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WOMEN TEACHING WRITING:
AN ANALYSIS OF FEMALE TEACHER AUTHORITY

by

Julia Kay Ferganchick-Neufang

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
WITH A MAJOR IN RHETORIC, COMPOSITION AND
THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

1996
As members of the Final Examination Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Julia Kay Ferganchick-Neufang entitled Women Teaching Writing: An Analysis of Female Teacher Authority and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Theresa Enos 4-2-96
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Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

Theresa Enos 4-2-96
Dissertation Director
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Signed [Signature]
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is the result of much collaborative work. I am deeply indebted to the support and suggestions of Dr. Theresa Enos whose thoughtful considerations as a mentor, colleague, and friend have shaped much of my work here. Likewise, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to work with Dr. Tilly Warnock and Julie Jung on the research project that led to this dissertation. Together we have investigated the fears and conflicts that face us as teachers of writing, but more importantly we have experienced the true compassion and excitement of collaborative feminist research. Our study was funded by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, and I want to acknowledge both its support of our own work and its continued support of research in the teaching of writing and the administration of writing programs. I am also grateful to the many women who responded to our survey and to all those who helped us with this project.

Dr. Dana Fox's thoughtful reflections about research methodologies have given me much insight into this process; I appreciate her support of my own work. I have had the fortunate opportunity to work with Dr. Thomas Miller, who has been a mentor for my work as a teacher and a writer. Thanks to him for his patience and support. Appreciation is also due to Dr. Ira Shor whose thoughtful suggestions about my work has led me to consider alternative perspectives, even conflicting ones. These and other opportunities are the result of all the outstanding people who make the University of Arizona Rhetoric, Composition, and Teaching of English Program a special place.

As I wrote this dissertation, I met weekly with Phyllis Mentzell Ryder and Patricia Youngdahl, and together we struggled through this process. They have taught me more about spirituality, love, and scholarship than I can possibly explain here. I am indebted to them for their personal and academic encouragement, as I am indebted to Chere Peguesse for her friendship and support.

I am especially thankful for my most valued reader and friend, Stoney James Neufang. Had it not been for his care and love, this project could not been completed. And finally, I want to acknowledge the patience of Kyle James Neufang, whose earnest struggles with addition and subtraction provided much needed relief from my own academic work. Watching his growth reminds me daily of why our work to better our communities and our world is so very important.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the Ferganchick family--Bert, Ann, Mark, Mona, and Stacy. Little did they know that their daughter and sister would grow up to become a feminist scholar of rhetoric and composition. Yet, it was from them that I learned to be who I am, learned to know what I should be, and learned to dream of who I could be.
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a study of feminist research methodologies through which I analyze the results of an empirical study I conducted in 1994 in collaboration with Dr. Tilly Warnock and Julie Jung. This study, funded by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, began with a survey, sent to 900 female writing teachers at 100 US universities, asking questions about gender-specific problems and student-to-teacher harassment in the writing classroom. Nearly 60 percent of the respondents reported having experienced gender-specific conflicts with students. These problems range from disruptive behavior in class to sexual harassment and assault. While these conflicts are obviously common among female writing teachers, very little research has focused on these issues because traditional research methods tend to ignore women's unique subject positions.

Drawing on the postmodern philosophies of Foucault and Derrida, and feminist theories of research methodologies (including Sandra Harding, Mary Fonow, Judith Cook, Gesa Kirsch, and Joy Ritchie), I argue that feminist research must begin with a personal location of the researcher within the research process, that feminist research is a collaborative effort among researchers and between researchers and participants, that feminist research is both about and for women, that feminist research focuses on the everyday experiences of women in their personal and public lives, and that feminist research resists essentializing the concerns of women, resists silencing multiple and alternative interpretations. I analyze these characteristics in various feminist research
projects and attempt to exemplify them in my own study.

Thus, my dissertation has a duel purpose. First, I want to argue that feminist research methodologies are valuable because they offer alternatives to traditional conventions of research, which often serve to perpetuate prejudice against women, people of color, and other oppressed groups. Second, I want to add to the voices of other feminist scholars who are creating multiplicities of truths, each situated within a specific context, each growing from situated subjectivities.
"Psychic Disequilibrium"

Growing up in this world, as a woman and as a scholar, I have felt an absence similar to that described by Andrianne Rich:

When those who have the power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you or hear you, whether you are dark-skinned, old, disabled, female, or speak with a different accent or dialect than theirs, when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing. (qtd. in Maher and Telrault 1)

I felt this psychic disequilibrium when I looked into the mirror of rhetoric and composition studies and didn't see myself as a woman represented in the works that I read. For model rhetoricians I was given Plato and Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian, I. A. Richards and Kenneth Burke, Derrida and Foucault--these are the great thinkers. While I heard the names of women like Mina Shaughnessy and Janet Emig, these names were connected to pedagogy--these are great practitioners, teacher-researchers who, Stephen North explains, are less valuable than the scholars and researchers in our field. "Lore," as North calls the knowledge developed by practitioners, is devalued in the academy and in our discipline.
I see the extent of this devaluation in our field when I read texts such as Ross Winterowd and Jack Blum's *Composition in the Rhetorical Tradition*, which should be renamed "Composition in the Western White Male Rhetorical Tradition" were the title to be an accurate reflection of the contents of this book because the rhetorical tradition *is* Western, white, and male. It is a tradition that, like most other traditions, has excluded women, people of color, and diverse ethnicities. Winterowd's text accurately re-presents this traditional exclusion as he discusses the works of Plato, Aristotle, and Isocrates in the classical tradition and Campbell, Blair, Coleridge, and Emerson in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His text is a useful one that can help feminists and other marginalized groups see the silences history has created for us. I include a discussion of this book not because it fails to fulfill its purpose, but rather to critique that purpose—the perpetuation of an exclusionary history of rhetoric that is narrowly defined as Western, white, and male.

Winterowd discusses the "dilemma" he faced when writing this text: "the need to limit its scope" (xi). He regrets, for example the exclusion of Chaim Perelman and E. D. Hirsch, whose works are beyond the scope of his text. In the first chapter on the classical tradition, he says "Obviously, I have left an enormous gap. I exclude the works of Quintilian and Cicero, as well as *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, among other important documents in the period between the fifth century B.C. and the first century A.D. My rationale (excuse?) is that I can achieve relative brevity without excluding the main issues that make our history meaningful" (1). As a woman scholar in this field, I am
dismayed (angry?) that Winterowd does not even see the need to excuse his exclusion of women from this tradition. The absence of women does not even warrant mention when discussing the "main issues that make our history meaningful." Winterowd's text, published in 1994, is ironically followed by the publication, in 1995, of Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition, in which feminist scholars attempt to fill the silence/absence of women in our history. But as of yet, women in the rhetorical tradition remain on the fringe--mostly in texts dedicated specifically to women.

Publications focusing more generally on the rhetorical tradition continue to re-present its patriarchal exclusions. In the third chapter of Winterowd's book, "Where We Are," he does discuss the work of women practitioners, namely Mina Shaughnessy, but in the fourth chapter titled "Two Modern Masters" we are limited once again to the work of men, I. A. Richards and Kenneth Burke.

As I criticize Ross Winterowd's representation of composition in the rhetorical traditions, I remember a night, nearly two years, when he and I cooked a spaghetti dinner together to celebrate the end of a seminar in the history of rhetoric that he taught and I attended at the University of Arizona. I remember the trip to Safeway, the smiles of secrecy as he prepared his "special recipe" made from canned pasta sauce. This evening, spent with Ross, our families, and our other colleagues, reminds me of the humanity, the goodheartedness, and warmth of a friendship built on academic inquiry. I am inspired by Bonnie Zimmerman's observation that

feminist inquiry must continue to trust that such narrow-mindedness is the
product of ignorance, not malice, and that, as lesbian scholars articulate both a
lesbian perspective and a critique of the heterosexist perspective, most
unreflective thinkers will change and adjust their own versions of the world. The
only perspective that has no place in feminist inquiry is the one born of prejudice
and maintained in anger and fear. (97)

It is within this spirit of mutual compassion and collaborative education that I
write as a woman/feminist/scholar in a patriarchal field. I do so not out of anger, though
I must admit that at times I am angry when I see the continued oppression of women,
minorities, lesbians, gays, and other oppressed groups; nor do I do so out of fear, and yet
I am often afraid that the sexist aggression I face will not be recognized, believed,
challenged in this academic world. Rather, I do so out of a committed belief in
feminism, antihomophobia, liberatory politics, antiracism--I do so out of a desire for
justice.

This desire arises out of need. Like Louise Wetherbee Phelps I feel that
because dismissive and demeaning behaviors linger, recur, and even intensify as
women and their projects in composition grow stronger, and because good people
still find such behaviors unremarkable and unworthy of censure or moral outrage,
they have colored my work and my life . . . Because they have hurt others . . . I
will not forget or pass over them lightly in these reflections. (299)

We cannot deny the problems we face as women, teachers, living beings who face
aggression--who are often silenced by the more powerful forces of tradition. In rhetoric
and composition, we cannot deny that women, for the most part, have been written out of
history--not out of malice, perhaps, but as a result of patriarchal ideologies that value
only men's contributions to history. As Simone de Beauvoir says, "Representation of the
world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of
view, which they confuse with absolute truth" (161). Here she names the condition in which women have lived throughout history--in a world written by and represented by men. This world, to use the words of poet Margaret Walker, is "a sexist, racist, violent, and most materialistic society. In such a society life is cheap and expendable; honor is a rag to be scorned; and justice is violated. Vice and money control business, the judicial system, government, sports, entertainment, publishing, education, and the church" (105).

Postmodern Possibilities

Were I to believe only this about our world, I would give up in despair. While we have certainly lived through atrocious times of slavery, genocide, greed, violence, and oppression, we have also tasted the fruit of liberatory solidarity in the women's movement, the civil rights movement, and more recently in the World Conference on Women. These examples of egalitarian progress give us an historical context within which we can work to further our advances in civil rights and liberties. But we must also realize that we work within our own unique historical period, one that can offer new possibilities for change. Currently, academics are working within a postmodern critique of logical-positivism that challenges universal and absolute truth, creating space for a discourse of resistance. The development of poststructuralism and postmodernism has led theorists to challenge the assumptions that are based on a supposedly stable identity. For instance, Foucault challenges conventional beliefs about knowledge as truth by
arguing that knowledge is "created not by the act of observing . . . but through 'relations . . . between institutions, economic and social processes, behavioral patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterizations; and these relations are not present in the object'" (qtd. in *Rhetorical Tradition* 1127). Derrida's destabilization of the subject has changed the way we think about the self from that of an individual and autonomous being into a social and socially constructed/ing part of society. He argues that "il n'y a pas de hors-texte"—there is nothing outside of the text, which implies that our knowledge of the world does not supersede language, but is a construct of it (*Of Grammatology* 158).

Feminist theorists in many fields draw on these theories of social construction to challenge the notion of truth, which has been carried from Plato's academy throughout history. Sharon Crowley, for example, draws on theories of deconstruction and social construction to challenge traditional pedagogical theory. She says, "it is all too easy to forget, while writing, that one's language belongs to a community of speakers and writers, that one has begun writing in order to reach (absent) readers, and that one's 'innovative ideas' have long textual histories behind them, histories which contain many many voices" (35). Therefore, "a deconstructive pedagogy . . . would redirect the notion of intention of purpose away from examination of a text onto its suitability to the

---

1 "Plato defines the philosopher's task as aiding others to remember by clearing away the worldly debris that obscures the truth" (*Rhetorical Tradition* 55).
rhetorical situation for which it was designed. Perhaps it would even reject the notion of intention altogether and substitute the task of incorporating the projected needs of audiences into the writing process" (36). Crowley's deconstruction of traditional pedagogical theories exemplifies the way feminist scholars challenge the "Truth" of the world as defined by patriarchal ideology. Her work creates a rhetorical space for a discourse of resistance drawing on postmodern ideology.

Likewise, Miriam Brody's recent book, *Manly Writing*, deconstructs the way "advice to writers functioned as an ideology that served the cultures whose students were being taught oral and written composition" (3). Brody shows that these ideologies were patriarchal and depended upon the subjugation of woman as other by examining the gendered metaphors of good and bad writing--good writing being described as manly and bad writing as effeminate. Brody shows how these representations created a stability that now goes unsaid, and, until recently, unnoticed because it was "normalized." She says:

To write well in Western culture is to write like a man. Advising boys, and more recently girls too, how to write, men have for centuries imposed images of their best selves on descriptions of good writing: selves that are productive, coherent, virtuous, and heroic; writing that is plain, forceful, and true. On their worst writing they have imagined themselves beset by uncertainty, vagueness, and timidity, by a writing that is ornate, unconvincing, and sometimes deceitful. In the long tradition of writing about writing, these best selves have been called manly writers, and the worst effeminate. People who offer advice about writing have long construed the virtues and vices of prose in the gendered language of male and female, representing good writing as masculine virtue and weak writing as feminine subversion that undermines a manly enterprise. (3)

Examining these gendered metaphors in advice to writing, Brody deconstructs the "truth" of pedagogical approaches to composition. But Brody does more than deconstruct; she
also uses this analysis to construct new ways to conceptualize writing instruction that are situated within specific contexts. "We may debate issues of style, but without gender we will have lost the logic by which some styles, plain and unadorned, could be called virtuous and true" (199). It is within this feminist postmodern tradition of deconstructing "truth" and constructing multiple and situated "truths" that I, as a feminist scholar and teacher, struggle in/against the patriarchal world.

As I do so, I must continually resist the temptation of patriarchal objectivism. Donna Haraway calls this phenomena the "god-trick" where one sees and knows all from an omnipotent position (188). I confront this tendency with each word because I have been taught the traditions of objective scholarship. As I engage in this project, I feel the comfort and security of tradition, of accepted methodologies, of an objective subject position, tug at me. But to replace the "Truth" of patriarchy with the "Truth" of feminism is a self-defeating purpose, which I want to abandon. Therefore, feminist researchers cannot claim a true or correct method of feminist research that is appropriate in every situation. Sandra Harding asks "can there be a feminist epistemological standpoint when so many women are embracing 'fractured identities' as Black women, Asian women, Native American women, working-class women, lesbian women?" (The Science

Haraway says, "I would like to insist on the embodied nature of all vision, and so reclaim the sensory system that has been used to signify a leap out of the marked body and into a conquering gaze from nowhere. This is the gaze that mythically inscribes all the marked bodies, that makes the unmarked category claim the power to see and not be seen, to represent while escaping representation" (188).
Question 163. She argues that rather than try to answer this question, feminists should value the multiplicities that stem from these "fractured identities" (164). "We should explicitly recognize the ambivalences and contradictions within both feminist and androcentric thinking, and learn how to cherish beneficial tendencies while struggling against the social conditions that make possible regressive tendencies in both" (164). I want to add to the voices of other feminist scholars who are creating multiplicities of truths, each situated within a specific context, each growing from situated subjectivities. Therefore, I cannot argue for a single solution to the racism, sexism, violence, and prejudice in our world, but I can claim my own methodologies that are situated within specific contexts and that are utilized for the specific purpose of raising awareness of gender-specific problems in the writing classroom and demystifying the circumstances within which they arise. To do so I must resist those traditional conventions of scholarship and research that require the creation of knowledge, truth, from observable facts and contribute to the collective struggle of feminist scholars by sharing this search for freedom.

Confines of Tradition

Because the field of rhetoric and composition, like the world, has traditionally positioned woman as other--and this tradition continues to be re-presented--I must search outside of traditional scholarship for role models, for answers to questions about women,
for myself. Mary Daly says "The radical be-ing of women is very much an Otherworld journey. It is both discovery and creation of a world other than patriarchy" (1). It is here that I search for the voices of women who have yet to speak, for the stories that have yet to be told, for the world in which I can be an active and significant part, where I can be subject, where I can have agency--where I can see the reflection of myself in the mirror. This seeking and searching leads me on a journey past Plato and into the silences of outer space.

This search began for me with a realization that the way we describe our world is colored by our experiences and values--by our subjectivity. Research is the way we represent the world in which we live. Traditionally, it is intended to describe how things are--to help us discover and describe our world. According to Lauer and Asher, "Empirical research is the process of developing systematized knowledge gained from observations that are formulated to support insights and generalizations about the phenomena under study. Knowledge develops in empirical fields from the establishment, classification, organization, and interpretation of facts" (7). But feminist researchers and philosophers have questioned this objective attainment of facts. Sandra Harding explains "we have come to understand that what we took to be humanly inclusive problematics, concepts, theories, objective methodologies, and transcendental truths are in fact far less than that. Instead, these products of thought bear the mark of their collective and individual creators, and the creators in turn have been distinctively marked as to gender, class, race, and culture" (The Science Question 15). Harding argues
that traditional research methodologies, while they pretend to be objective, perpetuate patriarchal constructions and representations of the world.

Traditional research methodologies often serve to promote a hidden bias against women because they require that we describe the world as it is without exploring silences, absences, or possibilities. An analysis of the work of two leading feminists in our field, Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, shows how these methodologies can restrict feminist searching. In their book, *Singular Texts/Plural Authors*, these scholars refute the "pervasive commonsense assumption that writing is inherently and necessarily a solitary, individual act" (5). To counter this vision of writers as isolated and solitary figures that has been with us since the Enlightenment, Ede and Lunsford completed an extensive empirical study of writers as collaborators in seven disciplines. The majority of the respondents to their survey questionnaires were male, and because of this, the authors felt compelled to present case studies of five men and one woman, thus offering a representative sample as case studies. According to traditional research standards, they had little choice here because their duty as researchers is to represent the "truth" of their observations. Therefore, the men they choose as representative case studies were older, held higher positions, and were more experienced than the one woman upon whose work they focused.

Ede and Lunsford were aware of this unbalanced representation. They use the following disclaimer:

Readers will undoubtedly have noticed, for instance, that there are very
few women in the scenes we have presented, and there are also no minorities. With the exception of the Modern Language Association and the Society for Technical Communications, members of the seven professional associations we studied were, perhaps not surprisingly, predominantly male (75 percent male; 25 percent female). Furthermore, respondents typically were well advanced in their careers. Their perspective is that of leaders, those who set the tone and establish the explicit and implicit protocol for collaborative endeavors. (42)

The above statement, according to traditional empirical research methods, is more than enough to justify and even demand that these authors use men for the majority of their case studies, and the acknowledgement of these biases helps readers see the oppressive ideological structures which this tradition reproduces. Nevertheless, Ede and Lunsford's research silences women and people of color.

I'll state the problem I see here in simple terms: White men dominate the work force now, and because our work is controlled by traditional research methods, white men dominate the pages of our reports. We will talk more about, learn more about, and give more examples of white men because we are still basing our research methods on oppressive and exclusive ideological structures that reproduce hegemony. Women looking for reflections of themselves are left with a single example of a woman who is younger, less experienced, and in a lower political and economic position than the men. Women and men of color are left with no examples at all. Thus, these "objective" research methodologies serve to reproduce not a universal truth, but a patriarchal truth.

3 There is no explanation, however for the absence of people of color in their report, not to mention people of other marginalized groups such as lesbians and gays.
that reflects the desires of those in power. Feminist researchers are working to uncover these biases in "products of thought" in order to reveal biases against those who have not been included in the collective group of creators, in order to create knowledge, and in the process a new world that does not discriminate. To do so, we must create for ourselves an image in the mirror; we must claim an agency, a position as subject, that has been inaccessible to women and other marginalized groups.

Defining Feminist Methodologies

Gesa Kirsch and Joy Ritchie suggest that feminist researchers begin this process by reclaiming the importance of the personal. "[W]e propose that composition researchers theorize their locations by examining their experiences as reflections of ideology and culture, by reinterpreting their own experiences through the eyes of others, and by recognizing their own split selves, their multiple and often unknowable identities" (8). Likewise, Sandra Harding argues that "the best feminist analysis . . . insists that the inquirer her/himself be placed in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter, thereby recovering the entire research process for scrutiny in the results of research" ("Is There a Feminist Method?" 9). Developing a research project based on the personal involves the telling of stories. Feminist research requires a move from describing an object, data, to describing a process of learning to know. In that process we share the information or knowledge that we come to know, but it is not an object; it is a
To engage in feminist research is a complex process that defies in many ways a concrete description. Sandra Harding says that there are not feminist research methodologies. She argues in "Is there a Feminist Method?" that "the preoccupation with method mystifies what have been the most interesting aspects of feminist research process. . . . I think that it is really a different concern that motivates and is expressed through most formulations of the method question: what is it that makes some of the most influential feminist-inspired biological and social science research of recent years so powerful?" (1). Fonow and Cook address this question when they describe four themes that run throughout the feminist research projects collected in their anthology: reflexivity, an action orientation, attention to the affective components of the research, and use of the situation-at-hand. ⁴ To answer Harding's question within the field of rhetoric and composition, I look to successful and influential feminist research projects.

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule's feminist study of women's

₄ Fonow and Cook define reflexivity as "the tendency of feminist to reflect upon, examine critically, and explore analytically the nature of the research project" (2); action orientation is "reflected in the statement of purpose, topic selection, theoretical orientation, choice of method, view of human nature, and definitions of the researcher's roles" (5); attention to the affective components of research is the "refusal to ignore the emotional dimension of the conduct of inquiry" (9); and use of the situation at hand reflects "an emphasis on creativity, spontaneity, and improvisation in the selection of both topic and method. Illustrations of these themes run throughout the research projects collected in this anthology.
psychological development has been one of the more influential in our field. Their research directly challenges the once universally applied study carried out by William Perry who developed a model of "human" development that was based almost entirely on white male students at Harvard. Belenky et al. explain:

While a few women were included in Perry's original study as subjects, only the interviews with men were used in illustrating and validating his scheme on intellectual and ethical development. Later, when Perry assessed the women's development with the aid of his map, the women were found to conform with the patterns that had been observed in the male data. While this strategy enabled the researchers to see what women might have in common with men, it was poorly designed to uncover those themes that might be more prominent among women. (9)

Refuting the belief that male experiences are universal, Belenky et al.'s study focuses on women. These researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 135 women within formal educational settings about their experiences as women. They used a case-study approach because they "wanted to hear what the women had to say in their own terms rather than test their own preconceived hypotheses" and explored five perspectives from which women "viewed reality and drew conclusions about truth, knowledge, and authority": silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge (11, 3). In their analysis these authors argue that women were ignored in the development of psychological theory; they compare the works of Carol Gilligan and William Perry to show two opposing sides of psychological development of women and men. In addition, they contextually analyze the women's interviews in order to describe how the women in their study gain "voice" and construct
Belenky et al. challenge patriarchal "truth" by developing a research project that focuses on women, but perhaps more importantly, their research is also for women. They work to uncover ways in which "institutions devoted to human development . . . hinder women's development" and based on their results argue for changes within these institutions that provide "strong support in moving toward freedom" (4, 213). In their results they discuss how women learn and suggest ways of teaching that are more appropriate for women. For example, "For women, confirmation and community are prerequisites rather than consequences of development" (194). And they suggest ways of teaching that are "connected" rather than individualistic and competitive. Focusing on research for and about women, feminist researchers like Belenky et al. are concerned with women's lives, focusing on the "mundane," everyday life experiences of women that have too long gone unnoticed within the academy. Belenky et al. exemplify this characteristic in their study by including diverse participants. Rather than restrict their study of women in educational settings to the academy, they included students in what they called "invisibility colleges"—human service agencies supporting women in parenting their children" (12).

