notion that language and reality are independent of one another and argues instead that "language and reality are dependent, that words constitute world views and any attempt to describe reality is only a partial account limited by what can be seen and understood from a particular vantage point and provision" (598). Her intent is that students understand that interpretation is partial and that to read and write is something other than following procedure. In 1989, CE offered less than 1 percent of its total composition scholarship to feminist ideas.
1990 had the highest percentage with six feminist articles appearing in CE out of the 54 published for an average of 11 percent for the entire year. Four of those six appeared in the April issue. "Women and Writing: A Re/turn" by Elizabeth Meese goes right to the heart of the matter in this part of the thesis. She states that "the interest in feminist scholarship is not new to the journal" (CE) (375). Regarding CE's call for papers, Meese states that "many fine essays were submitted in response to the call" and that "the deadlines did not hold for the gender issue, which, though doubled, is still unable to contain the explosion of good material" (376). With this explosion of material, we must wonder why such a minute percentage of it appears each year.

"The Other 'F' Word: The Feminist in the Classroom" by Dale M. Bauer reveals the resistance to the feminist teacher's voice in the classroom and explains the importance of working with students to help them overcome their assumptions and the hindering effect of those assumptions on their education.

Martina Sciolino writes in "Kathy Acker and the Postmodern Subject of Feminism" that at a time when postmodernism is almost always discussed in terms of male writers and as if there is no relation to gender difference, Acker breaks boundaries with her narrative methods which are "exemplary for postmodern feminism" (437). Sciolino draws
our attention here to a subtle yet valuable discrepancy which teachers too easily overlook when selecting materials for the classroom.

And in "The Tenant of Wildfell Hall: Narrative Silences and Questions of Gender, Carol Senf opposes the implied consensus that Anne Bronte is not worth reading and discusses Bronte's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* as a highly underrated feminist novel, and one that is critiqued only for its long, journalistic-like narrative style. Criticism, says Senf, omits attention to Bronte's awareness of men's and women's condition (446-456).

The other two feminist articles appeared in the September 1990 issue. "Beyond Literary Darwinism: Women's Voices and Critical Discourse" by Olivia Frey suggests that we value other ways of constructing knowledge and ways of writing about literature (524). "Reclaiming the Mother ('s) Tongue: Beloved, Ceremony, Mothers and Shadows" by Katherine Cummings depicts themes which resist domination, speak of oppression and ultimately find liberation (552-578).

"Identifying with Emma: Some Problems for the Feminist Reader" by Wendy Moffat appears in the January 1991 issue. Moffat's concern rests with "placing *Emma* in a cultural and historical context as well as educating meaning from its form" from a feminist perspective (45). And "Difference and Continuity: The Voices of Mrs. Dalloway" by Johanna X.K. Garvey also appears in that same issue. Here Garvey con-
tends that in *Mrs. Dalloway* "women's voices must contend with noise and urban space" (an area traditionally defined as masculine) (59). Both of these essays propose different outlooks to the way students find meaning in what they read.

"The 'Difference' of Postmodern Feminism" by Teresa L. Ebert appeared in the December issue. Ebert explains why she believes that "postmodern feminist theory is necessary for social change and that, rather than abandon it as too abstract (as many traditional scholars do) we need to re-understand it in more social and political terms" (886). Of the 51 articles appearing in *CE* for 1991, again only 3 addressed women's issues for an average of about 6 percent for the entire year. The trend for 1992, based on the first three issues for the year, reveals no attention devoted to feminist scholarship thus far.

While the figures here indicate feminist scholarship is available, the frequency of its appearance is weak and the wide gaps between each publication represent gender as an isolated topic for discussion. Since *CCC* and *CE* address all areas of composition, readers should expect an equal commitment to feminist pedagogy as well. Yet these journals present an incomplete picture of the processes and teaching of writing, the preparation of writing teachers, and the broad cross-section and balanced coverage they promise for all students.
Looking at these summaries of the feminist scholarship published over the last ten years in CCC and CE, we can see the evidence that feminist thinking is rich with innovative, creative and exciting new theory and theory combined with practice which represents the "political shifts" and "changing climates" for all students. These numbers show that in an entire decade of published composition scholarship, CCC devoted less than one percent of its space to feminist scholarship. CE has a higher percentage rate averaging about 5 percent overall. And these few samples are evidence that feminist scholarship does not always hold separatist views and can be collaboratively combined with mainstream curriculum if traditionalists set aside their fears and perceptions that feminist thinking is something outside mainstream education.

Scholars who resist untraditional thinking often do so out of fear of the unknown, but as intelligent educators and researchers, we can acknowledge that change is necessary if we are to fulfill our promises to afford all students access to the most current and progressive pedagogy available to them.

However, feminist journals committed to discussions of untraditional alternatives to education fail to address feminism in composition in any substantive way. Feminist Studies, a popular journal dedicated to encouraging analytic
responses to feminine issues while acting as a rich resource on feminist studies, does little to enhance feminist theory in composition: The journal publishes three times a year, averaging approximately 9 or 10 articles per issue. Between 1981 and 1991, of the approximately 176 articles published (I estimate 30 per year for the two years missing from research access), *Feminist Studies* included only five articles (or less than 2.8 percent) which marginally shed light on the feminist struggle in composition. And, of these five, only three (or less than 2 percent) discuss women as writers as the issue. Even scholarship addressing feminist academia skirts the crucial issue of gender differences in composition.

*Feminist Studies'* first article relating to women and writing appeared in the summer 1981 issue. Helene Vivienne Wenzel discusses, in part, Helene Cixous' article "The Laugh of the Medusa" (translated by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen for *Signs*, summer 1976: 875-93) where Cixous exhorts women to come to terms with writing in a way that "explodes" the dominant masculine text/content (875).

In the summer 1986 issue, Rosario Ferre, translated by Diana L. Velez, discusses women's varied themes in writing and how writing involves more of a struggle for women than for men (241). She talks about how "our biological fate curtails our mobility and creates serious problems for us as we attempt to reconcile our emotional needs with our profes-
sional ones ("The Writer's Kitchen" 242). Jacquelyn Dowd Hall ("Second Thoughts: On Writing A Feminist Biography," Spring 1987) discusses the struggle and barriers attached to retrieving material in print about women that has been distorted (19-37). These are only a few of the interesting and provocative topics which concern those teachers wrestling with the idea of overcoming a cultivated silence in the classroom.

And Signs, devoted to "the state of women's studies," also devoted little space to women and writing over the last decade. This journal publishes four times per year with an average of 20 articles per issue. Between 1981 and 1991, only one of the approximately 503 articles (less than .2 percent) addressed women in composition studies. Of the twenty-nine issues I had access to, each issue averaged approximately 18 articles including revisions, viewpoints, comments and replies. The first article appeared in the summer 1981 issue. Karen Gould, ("Setting Words Free: Feminist Writing in Quebec," 617-642) discusses the social and political influences on Quebec's feminist writing and how the new approaches to theory and practice are responsible for the way some of the feminist writers have carved an influential place and opened new avenues for women writers. Of the 50 articles published in Signs in 1981, Gould's represents only 2 percent. Although I had no access to the
1989, 1990 or 1991 issues, the trend clearly reveals the virtual exclusion from America's leading scholarly feminist journals of gender issues in the area of composition.

I was also especially interested in researching the Feminist Teacher journal as a source for women's composition as its philosophy is to make a commitment to "combatting sexism and other forms of oppression in the classroom." The journal is published quarterly and calls for contributions on integrating feminist materials into mainstream curricula, on feminist pedagogy, and on course descriptions, as well as feminist research and bibliographies, practical teaching ideas, (i.e. projects, lesson plans, and personal experiences), and any other news to feminist teachers including conferences, workshops, new publications and resources. Certainly this is the type of material graduate students of all disciplines, including composition, would need access to and should expect to find in the humanities and education departments. However, after a thorough search of the state and private universities in California, I found only a few scattered issues of Feminist Teacher at the Center for Re-entry and Transition at Cal Poly Pomona and learned that Chico and Fresno are the only universities in California that subscribe to this journal.

