NEGOTIATING IDENTITY IN ACADEMIC WRITING: EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN DOCTORAL STUDENTS

DISSERTATION

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By

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To my precious children, Sonny and Douglas,
and to my Sisters in Academe
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CHAPTER I
AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN AND DISCOURSES OF IDENTITY

[W]omen are not only participating in but are also transforming the academy with their writing...they are redefining what it means to be a writer and researcher in the academic context.

--Gesa E. Kirsch

To be a person of color in the United States is to be an outsider, a problem, unequal, and here to be used. To breathe this cultural air makes it necessary to struggle for spiritual, community, and physical survival. Also, to be somebody and have positive regard for yourself and your race means going against the tide and necessitates resistance, defiance, and occasionally open rebellion.

--Benjamin Bowser, Gale Auletta, and Terry Jones

Introduction

Gesa Kirsch's rather optimistic statement introduces a study of writing strategies among "successful" academic women. Women Writing the Academy investigates how women across academic disciplines perceive and describe their experiences as writers in the university. As much as this study can be viewed as ground-breaking work, however, it adequately addresses neither the realities of life for African American women in the academy nor our unique experiences as academic writers.
Like any writer, Kirsch can best reflect the community she is most familiar with, in this case, the community of "Caucasian" women academics. Her research agenda may even seek to include Black women (peripherally) under a broad feminist perspective which, in certain details, does resonate with issues of importance to us. But I am concerned that her selection of an overwhelmingly White research population, together with her stated avoidance of issues of marginalization that affect our survival in the academy, reinforces White women's experiences as the "norm" in academe, which in turn perpetuates our relegation to the academy's margins.

Joy James and Ruth Farmer report that African American women faculty were found to comprise a mere 1.9 percent of full-time faculty in 1985. Of that number, only 0.6 percent were full professors and 1.4 percent were associate professors, while 2.7 percent were assistant professors and 3 percent were instructors, lecturers, and others. I have seen little to suggest that these numbers have increased appreciably since their publication. They, along with "the institutional gross indifference to African American women academics" documented repeatedly in their essay collection, have prompted James and Farmer to claim that "in academe, where scholarship and professional input are often denigrated because of race and gender biases, we are underrepresented and overly concentrated in positions without
institutional power" (2). On the threshold of joining these predominantly White faculty ranks, I am distressed by such claims of under-representation and powerlessness among African American women, particularly in light of the optimism found in Kirsch's study of White women.

As a rhetorician, I sense that the dynamic of our enfranchisement in academia is at least partially related to our rhetorical effectiveness there, particularly in the impression of our scholarly identities that we suggest in the minds of academic readers. Our characters, as perceived by those readers, play a significant role in "composing" us as members of our academic communities. Judgments about us, based on the "quality" of our written work--and, through those judgments, the according of collegial respect and the distribution of material rewards--are made by readers who have the power to accept us into their intellectual communities or exclude us from them. Evidence of this evaluative process can be seen at all levels, from the course papers, examinations, and theses of graduate students to the array of materials submitted by faculty members for publication, tenure, and promotion decisions. Communication theorist Sidney Ribeau asserts that "the academic experience can empower or silence. It empowers through the inclusion of content which speaks to the breadth of human experience; it silences through the exclusion of those outside the
mainstream" (26). This dissertation project specifically investigates the experiences of African American women in graduate school in order to foreground issues minimized in works by writers like Kirsch. By examining our efforts to establish effective textual identities for ourselves, which in turn helps to tell our story of resistance and of survival, this work becomes an instrument for our enfranchisement in the academy.

As African American women, we often seem to have considerable difficulty eliciting positive judgments about the persuasive quality of our work, especially if, in foregrounding perspectives on spirituality, community survival, and human development, we resist the traditional (i.e., Eurocentric and masculinist) values of rationalism and materialism which privilege the secular over the spiritual, the political over the personal, and the individual over the community (James and Farmer 121). Defending our ability to make knowledge through discourse (ostensibly a basic intellectual project of the academy), Barbara Christian points out that "people of color have always theorized--but in forms quite different from the Western form of abstract logic...our theorizing...is often in narrative forms, in the stories we create... [in] dynamic rather than fixed ideas..." (qtd. in James and Farmer 118). Since European- and masculine-oriented intellectual traditions have assumed "universal" or
normative status in American academic communities, other methods of knowledge-making, like those described by Christian, tend to be marginalized in these communities.

Black women (and men) in academe have therefore borne the "inescapable burden," in the words of Cornell West, of defending "the humanity of Black people, including their ability and capacity to reason logically, think coherently, and write lucidly." Being made to feel responsible for the race, according to West, "has often determined the content and character of Black intellectual activity" (hooks and West 137). bell hooks extends West's contention to point out other pitfalls for African American women in using academic prose:

For Black women scholars and/or intellectuals, writing style may evoke questions of political allegiance. Using a style that may gain one academic acceptance and recognition may further estrange one from a wider Black reading audience.... Choosing to write in a traditional academic style may lead to isolation. And even if one writes along the lines of accepted academic style, there is no guarantee that one's work will be respected. (hooks and West 157)

This situation is appalling if the ideal of education is to enrich and enfranchise, and it must be changed in order for us to more effectively pursue our intellectual and social agenda. Our scholarly writings make key contributions to the fulfillment of those agenda. And while many of our experiences (both positive and negative) as academic writers are of course shared by others who are not African American women, our experiences in the academy
are shaped in special ways by family, church, social, political, and educational institutions, and a history of racial and gender-related oppression. These influences, collectively, condition our lives and work differently from many other academic writers. Insofar as these influences shape our writing processes and products, and through them the larger context of our enfranchisement as scholarly women, these factors warrant closer study if we are make further advances in the academy.

It is important for African American women academics to achieve certain goals with regard to our communities outside the academy. The women I worked with in the course of this project, for example, have spoken of a strong desire use their professional status to enhance the lives of other African Americans. They are responding to the desperate need of our children for teachers and role models. They are responding as well to the need to strengthen the intellectual and moral climate of this country within which our children must grow into productive citizens. They also recognize the need for their expertise and commitment in addressing the economic, political, and social conditions of Black communities, using whatever resources their disciplines have provided them with. I share in this vision of the social relevance of education and have made it part of my own scholarly agenda. In order to enact the kind of change that is needed, we African
American women need to stay strongly connected physically—as well as discursively—to our people; we cannot afford to become alienated from each other at this critical moment in history.

Further, the academy is an important place for people of color to build careers. Writing and teaching in an arena where we can touch thousands of minds directly through our teaching and scholarship, and indirectly through the work of students and colleagues we influence, present invaluable opportunities to help shape the social climate of the nation. We also see opportunities to help fashion the academy as a more diverse intellectual community than it has been at any time in its past, so that it serves all those who aspire to work within it.

In order to achieve such intellectual, social, and political goals (goals which are not shared by a significant number of academics, whose intellectual interests and social agenda are substantially different from ours), we may aim to use scholarly discourse to put on the academic agenda those ideas and perspectives that we perceive to have been suppressed. For instance, we may want to raise issues of racism in canonized texts; we may want to assert a spiritual or moral dimension to ostensibly "objective" secular topics; or we may want to assert the positive effects of linguistic improvisation on meaning. When we employ certain discursive options derived from our
own particular life-experiences, which we consider
essential for the expression of those ideas as well as the
authority that warrants those ideas, we tend to push and
even cross the boundaries of academic convention. Such
discursive border crossings can make valuable contributions
to our disciplines by adding more dimensions to the content
and process of scholarly inquiry. However, making that
kind of contribution does entail changing certain
established "rules of the game." It means destabilizing
received, taken-for-granted notions of what makes writing
"good," and challenging scholars and teachers to
(re-)examine and alter some foundations of their time-
honored practices for reading and responding to works of
their colleagues and students.

But that also means infusing the academy with fresh
ways of understanding and being in the world. Academicians
can no longer rely solely on assumptions formed long ago
(when the academy was even less diverse than it is now)
about the capabilities and positionings of the people who
enter and gain status/power among their ranks. They must
continually reassess those assumptions as they interact
with students and colleagues who bring different
intellectual, social, and cultural orientations to bear on
their work.

Such an enterprise is not easily tolerated, however,
by those who view cultural diversity as a threat to the
stature and function of scholarly discourse, as well as to the sense of solidarity that has traditionally been maintained through relative homogeneity of community members. Those whom the system has always benefitted in tangible and intangible ways risk seeing that benefit dilute or even disappear, and so the press for change meets considerable resistance among many of the "old guard." Thus, if disciplinary discourse is counted as a kind of passport by which individuals gain entrance to and status in an academy which many believe to be plagued by racism and sexism as well as resistance to change, those who write "differently," designating themselves as "outsiders," risk being denied entry or advancement.