Valuable characteristics of feminist research can be found within rhetoric and composition in Gesa Kirsch's study, *Women Writing the Academy*. Kirsch's study of women writers in the academy is also about and for women; she explores the difficulties and exposes the problems women face as they write in various disciplines. Kirsch's
purpose is to "examine how the women [she] interviewed describe their research and writing experiences, to show the diversity and range of their scholarship, and to explore their ways of establishing authority and addressing audiences" (xvii). By doing so, she hopes to describe the position and subjectivity of women in the academy. She observes that women in tenure-track positions are relatively new to the academy and gives an extensive review of the research in this area, which suggests that the academy currently and historically reflects a male-centered culture. She explores conflicts between womanhood and scholarship: Women can be scholars but they must forfeit their femininity and family life because the role of caretaker conflicts with that of academic. Because of this, women face greater obstacles than men. Kirsch shows that women are being judged against a male standard in the academy. To counter this, women's studies scholars are engaging in at least three types of scholarship: recovering and reevaluating women's contributions, studying women's own cultures and values, and reexamining basic concepts and theories to uncover "blind spots."5 All of this points to the reality that women have to fight for a position in the academy and then have to redefine that position for themselves. Through her description of women writing the academy, Kirsch provides active and successful models of women who are recreating their world.

5 Patricia Bizzell discusses these three types of feminist scholarship within the history of rhetoric. She suggests feminist scholars in this field can read traditional texts resistantly, search for women who have done work similar to men who are currently in the canon, and look outside the canon for women who worked with alternative discourses ("Opportunities" 51).
As a feminist researcher, Kirsch collaborates with her participants to gain additional insights. Her interviews became conversations in which both researcher and participant engage in searching. She also briefly describes layers of narration in self-representations that can be used to understand the contexts of women's lives. Kirsch problematizes the drawing of conclusions based on feminist research in this area because conclusions demand unity, coherence, and summary rather than fragmented and diverse thoughts. This example of feminist research shows the complexities that arise when scholars abandon traditional methodologies and attempt to resist closure. Kirsch exemplifies the process of searching—we learn as we travel, but the knowledge that we develop has multiple explanations, multiple meanings, and shifting significance. It is not "truth." It is rather a perspective.

Belenky et al. and Kirsch work toward the emancipation of women, the liberation of women from patriarchal oppression, by developing research methodologies that allow them to examine the silences, absences, problems, and conflicts of women. They design research studies about women that attempt to create creative alternatives to the patriarchal world in which we live. They focus on everyday experiences of women in their personal and public lives, and they collaborate with each other and their participants to develop more complex and comprehensive analyses of their observations. They situate themselves by articulating and drawing upon their personal experiences that have led them to view the world in a particular way; and they resist essentializing the concerns of women, resist silencing multiple and alternative interpretations. These are the
characteristics that I admire, that have produced valuable results for me as a feminist searcher in rhetoric and composition. And therefore, these are the characteristics I attempt to develop in my own study of female writing teachers, a project I have worked on in collaboration with Tilly Warnock and Julie Jung, two of my colleagues at the University of Arizona.

The process of this (re)searching has not been easy, nor has it always been comfortable. There are dangers working within a resistant feminist tradition. The most seemingly easy-to-follow advice from feminist theorists regarding research methodologies can lead to conflict and confusion. An example is the collaborative nature of my own research project. While the generation and implementation of the study I will discuss in this dissertation grew out of a collaborative effort, none of us could be expected to either agree with the others' perspectives at all times, nor be able to represent those varying perspectives. I am wary as I write of silencing my colleagues by developing my own interpretations of our process, our intentions, our results. I will seek to include these other voices here, comments and suggestions from my collaborators that will help me develop a broader understanding of the work we have done and continue to do.

A second conflict is the suggestion to ground feminist research in the personal. As I attempt to do so here, I am often reminded by my readers that a "personal" interpretation involves representing the actions, words, and even emotions of other people. As I reflect on the experiences that led me to this project, I am tempted to relate
these events as Truth because they were my experience. Yet they were also the experiences of others, some of whom may strongly disagree with my representations. Ignoring these experiences, silencing them in this text would be the easiest way out of this conflict—but to do so would be to silence those very aspects of research and inquiry that I want to reclaim here. I feel I have fallen quite quickly into the relativist dilemma discussed by Phyllis Ryder in "I'm OK, You're (Not) OK: Teaching in a World of Relativism." She says, "if everyone is right then no one can take action based on his or her own beliefs without compromising the respect that should be accorded others" (512).

Ryder discusses three strategies for taking students beyond the relativist position:

1. a hierarchical view of epistemological stances, where the socially-constructed view is seen as superior and people who do not hold this view are seen as ignorant; 2. a claim for the importance of personal experience, with an assumption that a true understanding of one's personal experiences will lead to a political awareness and political stance; 3. arguments of morality—that is, an assertion that the socially-constructed view of knowledge is more ethical than other views and that "proper" action should be based on concerns for all humanity. (513)

She argues that the first two offer us little hope for moving beyond relativism in an ethical way; the first is a tactic often used by those in power to continue oppressive power structures, and the second is only useful for those who are already committed to the construction of a more just society. The third strategy, based on what Ryder calls "liberatory morality," a claim to morality which proposes epistemological positions and actions based on a concern for others and a self-reflexive analysis of whose interests are being served," offers us a way to take action based on an analysis of power relations that
helps clarify who benefits from the actions we take. In this dissertation, I rely on this epistemological position, grounded in feminist standpoint theory. My answer to the question "Who benefits here?" is hopefully women and men in the field of rhetoric and composition who are committed to addressing issues of sexist aggression.

I will begin in chapter two by exploring the politics of the personal and examining possibilities for incorporating personal experience in academic research. I attempt to recapitulate my personal experiences that led to my involvement in this project with sensitivity toward various and multiple interpretations, while at the same time claiming my own interpretations of these experiences. By doing so, I hope to reclaim the personal and situate my interpretations of this process and the results it has produced and continues to produce even as I inscribe it here. I also hope to define possibilities for incorporating the personal within feminist research through the use of alternative forms of discourse.

In chapter three I will describe the evolution of our study, which began with a silence we heard as we listened to each other in conversation about teaching and program administration--the voices of female writing teachers discussing in a public forum gender-specific problems they faced in the writing classroom and gender-related conflicts that challenge their authority as teachers. As I do so, I will also discuss the methodological considerations feminist researchers in rhetoric and composition must explore when designing research that is intended to be both for and about women.

In chapter four I investigate the appropriateness of using quantitative methods for
feminist research and explore the controversy surrounding this issue. I then analyze the quantitative data we received from female writing teachers who responded to our survey and examine a specific context in which this type of analysis is useful for work in rhetoric and composition. In chapter five I analyze the qualitative data we received from our respondents and attempt to further our understanding of gender-specific problems by analyzing the stories reported to us. This chapter concludes with a discussion of how these conflicts have affected the teaching strategies of the women in our survey. In the final chapter, I will discuss the implications our research has for current composition pedagogical theory and argue for the use of feminist research methods in order to further our theoretical understanding of how gender and other social constructions of difference play out in the writing classroom.
CHAPTER 2
BREAKING THE SILENCE: LISTENING TO OURSELVES

This [feminist] perspective on societal reality is, however, only possible when we radically think through our own involvement, i.e. when we comprehend that the "small," ever-different relationships in which we experience exploitation and oppression (or release) are linked with the "big" material and historical (and not just ideological) relationships. -- Maria Mies (65)

What exactly does it mean to "position" oneself? or to include an element of "reflexivity" in research? or to begin with the "personal?" These three terms, discussed in chapter one, are used by feminist theorists to suggest alternative ways to conceive of the self within the research process. While nearly every text on feminist research methodologies includes a discussion of this phenomena, we have very few examples, and I would argue no satisfactory ones within our field, of how to do it. In a recent roundtable discussion at the University of Arizona, Jaqueline Jones Royster, speaking of her research on Black women in the nineteenth century, asked, "Where and when do I put myself in a story that others have left me out of?" This is the same question I address here: Where and when can feminist researchers put themselves into a story that others have left them out of?

In Kirsch's study that I examine in chapter one, she says "The narrative of the research study is . . . shaped by my current interest, my readings of relevant literature, my understanding of related theories, my personal history, and my experiences as a woman
in the academy" (39). Yet we see little of these things in the pages of her report. I wonder, because I am intensely interested, what history? what experiences? While attempting to make her research more inclusive of the personal, Kirsch's attempt to do so is limited, and I assume it is so because she is working within a new tradition for which there are few, if any, models. Some researchers try to incorporate the personal by including a brief discussion of themselves such as: I am white middle-class woman. . . . But again, how informative is this brief information? Is there some universal white or middle-class or female experience that we can draw upon in interpreting the influence of these factors on a person's research?

When I say I am a woman, does this term explain how my experiences shape how I see the world? Will readers hear within this term the rape of a twelve-year old girl who had no language with which to express her situation, no understanding of the social forces that placed her and many others like her at the mercy of sexist aggression? Will they hear the disillusionment of a young woman's dream of science, which shriveled because of the complete absence of women in every text, every lecture, every classroom? Will they understand how these experiences fuel my anger at sexist aggression?

Of course, there are some common assumptions we can make about such categorical descriptions. But do they give us insight into how the personal is connected with
research in any specific context? My suggestion is that they do not. And yet, we have just begun thinking of alternative ways in which we can connect these seemingly diverse aspects of ourselves--our histories, our experiences, our beliefs--into our academic work and, more specifically, into empirical research in our field.

The Silence of Science

Women who are interested in theorizing the personal within empirical research are working within a traditional double silence. First, the use of personal experience, regardless of gender, has been quite unabashedly forbidden for so many years within the traditional boundaries of empirical research. In fact, one of the more obvious

6 I use the term personal to represent the experiences in our lives that lead us to act in specific ways with regard to research. In other words, the personal includes our private experiences, but also incorporates our public and political experiences that shape the way we understand our world and ourselves. In many ways, my construction of personal resembles Walter R. Fisher's "narrative paradigm" that Fisher says can be "considered a dialectical synthesis of two traditional strands in the history of rhetoric: the argumentative, persuasive theme and the literary, aesthetic theme" (375). He uses the term paradigm to "refer to a representation designed to formalize the structure of a component of experience and to direct understanding and inquiry into the nature and functions of that experience--in this instance, the experience of human communication" (376). And yet, I resist using Fisher's terminology because, as Susan Miller argues, the term paradigm is used by compositionists to associate themselves with the "harder disciplines" (140). She contends that the use of paradigm "extends and preserves the anxiety about status that has been associated with English studies, both in regard to the perfection of elitist texts and as a professional concern about identity in relations to older, 'harder' disciplines" (140).
characteristics of modern science, on which we base our models of "perfect" empirical research, has been objectivity—the apparent absence of any personal connection or "bias." This goal of objectivity is expressed in the language used for empirical research reports, which traditionally require the passive voice construction so as to eliminate any indication that a researcher was in some way involved in the process other than simply as an observer of phenomena. Feminist philosopher Lorraine Code says that the "dominant epistemologies of modernity with their Enlightenment legacy and later infusion with positivist-empiricist principles, have defined themselves around ideals of pure objectivity and value-neutrality" (16). This leads, according to Code, to a philosophy of knowing in which the knower can achieve a "view from nowhere," which most often, perhaps not coincidentally, represents the position of the privileged and disregards "variable constructions of reality" and "different perspectives on the world" (16, 39).

Making a similar argument, Harding says, "The common view (or dogma) is that

Harding explains that physics, because it is free from all human considerations, has been held as the model for empirical research, and most other fields judge the effectiveness of their studies on how closely they can approximate the "objectivism" found in physics research. And she argues that the social sciences cannot use physics as a model because human considerations are much more complex than physical ones and because the "concepts and hypotheses of physics require acts of social interpretation no less than do those in the social sciences" (The Science Question 44-45). Lorraine Code says that "Physical science is represented as the site of ideal, controlled, and objective knowing at its best; its practitioners are held to be knowers par excellence" (17). She argues that physical science cannot be held as a model for social science because the human concerns within the social sciences are much more complex than those within the physical sciences.
science's uniqueness is to be found in its method for acquiring reliable descriptions and explanations of nature's regularities and their underlying causes. Authors of science texts write about the importance of value-free observation as the test of beliefs, and especially about collecting observations through 'experimental methods'" (The Science Question 44). She goes on to argue that the paradigm of science has permeated our ideals about objectivity and value-free observations and that such notions must be countered within both the sciences and social sciences if we are to uncover the hidden biases within them. In other words, while situated knowledges have been excluded from scientific and empirical research, Harding argues that we must reclaim this aspect of our work by making explicit our personal biases and views of the world that have led us into a particular line of inquiry.

These tendencies within the sciences have been imported into rhetoric and composition studies as our field has struggled to gain legitimacy within the academy. Stephen North's survey of contemporary scholarship in composition, for example, outlines a hierarchy of "methodological communities" that positions researchers who adopt "modes of inquiry geared to lead them to more 'scientific' knowledge" at the top of the totem pole (1, 135). Janice M. Lauer analyzes three other accounts of composition's disciplinary formation in her article that questions "The Feminization of Rhetoric and Composition Studies?" All three accounts, which include Phillips, Greenberg, and Gibson's "College Composition and Communication: Chronicling a Discipline's Genesis," Nystrand, Green, and Wiemelt's "Where Did Composition Studies Come From?: An
Intellectual History," and Susan Miller's *Textual Carnivals*, suggest that composition scholars have most successfully claimed their academic space by associating themselves with the "harder" disciplines and by drawing on "scientific" lines of inquiry. As we aligned ourselves with science in order to gain status, we also aligned ourselves with "scientism" and "objectivism," importing methodologies from the sciences and the oppressive baggage that accompanies them, such as the silencing of the personal and of women's concerns.  

The Silence of (His)story

Women who are interested in theorizing the personal within empirical research are also working within the traditional silence of women's concerns from those spaces where studies of humanity--the personal--were common. As Simone de Beauvoir says, "[Men] enjoy a traditional prestige that the education of children tends in every way to support, for the present enshrines the past--and in the past all history has been made by men. At the present time, when women are beginning to take part in the affairs of the world, it is still a world that belongs to men. . . ." (xxiv). It is not necessary here to list the ways in which women have been excluded from academic study; nor is it my purpose to

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8 Because an extensive investigation of patriarchal ideologies in the sciences is beyond my scope here, I refer readers to the work of Sandra Harding, Nancy Hartsock, and Donna Haraway.
to discuss how they have been positioned as other within our field because there is a growing body of scholarship that traces these exclusionary practices. (See Feminine Principles and Women's Experience in American Composition and Rhetoric and Reclaiming Rhetorica.) I will, however, repeat Elizabeth Flynn's argument that "much of the theoretical work upon which composition theory has been built was done by men . . . and often that work has been appropriated by women composition specialists without a critique of its androcentrism" (88). While we have seen a recent recovery of the personal with rhetoric and composition studies, Flynn's own "Composing as a Woman" for example, these are isolated incidents that transgress accepted forms of scholarship, particularly with respect to empirical research. Kirsch and Ritchie point out that "we have been taught to devalue our own experiences as researchers and writers, our relationships with students and other teachers, our own histories as sources for research and scholarship. As a result, we have often stripped the personal from our writing and our research" (8). Feminist theorists are just now beginning to reclaim women's personal concerns for study within the academy. Within rhetoric and composition studies, feminist researchers like Kirsch and Ritchie are arguing for methodologies that are "rigorously reflexive" and include a "politics of location [that] allows us to claim the legitimacy of our experience" (9). But it has been a long and difficult process because the silencing of women's concerns has such a strong historical precedent. To better understand the extent of this exclusion, we can examine how women's narratives, even their stories about themselves, have historically been controlled by patriarchal
Christine Moneera Laennec discusses one such example in the works of Christine de Pizan (ca. 1365-1430). She explains that de Pizan, while able to claim the position of "author," was unable to claim a position of "authority" in her texts: "Only by emphasizing her own lack of authority and her dependence on the knowledge of others does she have a chance of being taken seriously" (39). Laennec analyzes de Pizan's work to show that she is "undertaking a polemic against the misogynist tradition," but in her texts, she often undermines her own intentions by "feigning intellectual weakness" and "excusing herself for speaking" (41, 39). Laennec ponders the existence of an alternative approach available to de Pizan when she says, "One has to wonder, therefore, whether there is an alternative open to her, other than that of remaining silent" (44). And indeed, I think women are often left with this choice between using masculinist discourse and remaining silent. In de Pizan's case, she was working within a culture that had great difficulty accepting the author-ity of a woman writing. In contemporary research, we are working within a tradition that has for too long excluded both our voices and our concerns.9

9 An example of this current exclusion can be seen by glancing at the table of contents of Research in the Teaching of English. While some of the reports do include analyses of gender difference, not one article in 1995 focuses specifically on women.
Autobiographical Voices

I focus here on the genre of autobiography because I want to suggest that feminist researchers may draw on this form of self-revelation in order to incorporate the personal into empirical research. Michael Fischer makes a similar argument for the use of autobiography in anthropology when he says:

[A]utobiography is a privileged genre where the reflexivity of human storytelling is foregrounded. Autobiography is not only a good place to observe how art follows life and life art, but also a vehicle to reflect on the discovery and construction processes of anthropology itself, and of science and knowledge in general, including the human sciences and cultural products studied under the rubric of the humanities. (83)

I want to argue for the importance of telling our stories about the research process because it is within that process, and not outside of it, that knowledge is produced. We may, in fact, use composition's recent shift in emphasis from product to process as a model for the way we construct our studies. A focus on process within research reports will demand that the subjectivity of the researcher, the "I," be given consideration. This narrative format will open up the research process to critique so that we can begin to see more clearly the social construction of the research methodologies we employ. We will be able to understand, in other words, more than just the results but also the social, personal, and intellectual processes which led there. And most important, we will incorporate our personal histories, beliefs, goals, and biases within the research report itself.
To argue for the inclusion of self-disclosure in the form of autobiographical research reports is to assume, however, that there is a "self" that can be situated, positioned within the text, and to do so within a postmodern climate is precarious. The postmodern theories, which I credit in chapter one with opening spaces for discourses of resistance, have also been used to negate the experiences of women, for if there is no longer "Truth," then how can a woman claim the truth of her experiences for the purposes of locating herself within the research process?

I have tried and continue to try to write the story of my experiences that led to the study I will describe in later chapters. It is a story of fear and anger and frustration and was originally written as a narrative. But readers cautioned me--you are presenting this story as true, and it is only your interpretation; I may have a very different understanding of these events--My interpretation yes, my experience that I continue to re-create so that the pain is justified, explained. Is there no truth that I can claim about what happened to me?

This "relativist" dilemma is addressed by Harding when she says:

Historically, relativism appears as an intellectual possibility, and as a "problem," only for dominating groups at the point where the hegemony (the universality) of their views is being challenged. As a modern intellectual position, it emerged in the belated recognition by nineteenth-century Europeans that the apparently

10See Diana Fuss for an extended discussion of this debate.
bizarre beliefs and behaviors of non-Europeans had a rationality or logic of their
own. . . . The point here is that relativism is not a problem originating in, or
justifiable in terms of, women's experiences or feminist agendas. *It is
fundamentally a sexist response that attempts to preserve the legitimacy of
androcentric claims in the face of contrary evidence.* ("Is There a Feminist
Method? 10, emphasis mine)

Relying on feminist standpoint theory of epistemology, Harding argues that women's
viewpoints, and those of men who work to see the world from a less-privileged position,
are less "false" or less "distorted" because they have experienced the oppression of
patriarchal hegemony and are thus more able to see beyond the ideological blinders of
domination (*Feminism and Methodology* 185). Likewise, Nancy Hartsock argues for the
acceptance of feminist standpoint theory, grounding her work in the Marxist critique of
class domination. She argues that "The power of Marixian critique of class domination
stands as an implicit suggestion that feminists should consider the advantages of
adopting a historical materialist approach to understanding phallocratic domination"
(157-58). 11 Drawing on Marx's understanding of the proletariat standpoint, Hartsock
outlines the following principles of feminist standpoint theory:

> A standpoint is not simply an interested position (interpreted as bias) but is
interested in a sense of being engaged. . . . A standpoint . . . carries with it the
contention that there are some perspectives on society from which, however well-
intentioned one may be, the real relations of humans with each other and with the

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The appropriateness of Marixian critique for feminist theorists has been heavily debated
and is by no means unequivocally accepted. This debate is too extensive to provide an
adequate discussion here, but those interested can refer to both Hartsock's and Harding's
work.
natural world are not visible. This contention should be sorted into a number of distinct epistemological and political claims: (1) Material life not only structures but sets limits on the understanding of social relations. (2) If material life is structured in fundamentally opposing ways for two different groups, one can expect that the vision of each will represent an inversion of the other, and in systems of domination the vision available to the rulers will be both partial and perverse. (3) The vision of the ruling class (or gender) structures the material relations in which all parties are forced to participate, and therefore cannot be dismissed as simply false. (4) In consequence, the vision available to the oppressed group must be struggled for and represents an achievement which requires both science to see beneath the surface of the social relations in which all are forced to participate, and the education which can only grow from struggle to change those relations. (5) As an engaged vision, the understanding of the oppressed, the adoption of a standpoint exposes the real relations among human beings as inhuman, points beyond the present, and carries a historically liberatory role. (159-60)

Feminist standpoint suggests that we might begin the process of locating the personal within the research process by exploring our own positions and viewpoints on the subject matter involved. And to do so, we must begin with explanations of how and why we, in our own understanding, came to the position in which we are located. Thus our focus expands from being on the results of empirical investigation alone to include the process. In other words, we focus not simply on what we know but how we came to know or believe as we do. In doing so, we clarify and justify our own positions, while at the same time leaving room for multiple interpretations, or what Harding calls "contrary hypotheses about the influence of the researcher's presence on her/his analysis" ("Is There a Feminist Method?" 9). She argues that "introducing this 'subjective' element into the analysis in fact increases the objectivity of the research and decreases the 'objectivism' which hides this kind of evidence from the public" (9). Yet Harding's suggestion for
introducing the subjective element is somewhat limited. She says, "This does not mean that the first half of a research report should engage in soul searching (though a little soul searching by researchers now and then can't be bad!). Instead ... we are often explicitly told by the researcher what her/his gender, race, class, culture is" (9).