In the few issues I reviewed dating back to 1985, many articles addressed issues of equity in math, science, health history and most other disciplines; none addressed composi-
tion. There was one article by Maggie Humm which is of particular interest, however. Although Humm does not address composition specifically, she addresses the issue of pedagogical equity which we can apply to composition. In "Gender in Higher Education," Humm confronts the discriminatory assessment procedures education places on its discourse. She evaluates The School of Independent Study set up by North East London Polytechnic. The college's aim is to accept students who prefer more untraditional education, and as a result, women make up the largest population of this school's students. However, Humm learned that while the aim is to offer untraditional education, the process of applying for the program requires, as part of the process, a traditionally formal letter of application. Humm explains that the women "came to this writing experience as fearful as they had learned to be in traditional schools." They feared they had nothing of significance to say or if they wrote what they did have to say, it would be considered unacceptable by those who determine the "worthiness" of their entrance letters. This feeling of inadequacy confirms the findings by other prominent researchers equally sensitive to women's issues. Humm states in her conclusion that "often egalitarian teaching can end up oppressing women as much as elitist institutions" (11 v.1, No.2, winter 85).

6 See bibliography for Abel, Annas, Belenky, et al., Daumer, Flynn, Frey, Gilbert, Gilligan, Gubar, Hairston, Howe, Lakoff, Miller, Swift and their subsequent bibliographies.
This example reveals how the intent of official classroom discourse differs from actual practices. Well-intentioned academic institutions can no longer simply pay lip service to the needs of a very large and growing population of students—women—especially in those composition courses where women arrive intimidated by the very act of writing and feeling inadequate to say anything of importance.

The few articles presented here represent at least an overview of the contemporary thinking available to educators in the area of feminist pedagogy. To ignore such intelligent research acts as a major injustice to our students. First, however, the scholarship must be made available to teachers of composition so that their decisions concerning composition development are made from a whole rather than a partial perspective.

What we see in the most respected composition journals and in some of the most progressive feminist sources indicates how inadequate the contemporary literature is in considering a feminist pedagogy in composition. This is a sad commentary on scholarship considering the vast amounts of exceptional work being done by feminist scholars in all areas of contemporary composition curriculum development. We need only to look as far as Florence Howe and her strategy to transform the composition classroom, Linda Peterson's work to eliminate traditional assumptions, and James
Reimer's alternatives to traditional teaching of composition with the use of students' personal experiences to see the exciting new developments unfolding for composition students in a more equitable environment conducive to listening to all voices with the exclusion of none. (These scholars' work will be discussed in Part Two.)

Writing articles in scholarly journals is not enough, however. Although they trumpet how new, progressive, and theoretical they are, the texts we use to teach our future composition teachers also fail to address the issue of women's writing.

The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook (1988 Second Edition) edited by Gary Tate and Edward Corbett, for example, offers a contemporary example of the exclusion of a feminist voice from the current conversations about the latest trends in teaching composition. The preface of the 1988 edition of this book states that "a remarkable amount of first-rate material on the teaching of composition has been published..." This is certainly true. Composition research is generated daily, as evidenced earlier. It is equally true that this research includes articles (albeit in small numbers) on feminist perspectives on teaching composition, feminist opinions about how teaching composition is presently conducted, and feminist awareness about male-dominated composition classes. Tate and Corbett's source book exem-
plifies the extent to which such materials get translated into our curriculum for training composition teachers.

Tate and Corbett's source book opens with an essay by Robert Connors (a contemporary critic writing for the future enhancement of composition) which relives the history of the modes of discourse traditionally accepted as the English and American writing standard forms, an irony considering the "intent" of The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook. He traces discourse history up to current conversations about the use of written modes. All references noted by Connors address male authors, and although the authors in the 1931 Writing and Thinking by Norman Foerster and J.M. Steadman noted that student writing should be organic rather than mechanic, this is the closest Connors' article comes to considering differences among individual writers. As he discusses the "Rise" and "Fall" of discourse modes, he regards modes of discourse rather than the processes by which people think. Yet our thinking processes affect how discourse is manufactured.

These modes, created and organized by males for male writing, became the classification system for discourse and the conceptualizing strategy for teaching composition (24-25). Changes occurred later in the nineteenth century due to private, smaller colleges becoming larger. In Connors' own words, "The culture was calling for a new sort of educated man, and the 'Freshman English Course' as we know it today, with its emphasis on error-free writing and the
ability to follow directions, was born during this period in response to the call. . . . The teacher of the Gilded Age perceived [his] students as having needs quite different from the needs of their counterparts of 1830" (26). Connors' unintentional review of male-oriented discourse history simply perpetuates the stereotype that writing is man's work. 7

In this "contemporary" sourcebook where conscientious teachers can go to find the current language and latest theories regarding composition, John Gerber addresses reform for post-secondary students of English in his essay "Suggestions for a Commonsense Reform of the English Curriculum." He begins with the question, "Do we have a service to offer our contemporaries that is unique and essential for their well-being?" He answers "yes." Gerber theorizes that for undergraduates the focus should be a non-professional program which trains students in the arts of reading and writing. He suggests that the training in writing should begin in elementary school and that the type and level of writing should be adapted to the needs and capabilities of the individual student (61-62). The attention to reform is a little vague since it is not clear here just how Gerber's theory differs from what most teachers of composition al-

7 Although Connors cannot be held personally responsible for history's exclusion of women, he himself has carelessly fallen victim to subtle gender discrimination in his use of the pronoun "his" above.
ready know and practice. Certainly, there is no suggestion that writing assignments could be altered in order to address the particular needs of both sexes. In fact, although he does state that his theory meets the needs of both male and female students, there is no suggestion that Gerber knows gender differences in writing even exist.

The second part of Gerber's writing/reading reform advises that reading should "enable students to hone their reading skills in English and American literature." He suggests this be done by "confining reading to individual texts and to having the higher levels require the student successively to read texts in larger and more complex contexts." The first level, he states, should be designed to make reading as appealing and intellectually tantalizing as possible. The next steps would increase levels of difficulty (62). Again, it is not clear how this theory differs from present practices, but there is no mention of what English and American literature samples would be offered to students to awaken a respect for women's writing as different from, or at least existing separate from, men's writing. This "reform" offers more of the same unexplored curriculum now taught to composition students and perpetuates the traditionally narrow understanding of how the contemporary composition classroom has evolved.

Sondra Perl, another contemporary critic, broaches the issue of recursive writing in her essay "Understanding
Composing." Her timely subject appears on the surface to approach composition with attention to the writer as an individual rather than writing as a set of rules which all student writers must incorporate. Her essay looks closely at writers witnessing their own writing. One question Perl might ask a student working on the writing process is, "What is she hearing as she listens to the 'sound' of her words?" She refers to the recursiveness of writing as retrospective structuring—relying on one's inner reflections accompanied by bodily sensations. She states that this process allows the writer to be creative and to say something never said before, providing the reader with the "experience of 'newness' or 'freshness.'"

Perl's theory shifts the writing process to a more personal level, a requirement needed in a composition curriculum which acknowledges writers as individuals rather than as a group of collective thinkers; however, Perl relegates this recursive thinking process to the question of what is "right" and "wrong." She states that the writer might ask, "Are these words right for me?" or "Do they capture what I'm trying to say?" Recursive thinking seems simple enough; but, for many women writers, the internal questions usually go beyond the personal "what is right for me?" to "what will others think of as right?"

Self-censoring, so common to women, is not addressed in Perl's essay, yet this question would influence a writer's
final product as much as any of the more "creative" thinking questions she mentions might. Perl says, "In the process of writing, we begin with what is inchoate and end with something that is tangible." The question now is, tangible to whom? She says that writing is "crafted and constructed." What needs to be added here is, "and finally fitted into a mold." Women's writing is rarely complete without an editing process which form-fits their ideas into prescribed traditional writing forms. And these strategies are born out of a history of writing from which, as the earlier essays in Sourcebook have unconsciously shown, women have been virtually excluded.