Given the unfriendly climate I have just described for those aspiring to enter and/or change the academic institution, where do we African American women learn how to assert an effective yet distinctive scholarly presence in our academic writing? Certainly graduate school, as a cultural institution, must function as an important setting. It is within the rhetorical context of writing for instructors, examination and dissertation committees, and conference reviewers--all of whom represent the academy at large--that we begin to develop the kind of authorial presence that, theoretically at least, should empower us in the academic arena. For myself, and for many of my peers, the distance between our academic and non-academic worlds
is significant. For those who have come to predominantly White universities from historically Black colleges or universities (HBCUs), the distance between what are perceived to be culturally distinctive academic worlds is also great. Our backgrounds are richly diverse in terms of our ages, educational paths, social classes, faith traditions, family make-up, and many other factors.

As we struggle to find rhetorical spaces for ourselves within larger academic communities, issues of voice and identity in written discourse become issues of our very survival. We have been educated in academic institutions whose rhetorical traditions are traceable to ancient Greece and Rome. In particular, the idea that a writer’s image is in part constructed by the writer herself and in part conferred upon the writer by the community persists in the academy today. We are also strongly conditioned by cultural forces whose roots are African in character; thus, we also incorporate African-oriented rhetorical perspectives into our writing—perspectives that add a sense of integration and synthesis to typically Western approaches of compartmentalization and analysis. This dissertation maintains that the interweaving of these diverse influences shapes a particular kind of "writing self" whose rhetorical identity (textual cues about a writer's personal attributes that serve a persuasive function in her text) "authorizes" the content of a text.
If our rhetorical choices as graduate students foreground these culturally-mediated perspectives over our training in the academy's cultural conventions, attempts at textual self-portrayal can be dangerous. Claiming the right to speak and be heard as African American women, and at the same time as enfranchised members of our academic communities, is hampered by our very status as graduate students. As discussion in later chapters of this dissertation will suggest, we sense an assumption on the part of many professors that, because we are "only" students, we have not yet fully developed the capacity for conceptualization and argumentation judged according to standards held by those professors; that our limited experiences within their communities diminish our credibility; that we do not fully embrace the (Eurocentric) authorities valued by our professors; that we have not developed the "habits of mind" that mark a scholar in the (Eurocentric) academic traditions. Seldom do we observe these communities valuing, or even tolerating, the conceptualizations, experiences, authorities, and "habits of mind" that incorporate non-Eurocentric worldviews we are familiar with, perspectives that help constitute our very selves. Our concerns about this mindset on the part of our professors, accentuated by our position near the bottom of the academic hierarchy, tend to erode our confidence in our ability to make knowledge and speak authoritatively in the
academy from a "self-defined standpoint" which grows out of our particular experiences with work, family, and so forth (Collins 24).

Many of these issues have become visible to me over time as a result of reflecting on informal conversations with Black women (and men) Ph.D. students. However, they were brought painfully to the foreground of my consciousness during the weekend I wrote one of my candidacy examinations. I'd been composing my major area exam since Friday afternoon; by Sunday night, with the paper due in the English department office Monday morning, I'd finished only two questions out of four. The question I had been wrestling with was so innocently simple: "What is your teaching philosophy?" This was THE question I had asked my examiner to pose; it was my eagerly awaited chance to explain to someone in the field exactly what my formal education and life experiences have prepared me to accomplish in the world. But sitting in my room that night--literally and figuratively in the dark--visions of the three White women on my examination committee begin to dance in my head. And I asked myself over and over again, how could I possibly say to these women the things I needed to convey, from the worldview I brought with me to graduate school and from my position as a teacher/writer/student of color in an institution, which they represent, that can be
a dangerous place for those who think and write "differently?"

How could I articulate, from my own perspective, what needed to be exposed, critiqued, indicted, and changed about the way the academy teaches writing, using the academy's own language (and through that language, its culturally-specific patterns of thinking), citing its authorities, writing in its conventions and under its time constraints? Indeed, I mused, does that institution even desire to know the teaching philosophy of a middle-aged, African American, female, Navy veteran, divorced Catholic, mother of two, who has taught writing to many people who were barely let through the academy's doors—the teaching philosophy of someone who claims that she wants to empower her students to "use the master's tools to dismantle the master's house"? How was I to incorporate this sentiment, in an "acceptable" way, into yet another "depth and breadth" affirmation of my (mostly White-authored, though laudably liberal) reading list. How could I use this question on teaching philosophy to write myself into the conversation of rhetoric and composition studies on my own terms? If this exercise were to encompass identifying myself specifically as a Black woman student/teacher/scholar, as well as in persuading the Institution to authorize me as such, how could I do whatever I must do to
create an effective ethos for the task at hand in the following twelve hours?

This was a pivotal scene in the drama of my graduate school experience, illustrating the kind of self-representation problems that people like me typically face in graduate school and beyond (I've observed from the struggles of faculty members attempting to achieve tenure that these issues are not automatically resolved when we receive our degrees). A major problem in writing my exam was how to turn the discourse of the academy into MY OWN discourse--how to get it to accomplish what I wanted it to--meeting the culturally-mediated expectations of the White women on my committee while simultaneously inviting them to engage issues that are important to me by coming over MY culturally-mediated vantage point.

I learned in the course of defining this project that a number of my peers across disciplines share purposes and strategies, agonies and insights. Through our discursive choices, we attempt to control on numerous levels what we will say in particular situations and how it will be best said. As we come to understand more about how our experiences as African American women relate to our scholarship and teaching, we increasingly claim the right to say to our academic audiences, "we know some things better than you do, our ways of knowing are vigorous and productive and, in many matters, you would do well to
listen to us on our terms--precisely because of who we are." And in saying these things to our academic audiences, we are in many cases, paying a severe price. There are dangers in claiming authority, in graduate school, from a position of Black womanhood: We are burdened with anxiety over course papers returned with our words crossed out and others' words inscribed, over graduate reports that lament that we do not yet know how to "construct arguments," over research topic rejected because it is claimed that they do not merit scholarly treatment and would not generate "sufficient interest" in the field. Are these to be considered affirming efforts on the part of our professors to guide us to a stronger sense of ourselves as intellectual women of color? Or are they designed to force us into less disruptive locations within the established academic landscape? Many times, we simply cannot be sure of which messages are encoded in these kinds of responses to our work. And upon receiving those messages, we are often unsure of the best response.

The marginalization attendant to what Collins calls "outsider-within" status (any situation in which one is placed in close proximity to a group, and even allowed to participate in group activities, but is not accepted as a fully enfranchised member) "can be the source of both frustration and creativity" (233). She examines several
behavioral tendencies that can ground our rhetorical options:

In an attempt to minimize the differences between the cultural context of African American communities and the expectations of social institutions, some women dichotomize their behavior and become two different people. Over time, the strain of doing this can be enormous. Others reject their cultural context and work against their own best interests by enforcing the dominant group's specialized thought. Still others manage to inhabit both contexts but do so critically, using their outsider-within perspectives as a source of insights and ideas. (233)

But while those who exist along the academy's margins may still be able to somehow participate in its knowledge making enterprise, according to Collins, negotiating for that privilege carries a great personal price. She invokes the observation of Lorraine Hansberry: "Eventually it comes to you...the thing that makes you exceptional, if you are at all, is inevitably that which must also make you lonely" (qtd. in Collins 233). As will be illustrated in later chapters, the women who participated in this study question why such a price must be paid. They continually struggle to reduce the burden which their "outsider-within" status places on their lives.

**Key Issues in Identity Negotiation:**

**A Survey of Scholarship**

The research reported in this dissertation should be viewed within the context of interconnections between selfhood, identity, voice, ethos, and the nature of
academic discourse. Much recent scholarship emerging from many disciplines, including psychology, sociology, linguistics, Black feminist/womanist thought, philosophy of discourse, literacy studies, cultural studies, rhetoric, and communication, is informed by an increasing awareness of the cultural forces which shape self-concept and self-representation. Four key issues, currently debated among scholars, have particular bearing on my study:

- The nature and development of selfhood and identity.
- How identity is developed and expressed through written texts for various purposes, audiences and effects.
- How identity can be effectively developed and expressed specifically in scholarly writing.
- How much control writers themselves have over the expression of rhetorical identity versus how much they must rely on readers to confer identity on them.

A greater understanding of these issues—as they translate into specific rhetorical practices by both writers and readers—can enhance prospects for African American women writers to become more enfranchised members of an academy which increasingly desires to see itself as a multicultural community.

The nature of selfhood and identity: Current research links selfhood and identity in a combination of psychological, social, cultural, and communicative
processes. According to psychologist H. Adelbert Jenkins, the self is in large measure an active entity, the "logical thrust" that a person's intentions give to his pattern of choices" (32). Jenkins asserts that a person conceives of herself, in part, by recognizing herself as an action-oriented entity who makes choices from among diverse options:

Self concept is like the 'trail' one can recognize as one turns to reflect on the steps one has taken. That trail is made of the active decisions that have brought one to this point. The trail of choices is part of the answer to the question, 'What am I?' We are the products of the choices we make--the paths we take. We are self-creating beings to an important degree.... in imposing a conception on events, all human individuals create the 'reality' to which they respond. (32)

As doctoral students, African American women bring to their studies diverse dimensions of reality which are embodied in the scholarly identities they develop in their writings. Sharing this reality with their readers is very much a social and cultural negotiation. Communication theorists Michael L. Hecht, Mary Jane Collier, and Sidney A. Ribeau extend Jenkins' definition of self-concept to the social realm, asserting the self as a system of meanings organized within an individual "that are formed, maintained, and modified through social interaction" (46-7), along with "the dialectic between [individual and social dimensions] and the interpretation of one in the other" (49). These theorists posit that an individual's self-concept emerges from--and is continually redefined
by—social behaviors and interactions which, I would emphasize, include discursive behaviors and relationships with audiences.