While I agree that research might not benefit from extensive "soul searching," I do think, as I suggest above, that a statement of a person's race, class, etc., is less effective than an in-depth investigation of the research process and the contexts in which a study developed. In other words, I suggest that feminist researchers infuse their reports with autobiographical accounts that allow readers to see more than the results, that allows them to see, understand, and question the process by which those results were obtained. To do so, however, we must also reinvent the textual format of research reports.

(Re)Visioning Texts

Carolyn Heilbrun, discussing the history of women's narratives, comments on the different venues used by women to express their real histories. She says, "[women's] letters and diaries are usually different, reflecting ambitions and struggles in the public sphere; in their published autobiographies, however, they portray themselves as intuitive, nurturing, passive, but never--in spite of contrary evidence of their accomplishments--as managerial" (24). Heilbrun reminds us that women throughout history have often found
it difficult to tell their stories within traditional forms of public discourse, and thus used more private forms of letters, journals, and diaries to express themselves. Because research reports are a form of public discourse that exclude personal concerns, we must explore alternatives to this form similar to the "diverse discourses" that Lillian Bridwell-Bowles defines as "patterns of writing that allows for multiple truths . . . " (44).

Experimenting with the form of our language, the shape of our texts, and connections between our selves and the words we write can allow for the possibility of more inclusive forms of research reports that break the boundaries of traditional research that have for so long excluded both women's concerns and the personal in general. In addition to allowing marginalized groups to reclaim their own subjectivities, locating the personal within the research process can help those in privileged groups interrogate how their positions are constructed by dominate ideology. Lorraine Code says, "circumstances [of the privileged group] enable them to believe that they are materially and even affectively autonomous and to imagine that they are nowhere or everywhere, even as they occupy an unmarked position of privilege" (21). Thus, the research principles I outline here are equally important for those in privileged and in less-privileged positions.

Ellen Cushman's recent investigation of the "Rhetorician as an Agent of Social Change," which focuses on the activist potential of ethnographic research in rhetoric and composition, exemplifies the textual re-vision I argue for here. Cushman uses a "self-reflexive rhetoric" to describe her "role as a participant observer in a predominately
Black (their term) neighborhood in a city in upstate New York" (7). In order to develop this self-reflexive rhetoric, Cushman attempts to "turn our work as scholars inside out, upside down, and back in upon itself" and to do so, she plays with form, ignoring to some extent the traditional boundaries of academic articles by using extensive footnotes to reflect on her research and writing processes, endnotes to "include the theorists [she] find[s] most useful in reflecting on [her] argument," and appendices to articulate her anger at current trends in our field without jeopardizing the appropriateness of her scholarship for an academic forum (8). This format allows Cushman to create what she calls a "hall of mirrors" that allow her to incorporate multiple voices, including various manifestations of her own (8).

Cushman's article provides a model for the way rhetoricians can use altered forms of written discourse to incorporate personal explorations of scholarship that have been silenced in traditional texts. Yet, as writers of these personal explorations of the research process, it is important that we caution our readers about our limited subjectivities. Especially when we are writing from positions of privilege, we must continue to remind both ourselves and our readers that we are presenting not a Truth, but a limited, partial, and subjective truth. But writing is only a part of the process of communication, and for feminist research to transcend the claims of master narratives, I argue we must also learn to read them differently.

*On Monday I returned the papers at the end of class and proceeded to my office*
hours. No one else was around; the office was empty and still; through the open office door I could hear the sounds of students shuffling into classes. I sat at the desk with my back to door when I heard the door close. I did not have time to turn around when I saw an arm reach over my shoulder and thrust a few rumpled sheets of paper on the desk in front of me.

"What do you expect me to do with this?" Shawn's words were strong and angry.

I stood and turned to face him. "Excuse me?"

"What am supposed to do with this?" He asked again, his voice loud and demanding, his face flushed with anger.

I was shocked and couldn't think of what to say. I stared at him. He moved next to me and pointed at his paper that I had recently returned. After a few moments of silence I said, "I don't think we can do anything with this until you calm down." With that, I grabbed my bag and left him there in my office. I was afraid to stay with him and wasn't sure I could make him leave. Walking quickly to my teaching advisor's office, I thought about the past few weeks. What had I done to make him think he could talk to me like that? I was his teacher! What was I going to do? Memories of other students faded. The conversations after class, students who showed improvement in their writing all faded. All I could think about was my failure.

We are trained to read narrations, like the one above, as if they are true, records of events that, while being open to various interpretations and reactions, are themselves True.
Christopher Ortiz, in discussing the work of Carmen Martin Gaite, says, "we often allow how the text labels itself to affect our reading of it" (37). But when we re-present the past, drawing on our memories and recollections, we are never able to claim that this was exactly how it happened. Author and commentator Andrei Codrescu makes this point when he describes the writing of his autobiography:

Just before the book came out I asked my mother about a certain incident I had labored hard to render accurately. It was about the time she left me with my grandmother, the Baroness, in Alba Iulia. I was five, and the Baroness kept chickens. . . . But my mother, when I asked her about it, said that the Baroness kept pigs! That, furthermore, I was only three when I went to live with her, and that I was only there for one month. I remembered living there for one year. PIGS! I wasn't about to change anything so dear to me, so I let it slide. A year after the book came out, I was visiting my mother . . . , and she said that she felt very sorry that she'd had to leave me with my crazy grandmother and her chickens when I was five years old. But MOTHER, I said. PIGS! WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE PIGS? What pigs? She was annoyed. She denied every having said anything about pigs. It had been chickens all along. (22)

Codrescu comments on his mother's changing memory and says, "people are hard put to remember their true experiences. It's chickens for everybody whether they like it or not" (22). When chickens can replace pigs and pigs replace chickens, how likely are we to capture the true inflection of an angry voice, or how easy to exaggerate the number of tears cried. As readers, then, of autobiographical reports of research, we need to recognize the instability of these narratives as well. Fischer suggests we can "hear and unpack" the "fragmented and collaged" messages in autobiography through deconstructive reading, which he argues is nothing new:

These hermeneutical traditions are located in scriptural-moral discourses
(Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism, Confucianism, etc.) but they also are less-acknowledged tap roots of contemporary literary and philosophical explorations (Freud, Joyce, Gadamer, Levinas, Jabes, Derrida, et al.). The story is that the tablets of Moses had to be broken so they could become humanly usable. The Islamic version is that there are two sets of revelation: the sequence of the Qur'anic text, ordered by metrical length with the longest chapters first . . . and the historical sequence of revelation in fragments over the twenty-three year period of the Prophet's autobiographical prophetic career. In other words, deconstruction is nothing new. (80)

To read autobiographical representations of research is to think critically about the "always-complicated position of the ones who represent themselves" (Gilmore 8). In doing so, readers turn their attention away from the Truth of the representation and focus instead on the relationship between the self-representation, the research process, and the results that grow from and are connected to both.

The following report, written by an "impartial" observer, describes the final conference I had with the student whom I mentioned above. I include this description here for two reasons. First, I credit, in many ways, this incident with drawing my attention to gender-specific problems in the writing classroom because it was the words of this third party that help me understand the complexities involved in these situations. Second, this excerpt invites readers to examine the multiple layers of interpretation and misinterpretation involved in the telling of stories, particularly when one person, me in this case, disagrees with the memory of another, my student.
Although the student apologized for what he called being "abrasive" in his communication with the instructor and admitted, when it was pointed out to him, that he needed to think about what he was saying before he said it, especially to particular audiences, he stated that that was just the way "he is." The conference was a very complicated one, with both instructor and student becoming very agitated at various moments. The student stood up to walk out several times, but I convinced him to stay and to try to work things out. At several points also, it did seem as if the student was willing to work things out and to try to communicate with his instructor in more effective ways concerning his written work, admitting that (1) erasing the teacher's comments, (2) showing his work to another instructor for a "second opinion," (3) not following the process for feedback embedded in the syllabus, and 4) including language in his letter to the instructor (concerning his first essay) that could be construed as sexual harassment, probably closed the door on effective communication.

He didn't seem willing to change his method of communication, though, stating that this was just the way he communicated, that he was very opinionated and expected people to accept this.

In the course of the conference, as the student and instructor reviewed specific incidents of communication problems, despite his apologies and his stated willingness to try to work things out with the instructor, the student made a few more "abrasive" and insulting statements:

(1) When discussing what the student had said in leaving a conference, the student said
that the teacher's version of what he had said was a lie (a "goddamn lie") and called the teacher a liar two or three times.

(2) Concerning the same point, the student said to the instructor: "At some point, you're going to have to meet me outside of class [about this]," pointing his finger at the instructor. When the instructor reacted angrily to this and I pointed out that this was exactly what we had been talking about through the entire conference (thinking about what he says before he says it), the student changed his statement to "I meant we 'should meet."

(3) After he called the instructor a liar, he announced that he was going to be "really offensive and abrasive" and proceeded to be so, stating, "At this point, I have no respect for you as a teacher," which he repeated several times and in various ways (including, "you're the worst teacher I've ever had").

I thought that the student's manner was both condescending to both of us (defining words for us several times and attempting to tell us how we should be and act as instructors) and insulting to the instructor.

* * *

These notes capture the events of that interview, but the report does not indicate the crushing impact it had on me. When he left the room, I collapsed into my teaching advisor's arms, crying uncontrollably. My confidence as a teacher and a woman had
been shattered.

This was the culmination of a semester-long experience that introduced me to gender-specific problems in the writing classroom. But the growth of the research project I will describe in later chapters was much more complex, involving an ever-expanding conversation, which began as hallway "gossip" between another instructor and me.

Collaborative Voices

As I stacked my teaching manual and textbooks on the wooden box I'd brought to serve as a shelf, another new graduate assistant teacher (GAT), Julie Jung, peeked timidly into the room.

"Hi, Julia. Is this your desk?" she asked. She was a tall thin woman with short brown hair cut in a bob, which made her look very young. But I knew from our meetings that she also had taught before at another university. Already we had something in common.

"Yeah, I found this one empty. Are you looking for a space?"

"I guess. I'm assigned to this office but I don't have a desk yet."

"Well, you're welcome to share this one provided you like cows," I said, indicating my wooden wall hanging.
"I don't eat them, so I must like them," she replied. We both laughed; a friendship had begun.

* * *

When my student gave me a note that contained sexually explicit language, disregarded the assignment he was given, and made condescending remarks about my authority in the classroom, I read it with Julie.

She looked at me, and her mouth dropped open. "What is wrong with this guy?" I didn't reply. I didn't know what to say in response to this, so she vocalized my reaction for me. "What is this bullshit? He's refusing to complete the assignment! And this language! Who does this guy think he is? Who does he think he's talking to?"

I can't say for sure how I would have reacted had I read this alone. I was at the time, fairly ignorant when it came to recognizing sexual discrimination or intimidation. I grew up in a house where my brother did the yard work, and my sisters and I cleaned the house. I passively accepted phrases like "Don't worry your pretty little head about it, honey." And my knowledge of women's studies and feminist theory would not begin to develop until the next semester when I would take my first feminist theory course. But Julie's history was different. She had a history of activism, spending a summer in Washington, D.C., canvassing for rape prevention. And she had studied feminist theory at her previous university. So I imagine it was her outrage that gave birth to my own.
One significant aspect of research narrative is the space it opens for the incorporation of the voices of others within these pages. We go a long way toward demystifying the process of feminist empirical research processes when we can discuss the ways in which other people, their experiences, and their suggestions, affect our work. These contributions are often diminished on the acknowledgements page when they should, like the entire process, be given up for evidence of how we construct the studies in which we engage. Fischer identifies autobiography as a genre that encourages the incorporation of multiple experiences when he says "Autobiographical voices are often thought of as deeply singular attempts to inscribe individual identity (1st voice). They are, however, not only mosaic compositions but may often be structured through processes of mirroring and dialogic relations with cross-historical and cross-cultural others and thus may resonate with various sorts of double voicings (2nd voice)" (79).

Throughout the semester new teachers met in small groups to discuss teaching strategies. I shared my frustrations at first, but my silence grew as male colleagues would say, "I don't see what the big deal is," or "I'll come to your class and straighten this out for you." And I refused to open my mouth during large-group meetings. I realized there was a time and a place to talk about "female" teacher problems—and this was not in a formal academic setting. Conversations about teacher harassment were silenced until I met with Julie after school or on the weekends or when and informal group of teachers would stop in the hall to "gossip." The real conversations about
student-to-teacher harassment took place in the basement, on the side-lines.

Julie and I spent hours on the phone, in the hall, in our homes discussing the incidents that defined our own experiences with student sexist aggression. Our conversations led to critical inquiry as we read together feminist texts that supported our interpretations of events and furthered our understandings of the social contexts in which these events took place. Our writing program administrator, Dr. Tilly Warnock, became involved in these conversations on many levels. Together we moved this conversation out of the literal basement, where Julie and I held office hours, and into the main department.

In the following semester, Tilly called an informal meeting for teaching advisors and GATs to discuss what we were now calling gender-specific problems in the writing classroom. She invited the English Department Head to join us. There, both male and female instructors shared stories about conflicts they experienced in class and we began discussing training programs and program policy changes that would help teachers who were faced with these conflicts. One concern expressed was that while these problems happen all the time, very few of them are reported to the administration for various reasons. Many instructors were surprised to hear that the administration, as happened in my case, would actually act on a complaint of this nature.
Our conversation, which had begun between two women, had now grown to include our department, but it remained on the level of "lore." Searching through the literature of our field and of others, we found that gender-specific problems had not yet surfaced on a national/political level, though they were boiling in many classrooms. We therefore agreed to (re)search through empirical methods these conflicts by designing a research project to study gender-specific problems faced by female writing teachers across the country.

Weaving my experiences into these pages opens for me opportunities to explore how the three of us, Tilly, Julie, and myself, came to research project I will describe in the next chapter. It is obviously a one-sided account of these events, and I confess that it is not impartial, nor is it True. But explanations such as this offer us far more information about the research process than the alternative—when we listen to ourselves and to others, when we value the stories we have to tell, we begin to break the silence of objectivism in research.
CHAPTER 3
EXPANDING THE CONVERSATION: THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Troubles with Defining Problems

The three of us began our work to study gender-specific problems faced by female writing teachers as an addition to our other commitments, stealing a few minutes together in between classes and meetings to draft a research proposal that was eventually accepted and funded by the Council of Writing Program Administrators. We began with our observations–our formulation of the problem.

While working together in the University of Arizona writing program, we have become aware of a significant number of gender-specific problems that have arisen in our classrooms and those of our colleagues. At a recent meeting we attended with other graduate assistant teachers (GATs) and the English Department Head, we discussed some potential reasons for these problems: Students are coming to the university with little or no respect for their instructors; the student-centered classroom gives students more power to challenge their instructor's authority (an authority that may be difficult for women in particular to sustain); and the issues dealt with in composition classes are both controversial and subject to personal interpretations. While such subject matter can serve as a springboard for students' individual expression of ideas, some students
cross the boundary between disagreement and harassment when they insult their
instructor and challenge their instructor in a threatening manner. We do not want to
imply that male instructors are free from student harassment. But our society in general
oppresses women and questions their right to occupy a traditionally male role, which, in
this case, is that of university instructor. Thus, these problems are more likely to occur in
women's classrooms, where male cultural authority often clashes with female classroom
authority. This situation is intensified by the fact that many undergraduate composition
classes are taught by GATs who often lack experience and confidence as teachers, and
who may be close in age to their students as well.

This presentation of the "problem" raises some questions that I want to address here. The
first of which is our decision to survey only female writing teachers. Had we expanded
our study to include men as well, our data would allow for comparative analysis between
women's and men's experiences with gender-specific problems. Yet this was not our
intended goal. Because we wanted to develop our understanding of our own experiences
as women in the classroom and within the academy, we decided to concentrate our
efforts on the experiences of women, leaving a comparative analysis for some future
project.

In choosing to study "women" as an essentialist category, we confront the
controversy that surrounds this term. Ann Sitow defines the problem of essentialism in
this way: "a common divide keeps forming in both feminist thought and action between
the need to build the identity "woman" and give it solid political meaning and the need to
tear down the very category "woman" and dismantle its all-too-solid history" (11). Some
feminist scholars, such as bell hooks, argue that the essential category of women erases
important differences of race and class. Mary Childres and bell hooks say, "We are both
fundamentally alienated from many aspects of white middle-class male institutions and
even from white middle-class feminism. We both use a yardstick whittled from early
experience of poverty to measure definitions of oppression and claims of universality"
(62). Claiming a category of women often silences these differences—the different
experiences of women who, in addition to being oppressed because of their gender, also
feel varying forms of oppression including those that are not mentioned above: age,
sexual preference, religion, etc. While I recognize the dissonance between the
experiences of white and black women, and the fact that many differences are often
ignored in feminist inquiry, I also realize that the deconstruction of the essence of woman
leaves women with little practical and political solidarity, for it deconstructs the category
of woman but leaves intact the patriarchal ideologies that have systematically oppressed
women throughout history.12

Diana Fuss argues that "essentialism can be deployed effectively in the service of
both idealist and materialist, progressive and reactionary, mythologizing and resistive

12 Lester Faigley explains how this phenomenon occurs within postmodern theory, which he
claims has not produced a "broad theory of agency that would lead directly from these
critiques to political action" (39).
discourses" (xii) and goes on to investigate possible purposes or functions that essentialism plays in particular discourses. We can see the valuable function of the category "women" in the work of feminist researchers such as Belenky et al. and Gesa Kirsch, which was discussed in chapter one. Like them, I claim an essentialist view of women in order to research the silences of traditional research methods that ignore the concerns of women. As I do so, however, I attempt to remain sensitive to the multiplicity of differences that are present within that category.

Evoking the essentialist term woman often leads to the exclusion of differences other than gender among both women and men within empirical research. These include differences of race, class, ethnicity, physical ability and appearance, and sexual orientation. Lynn Cannon, Elizabeth Higginbotham, and Marianne Leung explain this problem by noting that "the pervasiveness of exclusionary practices produces a cumulative impact on the empirical generalizations that constitute the elements of feminist theory. As a result, the prevailing literature, which seems to identify particular 'social realities,' merely represents White and middle-class experiences. The social realities of other groups, such as minorities and the working classes, become relegated to side issues in the field" (116). While we attempted to obtain data that would provide insight into the ways in which gender and race interact in teacher-student conflicts, we were unsuccessful, as I will describe later in chapter four. I think this failure can be attributed to the fact that race and other differences were not considered as factors when we formulated our statement of the problem. Neither were issues of class, sexual
preference, or physical ability.

My understanding of the "problem" grew out of my experiences as a white woman in the academy, and yet as a feminist (re)searcher, I have an obligation to challenge and expand upon my limited understanding of race and other differences. While it would be easy to say here that we choose to narrow the scope of our study by focusing specifically on gender differences--recognizing that more research needs to be done in areas of race, class, and other differences--this disclaimer is not adequate. This form of "excuse" merely reproduces the traditions of patriarchal scholarship that have silenced the contributions of women.  

Cannon, Higginbotham, and Leung suggest that "correcting this imbalance in feminist scholarship requires theoretical conceptualizations that include all dimensions of inequality, more complex research designs, and strategies that confront the obstacles to the incorporation of diverse groups of women" (107). This is something that we failed to do when we designed our study. This failure, although very real, was not intended. As I learn more about research methodologies that are inclusive of these important differences, I incorporate them into my work, but bell hooks reminds us of the difficulties inherent in these efforts.

Even though we have clearly named the racism of some privileged white women, we have not talked about the fact that a large part of their inability to deal with race and class had to do with not having a language to articulate what it means to be pained via gender even as you are privileged via race and class. After all these years since the whole question of race came into feminism, we still do not have the language paradigms for white women to be able to express, "this is how I am

See the discussion of Composition in the Rhetorical Tradition, Chapter 1.
privileged" and yet "this is how I am exploited." ("A Conversation about Race and Class" 62-63)

Questioning Questions

Realizing then that these may be potential biases in our research, we continued. But these problems continue to affect my work with this study because we based our research questions on the problem as stated above. The questions we posed in our proposal were: (1) From the perspective of WPAs, what is currently being done to address gender-specific problems in the writing classroom? What is working and how can we build on current policies and practices? (2) From the perspective of female writing instructors, what kind of support do they receive when they are faced with these situations? What would they have administrators do to help alleviate these problems? and (3) Are WPAs and teachers in agreement with how writing programs can best deal with the issue of student harassment? Interestingly enough, our research has yet to answer, or even adequately address any of these questions. I think we underestimated the complexity of even the definition of the terms we are dealing with here, gender-specific problems and student-to-teacher harassment, and thus would have great difficulty trying to answer these questions as stated.