I agree with Perl's assertion that the process of recursive writing is a more powerful way of teaching composition, but her assertion is another example of how easy it is to assume that all writers write with the same freedom to express themselves and without the fear of ridicule. She avoids, as do all of The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook authors, the vital reality of too many writers who silence themselves out of a long tradition of exclusion from the composition community, limiting the true value of the final product.

Sourcebooks, like Tate and Corbett's, must rethink the value of what has been accepted as the English and American writing standard forms. The future enhancement of composition depends on scholars like these for equity in the clas-
sification system. The culture calls for new sorts of educated women and men, and as a response was made to the different needs of students in 1830, there must be a response now to the different needs of students in the 1990's.

One of the more current sources offered to graduate students is Second Language Writing, published in 1990 and edited by Barbara Kroll. Kroll's introduction acknowledges that "[t]he emergence of composition studies in the past quarter century as an area of professional emphasis within academic communities has spurred on a tremendous metamorphosis in the teaching of writing, for composition teachers are now being schooled in ways unheard of before the late 1960s" (1). Like ethnic studies, ESL is receiving much attention and is incorporated into the core of new pedagogy; thus, it is true that there has been a tremendous metamorphosis in the teaching of writing. However, Kroll neglects to address one major issue that accounts in large part for that metamorphosis—students' writing differences. In fact, Kroll supports her assertion with a quote from Edward Corbett who, as established earlier, also edited a source book entirely devoid of any reference to differences in the ways men and women develop composition.

Michael H. Long and Jack C. Richards also point out in their "Series editors' preface" that explored in this book are "assumptions behind current practices in the teaching of
writing," and they state that "[t]his book will provide a valuable source of information assessment of the current status of research and practice in second language writing" (viii). Yet, the issue of men's and women's differences in developing composition is not included among some very important and provocative issues future composition teachers will find enlightening.

One interesting article by Liz Hamp-Lyons, "Second Language Writing: Assessment Issues," looks at the assumptions for testing the validity of writing. She discusses the problems with each type of testing validity. Of the four types, she states that 'face validity' of testing writing has long been regarded highly by faculty and admissions officers" (71). However, she goes on to say that we need to go beyond face validity if writing tests are to do more than "permit crude, short-term decisions about who goes into which writing class; we need to ensure that writing tests are construct-valid" (72). She defines a construct-valid test as one which reflects the psychological reality of behavior in the area being tested. Although Hamp-Lyons does not address gender as a criterion for testing, her explanation of the "construct-validity" type comes closest to including voices of all student writers. This type of testing includes in its criteria the consideration of the impact of what happens in the classroom resulting from a test.
Hamp-Lyons admits this form of testing requires much more research, and states that she argues for "an approach to writing assessment that takes account of who the learner is, the context the learner has come from, and the context in which the learner must work toward educational success" (73). This is indeed an exciting prospect, considering that to know who the learner is suggests we first determine if the writing to be assessed is written by a man or woman and what experiences the writer brings to the writing test. Yet although she devotes an entire section to "The Writer," her only reference to gender as consideration of "who" the writer is through her own reference to G. Brossell's (1986) statement: "All writers are influenced in writing assessments by innumerable factors related to background and personality. Elements of culture, gender, ethnicity, language, psychology and experience all bear upon the way different people respond to a writing task. Unfortunately, the current level of knowledge about such influences does not allow us to understand the precise ways in which human factors affect writers and their performance on writing assessments" (Brossell p.175. Hamp-Lyons p. 76-77). Perhaps future research of the "construct-validity" type of testing should look more closely at Brossell's assertion.

---

Like Hamp-Lyons, Ann Johns asserts that all composition teachers must address the assumptions we teach from. She states: "As teachers, we will benefit from becoming aware of our theories and the assumptions that underlie them" (24). Her article, "L1 Composition Theories: implications for developing theories of L2 composition," stresses process approaches, interactive views, and social constructionist views to composition theory and refers to many of the more progressive scholars of composition: Donald Murray, Peter Elbow, Linda Flower and many more. Among the many approaches and references Johns discusses, the omission of gender equity in the composition classroom is obvious. As part of the overall pedagogical material offered to future composition teachers, this article, as all those edited by Kroll in Second Language Writing, reflects only part of the picture.

Kroll urges teachers to understand a "broad range of pedagogical issues that shape classroom writing instruction" (2). Such a need is more real than even Kroll is aware—sensitivity to writing differentiation certainly alters and enhances classroom instruction. According to the description on the back cover, "The book provides a coherent view of current approaches and issues." This description is misleading. The book does not address coherently, or in any other way, gender equity in composition, a disturbing oversight considering the serious ramifications for those students whose voices are ignored and eventually eliminated.
The articles in *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook* and *Second Language Writing* ignore the uniqueness of women's composing. And these books are only two of the texts filled with exclusionary assumptions offered to graduate students.

However, one source offered in a graduate school does reveal the need to transform traditional teaching through a feminist pedagogical approach: *Writing and Reading Differently: Deconstruction and the Teaching of Composition and Literature* edited by G. Douglas Atkins and Michael L. Johnson. Yet the book, as a whole, avoids the feminist connection to its theories. In this book, Vincent Leitch's article, "Deconstruction and Pedagogy," dramatically emphasizes how deconstructive teaching ought to submit its own language to depropriation. Leitch notes that Derrida, for instance, appreciated a threat, which fosters inquiry and transformation, not simply on a local but a systemic level (18) and that he looks at the array of "cultural institutions", while Barthes focuses on a limited range of effective teaching strategies that are available to the professor in the classroom (19). He goes on to say that Barthes describes a pedagogical scene which includes two elements: neurotic society in the background and the subversive professor in the foreground of the classroom. Almost all such difficulties for Barthes have to do with language—its power, its writing, its speaking (20). Like Barthes, compo-
sition teachers must acknowledge deconstructive teaching and affirm that the main job of deconstructive pedagogy is to "suspend the oppressive forces and to loosen their power." Leitch admits that this would assault present pedagogical grammar and syntax through excursive rhetoric and impure styles and it would disrupt Socratic dialogue and dialectical conversation (23).

Indeed, deconstructive teaching would create a flourishing environment for women in composition classrooms because, according to Barthes' theory, writing should go beyond pleasure and be linked with the consistency of the self, of the subject, which affirms itself—a "privilege" women, as writers, have been denied. The discourse of the professor, according to Leitch, should become "partial rather than totalized, and at best, discontinuous" and "break down stereotypes and opinions; suspend the violence and authority of language; let classroom discourse float, fragment, digress" (21). Yet, while this source book is offered to graduate students of composition, the ideology is virtually ignored in practice. Indeed, material on Socrates' rhetoric is a graduate course requirement, but Barthes' is not. Much like Humm's investigative research, this incompatibility between theory and practice prevents teachers from learning how best to teach individual students, thus denying them full access to their voices. (Stran-
Strategies for deconstructive teaching are presented in Part Two.

In another essay, "To Write Is to Read Is to Write, Right," David Kaufer and Gary Waller address some of the questions many composition teachers are asking about deconstruction: "Can we use it? What relevance do discussions of difference, decentered selves, and grammatology have to the educational acts we perpetrate in Strategies for Writing" (another title for introductory composition used by teachers at Carnegie Mellon)? "Are deconstructive mysteries the province of an elite whose arcane mystifications need never descend into the material practice of history?" Although Kaufer and Waller's provocative questions lie at the base of deconstructive pedagogy, and their theory is offered as reading material in graduate composition courses, the practice itself remains outside of the classroom.

Kaufer and Waller suggest that deconstruction become part of the teaching of composition. They state that "[i]t can be a powerful ally to teachers to direct students to the omnipresent, untrustworthy, yet available, power and powerlessness of language. Deconstruction can help to dislocate the ideologies with which our students so often commence their university studies" (68).