Such a self-concept manifests itself in a range of identities, each associated with a situation or role, and sometimes cutting across a wide range of situations and performances (Hecht, Collier and Ribeau 36).

We create an identity through applying...categorical labels to ourselves (e.g., woman, middle-class, yuppie), and these identities are confirmed and validated (or disconfirmed and invalidated) through social interaction (Hecht, Collier, and Ribeau 47).

The theoretical stance of these researchers moves discussions of identity beyond psychological formulations and social constructions as separate, even competing, concepts to discussions of the interaction between them. They assert that identity "must be understood as a transaction in which messages are exchanged. These messages are symbolic linkages between and among people that, at least in part, are enactments of identity" (161).

Marshall Alcorn contests what he sees as the postmodernist position that the self is a "linguistic accident." He outlines the position of those who hold such a view:

Selves do not emerge as they choose to do things with rhetoric; rather rhetoric continually does things to selves. Selves are not creative agents working within the core of the rhetorical process; instead selves are the effects of rhetoric, a sort of epiphenomena constituted by an interplay of social, political, and linguistic forces. There is no inner entity, the self, that chooses its character. Instead, the self
reflects the particular character of larger social forces that determine its nature and movement. Additionally, the self is not necessarily constant or consistent over time. Different social situations trigger different self-structures; it is a mistake to assume an inner core of the self that somehow grounds the various roles the self assumes. (5)

He goes on to explain that both Aristotelian and poststructuralist perspectives on the self "fail to recognize the rhetorical complexity of the human structures they seek to explain" (6). According to Alcorn, the Aristotelian perspective "envisioned an overly strong self able to choose freely its own nature, able to become whatever model it can imagine" while the poststructuralist view "emphasizes the self's lack of freedom, but in so doing it imagines an overly weak self" (6). Alcorn recognizes that theory of self constituted by social discourse can engender an appreciation of the social dimensions of selfhood. Nevertheless, he argues, such a view also "implies that the self, once formed, has no organized, 'characteristic' inner structure" (6). This view has negative implications for the assertion of an active self-determining self, and negates the possibility that writers can work from self-defined standpoints.

A bridge between these views has been developed in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. "The living utterance," Bakhtin affirms, 'cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of utterance' (qtd.
in Baumlin xxii). Nevertheless, According to James S. Baumlin, while Bakhtin and other Marxist theorists suppress the notion an autonomous self in favor of a self which internalizes competing social voices, Bakhtin also asserts that complementary, dialectical pressures are brought to bear on the self by social and psychological factors: "'As living, socio-ideological concrete thing...language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other,' making 'the word in language' half one's own and 'half someone else's'" (qtd. in Baumlin xxii). Extending Bakhtinian thought, Alcorn further synthesizes these notions of self-concept:

The idea of organized self-components explains how and why the self acts rhetorically. It explains why the self sometimes "takes in" or internalizes discourse but also sometimes resists and deflects the surrounding linguistic structures and social formations. Clearly, the self is not a mere radio receptor for social discourse. It is not a passive vehicle, constantly animated in different patterns by the passing through of ceaselessly changing social discourse. The self does not become each and every socially constructed discourse formation it encounters; something within its own inner organization prompts the self to identify with certain social forms and to reject others. (13)

Within the framework of my study, an individual's core identity may be thought of as a mental framework for organizing her life-experiences, roles she has had to play, and other people's impressions of her, into coherent, manageable entities. Over the course of her lifetime, a person's identity comes to be known by her and others as distinct and relatively stable though somewhat modifiable
according to various roles she must play (that is, she can revise her perspectives, judgments, values, and so forth from time to time, but she could never wake up one day and discover that she is really someone else). Jenkins supports this view:

Although different facets of the person may surface from time to time the individual usually has the experience of continuity or identity in the aspects of self that are manifested. This is partly what we mean by a sense of identity. Although I recognize that I tend to be one way in one situation and another way in a different situation, it is still I who am that way. We are aware of a oneness in the many sides of ourselves. (36)

Alcorn concurs, arguing that

it is a mistake to imagine a particular self as a simple, random, and constantly changing collection of texts shaped by historical forces. A particular self is not an infinitely changing collection of voices housed within a biological organism. It is a relatively stable organization of voices. We need not adopt the various modes of self-organization advocated by psychoanalysis, but as rhetoricians, we should acknowledge that the self has a relatively stable inner organization. The different modes of the self vary enormously according to time and place, but each self seems to have a distinctive character—a characteristic "self-structure"—that gives it a distinctive quality. (12)

Alcorn's assertions are particularly relevant to the intellectual struggle of African American women in the academy. It is ironic that, at the moment when many of us are beginning to realize and assert a central 'self-defined' standpoint (which comes from a mixture of Cartesian and African epistemologies), members of the postmodernist intellectual communities to which we are
attempting to gain access are denying even the possibility of a such a standpoint.

Hecht, Collier, and Ribeau outline a process of identity formation in which, as an individual performs various roles under the influence of the reactions of others, the meanings attributed to those roles are internalized over time and are eventually generalized to form the core identities in that person's self (47). Anthony Giddens extends the scholarly treatment of identity development by proposing that a key indicator of identity lies in the "biography" that an individual develops about herself throughout her life. He invokes Charles Taylor's assertion in Sources of the Self that "in order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going" (qtd. in Giddens 54). According to Giddens, any "biography" held in the mind of an individual "is only one 'story' among many other potential stories that could be told about her development as a self" and that "a sense of self identity is often securely enough held to weather major tensions or transitions in the social environments within which the person moves" (55).

This dissertation may be seen, in a sense, as a "biography" of its study participants, partly in terms of the impact of cultural influences on the identity negotiations of writers. The importance of race, gender,
and other variable manifestations of culture on identity formation has been increasingly recognized in research across disciplines. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz argues that the human animal is an incomplete thing that finds its completion only in culture (49). Social psychologists enumerate important racial characteristics, such as language and dialect, nonverbal communication, perspective and world view, ethnic values, and ethnic identification, that constitute African American identity (Hecht and Ribeau 501-3). These characteristics are believed to be profoundly conditioned by childhood and adult socialization, including not only interactions with family and friends, but also social interactions across racial/ethnic boundaries, religious involvement, socioeconomic status, and education (Demo and Hughes 364-6).

Alcorn maintains that "we should assume that different cultures "complete" selves in different ways and provide different structures for rhetorical interaction." Alcorn maintains that we should acknowledge that "different cultures not only imagine and define selves differently but also formulate social and cultural conditions that permit the creation of different selves. Within each social context is a reciprocal relationship between the self that a culture imagines and the shape of self-structure that is lived" (11).
In suggesting a cultural grounding for a writer's conception of herself that is eventually translated into her writing as rhetorical identity, I am using the concept of culture in a comprehensive way. Culture is commonly defined in terms of structures and practices, particularly communicative ones, through which a society announces and sustains its values and social order (Wood 26)—the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and other aspects of human work and thought characteristic of a population or community. From their vantage point, Hecht, Collier, and Ribeau view the concept of culture as "an interpretive processes that manifests itself in code, conversation, and community as a framework for understanding the world (code), interacting with others (conversation), and aligning with groups of people (community)," all of which influences a person's sense of identity (34).

Using these definitions as a foundation, I use the terms "race" (identity based primarily on physical characteristics), "ethnicity" (identity grounded in a shared sense of norms and values, group identity, historical continuity, aesthetics, and so forth), and "gender" (sexual identity associated with biological sex) in terms of their constitution by and situatedness in culture. All of these characteristics of personhood are constructed by culture and learned by the individual. They
are part of a system of social meanings that specify what it means to "be" in a given society at a particular time. Of course, the meanings of these terms vary over time and across cultures, and they are relational as well, gaining much of their meaning from the way that societies interweave them. Age, social class, political affiliation, faith tradition, and many other important factors contributing to one's sense of self may also be discussed in terms of culture.

Hecht, Collier, and Ribeau's assumptions about African Americans, whom they study as an "ethnic culture, which revolves at least in part around race," are useful to my research. In their view, identity formation entails "orienting self toward a particular ethnocultural framework" (34). They propose that "ethnic culture is socially and historically emergent, is co-created and maintained as a function of identity, and is constituted as a system of interdependent patterns of conduct and interpretation" (161).

They further claim that "an Afrocentric perspective on African American social reality starts with recognition of an African past and considers the complexities of life in segregated America and the elements that fundamentally shape people's lives" (14). Afrocentric scholars like Molefe Asante (a.k.a. Arthur Smith) and sociolinguists like Geneva Smitherman demonstrate that African American culture
exhibits significant features of traditional African culture. They make particular note of a sense of unity between the sacred and the secular; a synthesis of dualities in order to achieve balance and harmony, both in the universe and in the community; and a balancing of long-standing group norms with individual improvisation.