For example, the first question asks what WPAs are doing to address gender-specific problems, but we found that very few WPAs knew any more than we did or had
any more information about them than we did. Instead, we received many pamphlets that
address sexual harassment, certainly a concern of ours, but not our specific focus since
the common conception of sexual harassment issues is that they occur either outside of
the student/teacher relations, i.e., among faculty and staff, or are caused by a teacher.
Our focus on gender-specific problems addresses more subtle conflicts in the classroom
that are the result of gender differences. Thus we received very little information about
what is currently being done to deal with gender-specific problems from the perspective
of WPAs. When I wrote a report of our preliminary results for the WPA conference in
1995, I tried to include a list of suggestions for WPAs but could not find any significant
information in the WPA surveys returned to us. Many people in the audience of that
presentation were eager to hear such suggestions and a lively conversation followed that
presentation that focused on why we had no solutions to offer. While the WPA surveys
do contain rich information, an examination of that perspective is beyond the scope of
my own study because I have decided to concentrate specifically on the experiences of
female writing teachers with the hope that my collaborators and I can continue to
investigate the administrative concerns of dealing with such issues.

Our second question asks what support teachers receive from WPAs and what
additional support they would like to have in the future. Now I see this question as
premature because I have discovered an unforeseen need to analyze the very real
question of whether or not these problems do exist and in what forms they manifest.
Thus, before we can begin to address the original questions that we had posed in our
proposal, we must first investigate the definitions of these terms and the description of
the problems reported to us. I have been both frustrated and surprised at the new
questions I have been led to ask. These questions include: Do gender-specific problems
and student-to-teacher harassment exist? If so, in what contexts do they arise? What are
some possible causes? and How do they affect teaching and learning that takes place in
the writing classroom? While these questions weren't formally stated in our proposal, the
results of our study provide an interesting context in which to investigate them.

Issues of Method

To obtain the information we were seeking, we sent survey packets to 100 writing
programs throughout the United States. These packets included a questionnaire for the
WPA and nine female instructors in that program. The list of 100 universities to which
we eventually sent our survey was compiled from a list of subscribers to the Writing
Program Administrators Council. While this sample is obviously not random and
therefore cannot be used to generalize to a larger population, we were forced to make
this decision based on our limited time and resources. Fonow and Cook argue that "use
of the situation at hand" is a common aspect of feminist research for just this reason.

Exclusionary practices in field settings may limit the access of women
researchers to records, people, or activities; therefore, feminists have to be
particularly resourceful when it comes to getting around these obstacles. . . . The
ability of feminists to transform the situation at hand into a research opportunity
may be a survival mechanism. The under-representation of women in traditional
research institutions and the lack of adequate funds for feminist researchers forces feminist to be very opportunistic in their choice of topic, setting, and method. . . . It may also be the case that those scholars who juggle multiple roles select situations at hand as a way to conserve scarce resources. (12-13)

As teachers, students, scholars, administrators, wives, lovers, mothers, daughters, activists, community organization members—to name a few of our collective obligations—we decided to utilize the mailing list from WPA so that our project might feasibly be completed.¹⁴ We made this decision because we were less interested in developing a generalizable sample as were in hearing what other women across the country thought about the questions and conflicts with which we were struggling.¹⁵ Because so little research has focused on conflicts faced by women writing teachers, we wanted primarily to develop a more comprehensive understanding through which we could formulate better questions for future research.

¹⁴ Designing a random sample of female writing teachers from across the United States would entail first compiling a list of every institution of higher education and then randomly selecting a feasible number. Then it would require a random selection of teachers within each of the chosen institutions. In addition to the time commitment this process would require, the feasibility of compiling a list of teachers within a field that is in constant flux would be nearly impossible.

¹⁵ Our decision to not use a random sample simply means that our results cannot be applied to the entire population of female composition instructors in terms of traditional research methodology. But it in no way jeopardizes the "accuracy" of our results within the population that was included in the study. Because of the generative nature of this initial project, we were more interested in obtaining in-depth information from a small sample than we were in fulfilling the requirements of traditional research methodologies.
The Council of Writing Program Administrators agreed to fund our project, and our brief and hectic meetings continued as we drafted and revised questionnaire for teachers and administrators. In the fall of 1994, we sent surveys to the writing program administrator and nine female teachers in their programs at 100 universities across the United States (see appendix A, letter and survey for writing program administrators, and appendix B, letter and survey for composition teachers). We asked the administrators to distribute the questionnaires randomly among female writing teachers.

Before finalizing our surveys for WPAs and teachers, we circulated them among ourselves and many of our colleagues at the University of Arizona. We asked for feedback from fellow researchers and asked teachers in our program to fill out the survey and then describe their experience in order to help us understand how a teacher might respond to the questions we intended to ask. Our survey asked specific questions about student harassment and requested personal narratives about these situations, their evolution, and their solution. In addition, we asked questions about class size, workload, training, university support, and course content, all of which seemed to connect to the problems we experienced and we assumed other teachers were experiencing. We received the following responses from our colleagues: You need to provide more room; you need to be more specific about what you mean by gender-specific problems; you should limit the time frame--teachers can't spend an hour telling you their history as teachers!; since you are focusing only on women, you should explain why you assume these problems are different for women and men; you should give the WPA room to tell
their story too. As we finalized the surveys, we tried to incorporate these requests with a sensitivity to the overwhelming workload demands that many teachers in our field face. But because we didn't want to impose our own definitions, we needed to leave many ambiguities.

Looking back through my records of our searching, I found a note written by Julie titled "Brainstorm on Survey Questions":

From what we discussed in our proposal, we need data on:

- Size of classroom
- Type of writing classroom
  - course content (maybe ask for names of required texts?)
  - pedagogical philosophy (e.g. "student-centered"--with accompanying definition of what this means to them)
- course level
- Teacher and GAT workloads
- University support (of what?)
- Age of teacher/Average age of students in class
- Teaching experience
- Definition of student to teacher disagreement
- Definition of student to teacher harassment
- Personal experiences

I'm thinking that we'll need some sort of cover letter (actually 2--one for WPA and one for teacher), but maybe we shouldn't define what we mean by "gender-specific" problems so that we can get their definitions--what it means to them. It would be interesting to see if any patterns emerge from their responses. I'm also wondering who should answer these questions: WPA, teacher, or both?

Within this brainstorm, Julie had developed a crucial aspect of our research that changed the direction of our searching.

Based on my own experiences, I had developed a concrete and limited definition of gender-specific problems. They occurred when male students refused to accept the
authority of a female teacher and resulted in student-to-teacher harassment in the form of threats and physical intimidation. But because we decided to resist imposing our own definition, we were to develop a much richer understanding of what these problems are and how they affect teaching and learning in the writing classroom--an understanding that continues to deepened and change for me as I reexamine and reinterpret the stories provided by our respondents. Because gender-specific problems had not been discussed in a public arena, I based my definition solely on my own experiences and those about which I had heard. This is one reason why such conflicts are so difficult to define--they are evaluated by personal interpretation, and what appears to be a gender-specific problem to one person may not seem so to another. A second reason for the ambiguity of this term is that it represents a very general category that can apply to incidents ranging from disruptive student behavior in class to physical assault.

Rather than constrict the complexity of our research by imposing a single definition, which would then limit the multiplicity of our results, we relied on feminist research methodology that suggests researchers collaborate with their participants in designing and interpreting research projects (Fonow and Cook; Spitzack and Carter; Kirsch, "Methodological Pluralism"; Kirsch and Ritchie; and Sullivan). Kirsch says, "Additional insights are gained when researchers and participants interact. Researchers will be less likely to ignore their own cultural, class, and gender biases, and their research designs will include conscious decision-making about what methods are used for what purpose and for whose benefit" (Women Writing the Academy 29). With this in
mind, we asked our respondents to provide their own definition of gender-specific problems and then respond to our questions accordingly. In doing so, we hoped to elicit perspectives that would not have occurred to us and to gain a more comprehensive definition that will prove useful in a search for solutions to these problems.

We asked the following two questions: How would you generally define gender-specific problems in the writing classroom? and How would you define student-to-teacher harassment? Analyzing their responses, we can begin to understand the multiplicity and complexity of these issues and therefore gain a deeper understanding of them. But it is important to point out that the themes I choose to discuss here will inevitably silence those women whose intentions I fail to understand. As the writer of this analysis, I chose to include aspects of these definitions that I see as significant--other readers of these surveys would undoubtedly see others. In addition, I do more here than simply represent what our respondents have said--I interpret their responses, sometimes disagreeing with their implications. I claim the authority to do so with hesitation, with understanding that even my own interpretations have changed/will change and represented one limited perspective.

Defining (in) Terms (of Possibilities)

The responses to our request for definitions highlight the problem I discussed above--defining these conflicts is a function of experience. Of the 235 teacher responses
we received, 51 women either left blank or expressed difficulty in answering one or both of the definition questions. Of these 51, 33 also said they had not experienced gender-specific problems. One woman says, "I don't know—I've never felt the victimizing that I understand others feel. . . . Maybe because I've never felt myself a victim, I haven't become one." Another woman says, "I cannot define such issues—I can only describe my own perceptions." Because, as these women suggest, we define/describe the world from our own unique perspective, many women who said they had not experienced these problems argue that they do not exist at all. One woman says, "Since harassment can only occur from a position of authority, I fail to see how a student can achieve a position of authority over a teacher unless she permits the students to gain control." Another woman says, "I'm not sure about student-to-teacher harassment. Students have so little power in that equation that about all they can do is take up excessive amounts of class time (but I have the power to silence them or even eject them from the class)."

Because some women have not experienced what we called gender-specific problems, they believe that these problems do not, or even cannot, exist. Kevin Davis mentions this dilemma when he argues for the use of phenomenology in composition research. He paraphrases Swingewood as saying "The meaning of things . . . is not inherent in objects, but is actually located in the individual's inner life" (121). Thus, what we know is the result not of some exterior object—in this case gender-specific problems—but the result of experience. While I want to acknowledge here that these problems do not exist for some women, I want at the same time to claim the reality of
these problems for those who have experienced them. In some ways this discussion can be compared to a discussion about date rape. A woman who has never experienced date rape may find it difficult to understand how a friendly and consensual situation between two people can become rape—if a woman agrees to a date, then she is responsible for the consequences. This perception of date rape was common until only very recently. Therefore, I want to acknowledge those women who have not had these experiences and hope that a more fruitful discussion, drawing on the multiple understandings that we gain from varied experience, of what these conflicts are, how they are caused, and what effects they have will develop.

For the purposes of forwarding this understanding, I want to take issue with the quotation above: "I fail to see how a student can achieve a position of authority over a teacher unless she permits the students to gain control." This respondent suggests that students have little or no power to harass, yet the majority of our respondents claimed they had experienced these problems and that they are quite common. I suggest that they can and do occur and that we cannot uniformly blame the teachers who experience them. To do so, we must analyze the reason given here for this response—the unquestioned authority of a teacher and the impossibility of a student gaining authority without the teacher's permission. This issue of authority is a common theme among the

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16See chapter four for statistical analyses of responses.
definitions provided. Almost every definition provided for these two terms indicated that gender-specific problems and student-to-teacher harassment involve issues of authority and respect. One woman says, "Basically, I think that female faculty are perceived as less credible than male faculty . . ." and another says, "[Gender-specific problems are a] lack of respect for the teacher's authority. . . ." The question of authority and respect for female teacher authority, then, becomes a central concern of this project.

Bruce Lincoln traces the history of the term authority to its source in Latin auctorita, "a word used with many different shades of meaning, usually in connection with the capacity to perform a speech act that exerts a force on its hearers greater than that of simple influence, but less of a command" (2). Lincoln's title for chapter six asks an important question in regard to authority that is especially pertinent here: What about the Women? He argues that in classical times, women were denied any form of authority: "In all the materials we have considered, there is only one woman who managed to speak within an authorized and authorizing place. This was Gunnhild:'A small woman to look at, but large in her voice,' according to one description. . . . I [argue] that Gunnhild's large voice might best be understood as a voice of power, not one of law or authority" (90). Lincoln goes on to explain that "As queen, Gunnhild apparently could claim the right to speak" but that her voice was valued only because she had the "reproductive capacities exclusively to the royalty lineage" (91). Lincoln concludes this discussion by saying "With rare exceptions, in the societies and historic periods with which we have been concerned--as in all too many others--women were unable to speak
with authority" (101). This is the history with which women from many cultures are plagued--a history of no access to authority. Feminist researchers in linguistics and sociology continually develop evidence that this history is still a reality.

One example is the work of Jennifer Coates who, in her book *Women, Men and Language*, discusses the causes, and consequences of sex differences in language from a sociolinguistic point of view. She examines the historical reality of men's dominance of language and discusses the fallacy of women's verbosity--women are thought to talk a lot because they are measured against a standard of silence, silence having been defined as synonymous with obedience for women (31-4). Coates' quantitative studies reveal contemporary sex differences in language: Men dominate in mixed-sex conversations; women tend to use more standard language; class is an important factor; women use more cooperative strategies in communication; women and men constitute distinct speech communities. In discussing the causes and consequences of these speech differences, she shows that women learn linguistic skills earlier than men, and while these differences used to be attributed strictly to sex difference, Coates argues that they are results of environment influence. Coates concludes: "in a society where sex/gender is a highly significant category, it is not surprising that language reflects and reinforces such a category" (160). Her work, in addition to the work of feminists from a variety of fields, shows that the problems Lincoln describes in antiquity are still with us today, though perhaps more subtle because women can and do claim authority in many situations including the classroom.
Drawing also in linguistic studies, Evelyn Ashton-Jones argues that collaborative learning theories, such as those defined by Kenneth Bruffee, John Trimber, and Anne Ruggles Gere, are problematic because they do not account for women's less powerful position in mixed-sex conversations. She says, "That gender is indeed a powerfully operative variable in the dynamics of conversation--an integral part of a 'social accounting scheme' in mixed-gender interaction--is the subject of numerous studies . . . " (11). One study utilized in Ashton-Jones analysis is that of Pamela Fishman who argues that "To be identified as female, women are required to look and act in particular ways. Talking is part of this complex behavior. Women must talk like a female talks; they must be available to do what needs to be done in conversation, to do the shitwork and not complain" (99). Fishman's study shows that women shoulder conversational burdens in that they are responsible for maintaining the conversation, showing interest in a man's speech in order to further discourse, and providing supportive response such as "yeahs" and "umms," while men are less likely to do any of these things. Don H. Zimmerman and Candace West found "a similar pattern emerges in another area of conversation studies, which focuses on conversational interruptions and overlaps" (Ashton-Jones 14). West and Zimmerman suggest that interrupting is "a way of 'doing' power in face-to-face interaction, and to the extent that power is implicated in what it means to be a man vis-a-vis a woman, it is a way of 'doing' gender as well" (Ashton-Jones 15). Their study shows that 75 percent of interruptions are initiated by men in mixed-sex conversations, and thus suggests that women are often over powered in verbal discourse (107).
Ashton-Jones uses this analysis to question the assumption that collaborative
groups in composition classrooms can promote equality. Based on these linguistic
studies, men and women in collaborative groups would most likely perpetuate these
linguistic hierarchies. Ashton-Jones says,

The students who engage in such conversations cannot be conflated under the
rubric of student; as women and men, they are gender-differentiated. Ignoring
these issues, then, means that we may be directly instrumental in teaching women
a limited subject position from which to write, not only in encouraging them to
assume "appropriately feminine" voices and stances as they compose--rhetorical
personae that mirror and reproduce the social and political status of women in
society at large--but in unwittingly teaching them to accept their subordinate
place in the social hierarchy of gender. (22)

Obviously, women are at a disadvantage in mixed-sex conversations. But when we talk
about a female teacher, we must also take into account another kind of power, the
institutional power of a teacher. I want to suggest that there is a significance difference
between male and female teacher authority that can be understood through the
decomposition of teacher authority. Sandra Harding says, "Once we begin to theorize
gender--to define gender as an analytic category within which humans think about and
organize their social activity rather than as a natural consequence of sex difference, or
even merely as a social variable assigned to individual people in different ways from
culture to culture--we can begin to appreciate the extent to which gender meanings have
suffused our belief systems, and even such apparently gender-free phenomena as our
architecture and urban planning" (The Science Question in Feminism 17). Once we
begin to see how socially constructed categories of gender can affect even the buildings
in which we live and work, it is easier to see how a position that appears at first to be ungendered can be deconstructed to reveal genered ideology.

The authority maintained by a teacher in the academy is due primarily to a position of the teacher in that institution. This position is dependent upon education, knowledge, experience, etc. But when we gender that teacher, either male or female, and place that teacher in a social situation—with students—then we must realize that the social constructions of gender and cultural interpretations of gendered characteristics affect how teachers maintain authority. In other words, the sexism, racism, homophobia, and other biases that are cultural norms in our society are not left at the classroom door. They are carried in. A student who sees women portrayed in beer commercials as a commodified body, for example, will have certain expectations of, reactions to, and feelings about a female teacher. According to Ashton-Jones:

While it seems reasonable to speculate that these conversation patterns [of male dominance] might be subverted or reversed in situations where a woman clearly holds power—for example, a female employer conversing with a male employee or a female doctor talking to a male patient—this does not seem to be the case. Candace West, for instance, finds that female physicians use language that minimizes status differences, whereas their male counterparts use language that emphasizes the physician-patient hierarchy—in both cases, regardless of the patient's gender. More to the point, however, Helena M. Leet-Pellegrini's examination of gender and expertise as covariates in mixed-sex conversation shows that, even when women hold positions of power, the conversational advantage that men enjoy is not eliminated. In fact, possessing a higher level of expertise than men did simply reinforced women's supportive work in mixed-sex conversation. (15)

Because our culture discriminates against women, commodifies their bodies,
rejects their authority, challenges their rights, and silences their voices, a woman teacher can also be commodified, have her authority and rights challenged and her voice silenced--even by students. Women teachers, while able to draw on the institutional power of teacher authority, are often challenged because of their lack of cultural authority. As Julie, Tilly, and I stated in our proposal, "[O]ur society in general oppresses women and questions their right to occupy a traditionally male role, which, in this case, is that of a university instructor. Thus, these problems are more likely to occur in women's classrooms, where male cultural authority often clashes with female classroom authority." Patricia Bizzell, drawing on the work of political scientist Kathleen B. Jones, argues that "woman have typically been excluded from the public exercise of authority because of the way authority has been defined, as a social practice that resolves ambiguities by erasing conflicts of interest in favor of the dominant social group" ("Praising Folly" 40).

Women, then, being outside of the dominant social group in our patriarchal society, are often "excluded" from positions of authority. And even when attaining a position of authority, such as that of a college instructor, their authority can be challenged. This lack of respect for a female teacher's authority is exhibited in a number of ways in the reports we received. Teachers define students' use of physical, verbal, and written attacks on themselves personally and on women in general. In doing so, they raise another issue that I find in the definitions--the tendency to define these conflicts in terms of the students' intentions or the teachers' responses.
Examples of intentional definitions follow:

"A male student tries to use his gender or size to intimidate a female teacher. . . . Harassment is an activity (intentional behavior) which takes away from a teacher's ability to teach . . . ."

"Any verbal or physical action that is intended to intimidate . . . ."

"Student-to-teacher harassment is the deliberate provocation of a teacher by her student."

Yet some respondents define these problems in terms of the teacher's response:

"Unwelcome inappropriate attention that does not cease as soon as the recipient lets the other party know it is unwelcome.

"G-S problems are situations which unfold in such a way as to make a woman feel sexually uncomfortable or somehow robbed of power . . . [harassment is] verbal or physical behavior that causes the teacher to feel threatened. . . ."

"I would define it as behavior which causes the teacher to feel threatened"

"Most basically, anything that creates discomfort in the classroom, not only for the instructor, but also for other students (particularly women in the class)."[17]

In respect to this difference in definition, I suggest we examine the context of a student-teacher conflict in a rhetorical way--examining the power relationship between speaker and audience. In a situation of student-to-teacher harassment, the student becomes the writer, the speaker, the agent; the teacher becomes the reader, the listener. If we argue that intentions define student-to-teacher harassment, then we are forced in some ways to excuse sexist aggression as ignorance. "I didn't mean to offend you," a student might say,

[17]All emphasis mine.
and the "problem" would cease to exist. But reader response theory has challenged this notion of intention, and I want to use it here to challenge the excuse of ignorance. Using a reader-response perspective, we can say that the student's actions--words, writing, acts--have consequences that are created within the reader. If these acts are offensive, insulting, threatening, etc., they still exist even if the agent did not, or claims to not have intended them. But once again, this perspective leaves us in a quandary--what if I, as a female teacher, feel harassed and the institutional support (i.e., my teaching advisor, the writing program administrator, the dean of students) does not read this situation in the same way I do? I will have little or no support in, for example, having the student removed from my class. Either way we define these problems, as intentional or reactional, a female teacher may very easily be left without any recourse, any support, unless we are able to agree on what exactly inappropriate student behavior is. What we can hope for is compassion and understanding. As a woman/teacher, I can only hope that my reading of a situation that is grounded in the text (the student's actions) will be respected. As an administrator/woman/feminist, I can analyze the reading of a situation in respect to the text and assess the validity of that reading.

What then, is the text? What actions, writings, words from students represent a sexist, gender-biased problem that can/should be read as student-to-teacher harassment? I am far from being able to answer that question. But our research, which asked women to describe gender-specific problems that they have experienced, reaches toward that goal. Because I am a woman who believes she has been harassed by a student, because I
defined this problem based on my emotional response which was grounded in the text of a student's aggressive words and actions, and because I believe our respondents who reported similar experiences—I create here a definition of gender-specific problems that confirms these beliefs. While sexist aggression is often intentional, I choose to define these problems as reactionary, though grounded in the text, and I choose to define the power relationship between students and female teachers in such a way as to include the possibility that student's cultural power or the cultural power of patriarchy can and does conflict in harmful ways with teacher authority.