According to Fredric Jameson (included in Kaufer and Waller's essay), "our students bring sets of previously acquired and culturally sanctioned interpretive schemes of
which they are unaware and through which they read the texts prescribed to them. What we can do is to encourage them to become more self-aware of the power of such schemes, to become theoreticians" (69). Jameson's suggestion is not new to feminist research. Deconstructing education, whether or not it is placed within the term "deconstruction," is a common discussion in most feminist journals and articles (as discussed earlier in presenting feminist scholars).

We must question why deconstruction theory has yet to permeate composition theory although it has vitally affected feminist theory in general. Since most universities subscribe to most major and semi-major journals, what they now need to insist on is the inclusion of those journals such as *Feminist Teacher, Feminist Studies* and *Signs* whose vital information is a part of, not separate from, progressive education.

In another essay, "Heuristics and Beyond: Deconstruction/Inspiration and the Teaching of Writing Invention," Paul Northam states that "Learning the deconstructive mindset encourages students to examine closely and critically not only their diction and syntax but also their conventions of naturalizing personal beliefs and social and academic experiences" (117). He believes that deconstructive reading leads writers to think more critically, which leads to inspiration, and that it is this inspiration that gives writers the confidence to write with some level of convic-
tion. His theory applies to a large segment of writing students who do not feel confident to communicate their ideas and who "mechanically follow traditional heuristics." Women fall largely into this category.

Northam attempts to address all voices in the classroom and believes that "One way to encourage inspiration in writing is to train students in reading texts of all sorts with an attitude encouraged by deconstructive theory" (116). This is encouraging to women students who are often fearful of critical and analytical interpretation of what they read. Northam suggests an approach which enhances reading ability and ultimately leads to more competent writing. He agrees with Maxine Hairston that composition is undergoing a "paradigm shift." And in our transformation from product to process writing, teachers should consider more and more the nature of the writer and rely on the belief that writers should draw on their own experiences, and that these experiences are often determined by the writer's gender.

Although Atkins and Johnson did not intend Writing and Reading Differently as a feminist reference, which it is not, its theoretical underpinnings could lead to a feminist perspective which in turn would help teachers to teach students in a gender-sensitive way. In fact, the book keeps a feminist perspective carefully out of its explicit consideration, yet the feminist perspective is a part of all pedagogical approaches to composition. To avoid the gender
of the writer is to neglect every writing student in the classroom except the privileged few—i.e., the males.

The very fact that no women writers appear in Atkins' and Johnson's book affect future teachers' (who use this source as a guide or reference to teaching) decisions as to whether feminist issues will be considered in their classrooms and whether women will be seen as a separate group. Considering the feminist nature of deconstructionist theory, it's puzzling as to why feminist theory and practice are not incorporated as a major foundation to the book's general deconstruction theory. The very philosophy of this book, as outlined earlier, echoes the feminist pedagogy published over the last few decades.

While we cannot ignore the attention, albeit limited, that feminist issues in composition are receiving, we cannot lull ourselves into a false complacency. Tokenism relegates women's issues to the periphery which separates women's issues in composition from the field of composition itself, making the message to women clear: Women's issues are insignificant and do not command the respect and attention the traditionally privileged patriarchal, white middle-class male academic values do.

The task then is to include feminist theories in source books and journals to an equal degree with traditional theories. We can only conclude at this point that in compo-
sition classrooms where future composition teachers are formulating their basic assumptions about which teaching methods, tools, and materials will best serve their composition students, the current pedagogical dialogue is significantly gender-biased. Until composition research theory validates women's voices, many women students will be unable to combat their internal silence; indeed, they will simply maintain it.

Composition graduate schools offer some theory regarding gender issues in the classroom; however, the practicum graduate students experience in the classroom is often very traditional, with little or no emphasis on gender equity. If we are graduating teachers with little or no exposure to feminist practicum, we can not expect them to feel comfortable or even to suggest alternatives to their own students. Incorporating a curriculum which has as its base a gender-equitable education for all students is clearly desirable and something most teachers would not resist if feminist pedagogy were mainstreamed into the materials available to them equally with the traditional educational curriculum.

Aside from the traditionally exclusionary pedagogical materials published and used by teachers in the composition classroom, there is clearly a need to get away from exclusionary pedagogical practices as evidenced by some of the current composition textbooks and handbooks which reflect a feminist awareness. The 1992 edition of The Allyn & Bacon
Handbook, by Leonard J. Rosen and Laurence Behrens, is an example of contemporary material offered to composition teachers which attempts to address all students' voices. Rosen and Behrens include in their samples of student work, research papers, essays and memos written by women, about women's issues such as "Women Alcoholics: A Conspiracy of Silence" by Kristy Bell (688). The text avoids sexist language. Reference sources and examples appear to be well distributed between the sexes.

The St. Martin's Handbook, 1992 Second Edition, by Andrea Lunsford and Robert Connors, is another progressive handbook which includes in its contents special attention to workshops and journal keeping. Although the authors state in the Preface that the writers whose work they highlight most often throughout the book are Maya Angelou, Lewis Thomas and Eudora Welty, many more writing samples are used by many other writers with what seems to be a fair balance between women and men writers. However, this book, like most others, no matter how progressive in its thinking, includes argumentation as a form of discourse style and, like most other books, fails to mention how this mode of writing might fit more comfortably with a male writer's way of thinking than a female writer's.

The 1991 edition of The St. Martin's Guide to Writing (currently one of the more popular composition texts used by teachers all over the nation) by Rise Axelrod and Charles
Cooper also reveals an attempt to weave gender equally throughout the book with its avoidance of sexist language in general. The number of student and professional essay samples written by men, however, does seem to outweigh somewhat those written by women. A subtle message women students might unconsciously obtain from the imbalance would be that more men have written successfully than women. The topics used in this edition's samples written by students are quite timely, on the other hand. For example, "Is Sex Necessary," by David Quammen (139), "Patriarchy in Puritan Family Life" by Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg (144), "Taking a Stand Against Sexism" by Kristin Goss (179), "Abortion, Right and Wrong" by Rachel Richardson Smith (186), "Birth Control in the Schools" by Adam Paul Weisman (226), and two reviews of Do The Right Thing, "Searing, Nervy and Very Honest" by David Ansen (259) and "Open and Shut" by Terrence Rafferty (262) are included among more traditional work such as the short story "Araby" by James Joyce (333). This book also offers invention strategies which serve to encourage women's ways of thinking relationally. The sample essays include topics women writers can often more easily relate to such as relationships. And like the Lunsford and Connors' handbook, St. Martin's emphasizes workshops and revision exercises.

9 See Carol Gilligan, In A Different Voice; Belenky, et al., Women's Ways of Knowing; and Ann Bookman and Sandra Morgen, Women and the Politics of Empowerment.
Another composition textbook which addresses feminist readers in its Preface is *Strategies for Successful Writing* by James A. Reinking and Andrew W. Hart, 1991, Second Edition. These writers use a deliberate conversational tone in their writing, making the information accessible to those students who might be put off by "distant" language so often found in traditional textbooks. The writers clearly avoid sexist language and incorporate a balance of male- and female-generated essays about topics of interest to all students.

What lies at the center of all these books is that they are all basically gender-centered. These books strive toward including all students' voices. For instance, all of these books focus on process versus product writing with particular emphasis on revision, a strategy of teaching which is equitable and allows students to explore their own voices more freely. The attention to gender-equity in these sources suggests that the textbooks and handbooks being written for composition classrooms are concerned with feminist-centered teaching. If this is so, why aren't the universities offering feminist-centered classroom practica to the teachers who will eventually be using these texts? And while the professional journals discuss process writing in all of its various forms using many progressive techniques such as workshops and revision exercises, these
journals exclude too often the scholarship which identifies gender-centered pedagogy directly.