The work of Carol Gilligan and the Belenky team to reclaim women's voices emphasizes the impact of gender-related influences on identity. Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, and other womanist thinkers maintain that it is the complex combination of race, gender, and other elements of culture that shapes the African American woman's experience of self. "Identity is multifaceted with gender and ethnicity frequently emerging as hierarchically superordinate," according to Hecht, Collier, and Ribeau. "Further, the interplay of factors such as gender and ethnicity may create a double jeopardy for female African Americans" (78).

Increasingly, scholars of African American cultural identity (e.g., Collins, hooks, King) are recognizing the need to investigate the lives of African American women. These scholars have found that women share a history of gender oppression which transcends divisions created by race, social class, religion and ethnicity (Hartsock; Jaggar; Rosaldo; Smith). Collins, among others, points out that African American women have access to both Afrocentric
and feminist traditions. As Hecht, Collier, and Ribeau remark in their review of Collins' thinking in "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought," "this alternative epistemology is used by African American women to reflect the intersection of values and ideals that Africanist scholars identify as characteristically 'Black' and those described by feminist scholars as characteristically 'female'" (78).

**Representation of the "Writing-Self":** So far, I have been talking about an active, linguistic, culturally-influenced self from which identities are formed. Now it is appropriate to look at the link between identity, "rhetorical identity," "ethos," and "voice" as they relate to self-representation in written texts.

It is useful to borrow Nancy Mairs' conceptualization of her textualized "I" voice: a recording of the writer's identity, continually constructed as the text moves along, out of "whatever materials come to hand" (12). What are those materials, for the African American woman writer? How are they used as construction materials? What function does that constructed identity perform, and why is it rhetorical? Research into these questions addresses the concept that I refer to as "rhetorical identity": a sense of the author's presence, that she builds into a text, for the purpose of achieving certain effects in the minds of her target readers.
Based on her extensive research in gender and communication, Julia T. Wood defines communication as "a dynamic, systematic process in which meanings are created and reflected in human interaction with symbols" (28). As such, a written text is a "portrayal" or a playing out of that interaction. In explaining her point, Wood points out that dynamic refers to whatever influences both writer and reader to think and do later, an ongoing process of cause and effect. Systematic refers to the rhetorical situations or contexts that establish a need for response. That response joins with the situation that gave rise to it to form a discursive system that interlinks to other systems of situation and response systems.

Meanings are variable and constructed, according to Wood. She points to two levels of meaning, content and relationship, the content level being its literal meaning of a text, which indicates what response is expected to follow from the message. The relationship level, according to Wood, defines the relationship between communicators by defining each person's identity and indicating who they are in relation to one another. She believes, and I concur, that the relationship level of meaning is the primary one which reflects and influences how people feel about each other. I further argue that because those relationships inform our interpretation of messages, those relationships are key resources for a writer in negotiating rhetorical
identity, and through that identity, establishing her character in the minds of her readers.

The importance of a rhetor's perceived character has been acknowledged from the earliest moments in the history of rhetorical theory. Displayed through features comprising specific texts as well as through the rhetor's general reputation (following classical rhetorical tradition), her image in the minds of her audiences can be one of the most powerful influences on their judgments of her work. The enfranchisement of African American women as makers of knowledge in such a hostile environment may very well hinge on the daunting task of distinguishing ourselves to our largely White male (and White-male identified) audiences specifically as Black and female in our grounding assumptions, strategies of argument, and writing style, while simultaneously eliciting from those very same audiences a favorable impression of our perceived characters. Like all rhetors, we must invent effective ways to answer our readers' fundamental question: "Who is this person and why should I believe what she says?" How African American women academics address this question in their texts is of great significance in this study.

It has been found by Wood and others that readers construct interpretations of the person behind the text by drawing on their past experiences, their knowledge of the writer, and other factors. Because these interpretations
are heavily influenced by personal experiences, values, thoughts, and feelings, differences between how signals are intended and then perceived can be the source of miscommunication. This problem often develops when the cultures of writer and reader clash on the pages of a text.

In the introduction to his essay collection on ethos, Baumlín proposes that "ethos concerns the problematic relation between human character and discourse; more specifically, it raises questions concerning the inclusion of the speaker's character as an aspect of discourse, the representation of that character in discourse, and the role of that character in persuasion" (xvii). "More than an expression of individual psychology or an intersection of societal forces, ethos is...a verbal manifestation or representation of human character" (Baumlín xxiii). Alcorn states a more classically-oriented view of ethos as "persuasion stemming from the personal qualities of the rhetor" (3) and as "a relationship existing between the discourse structures of selves and the discourse structures of "texts"" (6). "I also want to consider ethos as something energized precisely by the plural, self-oppositional, and divided nature of both the self and conflictual cultural ideologies (Alcorn 21). He asserts that "character, as many argumentation theorists see it operating, is not something behind the force of an
argument; character, in many instances is the force of an argument" (4).

In his introduction to *Landmark Essays on Voice and Writing* Peter Elbow explains the differences between discourse as "text" and discourse as "voice." He says that the textuality metaphor "highlights how discourse issues from other discourse (seeing all texts as "intertextual") while the voice metaphor "highlights how discourse issues from individual persons and from physical bodies" (xiv).

A "text" (which I use in this study to signify a written document as opposed to a verbal statement), then, is always both an instrument and a manifestation of self-definition. A writer's awareness of her ability to project an image of herself onto readers through her texts can lead her to make choices and devise methods for doing so for various reasons. I call these choices and methods "self-representation strategies." Self-representation may be thought of as the processes involved in the development, maintenance, and revision of identity in discourse. Research has established a clearly cultural dimension to self-representation among African Americans. The effect achieved through the use of these strategies—that is, the writer's overall manner of articulation that is discernable to readers— I call "voice." The writer's "ethos," or sense of her identity in the minds of her readers (similar to "image"), depends in significant measure on responses to
the voice emanating from the text, signaling an "authorial presence." Elbow invokes Nan Johnson's historical perspective on rhetorical traditions. From Plato (and Cicero), the "reality" of rhetor's virtue is prerequisite and intrinsic to effective discourse; from Aristotle (and through Quintilian), the "appearance of goodness" is sufficient to inspire conviction in audiences (selected and strategically presented) (vi). This orientation is useful to my research because, if these apparently contrasting perspectives can be related together in a single communication scheme, it completes a relationship between what goes on in the act of writing (selected and strategically placed elements) and what takes place in the surrounding context of the discourse (interactions and perceptions of writers and readers prior to engaging in the communication act).

Elbow claims that this ancient debate about ethos and virtue leads to and contains a modern debate about relationship between voice and identity. "If persuasion depends on genuine virtue in the speaker, not just on virtuous seeming words, then the implication is clear," he asserts. "Plato, Quintilian, Channing and the others in that tradition believe that listeners and readers get a sense of the real speaker and his or her real virtue (or absence of it) through words on the page" (xvii)
Since it can be said that ethos is always generated in writing and manifests itself to readers whether the writer is aware of it or not (Crowley 82), I suspect that much rhetorical work attendant to the composition of texts by African American women (by all writers, in fact), takes place on both conscious and unconscious levels. Understanding more about these strategies of self-representation and their relationship to identity, voice, and ethos in academic discourse may provide some key insights into the effectiveness of our scholarly writing.

Elbow examines another debate which pits two critical views against each other:

In [one] view, either there is no "real self"--"self" consisting of nothing more than the succession of voices or selves that we create in language; or perhaps there is a real self but its completely invisible and unavailable to readers, so the only thing worth talking about is the created self on paper.... [In the opposing view,] people do have some kind of identity that exists apart from the language they use, and that it's worth trying to talk about whether or not that identity shows in a textual voice. (xvii)

The way a writer uses language to describe, report, narrate, or argue actually shapes a particular self-image both for herself and for her readers. Facets of identity can be developed and expressed for various purposes through written texts. Expressions of identity have particular effects on readers, which are analogous to the writer's speaking "voice," in that it can trigger some impression of the writer's presence in the reader's mind. This
"rhetorical identity"--the persona or presence invested in the text, developed by the writer to accomplish particular persuasive effects in the minds of readers, contributes to the writer's authority/credibility traditionally defined as ethos and helps build a mutual relationship to readers as fellow scholars. Effective rhetorical identity defines a textual voice that is at once distinctive and strongly resonant with readers.

**Disciplinary expectations regarding a writer's representation of herself in scholarly writing:** Other ongoing conversations are taking place in literacy studies and composition studies on how to articulate the place of individual voice in academic prose. These conversations have a strong bearing on the position of African American women representing themselves through their writing across disciplinary boundaries.