The above discussion clarifies, hopefully, how I have redefined gender-specific problems based on the responses we received. But I find this term too general to be useful for my purposes here. As I said before, I originally defined gender-specific problems faced by female writing teachers as student-to-teacher harassment. We asked our respondents to define both of these terms, and for most of the women who responded to these questions, gender-specific problems and student-to-teacher harassment were similar. Some women suggested that gender-specific problems are more general, isolated incidents, and are less violent than student-to-teacher harassment. One woman says, "I would define them [gender-specific problems] in the same way as [student-to-teacher harassment], but the differences are usually more subtle and more difficult to define as gender-specific. Sometimes it is only a matter of a look or a word that can clue one in that it's a gender thing." Student-to-teacher harassment, on the other hand, is
a more violent, recurring form of gender-specific problems. Another woman defines student-to-teacher harassment as "patterns of behavior or significantly inappropriate one-time behaviors that reinforce societal patterns of dominance and/or that constitute an obstacle to the productive functioning of the educational process." These women suggest that the relationship between gender-specific problems and student-to-teacher harassment is one of degree, gender-specific problems being less aggressive/offensive than student-to-teacher harassment. One woman explains her definition of gender-specific problems as: "I think that female faculty are perceived as less credible than male faculty, especially if they have relaxed, student-centered teaching styles," and her definition of student-to-teacher harassment as: "I see 'harassment' as an active overture: repeated overt hostility, disruption, etc." This view of the relationship between these two types of conflicts might best be represented on a continuum:

Figure 1 - Gender-specific problems defined by intensity of aggression.
Other respondents suggest that the difference between gender-specific problems and student-to-teacher harassment is categorical. They suggest that *gender-specific problems* is a general category that includes student-teacher conflicts and student-student conflicts. One woman's definition expresses this generality by saying these are "problems where one party violates another party's personal sense of self-worth by verbally or non-verbally attacking or insinuating inappropriate physical conduct." Another woman says, "A problem or situation in a classroom that revolves around gender." Student-to-teacher harassment, then, is a more specific category within the broader one and narrows down this general category in the obvious way of eliminating student-student conflicts. Definitions of this term are limited to those that focus on the teacher/student relationship. So for many respondents, the relationship between gender-specific problems and student-to-teacher harassment can be represented in the following diagram:
Both of the above representations imply a close relationship between gender-specific problems and student-to-teacher harassment. When I began work on this study, my definition of gender-specific problems faced by female writing teacher was student-to-teacher harassment. And while some of our respondents seem to share this interpretation, it is essential, I think, to realize the complexities represented in these two terms.

Based on the definitions we received for gender-specific problems and student-to-teacher harassment, I must redefine and rename my own assumptions about these problems. *Gender-specific problems in the classroom* is too general because it involves
both male and female teachers and aggression against both teachers and students. Even if I narrowed the scope to gender-specific problems faced by female writing teachers, I am still not adequately naming the sexist aggression reported by the teachers in our study. I want to suggest, then, a new term, sexist aggressions against female teachers in the writing classroom, which occurs when students, both male and female, challenge a female teacher's authority because they believe, either consciously or unconsciously, that a woman cannot/should not hold authoritative positions traditionally belonging to men. This includes positions of academic authority that have been historically defined as masculine sites of authority. For purposes of clarification, I will use the term gender-specific problems to refer directly to our survey, since this is the term we used. But I will also use the term sexist aggression, which I think more appropriately defines many of the situations the women who responded to our survey describe. It is within this deeper understanding of these terms that I analyze the responses of female writing teachers.
CHAPTER 4
TALKING NUMBERS: QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS
OF GENDER-SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

The Quantitative/Qualitative Debate

Feminist researchers have for the past decade heavily debated the use of quantitative verses qualitative methods. According to Jayaratne and Stewart,

Much of this debate has concerned the claim that quantitative research techniques--involving the translation of individuals' experience into categories predefined by researchers--distort women's experience and result in a silencing of women's own voices. Advocates of qualitative methods have argued that individual women's understandings, emotions, and actions in the world must be explored in those women's own terms. Defenders of quantitative methods in turn have worried that qualitative methods often include few safeguards against the operation of research biases and that abandonment of all aspects of traditional methodology may carry political and scholarly costs. In addition, some have pointed out that although quantitative methods can be and have been used to distort women's experience, they need not be. Although feminist advocates in this debate have generally embraced qualitative methods, they have expressed a range of views on the on the use of quantitative research. (85)

These feminist research scholars point out that while qualitative methods of descriptive analysis have been unproblematically accepted by the feminist community, quantitative methods are highly suspect. One reason for this suspicion is the historical tradition of quantitative methods to misrepresent women's experience. K. Yllo's critique of a quantitative analysis of domestic violence provides one example of this problem. She
"documents the damage done by research reporting that husbands and wives are equally likely to engage in 'violent acts,' when that research was used as an excuse not to provide services to battered women" (Jayaratne and Stewart 89). This research was later clarified and revealed the "nontrivial fact that there were large sex differences in the tendency to resort to violence in self-defense and in the amount of physical harm inflicted by the violence" (Jayaratne and Stewart 89). Thus, Yllo's work shows how women's experience is often misrepresented and therefore misunderstood as a result of quantitative research that is not grounded in women's experience.

Within the field of rhetoric and composition, we can turn once again the study of collaborative writing by Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede for an example of how the focus on quantitative methodologies is in conflict with feminist principles. While their study incorporated both quantitative and qualitative analysis of their data, their decision to use primarily male case studies and to exclude any discussions of racial or other differences was due to demographics, or numbers involved in their sample. Based on the higher percentage of male respondents, they felt compelled to offer more in-depth analysis of men's collaborative work.18 While there are other examples, I limit my examination of them here partly because critiques of quantitative analysis within feminist discourse are abundant and partly because I want to concentrate on how feminist researchers might reclaim the use of quantitative analysis.

18 See chapter one for a critique of this study.
Many feminists have already begun to reclaim the use of quantitative analysis, arguing that methods are not necessarily biased. Rather, they argue that both quantitative and qualitative research methods can be used to either further women's oppression or women's emancipation depending on the research design and the researcher's sensitivity to women's concerns. Sandra Harding suggests that "feminist researchers use just about any and all methods, in this concrete sense of the term, that traditional androcentric researchers have used. Of course, precisely how they carry out these methods of evidence gathering is often strikingly different" (Is There a Feminist Method? 2).

According to Jayaratne and Stewart:

> The emphasis here is on using methods which can best answer particular research questions, but always using them in ways which are consistent with broad feminist goals and ideology. Thus, the feminist debate in these issues can be seen to have evolved from one defined by opposition to all aspects of mainstream research to an argument for use of a broad range of methods in pursuit of research reflecting feminist values and goals. (91)

These scholars argue that feminists can and should employ a variety of strategies for feminist research projects, including quantitative methods, provided those methods are used to further feminist goals of emancipation—"the eventual end of social and economic conditions that oppress women and the achievement of a free society" (Acker, Barry, and Esseveld 134).

The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods can offer researchers a more comprehensive understanding of women's situations in our society. Drawing on another of Yllo's studies, a 1988 examination of marital rape, we can see how
quantitative analysis provided valuable data when developed in addition to qualitative analysis. In arguing for the use of quantitative methods she says:

[W]e found that a large portion of the marital rape victims had also been sexually abused as children. We cannot discover the extent of the relationship between child sexual abuse and marital rape unless we construct a controlled study... It may be that child sexual abuse is no more common among marital rape victims than among other women. But, only by comparing marital rape victims with nonvictims could we come to any adequate conclusions. (35)

Here Yllo's suggests that quantitative analysis, namely analyses of correlation and variance, can help us understand the relationship between various categories of data.

Another feminist research project that shows the importance of quantitative methods is Pauline Bart, Linda Freeman, and Peter Kimball's study of pornography. These researchers use quantitative analysis to investigate responses to film about pornography, Not a Love Story. Their results show "highly significant differences between the sexes in the predicted direction [that women would be more opposed to pornography than men] on every item" (175). They draw on the results of both quantitative and qualitative analyses to argue that

It is clear that the catharsis model promulgated by prefeminist research is unsatisfactorily [sic]. If pornography indeed resulted in catharsis, then we would have less sexual violence against women because there is more pornography available. Clearly this is not the case. The newer research, discussed above, demonstrates that pornography desensitizes men to violence against women and in fact can be considered prorape propaganda. The merger of sex and violence is exemplified by the fact that men who are 'successful' with women are called 'lady-killers.' (191)

Had these researchers depended purely on qualitative methods, their results would not
have had the impact that they do. In other words, researchers can utilize quantitative methods in certain situations that require the use of convincing "scientific" data. But it is important to see here that these researchers were reading, and we might say in a rhetorical way, their situation, and thus they were able to understand the best strategies to employ in conveying their message.

Andrea Tyler and Diana Boxer's study of cross-cultural perspectives on sexual harassment offers another example of how qualitative methods work in conjunction with quantitative methods to provide a more complete understanding of a research situation. Their study investigates how cross-linguistic and cross-cultural misunderstandings in the classroom can lead to charges of sexual harassment. They designed a study that investigates how students who are native speakers of American English perceive hypothetical classroom-related interactions between students and teaching assistants, and they compared these perceptions with those of international teaching assistants (ITAs). Beginning with a questionnaire, they complied statistical analyses that showed there was little variation between the two. But the in-depth interviews they conducted with a small percentage of their respondents and the qualitative analysis of these interviews reveals "the attitudes towards the acceptability of [a scenario in which an ITA asked a student to lunch] may vary along cultural rather than gender lines, despite statistical findings to the contrary" (my emphasis 121).

The results of this study indicate that quantitative analyses are important in analyzing issues of sexual harassment, but that these analyses must be combined with
qualitative interpretations in order to avoid misperceptions. Like these researchers, I draw on both qualitative and quantitative methods to develop my research because of the situation in which this research project developed and with a consideration of the needs and concerns of my audience.

Examining the Situation

This study, being partially funded by the Council of Writing Program administrators, was intended to encourage dialogue between writing program administrators and female writing teachers. My decision to develop statistical analyses was an effort to produce quantitative data that would be useful in arguing for greater attention to these problems in program administration, teacher training, and student conduct policies that can help teachers both negotiate and overcome these conflicts. In other words, I see the purpose of this analysis as consciousness-raising, targeted toward both WPAs and teachers who may tend to underestimate the scope of these problems. I base this conclusion on my own experiences, and those of the other researchers involved

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I have drawn upon examples of quantitative feminist research outside the field of rhetoric and composition simply because I've found no examples of feminist research projects in our field that utilize quantitative methods. This may be due in part to the tendency for feminist researchers to mistrust quantitative methods, certainly a justifiable opinion based on the ways in which quantitative research has traditional excluded women's concerns. But I want to suggest that these methods can be extremely valuable for future feminist studies in rhetoric and composition.
in this project. That is, while we often heard stories of gender-specific problems and are therefore aware that they exist, we had no idea how prominent these experiences were in the lives of other women. This is due in part to the fact that gender-specific problems, as I discussed in chapter two, are less often discussed in public forums and more often discussed privately among women.

WPAs, we assumed when we began this study, had heard various versions of gender-specific problems, but had not dealt with these issues in a public forum, teacher training sessions, for example, or on a departmental or scholarly level. To introduce this discussion in that wider arena, it is important to first convince WPAs and other scholars involved with composition pedagogy, that these problems are a wide-spread concern of a large majority of female writing teachers. Thus, my decision to utilize quantitative methods in addition to qualitative ones was grounded in my understanding of this particular audience, and the most appropriate means of persuasion in this situation. I will begin with a description of the demographics of our respondents and then discuss the results of statistical analyses complied from our data.

Demographics

The 235 teachers who returned our survey range in age from 21 to 64; the distribution of ages is shown in table one. A majority of 38.3 percent are between the ages of 21 and 31; 30.3 percent are between the ages of 32 and 41; 27.6 percent between
the ages of 42 and 51; and the remaining 8.8 percent are between the ages of 52 and 64.

Table 1 - Age distribution of survey respondents.

While we had asked writing program administrators to distribute these surveys to teachers who represent various ages, positions, and ethnicities, there were only 17 responses from women of color, as seen in table two. Over 92 percent of our respondents are white, and while this percentage may be an accurate representation of our field in which people of color are a significant minority, I think it is important to avoid using this as an excuse to avoid a discussion of race and ethnic differences in this project. As I said in chapter three, feminist researchers must work to actively avoid
racist analyses in spite of the small number of minorities who may participate in a research project.

Table 2 - Ethnicity distribution of survey respondents.

As I discussed in chapter three, the small number of responses from women of color shows that our research design—specifically our recruitment of research participants—was not sensitive enough to ethnic and racial differences.

While we did attempt to include issues of race and ethnicity by asking WPAs to
distribute our surveys to female teachers who represent various races and ethnicities, we did not consider many feminist concerns of difference such as sexual preference, personal/private experiences with abuse and oppression, etc. These issues deserve and demand the attention of feminist researchers--issues to which I intend to be more sensitive in future projects. However, I do think a confession of these oversights is a place to begin because they create a space for me to continue with this project, having understood and acknowledged many of the limitations.

The majority of our respondents, 50 percent, have taught composition for less than six years, and 25 percent have taught for 6 to 10 years, as can be seen in table three. Overall, teaching experience ranged from less than one year to 40 years with only 1.3 percent of our respondents having taught for more than thirty years. Table four shows the distribution of academic positions held by these women. Over fifty percent are graduate teaching assistants, while the other half are nearly equally distributed between part-time instructors, full-time instructors, nontenured faculty, and tenured faculty.
Table 3 - Years of composition teaching experience of survey respondents.
Table 4 - Position distribution of survey respondents.
As I said above, our respondents do not represent a random sample of female writing teachers. Yet, while current demographics of female teachers of first-year composition are not available, we can assume that the characteristics of our respondents, in many ways mirror the demographics of the entire field of composition teachers: The majority are under the age of 41, white, have fewer than ten years of experience teaching composition, and are graduate students and part-time instructors. Because first-year composition is often taught by graduate students and part-time adjunct faculty, we might expect to see a low average age and amount of experience. In addition, the majority of college composition teachers are women (see Connors; Holbrook).

Classroom Context

In addition to demographic information, we asked our respondents to describe their workloads, including courses taught and hours spent working, and their methods for teaching. Tables five, six, and seven illustrate our results.
Table 5 - Number of courses taught per semester/quarter.
The majority of our respondents teach between one and three courses each term. Seventy-seven percent teach in a semester system; twenty-two percent teach in a quarter system. As can be seen below in table six, most of these women spend between five and ten hours in the classroom and in office hours, and the majority spend less than five hours per week grading and doing other related work.

Table 6 - Working hours distribution. Percentage of respondents who spend each category of working hours (1) in the classroom, (2) grading, (3) in office hours, (4)
other.

Teaching Method

Table 7 - Distribution of primary teaching method.

Table seven shows the percentage of respondents who choose the following categories
as their primary method of teaching: lecture, whole group discussion, small group, student presentation. This graph shows again how our respondents comments reflect current practices in our field. Only 11.1 percent said they use lectures as the primary mode of instruction in their classrooms. The overwhelming majority of whole group discussions and small group work shows how many of these women incorporate student-centered practices in their classrooms, results that reflect the current pedagogical trends in our field. Thus, while these women are not statistically representative of female writing teachers in general, I think it is valuable to see how many of the characteristics of this group do reflect the current overall status of composition teaching in higher education.

Statistical Analyses

Of the 235 teachers who responded to our survey, 137 (59.8 percent) said they had experienced gender-specific problems in the classroom; 132 (75.9 percent) replied "yes" when asked if they thought "many" women in their program face these same problems; and 146 (62.1 percent) said their awareness of gender-specific problems affects how they teach. These three frequency counts are represented in table eight.
Frequency Counts

Table 8- Frequency counts of answers to the following questions: (1) Have you ever experienced gender-specific problems (including student-to-teacher harassment) in the writing classroom? (2) Does your awareness of these problems affect how you teach? (3) Do you think many of the teachers in your program face gender-specific problems in the writing classroom?
From the results of these frequency counts, we can see that a majority of the women in our survey claim to have experienced gender-specific problems. According to our respondents, these conflicts are common among other female teachers whom they know, and these conflicts affect the teaching of many women. Because women were asked to answer these questions based on their own definitions, those who defined gender-specific problems narrowly as student-to-teacher harassment would have a higher tendency of answering to "no" to these questions. But if these same women were asked if their authority was ever challenged by students who questioned the ability of women to maintain a position of traditional male authority, their answers might be different. Thus, we must realize that these frequency counts represent not a True count of how many women in our survey have experienced gender-specific problems and see the effects of these problems on their own teaching and on other women in their program, but how many women chose to define gender-specific problems in such a way as to reflect their own experiences. As I suggested in chapter three, the majority of women who had difficulty defining these terms also said they had not experienced them.

Simply having the language to describe these problems, having definitions that acknowledge the possibility of gender-specific problems, would greatly affect how a woman might respond to these questions. Therefore, I want to suggest that these tables do not accurately represent the enormous impact gender-specific problems have in our field. My hope is that this research can help us create that language to describe the
experiences of women who are at risk for continued patriarchal oppression in the form of challenges to their authority as teachers.

I ran chi-squared tests of independence to see what, if any, relationships exist among the categorical variables of position, experience, training and the experience of gender-specific problems. The following sets of variables showed no significant relationship:

- Experience problems and teaching method
- Experience problems and training

In other words, gender specific problems are not significantly related to a teacher's training or primary teaching method. However, some factors did show a significant relationship with gender-specific problems, factors that emphasize the impact of authority on these conflicts.

The chi-squared test of independence on position and gender-specific problems showed a significant relationship at .011 probability. As can be seen in table nine, the

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20 An explanation of these tests and the statistical procedures for completing them are beyond the scope of this study. Fred Pyrczak's overview of statistics, *Making Sense of Statistics*, is an excellent resource for those interested in obtaining further information.

21 A significant relationship is a technical term for a mathematical relationship between two sets of data. Most commonly, results greater than .05 are insignificant, which means there is no relationship between the two sets of data. Results less than .05 are significant, which means there is a relationship between the two sets of data.
number of part-time instructors, graduate teaching assistants, and nontenured faculty who reported experiencing gender-specific problems is greater than those who did not. On the other hand, the number of full-time instructors and tenured faculty who reported experiencing gender-specific problems is less than those who did not.

![Gender-Specific Problems](image)

**Table 9** - Gender-specific problems reported for each position group.
A second significant relationship exists between age and gender-specific problems. A one-way ANOVA analysis of variance showed significance at the .003 level. In other words, as a teacher's age increases, the probability that she had reported having experienced gender-specific problems decreases. The mean age of teachers who reported experiencing gender-specific problems was 35, and the mean age of those who did not was 39.

These results indicate that it is not what a teacher does that is related to gender-specific problems, but rather what a teacher is. The statistical relationships indicate that neither a teacher's training nor her primary method of teaching are statistically related to whether or not she reported having experienced gender-specific problems. But those categories that reflect what a teacher is, age and position, are statistically related to her report of experiencing these problems.

Calculated Interpretations

As I said earlier, I developed these statistical analyses for a particular purpose: to convince WPAs and other administrators that gender-specific problems and student-to-teacher harassment are concerns that affect the teachers working in their programs and therefore deserve their attention when designing teacher training materials and policies within their programs. In addition, I hoped to influence in some way the attitude of many women and men in regard to these issues, to counter the belief that they are the
result of bad teaching. Therefore, I use this information to suggest two important implications.

First, my results suggest that gender-specific problems, while often neglected by pedagogical theorists, are a widespread concern of female writing teachers. This theoretical neglect can be seen in the results we received about teacher training; while nearly 76 percent of the teachers said they received training at their current institution, only 40 percent said that training included discussions of gender-specific problems. We received one or more responses from 65 different university writing programs. At least one teacher from 55 of those schools said she thought *many* other female teachers in that program faced gender-specific problems. There were only ten schools from which we received no indication that many teachers experienced these conflicts, and of these ten, six of them were schools from which we received only one teacher response. According to our respondents, then, nearly 96 percent of the programs from which we received information employ "many" teachers who experience gender-specific problems.

Second, these results suggest that we must revise our understanding of gender-specific problems so that we do not assume that a teacher is responsible, and is therefore to blame, for them. Based on these results, we can no longer assume that a female teacher who reports experiencing gender-specific conflicts with students is in some way responsible for those conflicts. The above statistical results show that gender-specific conflicts are not significantly related to what a teacher does in the classroom, based on
the categorical variables of teacher training and primary method of teaching. Rather, they indicate that a teacher's age and academic position have a more significant impact on these conflicts. We must realize, then, that these conflicts most often arise because students resist the authority of female teachers, and the chance of these problems occurring increases when teachers are young and hold marginalized positions such as adjuncts, graduate student teachers, and nontenured faculty.

The above analyses served an important purpose, as they were developed for a report to the Writing Program Administrators at the WPA Summer Conference. In this context, I was primarily interested in proving that gender-specific problems are a great concern of female writing teachers--a concern not often recognized by the academic institution. As I said in that presentation:

Clearly, there is a need to include discussions of gender-specific problems in teacher training programs--discussions that do not blame teachers for these conflicts, but rather help teachers deal with them when they arise. And there is a need for institutional policies and practices that support teachers who face these conflicts. Unfortunately, we received very little information from programs that successfully addressed these issues. So our next step is to develop practical suggestions for teacher training and program policies that will.

But my (re)searching requires that I question and challenge my decision to present this data as an object--to objectify these women and their experiences. As I look back over my data, I see charts, graphs, numbers--I no longer hear the voices, full of multiplicities and contradictions, that echo in the surveys. These surveys have been neatly packed away and the information they contain has been reduced to a bar graph. For quantitative analysis to be useful for feminist researchers, we must broaden our understandings of
numerical interpretation with qualitative analysis of the lives from which these numbers are drawn. While I think the objectification of this data was important given the situation, the stories told by the women in our survey deserve a closer, qualitative analysis that exposes both the nature and effects of these conflicts on the lives of women.
CHAPTER 5
QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS: LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF
FEMALE WRITING TEACHERS

Content Analysis

According to Bruce Burg, in his book *Qualitative Methods in the Social Sciences*:

> [C]ontent analysis is "any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages" (Holsti, 1986, p. 608). . . . objective analysis of messages (i.e., written or oral statements) is accomplished by means of explicit rules called criteria of selection, which must be formally established before the actual analysis of data. The *criteria of selection* used in any given content analysis must be sufficiently exhaustive to account for each variation of message content and must be rigidly and consistently applied so that other researchers or readers, looking at the same messages, would obtain the same or comparable results. (original emphasis, 175)

It was with these rigid rules in mind that I began leafing through our surveys, looking for a "criteria of selection" that could be developed to categorize the experiences women teachers reported to us. As I did so, I began to realize that the problems these women experienced transgressed boundaries that were rigid and "consistently applied."