Composition teachers often include in their course curriculum, along with a handbook and textbook, a reader which encourages class discussion and critical thinking skills. Most of these readers now offer a wide selection of ethnically and culturally diverse materials, affording students a much broader perspective on who writes and what topics these writers write about. Some readers often include only one to several essays concerning women's issues, however, or they are offered in connection with cultural issues; and while this connection is also crucial to educational equality, we risk having women's issues swept under the proverbial rug by not looking at them directly as we must do.

There is one reader which takes gender equality seriously. *Rereading America* (1989 edition and newest edition on its way) edited by Gary Colombo, Robert Cullen and Bonnie Lisle, offers an entire reading section entitled "Women: The Emerging Majority" which looks specifically at women and the issues that concern them directly. This section includes ten essays written by women about women's issues including

---

sexism and heterosexism. Other untraditional sections equally important to our students about not only who we read but what we read and its relevance to our students' lives are "The Changing Family," which includes "Reassessing Family Life" and "Alternative Family Structures;" "Grading American Education;" "Challenging the Traditional Classroom;" and "Occupation and Social Status." Gender issues are blended equally in this book with traditional essays and ethnic and cultural works. If books of this type are discussed in graduate courses and our teachers are encouraged to include gender-equal pedagogy in their course curricula, then progressive books like this one will become mainstream among composition educators.

However, discourse modes of writing remain traditionally unchanged due to the omission of discussion in composition arenas about whether the rules regarding these modes actually reflect the writer and what the writer wants to say. What needs to take place is reevaluation of who writes and what that writer has to say and from there what constitutes valid writing styles to be taught to composition students. These discussions would have to include teachers of all other disciplines, however, since teachers will continue to be the oppressors who deny the voices of students and their experiences by imposing their own dominant worldviews unless the educational system works actively to uncover the "culture of silence" Freire believes this system maintains.
Some textbook writers are striving to give equal attention to all of the students who will read and incorporate the textbook's language, and it is evident that sexist language is an important issue and not a "he-hunter" conspiracy as Tibbetts and Tibbetts suggest. Addressing all voices in the classroom is a focal point, and we can conclude that as long as teachers demand equitable language, writers and publishers will produce it. Offering students alternatives to traditional teaching with new approaches insures that exclusion of any particular group, including women, will be eliminated.

But the social consciousness of feminist theories in composition should not begin at the college level. We must look to primary and secondary school curricula for existing evidence of individual gender issues much as we now see evidence of concern for ethnicity in the classroom.\textsuperscript{11} There is some question concerning whether proposed feminist theory and training in composition are actually incorporated and taught in composition classrooms. For now let us consider where we might make changes which address women's issues in the college composition classroom.

\textsuperscript{11} Multicultural texts are making their way not merely into "ethnic" courses such as Black History where they were once housed, but rather into many disciplines where ethnicity is no longer a separate issue.
Part Two

. . . teaching is a political act: some person is choosing to teach a set of values, ideas, assumptions, and pieces of information, and in so doing, omit other values, ideas, assumptions, and pieces of information. To omit women entirely makes one kind of political statement. To include women with seriousness and vision and with some attention to the perspective of women as a subordinate group is simply another kind of political act. Florence Howe, "Feminist Scholarship--The Extent of the Revolution" (20).

School systems reinforce preconditioned social behaviors and prejudices as unquestionable doctrine. And as Paulo Freire puts it, "The oppressors use their 'humanitarianism' to preserve a profitable situation. Thus they react almost instinctively against any experiment in education which stimulates the critical faculties and is not content with a partial view of reality but always seeks out the ties which link one point to another and one problem to another" (60). In fact, rarely do we find a secondary school system which enlightens students about social prejudices and preprogrammed messages about gender issues, and almost never does the system offer students alternative ways of thinking and behaving about those messages.¹²

¹² There are a few exceptions, however. See R.W. Connell, Teacher's Work. (London: Allen & Unwin Australia Pty Ltd., 1985). It deals with the inclusion of gender relations at the very core of curricula development in the secondary school system; also see R. Fowler, "HSC, STC: A Strategy for equal outcomes for girls", in P. Cole (ed), Curriculum Issues, Schools' Curriculum Unit, Victorian Institute of Secondary Education, 1984, 42-44 which offers specific practical alternatives to present strategies; and, P. Roy and M.
At the university level, on the other hand, intense discussion on gender issues does take place in many composition classrooms; however, the educational texts offered at this level often reflect the very biases discussed. Wendy Goulston ("Women Writing") explains that "... few writing classes currently help students understand how their writing difficulties connect with their sense of who they are and whom they are writing for. While a small number of women professors and their students are working on writing problems in relation to gender, most college faculty and students regard writing problems as a lack of editing skills or of talent. More recently, racial and cultural barriers to 'establishment' writing have been better recognized, though women's particular experience has not been explicitly examined and applied to mainstream writing pedagogy" (23). I think Goulston's point confirms the necessity to eliminate the assumption that women should simply entrust all pedagogical decisions to male authority. Women students can comply with the traditional curricula, but as they carve their writing into rhetorical forms, they often feel like impostors. Surely professors would agree that women have every right to pursue their voice in the classroom. But they don't understand how vulnerable women feel when they make

the attempt without genuine support for how they view the world.\textsuperscript{13}

The objective of reevaluation of cultural models and women's experiences is the transformation of the classroom. For example, traditional writing classrooms value certain forms of discourse which privilege certain students. Valuing one form over another requires that the teacher be a judge, imposing a hierarchy of learned values, gathered from ideal texts, upon the student text. Since feminist theory in general questions the inherently authoritarian nature of such traditional structures, seeing them as patriarchal, the traditional notions of accepted standards are challenged because they originate in masculinist values. Many changes would be seen in a truly feminist classroom. It would include alternate forms of discourse such as private poetry, letters, diaries, journals and autobiographies. It would explore women's silence in the areas of traditional curriculum development and work toward validating the personal voice. It would cast the teacher less as the sole evaluator and more as a collaborator seeking to redefine the criteria for valuing and selection. It would use students' experiences.

\textsuperscript{13} See Pamela J. Annas "Writing As Women," Women's Studies Quarterly; Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice; Dale Spender, The Writing or The Sex; Robin Lakoff, Language and Women's Place; Elizabeth Abel, Writing and Sexual Differences; Belenky, et al., Women's Ways of Knowing.
Fortunately, there have been published, in recent years, some contemporary reconstructions of pedagogical curricula which address an awareness of gender issues in postsecondary classrooms. These reconstructions address the necessity to include the socialization of women's thinking as different from men, and reflect a new understanding of women's unique writing processes and how women know what they know. Incorporating women's issues into the body of composition studies curricula will not be enough to awaken the consciousness of an entire academic community. However, it is a start.

But, from experience with the incorporation of ethnic studies into core academic curriculum development, we have learned that for too long this meant a simple token "salute" to ethnicity by far too many teachers. Students learned from this marginal attention that ethnicity—anything outside the white, middle-class agenda—was on the periphery of society. It wasn't until teachers personalized ethnic studies by incorporating them into their daily classroom lesson plans that ethnicity finally wove itself into students' education as part of the whole social, historical and cultural picture. The cultural insistence on the inclusion of ethnic studies in mainstream American education offers solid historical evidence for including women in the academy. And like ethnic studies, women's issues can be incorpo-
rated into teachers' lesson plans only with the conscious awareness that they should be.

Indeed, many universities base their structure on traditionally dominant world views. As a way to amend the imbalance, many universities have set up Women's Studies programs addressing women's issues. However, while Women's Studies is a major achievement for the enhancement of women, total inclusion is far from complete. And creating separate courses and disciplines such as Women's Studies simply reinforces the idea that women's issues are on the periphery: outside mainstream education. In fact, we can clearly see the limited attention women's issues receive in current composition studies conversation as explained in Part One. And to eliminate discrimination for all women of any color, total inclusion is essential.