Academic discourse is language generated and interpreted within a specific cultural context. It represents a specialized use of English discussion. It represents styles, methods of conducting argument and crediting sources, and so forth, which can vary significantly from one academic community to another. How the conventions and expectations of academic readers in particular disciplines impact on the writer's negotiation of rhetorical identity is an important consideration. A major question of this study is the extent to which each
study participant feels she must work within or against the conventions and expectations of her particular disciplinary community in order to establish her own standpoint and voice. As Layli Phillips posits:

Authority emanates both from being multiply located as an individual and being able to speak from a unique vantage point, and from being collectively located as a member of a particular group and being able to speak for a collective vantage point. A reformulation of academic discourse must take both of these vantage points into consideration when determining how and upon whom to confer authority," (Phillips 19)

Cynthia Caywood and Gillian Overing note that "certain forms of discourse and language are privileged [in the academy]: the expository essay is valued over the exploratory; the argumentative essay set above the autobiographical; the clear evocation of a thesis preferred to a more organic exploration of a topic; the impersonal, rational voice ranked more highly than the intimate, subjective one" (Kirsch 20). In many of the disciplines such writing is not assigned, and writers who attempt to incorporate such writing into their work run the risk of penalty.

A writer's presence in any form of academic writing is not merely manifest through the use of the personal pronoun "I" (which has rather limited use in formal writing). Rather, it results from a convergence of elements: choice of subject matter, kinds of theories proposed to account for phenomena, methods of working through arguments and grounding opinion, types of evidence and allusions chosen,
use of stylistic convention and improvisation, underpinning assumptions, even what is left unsaid. Since these elements are found in academic writing generally, it seems clear that such discourse is far from voiceless. Yet, the intentional assertion of a distinctive voice in a text (that is, one that does not merely imitate the prevailing "White-male" voice) is commonly perceived to interfere with its sense of "objectivity," a mythic but nevertheless highly valued quality among Eurocentric academics. In fact, the aforementioned elements of voice—even the "White-male" voice—can be shown to be conditioned by an array of social, historical, and cultural influences within the hierarchical power relationships that constitute academic institutions.

Pat Belanoff outlines the terms of one such debate in her essay "Language: Closings and Openings." While she speaks in this piece primarily on issues of class and gender, her remarks are equally applicable in terms of race and other cultural factors. She reports that some scholars believe students must master what she calls "conventional academic literacy" in order to continue their educations and careers. Further proponents of this position believe that the acquisition of such language is "the most significant intellectual task of students" (256).

As Belanoff continues to explain the reasoning of proponents of conventional academic literacy, participation
in the academy's knowledge-making enterprise requires using the dominant language of the academy, which carries power and respect of the academy's dominant (White male and White-male identified) factions. If a writer wishes to wield power, she must use the "power" discourse. If she chooses not to, she runs the risk that her voice will not be heard. Even as the content of academic studies opens up, the discursive rules do not. As Belanoff articulates this viewpoint, "although women, minorities, and Third World thinkers and writers are increasingly integrated into course content, the language with which one writes about them should not be altered" (264).

Belanoff invokes Patricia Bizzell and Linda Brodkey, who have characterized this kind of Eurocentric and masculine-oriented academic literacy as "often depersonalized, abstract, distanced, logical, concept-driven, and objective" (261). African American women generally tend to become frustrated as they attempt to negotiate their own more experientially-grounded positions in relation to this kind of academic literacy. From her womanist-oriented scholarship, Phillips reports that many Black women scholars must adjust to the prospect that when they attempt to publish work which incorporates self-examinative or spiritual aspects, such work is dismissed as overly subjective, unscientific, unsystematic, or overly limited in scope. Such responses are not a function of the work itself, but rather of the assumptions and values which undergird and motivate the criticism of the work by those who stand outside the author's domain of experience. (19)
An ominous subcurrent to this situation, Belanoff reports, is widespread belief that acquiring and writing within the terms of conventional academic literacy fools writers and readers alike into believing that their discourse does not carry with it the taint of social and cultural elitism that pushes African American women and others to the margins of discursive communities:

According to Brodkey, a discourse used by academicians who believe that they can communicate with one another undistracted by classism, racism, sexism, and other problems that they would like to believe inhere only in the world outside the academy. (264)

Deborah King argues, in fact, that for African American women, identity negotiation takes place within complicated societal contexts of racism, classism, and sexism which makes it necessary to revise our epistemological position from one of "double jeopardy" to one of "multiple jeopardy": "the relationships among these forms of oppression for women are multiplicative; in other words, racism can be multiplied by sexism, and so forth" (qtd. in Hecht, Collier, and Ribeau 78).

This concern leads to the other side of the debate, according to Belanoff, argued by those who insist that individual voice must be a component of academic literacy, those who insist upon the academic relevance of storytelling, and who seek to validate whatever culture students bring with them. These people charge that disallowing the individual's voice "limits writers to the
thoughts the communities have already had and ensures that such writings will be neither creative nor original.... We are extending the hegemony of our own ideas" (258).

The proponents of individual voice acknowledge that individuals belong to a number of overlapping discourse communities, and that the idiosyncratic nature of each individual's overlapping discourse communities assures her of some uniqueness of voice. Directing writers solely toward the acquisition of academic discourse (as described above) can force a writer to neglect things she needs and desires to say within the boundaries of the academy. Further, in pushing student writers toward depersonalized discourse, it is forcing them to submerge their natural abilities to learn through personal connections. Non-academic language, according to Annas, places "an emphasis on the particular, the contextual, the narrative, the imagistic" (qtd. in Belanoff 268). Pulling students away from the particulars of their lives, their stories of themselves, may create crippling disjunctions in their lives outside of school.

Both sides in this debate apparently agree that women's ways of being, knowing, acting, and writing (and, by implication, the ways of African American women) contrast with the ways that the academy values. So what do Black women do in this situation? Individual voice/identity or exigencies of academic discourse--must we
choose one over another? I assert in this dissertation that the women in this study ask this question whenever they sit down to write. Few of these women necessarily wish to separate academic and non-academic worlds; they want to synthesize them. They wish to respond to academic material in terms of 'particular problems in a particular time' (Lauter) that interweaves spiritual and secular, personal and political. And if language and discourse create worlds, we don't necessarily wish to separate the language of school and non-school, either.

My study has begun to investigate what African American women feel about being in the middle of this major debate, how they negotiate their way through it (in terms of their writing) at the beginning of their academic careers, and what significance can be placed on their struggle.

As Elbow reports, Carol Gilligan, bell hooks, June Jordan, and other feminist/womanist scholars are not fighting for a single, unchanging, unsocial voice, but insisting that

if your habitual or accustomed home voice has been devalued or silenced, there is something important and political at stake in being able to use a voice that you experience as yours.... The experience of feeling that one's habitual voice is considered illegitimate makes you want to insist that a piece of one's identity is at stake in one's textual voice. (xx, emphasis added)

According to Elbow, discourse can never fully express or articulate the complexities of a writer, constituted as
they are in diverse roles and innumerable internalized voices. But at times, he asserts,

writers do manage to find words which seem to capture the rich complexity of the unconscious; or words which, though they don't express or articulate everything that is in the unconscious, nevertheless somehow seem to resonate or have behind them the unconscious as well as the conscious. It is words of this sort that we experience as resonant—and through them we have a sense of the presence of the writer. Resonant voice in writing is not a picture of the self, but it has the self's resources behind or underneath it. Writing with resonant voice needn't be unified or coherent, it can be ironic, unaware, disjointed.... Once we see that resonance comes from getting more of ourselves behind the words, we realize that unity or singleness is not the goal. Of course we don't have simple, neatly coherent or unchanging selves. To remember the role of the unconscious is to remember what Bakhtin and social constructionists and others say in different terms: we are made of different roles, voices. (xxxv, emphasis added.)

A Theoretical Overview

The above survey of scholarship lays important groundwork for the theory of identity negotiation that will be articulated throughout this study. The stories that African American women doctoral students have shared with me, together with my own experiences with reading and writing in graduate school, prompted me to investigate in this project what it means for us to "write ourselves" into the academy—and to literally rewrite the academy for ourselves. This dissertation, examines some rhetorical features of academic texts in representing their writers.
One of the most important assumptions underpinning this study is that the more we make ourselves "visible" to our academic readers, that is, the more we signal to them that we hold a different status from theirs and that we write as people who are different from them, the more distinctly we may be identified as Black women, with all the consequences attached to such an image. Given the often competing constraints between our academic rhetorical situations and our sociocultural backgrounds, we must continually negotiate--comply and resist--on our way to establishing effective scholarly voices that are also comfortable for us.

Robert Brooke's discussion of various identity negotiation theories provides a useful framework for understanding how one's identity (and through self-representation strategies, one's voice) develops in the act of writing. In these theories, according to Brooke, "individuals are seen as having to construct their particular sense of self from the competing social definitions of self which surround them" (4). Thus it can be posited that the rhetorical exigencies of a given discourse, plus the writer's own personal history, beliefs, and values, together define a range of possible roles she might assume in her text. The voice emanating from that text results from negotiation through a maze of social forces as she accepts some allowable roles and resists
others. This image of "negotiation"--in the dual senses of
1) making tradeoffs among valued but competing options, and
2) winding one's way through complex cultural terrain--
seems to aptly describe our own experiences as writers
developing self-representation strategies. Collins uses a
similar image, in fact, when she asserts that "Black
women's lives are a series of negotiations that aim to
reconcile the contradictions separating our own internally
defined images of self as African-American women with our
objectification as the Other" (94).