My first attempt to categorize the stories told to us grew out of attention to the context for conflicts. Reading the surveys, I could see somewhat distinct contexts in which women experienced gender-specific problems and student-to-teacher harassment-
-contexts or situations that resulted in sexist aggression against female teachers. These contexts included grading, woman as mother, course content, woman as sex-object. Obviously, these categories are not parallel; the second and fourth represent stereotypical views of women while the first represents one teacher responsibility and the third represents one characteristic of the writing classroom. In addition, these contexts did not account for "each variation of message content," nor could they be universally applied to the stories provided by our respondents.

Knowing that with these categories I had not developed--according to traditional research methodologies--a "correct" analytical framework, I began working with other feminist scholars to refine and redirect my analysis. These "other feminist scholars" are friends with whom I meet weekly to discuss feminist projects in which we all are engaged. Using the "constant comparative method of developing theory," we began looking for key concepts in the data provided by our respondents (Bogdan and Biklen 74). I copied fifty-four legal-sized, single-spaced pages for them in which I had

22 Bogdan and Biklen outline the following steps of the constant comparative method of developing theory as they were developed by Glaser:
   1. Begin collecting data.
   2. Look for key issues, recurrent events, or activities in the data that become categories of focus.
   3. Collect data that provide many incidents of the categories of focus with an eye to seeing the diversity of the dimensions under the categories.
   4. Write about the categories you are exploring, attempting to describe and account for all the incidents you have in your data while continually searching for new incidents.
   5. Work with the data and emerging model to discover basic social processes and
transcribed the stories women had reported in our surveys, and then asked them if they could help me design analytical categories that, to use Berg's words again, could "account for each variation of message content and [be] rigidly and consistently applied so that other researchers or readers, looking at the same messages, would obtain the same or comparable results" (175).

When we met to discuss the products of our thinking on this matter, we began to draft new categories that could account for all "messages" provided by teachers. The first draft, written on the back of a white envelope (which contained a wedding invitation one of us had brought to share) was designed to account for student actions by categorizing actions that said: I see you as a mother, I see you as a lover/sex-object, I don't recognize your right to do what professors do, I can make you do whatever I want, I see you as a child. Once again, we were working with categories that were not parallel--the first, second, and last describing stereotypical views of women and the third and fourth describing a lack of respect for female teacher authority. Nevertheless, we tried to code the survey responses according to these categories to see what results would develop. We realized as we did so, that these categories could not always be distinguished from one another. A student who rejects a female teacher's authority by objectifying her sexuality, is also saying: I don't recognize your right to do what

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6. Engage in sampling, coding, and writing as the analysis focuses on the core categories (74).
Abandoning these categories, we began drawing a "map" of the conflicts that I have tried to represent below, although this computer representation does not do justice to the scribbled lines of our initial drawing, which contains three different pen colors, each representing the contributions of a single writer:

Figure 3 - Map of gender-specific conflicts.

When the women in our survey attempt to claim academic authority, an action that is realized through grading, assigning essays, choosing course content, setting course policies, etc., students often resist them because they see women's roles as predetermined: mother, lover/sex-object, child. In other words, we thought that students
resist female teacher authority because women are supposed to be mothers, lovers, sex-objects, children—not authority figures. Yet we realized that this conceptual framework simplifies matters too much. Mothers, after all, can claim authority as can lovers. Nevertheless, we followed this design farther and concluded that students resist female teacher authority (this resistance is represented in the above drawing with two vertical lines) through physical intimidation, violence, threats, sexual harassment, passive aggressive behavior, etc.

Prepared with multicolored markers, we began to check the validity of this framework by coding each act of student aggression and each context in which that action occurred according to these categories: teacher action (grading, assigning work, choosing course content), student response (I see you as mother, lover/sex-object, child). Once again, however, we found that the stories we read resisted this form of categorization. Often it was unclear what teacher action students were responding to—one teacher described a student who criticized her for the temperature of the room; another described a student who criticized her for the quality of the photocopied handouts. Also, student resistance to female authority often exhibited a combination of stereotypical views; an example is the student who first begs for leniency and then threatens violence if unable to sway the teacher.

It is important to note here that I am referring only to students who, according to the women in our survey, caused problems that have been classified by these women as gender-specific.
Unwilling yet to give up the rigid and consistent "criteria for selection" that I knew was expected of "good" research, I tried two more approaches. For the first, I abandoned all of the pervious categories I had tried, focusing instead on the magnitude of student aggression. I thought I might be able to develop a scale that would show the various degrees of gender-specific problems including passive resistance, written attacks, verbal attacks, physical violence, etc. But here I was again, unable to develop parallel categories that each accounted for distinct behavior. I could distinguish between written, verbal, and physical attacks fairly easily. But how could I compare these categories? Were the women in our survey less or more affected by written or verbal attacks? Are written threats of violence less disturbing than physical ones? If so, how could I account for that? It quickly became clear that I could not objectively categorize these actions without completely disregarding the effects these actions had on the women who experienced them.

What I began to realize as we continued this process of searching for categorical variables to define these women's experiences was this: I was reenacting the same constrictive traditional methodologies that I have argued against in previous chapters. Expressing my frustration at being unable to develop an analytical framework through which to examine and explain these experiences to other composition scholars, I received the following advice:

Perhaps it's time to stop working so hard at developing categories; perhaps it's time to
be quiet and listen.

This advice took me by surprise, for it reminded me that I was trying so hard to do just what I wanted to reject doing as a feminist researcher--forcing the data, women's experiences, into rigid and concrete categories. Thus I returned to the work of feminist researchers who have already grappled with these problems. Joan Acker, Kate Barry, and Johanna Esseveld, in "Objectivity and Truth: Problems Doing Feminist Research," articulate the quandary in which I found myself and explain how they work through it:

For us, a radical rebeginning has meant understanding gender as central in constructing all social relations and taking individual women's lives as a problematic (Hartsock, 1979; Smith, 1980). What is to be explained is what actually happens in women's everyday world and how these events are experienced. We begin, then, with the ordinary lives of women, but neither stop there nor move into a search for individual psychological sources of feelings, actions, and events. Although we view people as active agents in their own lives and as such constructors of their social worlds, we do not see that activity as isolated and subjective. Rather, we locate individual experience in society and history, embedded within a set of social relations which produce both the possibilities and limitations of that experience. What is at issue is not just everyday experiences but the relations which underlie it and the connections between the two. In this analysis, we use a dialectical method, in order to arrive . . . "at adequate description and analysis of how it actually works. Our methods cannot rest in procedures for deciding among different formalized 'opinions' about the world" (Smith, 1977). Rather, this is a method of exploration and discovery, a way to begin to search for understandings that may contribute to the goals of liberation. (135-36)

For me, engaging in a feminist analysis of our data meant resisting the temptation to judge the significance or "correctness" of my work against traditional standards of content analysis and reaching instead for a more flexible modes of analysis beginning
not with rules, not with categories, but with the stories themselves. Like other feminist researchers, then, I reject the rigid categories and criteria of selection dictated by traditional research methods in order to begin describing, in a somewhat random way, the experiences I've read about in our surveys. Therefore, I will use the themes I discussed above as a conceptual framework through which to describe the responses to our request for descriptions of gender-specific problems. I do so not in order to classify or categorize but simply to explore the various forms these conflicts take.

Resistance to Acts of Teacher Authority

Because I define gender-specific problems as student resistance to female teacher authority, I looked closely at sites of teacher authority in the classroom and noticed that our respondents often described situations in which students resisted teachers when they performed what I call acts of teacher authority. These include grading, assigning written work, choosing course material, and managing the classroom situation.

Gender-specific problems often occur in a context of evaluation. Because grading is a concrete site of authority in the classroom, many teachers reported problems arising when students disagreed with the evaluation of their writing. Women reported that students exhibit a great lack of respect to female teachers' authority to give grades. Students, particularly but not exclusively male students, try to get female teachers to
change their grades, think female teachers grade unfairly, and even bribe and threaten female teachers to get better grades. One story illustrates this well:

I'm not sure how gender-specific this particular conflict was, but . . . I had a very driven Asian male student in my class. He received a B+ on his research paper. During exam week he came to my office, which was deserted except for us. He demanded to know why he had a B+ for the course. We went back and forth for nearly an hour. He said, 'Well, why is it that in my other classes (math and science related courses) I'm getting Cs and Ds but I'm not angry with those instructors?' I answered that possibly it was because he saw those courses as more objective than [this one], but thinking it over later I wondered whether it was because his other instructors were male, but I don't know. At this point the student appeared very agitated and angry and I felt it best to move to a standing position because of the way he was hovering almost threateningly over me . . . [As he was leaving the student] said, 'One of these days I'm going to come back and I'm going to kill you.'

Another woman writes:

A very large male student was unhappy with his grade on a paper; he stood very close to me, bent down close to my face, and proceeded to speak (yell) loudly and threateningly. I very firmly told him that I would not discuss his paper grade until the next class day when he had had a chance to think about the paper and my comments. When he came to my office hours after the next class day, he very firmly closed my office door (I usually leave it open) then pulled his chair up close to mine, He was angry and attempting to blame me for his grade--'you said you wanted . . .,' etc.

Another woman says, "A male student once requested that a man grade his papers because I expect men to know as much about poetry as women, which is unfair." In this example, we see the student assuming that his female teacher grades less fairly than any male teacher would, and this assumption is based on a stereotypical view of women as less objective than men.

A third women says, "I have one [intimidating male student] now: a musclely
prison guard who normally is a great contributor to class discussions, but if he's unhappy with me (because of grades, etc.) he's usually quite vocal in expressing that displeasure. Just yesterday, he rudely interrupted me as I was speaking in class to make such a comment. It changed the whole tone and feel of the class . . ." A fourth respondent describes a more aggressive response to grades when she says, "A male student tried to get me to change a grade on his essay by shouting, insulting, and physically intimidating me by standing too close, leaning towards me, and waving his arms. When I reported him to my supervisor and the professor (male) spoke to the student, the student exhibited none of the above behavior." In this case, the teacher was convinced that the student would not have approached a male teacher the same way, and he changed his behavior considerably when confronted with a male authority figure.

Conflicts arising from the evaluation of student writing created professional problems for teachers as well. Many respondents reported students who took grade complaints to the administration. These confrontations usually resulted in excessive work demands, with the teacher having to meet with administrators, write reports justifying her grading system, and/or defending her ability to give appropriate grades. Teachers whose authority is challenged in this way also report that they receive negative student evaluations, and some fear they will be seen as trouble makers within their department.

As I reread my work here, nearly a year after the first draft was written, I think about
my own situation this semester: A parent comes to my office and demands that I change the grade her child received in my class. I refuse. She takes this appeal to the director, and it goes on to the dean. I spend countless hours in conferences, explaining, defending, justifying. But I will lose this fight, just as I lost the last one, and the grade will be changed. What authority have I here? Just last year the teachers in our program were warned about the increase in grade inflation; we must be more strict in our evaluation of student papers. Why? I want to ask, Why?

Gender-specific problems also result from student resistance to assignments prescribed by female teachers. Most often, this resistance takes the form of obscene or aggressive writing in response to assignments. One woman describes a male student who "wrote a very graphic paper about sexual intercourse that used very inappropriate and personal examples. He wrote this paper as a response to an 'explain cause and effect' assignment." Another woman says, "I experienced a harassment situation that grew progressively worse through notes/messages written by a male student in notes, journal pieces, and tests." These examples show how students resist a female teacher's authority to give assignments by turning these assignments into opportunities for sexist aggression. A third respondent describes a student who disregarded the assignment she gave and wrote "a very graphic physical description of rape as if he [the student] were the rapist." And a fourth woman describes how a student used writing assignments as an opportunity to write "personal comments about my appearance."
The third act of teacher authority I want to address is selecting course content, primarily topics for discussion and reading assignments. Very few teachers in our surveys said they openly discuss their political views as feminist. In fact, many said they avoid discussing their politics in order to avoid aggressive student response. Following is an example:

As a feminist in my own affairs, I may mention related issues when pertinent to discussion. However, I do not like personal beliefs, especially mine, to enter the classroom. My job is to teach composition writing and research techniques. I feel that because I am open to students ideas, do not allow personal attacks in discussion and don't interject my personal agendas, that this is not an issue in my classrooms.

However, this is an issue for many of the teachers who responded, especially for those who emphasize the use of nonsexist language. Many women report having students who strongly opposed the use of nonsexist language, and one teacher was called a "feminazi" for having brought up the subject in class. Another woman says:

Problems here are partly due to the fact that [this university] is sponsored by a church with conservative views of men's and women's roles and it draws a lot of politically conservative students. Most of the problems I've experienced have come when I have taught students in general education writing courses that they should use non-sexist language. . . . The most memorable incident occurred in an advanced writing course. It was a double section that I taught with a male intern, a graduate student. He got the assignment to teach non-sexist language; because his teaching style was sort of confrontational anyway, I think his way of teaching about non-sexist language caused more problems than the usual irritation, especially among self-satisfied male students who saw it as a feminist plot to dictate language change. The student teacher was unable to deal with the responses of some vocal students and I attempted to help out. The next class period, I recall, I did all I could to control the damage and get the class going again. But the class was never quite the same, as students viewed me and my intern with some suspicion since we'd obviously been hoodwinked by the
"radical feminist" movement.

This example is especially interesting, I think, because it involves both a male and female teacher, both of whom are criticized for perceived "biases." This respondent points to an important aspect of this analysis, the absence of men. We use the term gender-specific problems instead of sexism or other terms that indicate biases against women because we realize that men also are gendered and, I assume, experience gender-specific problems as well. As the above example indicates, men who attempt to incorporate feminist principles in their classes may be as susceptible to backlash as are women.

Tyler and Boxer's study, described in chapter three, suggests that issues of race and ethnicity may create serious problems for male teachers, graduate teaching assistants in this case, because of cross-cultural misunderstandings about appropriate behavior. They say:

[[It may come as a surprise to learn that many US females, especially in engineering and the science, perceive international men negatively and report difficulties with foreign males students, faculty and business professions. . . . While we acknowledge the possibility that some men from cultures outside the US may bring with them negative attitudes towards women in universities and in the workplace, we also believe that some of these negative perceptions may be the result of cross-cultural misunderstanding. (108)

In light of these and other investigations of problems that male teachers encounter, I do not want to suggest that the problems I describe here are unique to female teachers. Rather, I want to concentrate on describing the problems female teachers face and
developing a better understanding of the context in which the women in this study live and work with respect to gender-specific problems.

Our respondents also report that students regularly resist discussions of gender difference, racial discrimination, and homophobia. In many cases, teachers avoid these topics in order to avoid conflicts. As one woman says, "I no longer use gender issues as a theme of study." Another woman says:

In a freshman course, we discussed homosexuality; several men came to my office hours, very hostile. The article we had read was a scientific study of sexual orientation, and they were disturbed when I insisted that their critique of it had to be logical, rather than emotional or religious. I later dropped this reading.

A third respondent says, "I've had one clear cut case of harassment from a male student who openly resented the course content (we critiqued sexism in advertising, for example) and announced his resentment of women. In a private conference with me, he described his hatred of his mother, on whom he blamed all his problems, and as he described his feelings he invaded my personal space, raised his voice, and claimed he was so angry with me he could slap me." These stories suggest that female teachers can be in danger of physical violence as a result of student resistance to course content.

Even such common acts of teacher authority as leading class discussions can result in student resistance:

One student in particular resented the discussion of gender issues in relation to readings. He would attack me with statements like 'Are we always going to talk
about women and stuff in this class? I'm tired of hearing women like you complain.' Additionally, this student complained to my superior about my teaching, suggesting that I was unfair to male students (he is the only student of mine who has made such remarks). This student missed the first two weeks of class and was irresponsible about assignments and hostile in the classroom. He also complained about other female teachers.

While this example, and many others in this section describe acts of authority that attempt to address sexism or other forms of discrimination—acts that we might suspect would be met with resistance—there are many examples of less political acts being resisted by students as well. One woman says, "Upon distribution and discussion of a take-home exam, an older, male student burst out laughing and responded 'you must be joking' and proceeded to point out [problems with] my ill-conceived project." Others resist this authority by simply refusing to participate in class or complete assignments. One woman writes, "Some women [in a first-year writing class] refused to participate in class discussions when called upon to do so." Finally, some students resist this authority with verbal and physical threats. One woman was enforcing the enrollment cap set by her department by refusing to sign an admit form for a new student. He responded by saying, "How about I take you behind the building and put a gun to your head--then will you let me in your class?"

Another women tells this story:

A [university] football player who was failing my class sabotaged several discussions by interrupting me, changing the topic of discussion, repeatedly objecting to assignment demands and course standards, and insisting on discussing his own personal problems with course assignments, etc. Finally I kicked him out of class one day and encouraged him to talk to the director about
me. The director backed me up and in fact said he'd give the papers lower grades; however I do not think he recognized the gender nature of the problem. [Our university] football team then had several rape and sexual harassment charges against them; numerous articles were coming out in the college paper in which they "defended" themselves by attacking both the girls who'd brought charges and "feminism." This context contributed to the student's irateness and his sense of his "right" to harass me in the classroom. Too, it contributed to my fear of retribution. While the director backed me up in this instance, he later remarked that I had had "authority problems" in my class and this was one reason why I was still only a part-time lecturer.

This story exemplifies student aggression against female teacher authority. It also indicates the political repercussions female teachers face when these conflicts are seen not as student aggression, but as a teacher's "authority problem." The failure to place these conflicts within an historical context that places female teachers at risk for student sexist aggression may lead administrators to blame teachers.

Traditional Female Roles

To understand how women have been excluded from the position of academic authority, we can examine the accepted cultural positions for women: that of mother/servant, lover/prostitute, and child. As Simone de Beauvoir illustrates, these roles have served to subjugate women throughout history. To illustrate how student aggression against female teachers plays out these historically sexist ideological assumptions about women, I will examine gender-specific conflicts that involve these

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24 See Simone de Beauvoir for an historical discussion of these roles.
stereotypical views of women in the stories reported to us.

Woman as Mother

Students resist female teacher authority by reinscribing patriarchal constructions of woman as mother, a role with limited authority and extreme demands. As one woman said, "Students often think I am their mother and continue to relate to me as they do to their mothers--I'm just another chapter in a long history of mothering for them and often, neither of us can readily separate the mother from the teacher."

Student expectations of female teachers to mother them imply that the teacher is responsible for the student and his/her work, that a teacher must take care of and provide for students in excess of normal teaching duties. One teacher defines this as the "unwillingness to assume responsibility for reading instructions and correctly fulfilling the assignment." The following story illustrates this well:

A very bright returning female student was doing very well in the class but was nonetheless extremely insecure about her performance. She phoned me once or twice a week or so, freaked out about having to take so much responsibility for her work--having to come up with her own topics, frame questions for discussion, etc. (she called this "lack of structure"). Conversations never lasted less than half an hour. She used the balance of my office hours. I don't give my home number to students because they will tend to use it too freely. On Sunday morning, as a paper was due, she phones several administrators looking for my number, complaining as she went about my course. Finally someone gave her

An interesting aspect of these problems is that they most often involve female students. While most sexist aggression against female teachers involves male students, this "mother" stereotype is more common among female students.
the number and she phoned me. It was 10:00 a.m. on Sunday. I began by saying
gently that I thought this was an inappropriate time for a call. She ignored me
completely. I listened for five minutes and she said she wanted to read her paper
to me, I said firmly, "I don't want this conversation to go on more than a minute
or two longer, because I am extremely ill with a stomach flu." It was completely
true, and while she resisted reading me the entire paper, she nevertheless kept
me on the phone for over an entire hour. I relented and remained on the phone
because I realized it would be easier to deal with her that morning, rather than
during office hours, when I had other student appointments. In the end, I could
only get myself off the phone by INSISTING that I HAD to go to the bathroom!
She stayed in the course a while longer, till nearly midterm when she finally
dropped, blowing an A-.
She told the department secretary that if only I had
been willing to talk to her on a "personal" level, she would have stayed in the
course.

In this example, the teacher had to choose between remaining on the phone with student
that day or dealing with even more excessive demands on her time during the work
week. Perhaps more important, she was still criticized even after giving in to the
demands of this student.

One reader of this analysis commented on the above story: "This illustration may not
bring sympathy for this teacher. I can see how she can have a problem establishing her
authority--is this all the student's fault?" No, not all the student's fault, I don't think I
could argue that any of these conflicts can be blamed exclusively on the student.

Rather, they can be attributed to a cultural climate that creates limiting and oppressive
spaces for women. I do sympathize with this teacher because I have experienced the
pressure she describes. If we accepted the cultural roles created for us as women, we
are criticized for passively accepting our oppression; if we resist them, we are as
equally likely to be criticized and blamed. I too can see how she can have a problem with her authority; I have been there.

Defining female teachers as mothers, students also expect and demand leniency. One woman says, "I had a female student aged approximately 22-24 who by midterm had failed to turn in either two full-length essay and had also exceeded the limit for absences. She came to me asking for leniency. (I believe she wanted me to behave as her 'mother')." Another woman tells this story that blurs the boundaries between the categories I've outlined, but nevertheless shows how student aggression tries to "put woman in her place":

I was teaching basic writing, an average class. I ran into a colleague who was younger, shorter, quieter than myself. She said she had this student in her class who was thoroughly obnoxious and sexist to her. She was going to have him moved. The university moves students in these situations at the student's convenience to another class at the same time. He ended up in my class. I thought, I'm older, taller, more experienced, have a louder voice. I will deal with him better than she could. Boy, was I wrong. From day one this guy was belligerent and obnoxious. His fellow students learned quickly to dislike him. That was a mercy. He created in instant community in my class. I spoke to the composition coordinator. He sent a male faculty member to speak to this guy before my class one day. We both decided he needed to be called on the carpet by someone other than me. He ignored my authority, so we sent someone we thought he wouldn't ignore. It didn't help. I was ill one day and my husband took my classes. This guy had the gall to make all sorts of sexual remarks and jokes about me in class that day, until my husband announced that he was my husband. Then this guy apologized profusely. What made things worse was that he never turned in any work. He would come to my office and act like he had been a bad son and beg my forgiveness--this lasted for 3 weeks, until he realized that I wasn't buying it. Then he became more belligerent in class. Finally, I had a conference with him and I told him I was dropping him from the class because he could only fail if he remained. The following morning before class, he
showed up at my office and begged my forgiveness. When I refused, he got angry and threatened me. A teacher next door called the police and then came out and announced that the police were on their way. He left. The police suggested that they accompany me to class. They did. He was there. They removed him. In a subsequent interview w/ the dean, he complained that I hated men. The dean commiserated w/ him and explained that the university was full of angry women, so he'd better keep his head down. There, that's my story.