While we cannot ignore the necessity for and the progress now being made in transforming traditional pedagogy at the secondary school level, this chapter focuses specifically on theories and practices successfully implemented and explored by feminist practitioners for the inclusion of gender awareness into the composition classroom at post-secondary levels. (I will use the term feminist to represent all those teachers who embrace the ideology for the elimination of oppressive and traditionally discriminatory and authoritarian pedagogy.) I use Freire's ideology as a basis from which to evaluate teaching methods which serve to
empower and liberate students' writing. The few sources offered here reflect a mere sample of successful approaches already employed although many others are now developing across the nation at differing educational levels, remaining, however, in token numbers.\(^{14}\) This sample represents only an overview of some innovative possibilities for consideration by composition educators. The intent here is to show the current range of positive changes being made in the more liberal composition classroom—a climate nurtured by teachers seeking to free those voices which might otherwise remain silent—and how these changes are reflected in the students themselves.

1.

I begin with a course offered by Florence Howe as I believe her strategy goes to the heart of transforming the composition classroom, and I use her strategy as a model for feminist teachers to follow. I discuss other vital techniques as variations to Howe's focus on classroom climate rather than alternatives separate from her methods. My purpose is to reveal some highly successful untraditional pedagogy geared entirely toward individual equity in the

\(^{14}\) See Selected Bibliography at the end of this chapter for additional sources offering further bibliographical information on approaches for transforming the classroom.
classroom. In "Identity and Expression: A Writing Course for Women" (College English, 1971), Howe explains that her purpose is to improve women's ability to write by helping them to understand their own social identities as women and their potential as feeling and thinking people. Although Howe's methods are designed primarily for women, these methods can easily be adapted to all students in the composition classroom.

There are three aspects to her course—reading, discussion, and writing. The course begins with a reading list of mostly female writers. The purpose is not to avoid male writers but to compensate for the centuries old myth that women are inferior and therefore cannot write. In fact, due to this long tradition believing in women's inferiority, Howe's female students are more highly critical of female literature at the outset, but they eventually become more interested. Howe includes underground literature from women's liberation as a way to raise their consciousness about women's issues. And as Howe points out, "Consciousness or knowing fosters power and control" (865). Eventually, students begin bringing in their own issues of national magazines which devote special attention to the subject of women. This provokes, for the female students, a desire to write critical analyses on women's magazines. It should be noted here that male writers may also feel uncomfortable
with traditional writing modes and will welcome a more contemporary approach.

Howe's objective for the second component of her course, classroom discussion, is to avoid leading students to prearranged answers, a device often used in more traditional writing climates, about the materials they read. She often begins discussions with open questions: "How did you feel about . . . ?" This question is "designed to evoke affective responses rather than cognitive ones—a process that is more difficult than it may seem, since students are conditioned not to respond at all but to guess the cognitive response that the teacher is searching for" (867). Frances Maher calls this "guessing-what-the-teacher-wants" technique traditional authoritarian teaching. It presumes that an expert will present to the students an objective and empirically proven set of information. She explains how this mode reflects a dominant vision of expectations which poses a problem to women and other minorities as it normally excludes them in the classrooms (Maher, 30). Howe's strategy veers away from the more inflexible notion of being empirically right or wrong, allowing students to trust themselves, and discussion becomes more fluid and animated.

Trust appears to be the most valuable resource in an open classroom such as this. Many students arrive at college classrooms suspicious from the onset that they will fail or not "live up" to the teacher's expectations. Tradi-
tionally, teachers transmit information and students receive the transmission. Freire calls this the "banking" model and considers it dehumanizing and rigidly controlling of what and how students think. For instance, Olivia Frey believes that we cannot avoid the thinking and decision making processes women go through in their everyday lives--defined by Carol Gilligan as contextual and narrative versus the traditional formal and abstract. Frey points out (and many other theorists agree) that it is "difficult for some women to engage in intellectual debate so often required in [traditional] scholarship" (510). In other words, it is difficult for many women to leave behind their day-to-day concerns such as childcare or the death of a friend when engaging in the writing task. Indeed, Howe admits that the most difficult role the teacher plays is getting students to trust their opinions and value their experiences enough to speak out. However, once trust is established, Howe's students read, talk and write freely. They now trust they have something of value to say, and they say it.

In part three, Howe explains her writing process. Students are asked to write several essays on themselves and the social conditions of their gender (866). Under the "safe" conditions Howe sets up in her classroom, students learn to enjoy writing. They learn that the worst they can expect is a note suggesting a revision of one particular thing or another. Students take "risks" they wouldn't nor-
mally take in a "standard" composition class. As a result of Howe's attention to "personalizing" the writing experience, students are eager to try writing in various modes.

The general classroom format consists of group form. Students are responsible for pre-selected reading and preparation for discussion. They depend more on each other than on the teacher to "deliver the goods" for them. Thus, a student's absence becomes a handicap to the group as a whole. In turn, they become more demanding of one another. The students' general attitude, in an open forum setting such as this, is suspicion, but as time goes on, they learn the power of controlling their own destiny. Howe explains how the teacher can work to find a role for herself somewhere between the traditional authoritarian figure and a collaborative member of the class group (868). The process frees voices and generates a less threatening classroom environment for both women and men.15

Ultimately students learn that writing is nothing to fear and begin exploring other methods of written expression: poetry and autobiography. Even those who struggle with writing enjoy the freedom of discussion and find the classroom experience rewarding (868-871). Howe's success encourages a broader perspective within traditional composi-

15 See Florence Howe's article, "Identity and Expression: A Writing Course for Women," College English 32 (May 1971): 863-871 for specific reading assignments and their significance to her course design.
tion curricula and beckons us to look closely at the materials we offer in place of traditional writing assignments.

2.

Using Howe's course development as the foundation for feminist pedagogy, let us look at Linda Peterson's discussion of the elimination of traditional exclusionary assumptions from classroom materials. Here the focus is on writing topics. In "Gender and the Autobiographical Essay: Research Perspectives, Pedagogical Practices," Peterson explains how teachers can be "conscious that assigning only one kind of essay in a writing course may give a grade advantage to some students" (173). Based on her empirical study, admittedly imperfect, yet balanced by sex, cultural diversity and similarity of assignments, she found that although women are not necessarily good at abstracting principles from their experience for writing the argument paper--often assigned in traditional composition courses--they are superb at and rated much higher than men in reproducing what goes on around them autobiographically. Peterson concludes from her findings that teachers of composition must "formulate their assignments to encourage the capacities and experiences of both sexes." That is to say, then, that issues of gender affect our decisions about reading.
and writing assignments and our responses to students' own essays, and we cannot ignore them.

For instance, in Peterson's study, women chose most often topics which focused on relationships, while men chose the self as distinct from others. This finding not only justifies Howe's purpose of teaching women to improve their writing by understanding and exploring their social identities, but confirms, Peterson reminds us, Nancy Chodorow's theory of gender patterns: The feminine sense of the self is connected to others; the masculine sense of self is separate (174). Peterson's study suggests that issues of sexual identity emerge in students' choices of topic and in their approaches to significant life events.

As a result of her findings, Peterson formulated three pedagogical guidelines which teachers can use when considering appropriate writing assignments: (1) The formulation of personal writing assignments should not unwittingly privilege one mode of self-understanding over another. She explains that if an assignment required the writer to confront a crisis alone, it might prove more difficult for women students than for men. Conversely, if the assignment required a psychological or emotional exploration of a personal relationship, it might be uncomfortable for male students. (2) The readings suggested as models for the assignment should include examples by and about both male and female subjects. Teachers should explore whether their
reading selections genuinely represent differences in representing personal experience, or whether they simply repeat similar and traditional patterns of knowing the self composed by both men and women. (3) Evaluation of personal essays should not privilege certain gender-specific modes of self-representation, nor penalize others. For example, a woman teacher may underestimate a male student's attention to confrontational action, while a male teacher might misinterpret a female student's emphasis on relational dynamics (173-175). Peterson's guidelines afford the composition teacher the opportunity to evaluate critically the assumptions which may otherwise go unchecked and continue habitually to perpetuate oppressive classroom dynamics.