This dissertation reaffirms and extends existing
theories of identity negotiation by bringing forward
certain issues associated with African American women in
particular, linking to the act of negotiation the
challenges facing older Black women students in graduate
programs and the sometimes uncomfortable situation faced by
Black women of any age in predominantly White programs
whose background has been at historically Black
institutions. Chapter III introduces the study participants
and discusses self-representational issues they express.
For each of these women, writing is indeed a difficult
negotiation, a series of trade-offs to achieve what is
important to them, whether it be acceptance by the reader,
a passing grade, or some other benefit.

Specifically, I posit that in approaching a writing
task, Black women as graduate student-writers often feel
compelled to consider what their culturally-grounded beliefs, attitudes and values—the voices of their families, church communities, and so forth—lead them to perceive about their subject matter. My research data suggests, first, that these women do perceive their families, communities, faith traditions, etc., to be among the chief influences on their identities as African American women and indirectly on the rhetorical contexts within which they compose texts.

For various reasons, they may or may not believe they have the capability of employing strategies drawn from those influences as they construct rhetorical identities as African American women in the papers they write for their evaluative readers. While several women in this study do believe that at least in certain situations they are able to construct a rhetorical identity that identifies them specifically, other women do not believe they are able to express their selves, for various reasons. The kind of writing they are asked to produce, for example. The "rules" for objectivity, neutrality, what the women perceive that these communities contribute to their identities, and how they translate facets of those identities into textual, or rhetorical, identities, will also be taken up in Chapter III.

At the same time as these writers attempt to develop a textual, or rhetorical, identity for themselves, they must
rely on their perceptions of their evaluative readers' for
guidance, whether expectations are explicitly articulated
by those readers or assumed by the writers themselves based
on their previous experiences with other readers. Roger
Cherry observes that "decisions about self-portrayal...vary
according to the way in which writers characterize their
audience and other facets of the rhetorical situation"
(252, my emphasis). Further, each writer has her own
notions (internalized from any number of professors in any
number of settings) of what constitutes both academic
writing in general and the writing of her discipline in
particular. Although assumptions about the monolithic
nature of academic writing have changed over the years,
certain "tenets" of scholarly composition in the Western
tradition still persist: "that the writer will
scrupulously pursue truth in argument and narration, strict
accuracy in ascertainable fact, lucidity in
exposition...and that all subjects are discursively
amenable to the same rhetorical principles of language and
structure" (Nash 28, my emphasis). However, "truth,"
"accuracy," "lucidity," and even "rhetorical principles of
language and structure" are culturally constituted
features. Thus, the negotiation that takes place within
the writer's mind among various perspectives on subject and
audience is often a negotiation of cultural differences.
This negotiation is further complicated by certain power-related issues such as the writer's authority from the convergence of such subordinate positions as student, Black, and female. For Black women writing in the academy, this aspect of negotiation may further be conditioned by her awareness, as expressed by Collins, that "oppressed groups are frequently placed in the situation of being listened to only if we frame our ideas in the language that is familiar to and comfortable for a dominant group. This requirement often changes the meaning of our ideas and works to elevate the ideas of dominant groups" (xiii).

Accordingly, rhetorical options employed by these writers sometimes attempt to resist such domination. However, my study has found that these options range from total compliance with the values and expectations of their evaluative readers to almost total resistance to them. For example, some feel they must imitate the dominant discursive models of their fields so that their writing might seem almost neutral in character. These women feel a sense of discomfort as they use this option because they realize that their language in reality is not "neutral" at all but creates the voice of the prevailing group. The writings of others, at least part of the time, reflect a more moderate ground, having achieved some degree of balance that works for them and, if they are lucky, resonates with their readers' expectations as well. More
often than not, however, there is never quite a balance, and the writers come away from their work feeling that they have not made any real space in their discourse communities.

The negotiation which continually takes place in the writer's mind throughout the composing process, and even before an identifiable composing process begins, becomes crystallized on the page through the decisions she makes on what to say and how to say it. The diverse ways in which discursive features come together in their texts result from conscious and unconscious decisions about how they will position themselves within (and/or outside of) the constraints imposed by the academic rhetorical situations and their own backgrounds. As they struggle to generate a particular kind of ethos in the minds of their readers, they negotiate what they believe to be an appropriate signature by means of self-representation strategies.

In examining how ethos and identity negotiation relate to one another, I approach the issue of the writer's image as does Sharon Crowley, from an Aristotelian perspective. Writers, she says, rely on "ethical proofs" to persuade readers by the force of their personalities or reputations (81, 96). To use Crowley's terms, certain aspects of the writer's identity can be selectively constructed in the text to achieve some purpose ("invented ethos") and others inferred by the reader responding to the voice of the text
("situated ethos") (84). The idea that a writer's image is in part constructed by the writer herself and in part conferred upon the writer by the community persists in the academy today. Seeing a text as a site of social relations, Crowley asserts that "the [often unequal] relative social standing of participants in a rhetorical situation can affect a rhetor's persuasiveness" (Crowley 109-10). Situational ethos, or the writer's extra-textual reputation, is the writer's image in the reader's mind, based on interpersonal contact and/or the reader's knowledge of groups and social roles and cultural status(es) with which the writer is associated.

Evaluative readers have considerable advantage in assessing situational ethos of their students, depending on the values they attach to any number of aspects of her life (demonstrated or assumed), for example, biases for or against the writer's race, gender, or social status, the quality of her previous education, and so forth. These factors are outside the immediate rhetorical context of any given writing task.

However, as Crowley posits, student writers also have a measure of rhetorical power at their command:

Rhetors enjoy situated power if they are in a position to influence the ideology of participants in a rhetorical situation.... Rhetors also have situated power if they can suppress or divulge information that is critical to understanding or deciding an issue. Rhetors who control the channels of communication have great situated power, because in extreme situations
they can force people to become their audiences."
(110)

As part of the educational contract, professors agree to read the work of their students. Most students assume that when they turn in an assigned paper, the professor will read it carefully enough to be able to evaluate it fairly. This contract assures the writer that—if she performs her rhetorical task well—she will be able to somehow influence the reader's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. I think that is on the minds of my study participants in most writing situations. When they have a culturally-oriented message to deliver to that reader, they expect it to be respected. But, as Crowley says,

the greater the disparity of situated status between rhetor and audience, the greater the distance between them. In cases where a rhetor's social status is much higher, or much lower, than that of an audience, my general rule about distance no longer holds. That is, in these cases identification is probably not the most effective approach, and a less intimate distance may be more effective. (110)

The second kind of ethical appeal, invented ethos, is character constructed by the writer by means of features built into the text. In this study, I counted as invented ethos any more-or-less direct statement that the writer makes about herself that has the potential to create an image of a "personality" in the reader's mind. I argue that such "I"-statements as well as their placement among the voices of other sources cited in the text, constitute a direct intervention of a persona standing behind whatever
statement follows the "I". Other elements of such invented ethos include grammatical and mechanical features, word choices, references and allusions, and so forth—features which taken together evokes a sense of "voice" in readers' minds. Based on this voice, a sense of ethos, credibility, and authority, may (or may not) be conferred upon the writer by the reader. I call the sum-total of those evident features the writer's "signature."

However, differential power relations—infused in the situated ethos of writer and reader—that exist outside of rhetorical situations affect the degree to which an invented ethos can be effective. This study seeks to understand more about the relationship between situated and invented ethos. If we are to write effectively for their graduate-school audiences and for themselves, we must learn how to bring academic and non-academic resources into balance within their texts, regardless of whether the (graduate school) institution itself intends to teach us how to do this. After reviewing interview statements and writing samples, I conclude that some of my study participants seem more successful than others at performing such balancing acts. There is a range of situations in which they can choose (or perhaps are forced) to write in compliance with, and/or in resistance to, representations of self which they believe are being imposed on them by the academic institution, and there are particular rationales
which guide their choices. Through a detailed examination of the writings of two study participants, Alice and Maya, Chapter IV illustrates a few of the rhetorical strategies for accomplishing those aims are evident in texts, and how these aims and strategies correspond to one another.

Chapter II lays out the design of this study and discusses the considerations that guided my research methodology.
Notes

1 In explaining her research design, Kirsch asserts that "the majority of [the thirty-five] women participating in the study were Caucasian; only one student was of African-American, and one faculty member of African-Caribbean, descent.... This study does not examine potential obstacles that can discourage women from writing and from participating in the academy--obstacles such as...marginalization within the profession" (31).

2 As of this writing, the latest year for which figures are available.

3 Scholars who identify themselves as "Afrocentric" endeavor to approach the study of discourse from African cosmological, epistemological, axiological, and aesthetic perspectives. Foss, Foss, and Trapp characterize this enterprise as "a particularly well-developed and coherent" approach to rhetoric based on "African cultural practices adapted to life in the United States" (287). In seeking to discover how African American discourse is constituted rhetorically, Afrocentric scholars tend to eschew Eurocentric frameworks in favor of African-oriented ones (although, according to Asante ["Afrocentricity" 8], these frameworks are not necessarily opposed to each other). My current view is that both African- and Western-oriented frameworks appear to have much to offer the study of African American women's discourse since I envision these women balancing aspects of both in their writing. I am not willing to substitute one conceptualization for another; in fact, I support their integration.