A third attribute of the mother figure is that she must obey the commands of the father. This sexist assumption is played out in student aggression. One woman says, "[Students] have told me that a male professor regards their work highly, so should I." In similar ways, students threaten to "go to your supervisor" in order to get their way. As one woman pointed out, many supervisors are men. A final attribute of the mother figure is her responsibility for house keeping. One teacher says, "[Students] feel free to critique the temperature of the room, the copy quality of the course packet, and my physical appearance."

*At a recent conference where I presented a portion of this analysis, a man asked, "Do you really think mothers, i.e., teachers, are treated this way? How can you assume that mothers are taken advantage of in this way?" My response was hesitant and, I'm afraid, unsatisfactory. My own mother happened to be sitting in the audience as well. I wanted to shout TELL THEM MOTHER, TELL THEM WHAT IT'S LIKE! Tell them about the burdens of motherhood. Tell them about your mother and hers. Listen to the stories of*
these women who have struggled through so many histories.

Woman as Child

The second stereotypical view of woman is that she is like a child—young and unintelligent with no authority and no right to speak. Students who resist female teacher authority often attempt to reinscribe this stereotype by shouting and yelling at teachers, refusing to follow instructions and procedures outlined by the teacher, and disregarding the teacher's knowledge. One woman says, "A male student arrived late every day, dominated discussions, argued every point I made, refused to accept constructive criticism on his work and in the classroom becoming threatening to the point my other male students felt a need to protect me." Another respondent writes, "A black male student was sitting behind my desk as I walked in to the classroom to teach. He wouldn't leave. He thought it was a cool thing to do. I taught the class from a student chair." Another woman says, "On occasion I have had male students who demonstrated verbally that I, a woman (PhD from Harvard notwithstanding), could not possibly teach them anything."

Woman as Lover/Prostitute

Through aggressive texts, speech, and actions, students also reinscribe woman as lover or prostitute in order to resist female teacher authority. This is the most common category of sexist aggression reported to us, and there may be two reasons for this: first,
this may actually be more common that the other types, but perhaps more plausible is the fact that most women identify gender-specific problems with sexist aggression and therefore felt more inclined to report these incidents.

Woman as lover is expected to disclose personal information about herself. Students, particularly male students who view female teachers as lovers, often cross boundaries between the personal and the public. Many respondents said male students ask their age and marital status, and many have been propositioned by male students who want to date them. While these actions are certainly inappropriate, many teachers report even more violent aggressions. One woman told her students to come see her during office hours, and a male student responded, "How much will we get to see?" One respondent added a handwritten note on the back of her survey which read: "The day I was about to mail this, one of my male students felt he was not receiving enough attention, swore at me, and stormed out, throwing a desk on his way." Another woman says, "[A] student frequently tried to disarm me with winking, commenting on my appearance, and openly speculating about my love life. He would laugh it off with 'just joking.'" Another woman writes, "I had a student volunteer to read aloud a freewriting that turned out to be a very suggestive piece about me."

In this context, students use sexual aggression to either reject the authority of female teachers or intimidate them in the classroom. Many respondents said they believed students were "testing" them to see just how much they would take, as in the case of a teacher who reported a student paper about the decapitation of a former
girlfriend. Another teacher writes, "In a freewriting journal, a male student made sexual comments about me and other women in the class. He also wrote 'I am the next Gainesville murderer. I say this so you can watch your back. I'm a psycho. I'm going to snap.'" Another women says, "[A] student expressed his usual boredom with the class. Trying to 'prove myself,' I asked, 'What can I do to interest you?' He said, 'If you showed up in my room in the middle of the night.'" And yet another example:

A student from the previous fall semester at a school about 70 miles from my home called me one evening. He had called me before, and I had been nice to him, despite his telling that his boss at worked had asked him about me, specifically if he had ever 'fucked' me. At any rate, on this particular night he announced that he was calling from a phone just two blocks away from my house. I asked if he were visiting friends. No, he said he was on his way back to school and had stopped to visit me.

Another woman told about a male student who called her "stupid" in class and told her, in front of other students, that he only comes to class because she, the teacher, is pretty. The teacher writes, "The semester culminated when he described an attack/rape of his English teacher." Another teacher reports of a student paper about a rape in which the student is the rapist. The teacher said she felt she was the intended victim, and a third report tells of a student turning in a very graphic paper about sexual intercourse.

The examples of sexist aggressions against female teachers are so numerous in our surveys, that I cannot possibly recount each one here. Instead, I have selected a few representative stories to present below:  

26Unless indicated, each story was written by a different women.
One student wrote in his open-ended journal assignment how much he 'hated the fucking class' and 'the fucking liberal bitch teacher.'

A homework assignment from a student named 'Fu' was turned in, and in another color somebody had added to his name 'ck (my name)'.

A male student came to my office hours more frequently than I was comfortable with. He also made some remarks in class to the effect he would like to 'lay me' on the table.

A group of young men continually gossiped together at the back of the class. When I asked them to share it with the class, they laughed raucously. After class, a female student told me they regularly discussed what I looked like under my dress.

A student wrote and handed in a journal entry that was sexually explicit and directed specifically toward me (detailed what he would like to do with/to various parts of my anatomy).

In addition to these written attacks on women as sex objects, many teachers reported having students who use a more physical form of intimidation. One woman tells this story:

I had a very violent student two years ago who would talk about very sexually explicit subjects in conferences . . . A few months ago, I saw him at a bar (he was no longer my student), and he spread his legs and flashed his penis at me!

This example shows how gender-specific problems women face as teachers are not always contained within the classroom. Women are pursued by aggressive students on the phone, at their home, in their offices, and in public places. One women reports a male student showing up drunk at her house one night and asking her to go out with him. These surveys show that students often do not accept a female teacher's authority;
rather they challenge it with cultural patriarchal power in the form of threats, aggression, and sexual dominance. Regardless of where these conflicts take place, they have a significant impact on the classroom.

Effects on Teaching

In our survey, we asked "Does your awareness of these [gender-specific] problems affect how you teach?" Over 62 percent answered yes. It is perhaps not surprising that this number corresponds closely to the percentage of those who said they had experienced these problems. Many women referred directly to their experiences with gender-specific problems when answering this question. One woman says, "I am very aware of how all my students react to me and treat me. After having gone through what I have this semester, I will be more alert to early signs of harassment and confront harassers directly." The experiences she refers to include a student threatening to kill her if she told him to buy the wrong books for the course.

We also asked them to explain how these conflicts affect their teaching. Most responses could be arranged in the following categories: course content, personal appearance and presentation, appeals to authority, and attempts to create a nonsexist classroom.
Course Content

Many women said their knowledge of gender-specific problems and their experiences with these conflicts affects the content they chose for their courses, including readings, writing assignments, and discussion topics. Some women discussed how their knowledge of gender-specific conflicts encouraged them to treat issues of gender discrimination in their classrooms. One woman says, "I'm a committed feminist, so I'm determined to employ a pedagogy which addresses issues around gender and language, race, and so forth." Another woman says, "I try to include the issue of gender in my discussions of language, writing, and epistemology. I also make it a point to bring up the issue during class discussions." Each of these women quoted above also said that they had not experienced gender-specific conflicts, or that these conflicts had not involved sexist aggression towards them. Thus, the changes in their course content do not reflect reactions to the sexist aggressions described above. One woman's response addresses this correlation directly when she says, "I have always been sensitive to gender equity in my classes. I discuss it openly with my students. I have never been a victim of harassment or gender issues." While her response might imply that discussions of gender issues in the classroom can help deter sexist aggression from students, the majority of our respondents suggest that avoiding issues of gender is a more common response to gender-specific problems.

Most of these changes our respondents reported in course content involve a move away from controversial and/or political material. Many women say they avoid
discussing gender issues because of the negative student responses they have received. One woman says, "I am more cautious about discussing gender-related topics for fear students will react negatively." Like many other teachers in our survey, this woman fears repercussions from opening the wounds of gender inequity in class discussions and course readings. Another woman shares this perspective when she says, "I have de-emphasized non-sexist language and gender issues, but bring these issues up implicitly or my students bring them up." A third respondent says, "I have to admit that some days I will shy away from discussing gender issues because I don't want to deal with [student] hostility." These women express caution, yet have not completely eliminated the topic from their classroom.

Other teachers have. One respondent says, "I no longer use gender issues as a theme of study. I use more neutral topics like education where all students feel they are on equal footing." This respondent says she used to deal with gender issues, and when she did she found herself spending much time dispelling stereotypes about gender differences and feminism. For her, as for other women in our study, bringing up gender issues in class caused too many problems with students who cling to our society's misconceptions about women, men, and cultural differences of gender.

Pedagogical Methods

While there is a proliferation of literature in our field dealing with liberatory pedagogical issues that suggests teachers ought to be bringing up issues of gender,
racial, sexual, and class discrimination in their classes, many of the respondents of our
survey indicate that the resistance they meet when doing so is a burden they cannot
carry. In fact, some women have even rejected more less political forms of liberatory
pedagogy as a result of student aggression. One woman's story illustrates this well. She
describes this incident, quoted above but worth a second examination in regards to
affects on teaching: "In a freewriting journal, a male student made sexual comments
about me and other women in the class. He also wrote 'I am the next Gainesville
murderer. I say this so you can watch your back. I'm a psycho. I'm going to snap.'"
When asked how her knowledge of these problems affects her teaching, this woman
says, "After the problem [described above] I did not give an 'imagine you are the
opposite gender' assignment I was going to give. *I have also stopped freewriting*
(emphasis mine). Another woman says, "I realize challenges to authority (especially for
women) can arise if the class is too decentered and nip any challenges (that are simply
to challenge the authority of the instructor and not questions or legitimate differences of
opinion) in the bud." Both of these women suggest that recommendations made by
liberatory pedagogy to decenter authority and base class discussions on students own
concerns, recommendations made by Ira Shor, Henry Giroux, and other male theorists,
may in fact lead to an increase in student sexist aggression.

In *Empowering Education*, Ira Shor says, "Critical-democratic pedagogy situates
curriculum in issues and language from everyday life. Generative themes make up the
primary subject matter; they grow out of student culture and express problematic
conditions in daily life. . ." (55) One of our respondents addresses this issue when she says, "Trying to democratize my classroom, I encourage students to tell me what they think. But instead of being viewed as a 'liberator,' I clearly become an indulgent mother as several male students become absolutely disruptive--interrupting me to tell about parties and drinking. One student came to class without his essay--he had written it, he said, but he got drunk and vomited on it." This woman responds to the question about changes in teaching by saying she has "been thinking more and more about the idea of feminist pedagogy," but doesn't practice it. Her concerns, based on her experiences of gender-specific problems, are that these conflicts might increase if she were to deemphasize her authority in the classroom.

Apparently, there is some dissonance between the advice offered by these liberatory theorists and the situations faced by these female writing teachers, and I suggest that this conflict between liberatory pedagogical theory and female writing teachers' practical experiences arises because critical pedagogy assumes a male subject position for teachers. I use the example of liberatory pedagogy not because I think this pedagogy depends on patriarchal ideology any more than other, more traditional pedagogies in our field. Rather I use this example of liberatory pedagogy to argue that even pedagogical theories that aim toward a more egalitarian construction of the writing classroom can be problematic for women, and thus can give us some indication of how gender inequity (i.e., the absence of the female experience) has affected the pedagogical developments in our field.
Some respondents said they use their knowledge of gender-specific problems to create a non-sexist classroom by utilizing pedagogical methods that address gender inequity. For example, one woman says:

I believe it is important to make explicit classroom processes and negotiations to students. We frequently discuss how students are silenced in the classroom and the ways these silences are oftentimes gendered. My students read essays about gender in relation to whatever subject I am teaching. For instance, in business writing classes I have students write collaboratively, and then discuss how men and women oftentimes approach group projects differently.

Another woman says:

I try to keep track of which sex gets verbal class space and accommodate to provide equity. I talk in class about gender-specific responses, both of students toward faculty and of faculty toward students, so students will be aware of their behavior. I sometimes ask exam questions about classroom climate and equity. The issue of gender is always on my mind as I prepare classes, teach, and grade papers.

These two responses show how the knowledge of gender-specific problems and gender inequity in general can lead to concrete pedagogical approaches that foreground issues of gender of difference through student involvement in the process of critiquing gender dynamics in the class. But these are a small minority in the responses we received. Many more women were much more cautious when utilizing pedagogical approaches the foreground student involvement.

Decentering Authority

Central to the concerns of contemporary writing pedagogy, including but
certainly not limited to liberatory and feminist pedagogies, is the student-centered classroom (see Pedagogy in the Age of Politics and the Politics of Writing Instruction). Decentering teacher authority was also a common theme among the responses to our pedagogy question. But these women's comments indicate a much more complex development of student-centered classrooms that attempt to balance very carefully teacher and student authority. One woman says, "I am serious with students in the first half of the semester and then later on loosen up a little." Like other respondents, this woman begins the semester on guard against student aggression and begins relaxing the structure of her class only after she has established her own authority. Another woman says, "I do what I know some other women teachers do: I take pains at the beginning of a new class to establish my authority (students call me Dr./Professor; I dress up; I lecture a bit; I'm a bit formal); then I start to share authority and run the class more by consensus." And yet another says, "I try to be somewhat authoritative at the beginning of the semester."

These responses suggest that for these women, a student-centered classroom must be developed carefully and slowly over time and must be preceded by the firm construction of teacher authority in the classroom. Teachers in our survey discuss many ways in which they attempt to develop this authority. As mentioned above, some women attempt to develop their authority early in the semester by relying on traditional authoritative nuances such as requiring students to use Dr. or Professor when addressing the instructor. And many women say that attention to their physical appearance is a
priority for them. One woman says, "I have to be careful to be extra businesslike at
times and not to mention my weaknesses to the class." Another says, "I am careful how
I dress and how I present myself in class." This attention to physical appearance and
self presentation are tangible ways in which the women in our survey attempt to
establish the authority that theorists in our field are so willing to suggest we give away.

In addition, many women use the traditional *logos* appeal of outside authorities
to maintain their own. One woman says, "I appeal to male 'authority' in my discussions
of issues: I use my husband and male colleagues as examples of people who notice some
of the same things that I do." And another woman says, "I am careful to cite my sources
so students won't tell me my facts are opinions."

These changes in teaching and classroom strategies show what some teachers do
to deal with these conflicts. But a discussion of gender-specific problems that focuses
on what teachers themselves can do to avoid or alleviate them is problematic because it
places too much responsibility, and by implication, blame on individual teachers. This,
however, is a controversial position because many women who responded did want to
either internalize these conflicts or take responsibility for inappropriate student
behavior. One woman says, "I am a good people person, but I don't put up with garbage.
I nip all problems in the bud and have been fortunate that such action solved my
trouble." I'll let another of the survey participants respond to this:

I list(ed) several problems I've had with male students and mention that there
have been other, more minor ones. When I've shared these problems with professors or administrators (on only a few occasions), their response has generally been to suggest that I may be running the class poorly, acting unprofessionally, etc. I hope you won't suspect the same thing, but just to offset any suspicions: I'm a good teacher! I've won several teaching awards at more than one program, and I work hard to prepare rigorous, challenging courses for my students. I don't think the problems I've experienced on occasion have been the result of bad teaching.

The statistical data discussed in chapter four seem to support this women's suggestion that these problems do not arise because of what a teacher does. Rather they are more closely connected to what a teacher is. While I want to emphasize that the effects on teaching I've discussed above should not be used as a prescription to solving these problems, they do suggest that gender-specific problems have a significant impact on the classrooms in which these women teach.

Our research is an example, then, of how feminist inquiry can raise questions concerning traditional theories of pedagogy and can offer us more in-depth information with which to build new theories that are sensitive to experiences of women. In the final chapter, I will discuss some implications of our own research for composition pedagogical theory and, more generally, possibilities for expanding our use of feminist research methods to further our understanding of the field of rhetoric and composition.
CHAPTER 6
CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

Our attempts to listen, see, and find out about our lives as teachers and scholars in rhetoric and composition—our research—has been traditionally dominated by biased research methodologies. Thus, the way we see our field, and more particularly our classrooms, is skewed by these biases. As I explained in chapter one, women and their concerns have been left on the margins of both the rhetorical tradition and the development of research methodologies utilized in the academy. As composition and rhetoric scholars continue to adopt methodologies from other fields, as we begin to claim our position as a discipline within the contemporary academic community, we continue to import and to perpetuate the biases inherent in those methodologies. Therefore, it is of little surprise that when we turn to pedagogical theories in our field, we see an absence of attention to the concerns of female teachers of writing.

Having been involved in the study described here, I have become keenly aware of gaps in our pedagogical theories—silences that ignore what it means to teach as a

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27 The work of cognitivists such as Hayes and Flower is one example of the importation of research methodologies from the social sciences into composition studies. Their work has been the subject of much debate that I will not address but which offers an example of the problems I mention.
woman, what it means to deal with gender-specific problems in the writing classroom. One such example is the work of liberatory pedagogy theorists such as Ira Shor and Henry Giroux.28 Their work has been heavily criticized by feminist scholars in women's studies because, as Carmen Luke suggests, from a feminist position, the discourse of critical pedagogy "constructs a masculinist subject which renders its emancipatory agenda for 'gender' theoretically and practically problematic" (25). She explains that contemporary liberatory pedagogy is founded on three theoretical histories: "first generation Frankfurt School critical theory, Gramsci's concept of hegemony . . . , and on Freire's educational theory and practices of 'conscientization'" (27). And she suggests that all three of these counterhegemonic fronts were founded on patriarchal ideologies. This theoretical history carries with it an assumption that teachers are male. And because of the different cultural climates experienced by men and women in our society, this assumption leads liberatory pedagogy to ignore women's unique subject position. The instructor created with the discourse of liberatory pedagogy is able to maintain a double identity as both a teacher and a man, which allows him to assume both a cultural and institutional power.

Our research project, based on feminist methods of inquiry that focus on women's specific situations and concerns, calls into question pedagogies that don't

28 While Henry Giroux's work is not directly related to composition classrooms in particular, his work is heavily drawn upon by composition scholars, particularly those interested in liberatory pedagogy.
account for gender. Many women in our survey express frustration when attempting to incorporate pedagogies that assume this masculinist subject—and these include liberatory pedagogy, discussed in chapter five, as well as more traditional approaches to the writing classroom. An example of the later is the issue of grading that I discussed in the previous chapter. Our study shows that women have a difficult time maintaining authority, particularly the authority to critique and grade student papers. Women in our survey have been threatened, harassed, and even fired for problems that arise when students refuse to respect a woman's ability to grade appropriately. And yet, Robert A. Schwegler in "The Politics of Reading Student Papers" maintains that

Admittedly, the power of teachers is greater than that of students, so to speak of contingent authorities is not to envision equal power. The relationships of power within American education and society sharply limit the extent to which authority can be effectively redistributed in any classroom. In addition, a teacher's knowledge, skill, and experience relative to the students often creates an imbalance in authority. (221)

Here Schwegler makes sweeping generalizations about the "authority" of writing teachers, without any regard to the gender of that teacher, or any regard to the complications that gender and other differences can create within this student/teacher relationship. Our research calls this assumption into question and in doing so, demands that theories of composition pedagogy must begin to theorize gender as a significant factor in classroom—for not only the student, but the teacher as well.

Feminist scholars have already come a long way in this journey, developing a proliferation of discussions about gender in the classroom that focuses on student
experiences. These discussions have furthered our understanding of the different educational environments experienced by male and female students. In *Gender in the Classroom: Power and Pedagogy*, Susan Gabriel and Isaiah Smithson have collected numerous contributions to our understanding of these dynamics. Smithson says:

American education does profound, lasting, psychological damage to many of its female students. Giving girls and women a woefully incomplete history of their sex, offering them literary texts considered canonical in part because of their projection of male fantasies hostile to women, insinuating that there are some subjects and some careers that are inappropriate for women, allowing males to dominate classroom interaction, responding to a woman's classroom comment with sexual harassment such as, "Well, I'm not sure what you said, but your eyes certainly lit up when you said it"—through these and thousands of similar institutional and personal gestures, universities and teachers exercise their power over female students. In doing so, they join the rest of society in attempting to undermine girls' and women's belief in themselves. (5)

The work of many feminist scholars—women and men who are concerned about the destruction caused by gender inequities in our society—have made important progress in uncovering classroom biases and recovering women in education. But these studies have not yet begun to theorize the gender of teachers and show how the sexist assumptions of our culture plays out in the classroom dynamics between teacher and student. Thus, while our pedagogical theories have begin to take into account the gendered student, they have not yet fully considered the gendered teacher.

Some recent work is being done that theorizes the gender of writing teachers and suggests we have much work to do in this area. Russ Cunningham and Samantha H. Goldstein present a collaborative investigation of the gendered writing teacher in their
essay "The Writing Instructor as Gendered Text: A Collaborative Inquiry." In this essay
the authors each question their own position as gendered writing teachers by describing
their own classrooms and interactions with students. They suggest that the writing
teacher is a gendered text that students read in different ways depending on the sex of
the teacher. Cunningham says that his students read his masculine position in such a
way as to reinscribe his own ability to "operate pedagogically if not entirely as a
disembodied presence in the writing classroom, then at least as a highly mobile and
almost omnisciently situated one," while Goldstein says she becomes "a poster girl for
the material in [the writing] class" (36, 45). According to Goldstein,

While Russ's presence as a white male in the feminist classroom constructs a
safety zone from which he has relative autonomy to investigate women's writing
about race and sexuality, I, in a sense, come to embody some of these texts—
perhaps not as much as if I were more racially or ethnically visible but,
nevertheless, more so than Russ. (43-44)

This analysis of the gendered teacher suggests that we cannot ignore the gender
of teachers as we construct pedagogies for the writing classroom because issues of
gender and other differences have a significant impact on the way students react to what
we do. Cunningham's analysis of his own position as a male teacher complicates our
tendencies to see only women as gendered and men as neutral. He says "radical and
postmodern feminisms ... are directed as much toward the liberation of men from rigid
constructions of masculinity as they are toward the deliverance of women from the
inequities of a 'fragile' and subaltern femininity" (33). And yet, while it is important to
see how men also are constrained by traditional stereotypes of gender, we cannot forget,
as Cunningham himself reminds us, that men are situated in a different and more privileged position than women. He says,

While my critical writing pedagogy ought to be involved in the effort to embody knowledge, my maleness and the discourses it evokes seem to keep me considerably out-of-body in the writing classroom. Achieving masculine presence of mind through an absence of body, I've become an invisible, off-screen spokesman for what often reads like a ten-week infomercial on feminism. (37)

Cunningham and Goldstein's work reminds us that, as Ann Ardis says, as teachers we must "account for the pedagogical impact of our bodies [because] who we are, as we are positioned both institutionally and as bodies in the world, conditions the effect of what we say" (168).