Once the guidelines are set, Peterson offers several suggestions: "(1) If the event or topic seems gender-specific, challenge the assumptions about men's and women's experience that underlie it. (2) If assignment number one seems untenable, look for the universal in the experience. This allows students the freedom to avoid gender. (3) For insight and originality, try 'cross-dressing' (viewing experience through the eyes of someone of the opposite sex or from a different racial or ethnic background) a way to try out different patterns to present or interpret the self as a "rhetorical rather than behavioral strategy" (177-178). The intent is to encourage more exploration and experimentation in women's writing since their sense of self is often quite
fluid and undefined. This rhetorical strategy goes beyond the traditional assignment of asking students to write an autobiographical essay. Women often respond to this assignment by defining "themselves" in "others'" terms and with others' language. Peterson's pedagogical method forces students out of stereotypical perspectives.

Peterson's research and strategy help substantiate how attention to gender difference necessitates more sensitive consideration of the types of writing assignments teachers choose. When a writing assignment privileges some students over others it affects their success. Freire puts it more pointedly: "Any situation in which some [people] prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence; to alienate [people] from their own decision-making is to change them into objects (Freire, 73).

3.

Addressing the implicit underpinnings of both Peterson's suggestions for scrutinizing assignment selections and Howe's methods on using women's personal experiences to improve women's writing, Elisabeth Daumer and Sandra Runzo

16 See College Composition and Communication, "Gender and the Autobiographical Essay: Research Perspectives, Pedagogical Practices" (V.42.2, May 1991) for more on Linda Peterson's study of students' autobiographical essays on gender and performance. Also see Peterson's bibliography for more on innovative classroom transformation.
suggest that the inclusion of theory should be an explicit part of the writing process itself. They suggest that readings and discussions could revolve around untangling contradictory attitudes within a piece of writing. Writing assignments stemming from such readings and discussions could address the necessity for women to have control of their language by discussing experiences of being unable, or denied the right, to speak for oneself and by discussing incidents of racial, sexual, and linguistic oppression and assertion.

Particularly they suggest: "A student could discuss her identification with someone of a social group different from her own. Students could write about a time when someone changed or distorted their language. One student tells a story of personal significance to another who then retells it to the class. The originator could describe how and whether her relationship to her words changed once another student conveyed them. Students could write about each other, appearances, or language use, for instance, and discuss the differences between how we perceive ourselves and how others perceive us. A student could write about herself in a context that she thinks social conventions have denied her" (55-56). Writing assignments could also be used for students to explore such issues as how our ability to speak is bound to our control over our bodies and the correlation between sexuality and power.
Another assignment might ask students to talk about a time when language helped them to cope with an emotionally difficult situation, or how their own lives affect the way they think and write about sexuality, and any sense of power and vulnerability that results from feelings about their body (56-57).

Other writing assignment ideas are based on Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston, a novel which illustrates the power of naming oneself and of resisting other people's definitions. Students could write about their own identification with a women's community, the significance or lack of significance of female friendships, story-telling as a means for passing on women's knowledge, and the power of definition and how definitions reveal one's self-interest and perspectives (58). Daumer and Runzo point out that to unearth the voices of women, we must search out untraditional sources, often the forms of writing which have not been granted status: journals, letters, diaries. These suggestions offer possibilities for bringing women's voices into the classroom in order to appreciate the power of women's knowledge and the strength women have cultivated through language.
James D. Reimer offers another excellent alternative to the traditional teaching of composition which establishes the use of the students' own personal experiences. In "Becoming Gender Conscious: Writing About Sex Roles in a Composition Course," he shares his experience with teaching an honors composition class which focuses on a single theme: the nature and effects of gender roles in contemporary society. Much like Peterson's theory, Reimer prompts students to question society's rigidly defined gender roles as well as to become aware of the ways in which these roles affect their own lives. The selection of essays and additional readings gives specifically feminist, liberal views on the matter of gender roles. His assumption was that his students had been exposed to society's predominant attitudes towards strongly differentiated roles and behaviors for men and women for at least seventeen or eighteen years, in a traditionally patriarchal school environment, and that most students would then have a familiarity with the traditional and conservative views of sex roles, whereas they were much more unlikely to have given thoughtful consideration to liberal, less traditional attitudes (158).

Like Howe, Reimer elects to break away from traditional discourse standards. He allows his students to
select reading materials relevant to their own lives and to evaluate their own cultural attitudes.

Reimer's plan suggests selecting material which reveals the complexity of the subject by focusing on five or six distinct but related issues concerning sex roles, including topics on images of men and women in advertising; male and female attitudes toward competition, work, and success; views of male and female sexuality; relationships with the opposite sex; friendships with the same sex; and images of men and women in literature. An in-depth consideration of a powerfully influential and pervasive means by which our society defines and perpetuates sex roles—visual media—served as a foundation for future discussions by permitting students to grasp some of the traditional values and behaviors that our society deems acceptable and desirable for men and women (157).

In addition to the reading material, Reimer requires a semester-long journal in which students write personal responses to one or several of the readings assigned for a particular class session. This journal encourages personal introspection and provides an opportunity for students to reveal feelings, thoughts, and experiences they might have felt uneasy about sharing with the class. The journal also

---

gives Reimer the opportunity to stimulate students to look deeper into their own experiences to validate or challenge their views and values as well as those expressed in class readings and discussion (158). Upon final evaluation, Reimer deems that overall his composition course is a success due to its interesting subject matter (159). With Reimer's strategy, students write about an issue which they find relevant to their own lives and in which they have vast experience. The composition course becomes a process of discovery about self and society. This strategy teaches students to value themselves as persons and as writers. Like Howe, Peterson, and Daumer and Runzo, Reimer values students' differences and works toward transforming the classroom to a climate of trust.

5.

Thus far, Part Two of this thesis discusses concrete and practical methods and strategies for alternative teaching methods in the classroom. However, discussion on transforming education would be incomplete without addressing some of the philosophical implications in the institution as well as in the classroom.

Although Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes may not have intended their deconstructionist theories for the feminist composition classroom, their philosophies speak
directly to contemporary feminist transformation. In *Writing and Reading Differently: Deconstruction and the Teaching of Composition and Literature*, a source book designed to teach future composition teachers deconstruction of present pedagogical practices in the composition classroom, Vincent B. Leitch ("Deconstruction and Pedagogy") explores Derrida's and Barthes' reflections on the historical and contemporary roles of power, authority, and language (16). Derrida's conclusions for deconstructing higher education are derived from philosophical research. According to Leitch, Derrida stated in his essay written for the Group for Research on Philosophic Teaching (GREPH), 1975, that "'deconstruction' has always had a bearing in principle on the . . . function of teaching in general (17). Deconstruction is concerned with pedagogical theory and practice. In matters pedagogical, neutrality is unacceptable and activism is essential" and "[e]very constituted hierarchy and criterion [should] be investigated as a prelude to any transformation" (17). Derrida is concerned with the hierarchical relations underlying the institution of school in general. He refers to universities and texts as "networks" which create and control our activities and insists that for "anyone who belongs to an institution of teaching and research, the minimal responsibility, and also the newest, most powerful, and most interesting, is to make as clear and thematically explicit as possible such political implications, their system and
its [apparatus]" (18). Howe, Peterson, Daumer and Runzo and Reimer are deconstructing traditional assumptions in pedagogical curricula development.

Derrida offers philosophical strategies for teachers concerned with transforming the traditional classroom: (1) don't abandon the "old" university, (2) create a critique of it, and (3) develop a positive and extensive transformation of it (17). Derrida fosters inquiry and transformation not simply on a local level but on a systemic level as well.

This ideology cannot be ignored if changes are to occur in composition classrooms where the "universities' values" themselves are represented. We write what we know; writing represents our values, and through deconstructing the composition classroom, we can determine which of the values we maintain are fictitious and whether we write our own truth.