4 See Lloyd Bitzer's article, "The Rhetorical Situation."

5 When I characterize this traditional academic discourse as manifesting itself in a "White male" voice, I mean that it facilitates habitual modes of expression that have been sanctioned as normative by the dominant voices in the academy who have historically been White and male or if they are women or even people of color, they have been socialized to be White-male identified. The discourse that I and others have labeled "conventional" or "traditional" academic discourse is, in definitions advanced by Pat Belanoff, discourse (embodiing thought processes) which "perceives the world in terms of categories, dichotomies,
roles, stasis, and causation," as contrasted with other discourses (embodying other thought processes) that "perceives the world in terms of ambiguities, pluralities, processes, continuities, and complex relationships" (qtd. in Belanoff 262-3). These latter characteristics have been associated with "female" and "Afrocentric" epistemological and discursive modes. Belanoff demonstrates the pervasiveness of these contrasting discursive modes by invoking Thomas Farrell, who concedes value to the "female mode" of writing, but advocates that college composition teach a "male mode" because "the male mode of rhetoric is probably better suited than the female mode for written discourse." Belanoff counters by asserting that "the elevation of theoretical, formal, abstract thought blinds us to the overwhelming degree to which powerful and effective reasoning can be practical, non-formal, concrete." (261)

'I emphasize the term "evaluative reader" over instructor or professor, because the term most precisely describes the function of that person in judging the writer in some way against an appropriate (conventional) and credible (to academic audiences) scholarly image or position in a her text. In the case of this study, evaluative readers were the primary (though not necessarily the only) audience considered by most of the women for the papers which I collected as writing samples. The writer's challenge becomes how to satisfy the expectations of her evaluative reader and any other audience(s) the writer has in mind, while trying to alter that evaluative reader's expectations that too often relegate the writer's image to the background of scholarly work.
CHAPTER II

INVESTIGATING SELF-REPRESENTATIONAL ISSUES

The primary responsibility for defining one's own reality lies with the people who live that reality.

--Patricia Hill Collins

The issue I am raising...is whether or not even black women should feel a sense of privilege or proprietorship in the act of speaking as an authority on the Other when the Other is textualized as the black woman.

--Mae G. Henderson

Introduction

It was once suggested to me that, as an African American woman researcher, one of the most important contributions my work can make to a scholarly understanding of Black women in the academy might be grounded as much in the "how" as in the "what"—in the advancement of useful investigative methods as much as in any definitive conclusions about them I might be able to draw. This chapter explains how I have attempted to carry out Patricia Hill Collins' mandate to help define Black women's reality by developing useful means of investigating self-representational issues related to the graduate-school writing of African American women. In terms of this dissertation project, that mandate involves designing
research methods that enable me to focus on the research questions I outline in the next section of this chapter. Specific methods of data collection and analysis are themselves described in subsequent sections. My position as a Black woman investigating the lives of other Black women is of great importance to this project, and issues associated with that position will be discussed in subsequent sections.

Research Problem

This study focuses attention upon discursive choices made by Black women writing in graduate school, based explicitly on the cultural frameworks within which they locate their academic work and on their assessments of their evaluative readers' expectations. I raise this fundamental issue: What is involved—from the standpoint of several particular African American women writers—in articulating rhetorical agency in academic prose? In order to address this issue, I found that a number of specific questions needed to be answered: What factors/influences seem significant in the development of an individual's identity? To what extent do African American women writers believe they are even capable of constructing distinctive textual identities in their academic papers? When—and to what degree—might they choose to write in compliance with, or even in active resistance to, representations of them
which they believe are being imposed upon them by the academy in general and their evaluative readers in particular, and what rationales guide such choices? What rhetorical strategies for asserting identity are evident in their texts, and what do they seem to signify? And, ultimately, how do these beliefs, choices, rationales, and strategies correspond to one another?

I have investigated (and will continue to investigate) these questions because I view the processes by which academic writers devise discursive strategies (and the effects of those strategies upon the academy as well as upon the writers themselves) to be a largely neglected problem for rhetorical studies. These questions are particularly important to African American women.

Scholars of rhetoric in English departments, as a general rule, with their primary focus on the theoretical and the historical, have provided few methodological models for a study like mine, which deals with the particular circumstances of a small group of active, contemporary writers. Conversely, researchers from the disciplines of clinical psychology, social psychology, and education are producing an increasing amount of scholarship based on locating study participants within the frameworks of their own experiences. Because of their commitment to such an approach, which I believe is essential for work with people considered "marginalized," these researchers have provided
much of the support for my assumptions throughout this dissertation.

Having said that, however, I note that a few recent projects in composition studies have employed the approach I've described to examine issues of identity and authority in academic discourse; that work also sheds considerable light on my research problem. Maureen Hourigan's study of basic writers, for example, explores the roles that class, gender, and culture play in the difficulties some students' experience with academic discourse. Hourigan argues that pedagogies designed to empower students marginalized by class or gender often ignore students marginalized by race or ethnicity, and she suggests that racial and gender specific features of writing may reinforce cultural myths about race and gender. As will become evident in later chapters, her work has prompted me to ask more about the dynamics of these cultural variables.

Valerie Balester has studied the African American linguistic and rhetorical traditions exhibited in written and spoken texts of Black first- and second-year undergraduate students. Interestingly, in relation to my research questions, she found that her study participants seemed keenly aware of how they would be perceived by her and by the eventual readers of her research. She explains that "they always constructed their ethos to influence the possible prejudices of multiple audiences. Their attempt
to control ethos, to appear as members in good standing of the academic discourse community, resulted in their use of or rejection of a number of African American rhetorical strategies" (4). My project asks, in part, whether or not students at the doctoral level continue this practice. On the basis of her findings, Balester argues that

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the viewpoints of speakers and writers, when available, are among the many resources we should consult when analyzing and interpreting texts from a cultural perspective. The production of texts is influenced by a writer's linguistic background and cultural heritage. Thus, awareness of the needs, goals, and perceptions of writers is an essential component of a sensitive rhetorical interpretation. (157, emphasis added)
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Balester's statement here supports my purpose for pursuing this project, that is, to pay attention to writers as they articulate their own perceptions, for, as the saying goes, their perceptions are their reality.

Donna LeCourt's work on writers' subjectivity focuses on the academic and competing cultural discourses of graduate students as well as basic writers, in order to determine how these groups are variously affected by the act of writing. Using "literacy autobiographies" (texts in which the students themselves describe their writing histories), her study examines the dynamic of how students constitute themselves as writers. LeCourt's rationale for using the students' own words as a means for interpreting their work seems to be grounded in the same assumptions about meaning-making that ground my work.
The struggle of African American undergraduates (male and female) attempting to become proficient in academic discourse in their introductory writing courses has been studied by Athelsian Canagarajah by means of a sociolinguistic comparison of their argumentative styles. Canagarajah's work suggests that students associate academic writing with values and identities that are inconsistent with their own, and perceive academic discourse as reproducing them according to the ideology of the academy's dominant (oppressive) social groups. In response, they use an ambivalent style of writing that apparently enables them to appear to use academic discourse while at the same time avoiding close involvement with it, so as to protect their sense of self. In terms of the identity negotiation theory articulated as a result of my research findings, I find it significant that Canagarajah characterizes literacy as an ideological act of negotiation between competing discourses and identities.

Gesa Kirsch's study attempts, as mine does, to connect women's roles in academic institutions with issues related to the nature of their scholarly writing. While she acknowledges an inattention in her text to Black women and to the "obstacles that can discourage women from writing and from participating in the academy--obstacles such as...marginalization within the profession" (31), she does raise several questions that inform my work:
If subjectivity is fluid and ever-changing, why do writers experience themselves as authors expressing intentions? Why do readers interpret texts as traces of authorial intentions? How can writers claim to discover their real voices? (37)

Despite the major contributions these research projects have made to what is known about writers writing academic prose, none of these studies deal extensively with the population of student-writers that I investigate here. To my knowledge, only a limited number of African American women participate in projects involving graduate students (one each in the LeCourt and Kirsch studies, for example). Whether grouped together with men, undergraduates, or faculty, or simply not sought out at all, the experiences of African American women at advanced levels of education remain located on the periphery of the research agenda. As I have emphasized in Chapter I, the problems of African American women attempting to pursue academic careers makes it imperative that our discursive enfranchisement be much more closely examined. The following section discusses how my project has been designed to fill in this gap.

**Developing Research Methods**

This study is designed to locate participants within the frameworks of their own experiences, using qualitative research methods associated with case study research and text analysis. My purpose is not to make sweeping generalizations about African American women as a
homogeneous category, but to make possible a better understanding of the particularity of their experiences as academic writers. I thus adopted a "case study" approach to data collection and analysis. Identifying each study participant as an individual "case" (by which I mean locating her within the framework of her own experiences) not only showcases her personal dynamic of identity negotiation but also makes possible a discussion of resonances and variations among the study participants without drawing a stereotypical picture of "the African American woman." According to research specialist Catherine Hakim, a qualitative design such as the "case study" approach I have employed offers richly descriptive reports of individuals' perspectives, attitudes, beliefs, views, and feelings, the meanings and interpretations given to events and things as well as their behavior; displays how these are put together, more or less coherently, into frameworks which make sense of their experiences; and illuminates the motivations which connect the attitudes and behaviors, the discontinuities, or even contradictions between attitudes and behavior, or how conflicting attitudes and motivations are resolved in particular choices made. (27)

While the theory that will eventually be developed in this dissertation will of course contribute to and extend insights provided by previous scholarship, my qualitative approach has allowed new questions to be raised and new directions to be pursued based on the data collected.