In Goldstein's analysis of her own teaching, she echos the women in our survey who are confronted with student's expectations of nurturing by female teachers and other "motherly" attributes. She says, "I have to realize that my new position (in which I represent not only student voices but also a critical approach to a variety of texts) often places me jarringly in opposition to my more "natural," appropriate role as a feminine nurturer of student writing" (43). Goldstein goes on to examine how both her and her students have a strong tendency to cast her in the maternal role of nurturer, a role that is often in conflict with, for example, critically evaluating student writing. Her analysis and my own in chapter five challenge Janice Hays' recent adoption of the term "parental" rather than maternal to characterize a feminist pedagogy, in order to avoid the dichotomizing gender-role attributes that the term maternal inevitably evokes" (161).
While I am sympathetic to Hays' reasoning for this adaptation of the metaphor, I am also weary of conflating two terms like mother and father, which hold vastly different discursive meanings in our culture. I find it ironic, and a bit dangerous in light of the above discussions of gender differences, that Hays concentrates on the different educational experiences of male and female students in her essay and yet is willing to ignore the gender differences inherent in, but made invisible by her choice of, the term parenting.

We must, I think, be careful of the terms we chose to describe ourselves, our students, and our pedagogies because, as rhetoricians, we must be accountable for the implications of our discourse. Kenneth Bruffee's book on collaborative learning, in which he argues for restructuring the foundation of the academy through collaborative learning, provides an illustration of what I see as dangerous discourse. Take for example this quotation that I used in a recent CCCC's presentation:

To turn classrooms into arenas in which students can negotiate their ways into new knowledge communities in this way [through collaborative learning], college and university teachers have to discover points of access or ports of entry to the relevant community that are appropriate to the varieties of nonmembers in their charge. They have to discover ways to help those nonmembers loosen their loyalty to some of the communities they are already members of—to "divorce" themselves from those communities, as Perry puts it—and marry instead into the knowledge community that the teacher represents (79).

During our discussion of this quotation at CCCC's, I was convinced that many share my hesitations about the use of this metaphor. The idea of marriage—a foundational ideology on which Bruffee's theory is built—represents an historically
oppressive institution. The suggestion that we expect students to forfeit what women in
the past and much of the present forfeit for this institution becomes extremely
problematic when we stop to think about what the institution of marriage has meant to
women as an oppressed class of people. The above example is not an isolated case in
Bruffee's text. He quite often uses the marriage metaphor when referring to the
transition students make when entering academic communities. And while his
metaphor might be very accurate in that students are expected to forfeit their own voices
and connections to their own nonacademic communities, it seem contradictory that
Bruffee should want to reproduce this ideology in his "anti-foundational" theory of
education.

Let me illustrate the power of this metaphor and the oppressive ideology it
reproduces with some statistics about student progress at the University of Arizona,
which is geographically located in a borderland of multicultures being close to the
Mexican border and Native American reservations. At this institution American Indian,
African American, Asian, and Hispanic students make up 20 percent of the student
body, while White and foreign students make up 77 percent and 2.5 percent
respectively.¹ For those American minority students, the combined graduation rate is
only 16.3 percent compared with 83.8 percent for white students. Going back to the
marriage metaphor, we might say that minority students have a much more difficult

¹ Statistics based on a 1993 report, "Why Do Diversity," from the University of Arizona Teaching Center.
time "divorcing" themselves from their own communities in order to "marry" into the academy, while white students don't seem to have as much trouble. A probable reason for these groups of students having different educational success rates is that the academic community more closely resembles the communities from which white students come so that they do not have to give up their own values and traditions but rather adapt to some of the minor differences between white American culture and the academy. Minority students, on the other hand, are asked not only to adapt themselves into the academy but into the Anglo-centric patriarchal structure of white American culture that is prevalent in colleges and universities. Women face a similar situation as Elizabeth Flynn and Patrocinio Schweickart point out when they suggest that women must adopt a male persona in order to succeed in the academy.

From this example I think it is clear that collaborative theory and pedagogy based on these oppressive and exclusive ideological assumptions will not succeed in helping women and minority students, the majority of whom decide not to divorce themselves from their own values and traditions. Bruffee and other proponents of collaborative pedagogies have done much to show us the importance and validity of collaborative learning, but until we begin to recognize, question, and change these ideological assumptions that we reproduce, often inadvertently through oppressive metaphors, we remain supporters of the hegemony.

We might begin by developing a new pedagogy of community that does not value difference in a superficial way that says each person brings unique contributions
to a learning group, but one that recognizes those differences as essential parts of the new communities. Thus differences need not be eventually forfeited in order for students to conform to the academic ideal, which reflects the hegemonic nature of our culture, history, and politics.

As we work together to create pedagogies for writing classrooms--strategies that we can utilize to promote the use and understanding of language as it is shaped by and as it shapes our cultural--I suggest we turn the powerful tools of feminist methodologies on ourselves to examine and explore how gender affects what we do as male and female teachers of writing. In doing so we may begin to create a new language with which to discuss problems of sexist aggression in the classroom, a language we can use to turn these challenges into learning opportunities for ourselves and our students.

New Directions for Feminist Research

To accomplish feminist goals in our research within rhetoric and composition, we must continue to develop methodologies that are compatible with and developed in conjunction with feminist theories. One such important concern is that of feminists to make their work accessible to those outside the academy as well as those within. Many of the women writers who Kirsch studied expressed a desire to write for nonacademic audiences in order to make their scholarship "available and beneficial to the population
being studied" as well as other more general audiences (93). But they found this to be a difficult task. As Kirsch explains:

Women who pursue their desire to reach general audiences take a number of risks: they have to insist on the value of their scholarship within the academic community despite the tendencies of those communities to devalue popular publications; they have to commit more time to their writing if they are to meet both their academic obligations to publish in professional journals and their goals to reach nonacademic audiences; and they have to transform academic kinds of writing to be more accessible to general audiences. Because women already occupy a marginal position in the academic setting, writing unconventional forms of discourse for public audiences further challenges their authority. (96)

But these difficulties are not new, nor are they impossible to overcome. They echo the trails of those who fought for the right to vote, the right to hold office, the right to occupy positions of authority. Likewise, they echo the struggles of those who urge us to value domestic labor, to overcome the divisions between the personal and the public, to respect the concerns of women.

In joining the ranks of the women and men who struggle to create a more egalitarian community, society, and world, feminist researchers have an obligation to "tell the truth about their lives" as scholars and women within the academy (Heilbrun 25). Heilbrun argues that because women, up until the eighteenth century, had no models for writing about women in a way that expressed the truth of their lives, they themselves could not tell the truth of their own lives and become mentors to future generations (25). While working conditions for women have changed and continue to improve, we are still often compelled to measure our accomplishments and dreams
against myths of womanhood that are perpetuated because women have not spoken the truth of their lives, both their dreams and their problems.

Drawing on the personal through various forms of narration and autobiography--forms that would necessarily challenge the traditional constraints of research reports--is one way that we can begin sharing our stories of feminist academic inquiry. In doing so we can begin to develop more than objectified data as a result of research; we can develop new methodologies for feminist research. Feminist scholars in rhetoric are currently working to expand the definition of rhetoric to include alternative discursive forms. In the anthology *Reclaiming Rhetoric*, for example, contributors show how women have historically used conversation, multivoiced writing, and autobiography to undermine the silence imposed on them in public discourse (see Glenn, "Reexamining"; Kolodny; Sutherland; and Redfern).

These historical figures turned to alternative discourse, usually considered "private" discursive forms because they were denied, in many cases, the opportunity to speak in a public form. But today, postmodern feminist theories are collapsing this split between private and public, encouraging writers to investigate the private within public discourse. French feminists, most notably Héloïse Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Luce Irigaray, have developed theories of écriture féminine, which (1) "stresses the ways in which women's bodies--including our perceptions of ourselves as women and our sexual experiences--have been appropriated and determined by men," (2) suggests that "language is itself a body function," and (3) emphasizes "the role of the mother's body in
feminine writing" (Sellers 139-40).

French feminists' attempt to reclaim writing in an alternative and feminine form is one example of how scholars work within postmodernism to challenge patriarchal constraints on women and their language. And it is within our current postmodern climate that we can look for new opportunities to establish situated and contingent truths within feminist research that together open up possibilities for more substantial feminist work in our field. Foucault uses the term *initiators of discursive practices* to describe writers who produce "not only their own work, but the possibility and the rules of formation of other texts" (189). And feminist researchers must have this dual purpose in mind as we collectively struggle against the constraints of traditional scholarship in our field. Lester Faigley, drawing on the work of Jane Flax, says:

> there is nothing outside contingent discourses to which a discourse of values can be grounded--no eternal truths, no universal human experience, no universal human rights, no overriding narrative of human progress. The foundational concepts associated with artistic judgement such as "universal value" and "intrinsic merit," with science such as "truth" and "objectivity," and with ethics and law such as "rights" and freedom" suddenly have no meaning outside of particular discourses and are deeply involved in the qualities they are alleged to be describing objectively. (8)

Thus, we are obligated to situate our work within specific contexts, describing more than merely what we see by examining the social and physical influences that direct our understanding of knowledge.

Cheryl Glenn articulates this postmodern change within our field when she says, "Until recently, we could pull a neatly folded history of rhetoric out of our glove
compartment, unfold it, and navigate our course through the web of lines that connected
the principal centers of rhetoric... For years, we ignored the borders of our map, the
shadowy regions where roads run off the edge of the paper and drop away at sharp
angles" ("Remapping" 287). But now, according to Glenn, we are developing "new,
often partially completed maps that reflect and coordinate our current institutional,
intellectual, political, and personal values, all of which have become markedly more
diverse and elastic in terms of gender, race, and class" (287). Glenn suggests that
feminist research in the histories of rhetoric can help us remap the roots of our field to
be more inclusive and therefore more useful in fulfilling "our needs as citizens,
researchers, teachers, students, and colleagues in the diverse and multidisciplinary
professions of rhetorics" (300). I agree with Glenn, that we can learn more about our
present situations as feminists in this field through an investigation of history, and I also
suggest we learn from the process utilized by those who have historically struggled
against oppression.

Conscious Resistance

My own research has led me to consider how women have historically worked to
improve conditions for themselves, and possibilities for others. I suggest we hold their
struggles as a model that we can both draw upon and tailor to our needs within rhetoric
and composition studies. Teresa de Lauretis says:
The fact that today the expression consciousness raising has become dated and more than slightly unpleasant, as any word will that has been appropriated, diluted, digested and spewed out by the media, does not diminish the social and subjective impact of a practice—the collective articulation of one's experience of sexuality and gender—which has produced, and continues to elaborate, a radically new mode of understanding the subject's relation to social-historical reality. Consciousness raising is the original critical instrument that women have developed toward such understanding, the analysis of social reality, and its critical revision. (186)

While, as de Lauretis suggests, popular cultural can take our words and diminish their power, as has happened with the term feminism, which so many women reject now because of its negative political connotations outside the academy,² we can still claim the importance of consciousness raising as a social and political tool for increasing our awareness of ourselves and the situations of others.

In her article on feminist pedagogy, Kathleen Weiler discusses the importance of consciousness-raising groups to the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s. She highlights three aspects of these groups: (1) a grounding in the need for political action, (2) a reliance on experience and feeling, and (3) a common sharing of experience in a collective group. I want to briefly outline how these three traits can improve the working conditions for women teachers of writing.

Many of our respondents referred to the politics of teaching writing as a source

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² One need only read a sample of the critiques of Hilary R. Clinton that have proliferated in the past few years because of her active involvement in our government to see how the media have demonized the term feminist.
for problems. One woman tells of a student who turned in two pages of a required 32-page journal. His grade fell from a "B" to a "D" based on the grading criteria in her syllabus. Yet her writing coordinator suggested she raise the grade to avoid problems.

This teacher writes:

This lack of support or credibility, in most cases, severely restricts many non-tenured and part-time faculty. Students believe if they threaten, cajole, or harass long enough, the grade will be modified. . . . Yet if we complained rather than accept graciously, our course load and continued employments might be seriously jeopardized.

Another woman from the same school said, "As long as these [teaching] positions are second class, students will perceive vulnerability."

Kathie Sarachild says that participants in consciousness-raising groups were "interested in getting to the roots of problems in society. You might say we wanted to pull up weeds in the garden by their roots, not just pick off the leaves at the top to make things look good momentarily" (Weiler 457). Likewise, attempts to change the cold climate in the classroom for women must be directed at the roots. We cannot solve these problems individually or personally. Teachers of writing, men and women alike, need to talk among themselves and with administrators. We need to argue for stricter policies against student-to-teacher harassment. We need to be supported by our institutions in our efforts to make classrooms places where women can hold authority, where women are respected, where sexist behavior is not tolerated. To do this, we must act collectively and politically on local, state, national, and international levels. One
respondent expressed the value of a politically oriented approach to these issues:

The program I teach in is very successful and supportive because it makes available information, advice, and support (mentoring groups and conferences with experienced teachers). . . . Also, the program itself emphasizes a social-political approach to writing that foregrounds these issues rather than ignoring them.

Unfortunately, not all women feel such support in their programs. One woman describes a male student coming to her office for a conference. At one point he told her he wanted to "lay" her on the table. This teacher then said she didn't talk to her supervisor because she could handle the problem on her own and didn't want to "let the student get the best of her." Another teacher wrote about a student who turned in "several papers filled with obscenities and accounts of violent sexual acts." When she reported this to the administration, they told her either to fail the papers or to let the student rewrite them. They suggested she was overacting to want the student out of her class. If we are to challenge these abusive attacks from students and the passive acceptance of this behavior from administrators, we have to develop a reliance on our experiences and our feelings. Then, we need to work collectively to convince others, including program administrators, to take us seriously.

In doing so, we must begin to value our experiences and to share those experiences with others in the field. There needs to be open communication about gender specific problems--not from the top down--the dominant style of management in bureaucracies--but grassroots. That is, mentors and administrators need to listen to women teachers. As one respondent said,
I am hopeful that the copies of this very survey will begin a dialogue here. It would be useful if our leadership were willing to listen to stories about our experiences (rather than tell us what our experiences are) and educate themselves regarding how these dynamics play out.

Maxine Green suggests that "We have to exert ourselves to name what we see around us (the hungers, the passivity, the homelessness, the inarticulateness) and reach out somehow, not only to envisage and imagine, but to repair" (2). She reminds us that healing begins with naming those conflicts that pursue us. Healing begins in a community that values the experiences of others, whether those experiences resemble ours or are alien to us--it begins with the ability to both speak and listen among ourselves and among diverse audiences.
APPENDIX A

LETTER AND SURVEY FOR ADMINISTRATORS

October 5, 1995

Dear Writing Program Administrator,

We are conducting a WPA-sponsored survey to determine how administrators and female composition teachers deal with gender-specific problems, including student-to-teacher harassment, that they, as instructors, encounter in the writing classroom. Our goal is to produce an article which (1) defines gender-specific problems; (2) identifies current procedures designed to alleviate such problems; and (3) suggests ways to improve these procedures.

To meet this goal, we need information from both WPAs and female composition teachers. Please fill out the Survey for Writing Program Administrators and also distribute the Letter, Survey for Composition Teachers, and a SASE to nine female teachers of undergraduate composition who hold a variety of positions and represent various ages and ethnic groups.

We have coded the survey packets so that we can trace responses while assuring anonymity for those who prefer it.

Please return this survey by November 15, 1994. If your program has a teacher's manual or any published policies that address gender-specific problems, please send these materials with the survey and disregard any questions that are answered by it. We will send you a copy of the article upon your request.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Julia Ferganchick-Neufang

Julie Jung

Tilly Warnock
Survey for Writing Program Administrators

Name (optional): __________________________ Phone (optional): __________
Gender: ______ Female ______ Male
Ethnicity: __________________________
Years as WPA ______ Years at current institution: ______

**Answer the following questions based on information from the past two years.**

How would you generally define gender-specific problems that affect female teachers in the writing classroom?

How would you define student-to-teacher harassment?

How many incidents of gender-specific problems (including student-to-teacher harassment), if any, have arisen for teachers in your program ______?

How did you find out about these problems?

How were these problems resolved?

How many in each category teach undergraduate composition courses in your writing program?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time instructors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time instructors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Teaching assistants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How many undergraduate composition courses does each of the following teach per (check one) ______ semester ______ quarter?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Full-time instructors</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Part-time instructors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate teaching assistants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What training does your program provide to new teachers? (Check all that apply)

_____ Workshops
_____ Manual
_____ Handouts
_____ Lectures
_____ Individual Conferences
_____ None
Is this training provided for (check one) _____ one semester _____ two semesters _____ other? If other, describe:

Is this training required or optional for each category listed below?

- Faculty _____ required _____ optional
- Full-time instructors _____ required _____ optional
- Part-time instructors _____ required _____ optional
- Graduate teaching assistants _____ required _____ optional
- Other _____ required _____ optional

Does this training address gender-specific problems as you have defined them?

_____ yes _____ no.
If yes, describe:

Outline your institutional policies that protect teachers from student harassment: (Attach copies if available)

Outline your program policies that protect teacher from student harassment:

Outline the procedures a teacher in your program should take if harassed by a student:

In what ways does your program succeed in addressing gender-specific problems in the writing classroom?

How would your program better address gender-specific problems in the writing classroom?

How might WPAs and composition teachers better communicate their positions and needs to one another regarding gender-specific problems in the writing classroom?

Please use the back of this page for additional information and/or to tell us your story.
Dear Composition Teacher,

We are conducting a WPA-sponsored survey to determine how administrators and female composition teachers deal with gender-specific problems, including student-to-teacher harassment, in the writing classroom. Our goal is to produce an article which (1) defines gender-specific problems; (2) identifies current procedures designed to alleviate such problems; and (3) suggests ways to improve these procedures.

With your input, this study will yield much-needed information about the working conditions of composition teachers. Your responses are valuable to us regardless of whether or not you have experienced gender-specific problems in your classroom. We have coded the survey packets so that we can trace responses to institutions while assuring anonymity for those who prefer it.

Please return this survey in the attached SASE by November 15, 1994. We will send you a copy of the article upon your request.

Thank you for your help.

Julia Ferganchick-Neufang

Julie Jung

Tilly Warnock
Survey for Writing Teachers

Name (optional): __________________ Phone (optional):_________
Gender: ______ Female ______ Male
Ethnicity: ______________________
Years teaching in current institution: ____ Total years teaching composition: ____

1. How would you generally define gender-specific problems that affect female teachers in the writing classroom?

2. How would you define student-to-teacher harassment?

Answer the following questions based on your experiences teaching undergraduate writing courses in the last two years.

3. How many courses do you teach per (choose one) semester _____ or quarter _____?

4. List the undergraduate writing courses you've taught in the last two years:
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>Required? (yes/no)</th>
<th>Max Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

5. How many hours a week do you spend (1) in the classroom _____, (2) grading and preparing for class _____, (3) holding office hours _____, and (4) other teaching-related activities _____?

6. Are you a (check one):
   
   Full-time instructor ______ Graduate teaching assistant ______
   Part-time instructor ______ Faculty member ______? Tenured? ___yes ___no
   If none of these, describe your position:

7. Which method do you use most in your writing classroom? (number them 1-4; #1 for most frequently used)
   ___ Lecture ___ Whole group discussion ___ Small groups ___ Student Presentation

8. Did you receive any teacher training from the program in which you now teach?
   ___ yes ___ no
   If yes, briefly describe that training and answer the questions below:

   A. Do you think this training gave you greater confidence as a teacher? ___ yes ___ no
   Explain:
B. Did this teacher training address gender-specific issues in the writing classroom? ___ yes ___ no. If yes, explain:

C. Did the teacher training you described above deal with issues of student-to-teacher harassment? ___ yes ___ no. If yes, explain:

9. Describe any teacher training you have had elsewhere, including the dates of that training.

10. Have you ever used your program's mentoring or advising system to discuss gender-specific problems in the writing classroom? ___ yes ___ no ___ no such system. If yes, were you satisfied with the mentoring/advising you received? ___ yes ___ no. Explain:

11. Do you think many of the teachers in your program face gender-specific problems in the writing classroom? Explain:

12. Does you awareness of these problems affect how you teach? ___ yes ___ no ___ N/A.
   Explain:

13. Have you experienced gender-specific problems (including student-to-teacher harassment) in the writing classroom? ___ yes ___ no.
   If yes, describe the incident(s) and include the date(s). Continue on back if necessary.

If you answered "yes" to question 13, answer the following questions about the course(s) in which the incident(s) took place. If you answered "no," skip to question 14.

   A. What percentage of your students were 18-22 years old _____; women _____; people of color _____?

   B. Which method did you use most in the problematic class(es)? (number them 1-4; #1 for most frequently used)
      ___ Lecture ___ Whole group discussion ___ Small groups ___ Student Presentation

   C. Did you require a text(s) that foregrounded gender issues? ___ yes ___ no.
      If yes, what text did you use?
D. Did you have problems with (check one) ___ 1 student, ___ 2-3 students, or ___ 3 or more students?

E. Identify distinctive characteristics of the(se) student(s):

14. Are there procedures in your program that teachers should follow if harassed by a student? ___ yes ___ no ___ do not know. If yes, describe:

15. Have you followed the above procedures? ___ yes ___ no ___ N/A. Explain:

16. In what ways does your program succeed in dealing with gender-specific problems?

17 What additional support could your program provide to deal with gender-specific problems?

Please use the back of this page to tell us your story.
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