While Derrida's theory of deconstruction focuses heavily on the university system, Roland Barthes concentrates on the powers of classroom language and effective teaching. His theory, according to Leitch, more clearly explains the connection of deconstructive analysis to composition classroom transformation. He argues that teachers should free "the ubiquitous text from stereotype, repetition, and opinion--formations of a neurotic society" (19). He believes speech, the teacher's medium, is violent and authoritarian and that deconstruction in the classroom is quite difficult.
to attain. He believes that to speak is to exert a will of power. We can, perhaps, conclude then that if this is so, the silence carried by women confirms their powerlessness. He affirms that the "main job of deconstructive pedagogy is to suspend the oppressive forces of discursive language—to loosen, to baffle, or lighten its power" (21). Barthes' strategy for transformation is to "uproot the frozen text; break down stereotypes and opinions; suspend or baffle the violence and authority of language; pacify or lighten oppressive paternal powers; disorient the law; let classroom discourse float, fragment, digress; seek ascetic or libidinal abandonment of the teaching body/self" (21). In this sense, we can associate Barthes' philosophy with Freire's theory of the pedagogically oppressed which radically insists that education encompass the voices of all human beings. Both Derrida and Barthes beckon teachers to go beyond a textual hermeneutics and toward a critique of values, arrangements and practices. I believe Howe, Peterson, Daumer and Runzo, and Reimer do just that. These practitioners, without losing authority, work to give control of the composition classroom to their students, so that they can feel free to examine and evaluate their own social identity and the values and assumptions which surround them. It is the power of writing—to create—that produces transformation.
What these deconstruction theorists and the practitioners mentioned earlier in this section have in common are uncompetitive approaches to transforming the traditionally authoritarian classroom (and system). They agree that how students obtain truth about the world around them depends significantly on their abilities to unearth the assumptions which often bury their own identities and their personal methods and processes of determining what is valuable. They agree on the oppressive nature of teaching students truth cloaked in "standards" set by a traditional patriarchy which privileges only one segment of the population. These theorists and practitioners are each working toward an equity in education which presently does not exist.

The success of teachers working for curriculum change throughout the nation reveals how relevant the inclusion of women's voices is becoming in education, albeit slowly, and sets a precedent for other school systems. An individualized feminist classroom environment is the objective which grows out of the awareness created by grassroots projects. It is from projects like these that teachers can adapt feminist theory dynamics to all classrooms (including composition) where emerging voices enrich the diversity of the composition community. We can see that composition classrooms geared to include all voices serve to create motivated writers. And without the fear and anxiety of filling up prescribed modes, students find a safe and trusting environ-
ment which illuminates those very differences in thinking and ideas that are too often excluded.

Selected Bibliography: The following is a partial list of other works specifically devoted to transforming the post-secondary classroom:


Conclusion

We are all Pandora, motivated by a need to know our inner and outer worlds when we sit down to write. For when we open the lid, pain does fly out, and anger, fear, and grief—but also joy, and an end to silence. Pamela Annas, "Silences: Feminist Language Research" in Teaching Writing: Pedagogy, Gender, and Equity.

In order for women to control the information they accept as true, they must first become self-consciously aware of recreating their own identity and ultimately writing in their own voice. They must finally come to realize that to simply enter the literary arena is not enough. Indeed, women's writing has been filtered through male ideas and assumptions to the degree that their silences ultimately cheat the composition discipline by remaining undeveloped.

We are shortchanging more than half of the student population when we omit the tremendous volume of pedagogical material which addresses an entire perspective too often avoided in university curriculum development—women's issues. For women are not the only students to receive only partial pedagogical truths. We cannot assume that even majority white male students accept traditional pedagogy simply because they are members of a privileged population; they too enhance their own education when they are made aware of the assumptions which govern their course curricula. It is up to the students to determine what of their
education they choose to omit, not administrators. And teachers do a disservice to all of their students by avoiding investigating alternatives to the more easily accessed traditional course sources. Teachers can insist that their university offer curriculum source lists and untraditional journal subscriptions which include perspectives on feminist approaches to teaching composition. And, at the very least, they should read their current course sources deconstructively and teach their students to do so. To do otherwise is to be mere figureheads perpetuating a history that omits a large percentage of classroom voices.

While scholarly journals devote little attention to feminist composition issues, the composition classroom is, in fact, the one place that could act as the catalyst in helping to move the university toward equity. Composition is one of the few college requirements that almost all college students, at some point in their college career, must complete, so composition teachers have access to almost every student in the university—a powerful position. Universities owe it to composition, as they do to all disciplines, to send out information to these teachers so that they can offer the most progressive and equitable ideas and materials education has access to. By doing so we will empower rather than limit students' education.

But it appears that composition journals omit the perspective of an entire population of students, and feminist
journals omit composition as a legitimate discipline for the
discussion of equity in the classroom. Feminist journals, in
fact, too often remain entirely aloof from all of mainstream
education.

Humanities and education departments owe it to their
students to subscribe to intelligent and progressive femi-
nist journals like Feminist Teacher. And composition jour-
nals including the CCC and College English owe it to future
teachers to include feminist perspectives on a consistent
and equitable basis if they truly believe in equitable
classrooms, as their philosophy promises. Universities, in
turn, must subscribe to these journals in keeping with their
philosophy to bring fair and equitable education to all
students.

But first we must value difference by acknowledging the
research done in the area of women's issues in composition
and the responses to those new ideas published in isolation
from one another. Too many composition teachers disregard
feminist scholarship, falsely believing research in this
area is scarce. The knowledge that feminist research is
developing daily, and that it is radical only because it
unveils a long tradition of oppressive education, must be
made available to anyone pursuing a career in composition.
Composition students seek knowledge as they would in any
other discipline, and to ignore feminist pedagogy is to
offer them "cut-rate" education. And including feminist
pedagogy as a "theme" for one issue or publishing feminist
text as if you were reading it naturally.

theory in isolation from traditional pedagogy limits teach-

ers' access to pedagogical choices—choices which should not

be made for them—and sends a message that feminist pedagogy

is distant, discontinuous, and inaccessible.

Traditional pedagogy omits the voices of a very large

population of students in our composition classrooms and

cultivates their silence. Until the university system

acknowledges the complete value of difference, not only of

ethnicity, students continue to receive only a partial

education—a half truth.

Teachers need only to look at the many successful

alternative composition programs in many universities across

the nation (such as those presented in Part Two) to justify

the need for more availability of feminist pedagogy. These

innovative and timely curriculum developments are evidence

of the rich new avenues available to all composition teach-

ers who believe that their students deserve it.

An incorporation of feminist ideology, like Paolo

Freire's radical pedagogy, could break through silence and

passivity and empower subordinated groups of all types.

Teaching must include valuing all dialogue with an engaging

and intense interest, thus giving all students the respect

conducive to inciting enthusiastic conversation from any

member of any social group so that all students approach
their writing unencumbered by their conditioned silencing and resulting self-censoring.

Writing ultimately is the search and seizure of language. We constantly strive to find language that adequately and poignantly expresses what we are trying to say. But who determines what is adequate and/or poignant, and where are the "wells" of acquired information located in order to explicate the resources required to accomplish the final product? Most importantly, what exists in those wells?--for it is, after all, the only substance we have to call upon in our search and seizure endeavors. Women writers in the composition classroom must become critical thinkers and question their teacher's assumptions closely. And teachers must actively work to eliminate traditional pedagogical assumptions which represent a limited section of their classroom population. They will need to go beyond "depositing" information in students' "banks," as Paulo Freire suggests. They must consider the realities of their students' lives and include their students in the plan for creating writing assignments which directly respond to those realities.

Change is threatening at best. But with the continuing enrollment of women in the universities, reteaching teachers to adopt methods of teaching designed to cultivate a climate which supports a gender-equal environment is necessary if we are to ensure education which meets the needs of a diverse
student body. The adoption of feminist pedagogy and its underlying theory is essential to egalitarian education.


Cote, Margaret M. "Now That We Have a Room of Our Own, Are We Throwing Away The Key?" College English 44 (1982): 606-611.


----------- "Those We Still Don't Read." College English 43 (1981): 12-16.


Nilson, Alleen Pace. "Winning the Great He/She Battle." 