My research methods are further informed by what has been called a "politics of location." Gesa Kirsch and Joy
Ritchie discuss the application of feminist approaches to research in rhetoric/composition. Their work has helped me to validate my study participants' experiences as a source of knowledge and to understand how my study participants and I relate to each other and to the issues under study. Kirsch and Ritchie emphasize that a politics of location requires learning about one's own writing practices, cultural biases, and ethical positions. Thus, I have been able to identify several risks that I had to consider as in conducting my research:

- Creating yet another "master narrative" by abstracting, reifying, and privileging;
- Speaking for and essentializing participants;
- Being blinded by my own culturally determined worldview.

I worked toward minimizing those risks by acknowledging that my cultural status as a Black woman does not allow me to make sweeping statements about other Black women, by paying close attention to and respecting my relationship as researcher to my study participants, and by emphasizing the tentative, preliminary nature of my conclusions.

**Selection of study participants:** I worked with seven African American women doctoral students in a range of disciplines at Ohio State (Education, English, Music History, Political Science, and Slavic Languages) who are planning academic careers and who write extensively in
their programs. At the time of data collection, these women were engaged primarily in coursework, although one or two were also beginning to prepare for comprehensive examinations. Although I distributed a formal "Call for Participants" across campus (Appendix A), those who eventually consented to participate were women I already knew or knew of. Most of these women also knew one or more of the other participants prior to the start of the project, but to my knowledge, the women from Political Science and Slavic Languages had no prior acquaintance with the rest.

A study based on this extremely small number of participants can only be indicative of the diversity among these individuals, rather than broadly representative of all African American women in graduate school. I have tried to show, in fact (Chapter III), that while there are certain resonances among them given the similarity of their academic situations, our rhetorical practices, and the life experiences upon which those practices are based, make each of them unique.

Data Collection: Data collection within my "case study" approach consisted of interviews with study participants and close readings of their texts. From her perspective as an interviewer, Gesa Kirsch asserts that

Interviews invite and encourage the production of self-representations because interviewees have to select events from a store of memories and make connections between disparate events to narrate their
experiences coherently. This narration process is always an act of invention and improvisation: self-representations change as more questions probe interviewees' memories and provide room for new insights and revised narrations. (36)

Because I subscribe to the assumption that individuals "construct" the reality they experience, I have used interviews to record the shape and direction--the "reality"--of my participants' academic experiences from their own point of view, as they consider extent to which they are able to develop effective scholarly voices.

In the first of three initial interviews (Appendix C), I asked each woman to define a broad context of personal, academic, and professional history into which her writing can be situated. From there, we moved to issues of self-definition: What exactly does each participant mean when she identifies herself as an African American woman (or uses some other self-designation)? In order to get detailed responses to broad questions like this one, I posed more specific questions throughout the session designed to encourage interviewees to explain and clarify what they mean in their own terms. Based on the experience of at least one researcher in women's oral history, recorded by Sherna Gluck and Daphne Patai, such an interview strategy should allow "the particularities of their experiences...to emerge from behind the veil of familiar and ambiguous terms" (17). The second interview with each participant pushed the issue of identification
toward more specific questions about self-portrayal in academic discourse: What image of herself—as a scholar and as a person—does she hope to leave with her readers, and in what ways does she try to project that image as she writes?

These two interviews provided a contextual starting point for analyzing a set of the interviewee's writings, negotiated with each woman from a range of response papers, position papers, seminar papers, conference papers, research reports, dissertation chapters, and so forth.

My initial criteria for collecting writing samples were simple. Since I was looking for any opportunity that the women seized upon for exerting rhetorical identity in their writing, I told them I would accept any text written for what we together identified as "academic" readers. Those readers most often turned out to be their professors, but sometimes they were classmates, conference and journal reviewers, and others within the academy. Since most of the participants were pursuing coursework at the time of data collection, they gave me primarily response/position and seminar papers.

After talking to each woman about her writing strategies, I selected one or more papers that represented a particular self-representational challenge she faced. For example, one woman noted discrepancies between writing she does inside and outside her major area. Therefore, I
looked at one paper from each setting. Another woman discussed her need to account for as many scholarly sources as possible before she could express her own ideas on a subject. I picked a paper of hers that seemed to illustrate that situation. Ideally, I wanted to match up an issue in self-representation with a woman's perception of it as a challenge and with her paper's method of addressing it. In the end, however, I was not able to match up all of the women with issues and texts, partly because of time constraints and material available (e.g., some women couldn't find copies of work they talked with me about).

In follow-up interviews, I focused attention directly on the analyzed texts, which became the foundation for a more detailed discussion of rhetorical choices made based on cultural resources brought to the texts. My determination of specific resources was made in part on the basis of the literature I continued to survey, but also to a large degree on resources defined for me by the participants themselves. Therefore, I relied heavily on the groundwork laid in previous interviews, where the women discussed their own constructions of concepts such as "blackness" and "femaleness." It was then my job to unpack those constructions in my own analysis. However, the interviews have shown me that the texts say far too much,
on too many different levels, to be essentialized in a neatly packaged analysis.

I realized that the information I was seeking was constructed in layers, from general background contributing to their identities, to specific issues of writing academic prose, to even more specific issues of their rhetorical strategies in individual papers. Therefore, I thought it would be best to gather the information in stages reflecting those layers of detail. I planned three sets of interviews, one for each layer, based on an "interview guide" approach outlined by Michael Quin Patton.

Following this approach, I developed specific topics and issues to be covered with each woman, and during the course of an interview, I would decide upon sequence and wording of particular questions related to those topics and issues.

I discovered both advantages and disadvantages in this strategy. As Patton predicted, using an interview guide allowed me to collect somewhat comparable data from interviewee, while inviting considerable spontaneity. The downside of this approach is that while some important topics were covered, other relevant issues were overlooked. The flexibility I had built into sequencing and wording questions resulted in substantially different responses from different perspectives, thus reducing the comparability of responses.
Patton asserts that "the task for the interviewer is to make it possible for the person being interviewed to bring the interviewer into his or her world" (279). In designing questions for the first interview, I wanted to find out how the women themselves characterized the influences on their lives. While I wanted the women to tell me as much as possible about their childhood experiences and their present lives outside the academy, I did not want to impose any suggestions of who or what was important in their lives. At the same time, however, I realized that there must be starting points and markers for discussions as they relate to my research agenda. I thought the best means for obtaining such input would be to let them have considerable control over what they wanted to say. The first set of interview questions in Appendix C reflect my attempt to find a middle ground between open-ended and directed discussion. In light of what I wanted to accomplish in the first interview, my questions are somewhat directive, but more open-ended than those I developed for other sessions.

While at least one woman was concerned about being identified by people she knew,² most of the women were not overly concerned with issues of privacy. They assumed that whatever they said on the record would be subject to inclusion in a public document, and they expressed little fear or embarrassment about sharing their ideas and
experiences with potential readers. Because they were pursuing or preparing to undertake research projects of their own, they understood the groundrules by which we worked.

Having said that, however, I felt in every conversation that I was walking a thin line. Asking questions about a woman's self-concept means asking about both positive and negative aspects of her life. I did not expect these women to voluntarily reveal family secrets; emotional, physical, or sexual abuses they may have suffered; the ravages of poverty or violence, or any number of other things that have shaped the persons they are, but are not usually volunteered for public consumption. I knew before I conducted any interviews that I had to respect each woman's private affairs as much as she desired. On the other hand, understanding that negative incidents and personalities were as important to the development of one's sense of self as are positive ones, I knew I had to at least make the interview process as safe for these women as possible so that they would share enough details to base a discussion on. I needed frank assessments from them of things that shaped their self-concept, but I didn't want to give them the impression that I was casually prying into their private lives. I had to structure questions, often in the flow of conversation, that would be clearly understood as appropriate and important to the central
premises of the project as I had explained it to them in our initial conversations before they signed consent forms.

I also anticipated that in the heat of discussion, unintended, uncensored, remarks about particular individuals and incidents were likely to be made. Since all interviews were tape recorded (and transcribed by someone not affiliated with the university), I had to plan to remind each interviewee from time to time to tell me when her remarks should be considered on or off the record. On a number of occasions I was requested to turn the recorder off, in order for a woman to speak her mind on some private issue. Significantly, in these cases the women wanted me to hear these comments, despite the personal nature and the desire that they not be published.

I conducted interviews at various times and places in order to accommodate these women's busy schedules. Some took place in the women's homes, some at my on-campus apartment, some in their department offices. I even had to walk across campus with one woman between teaching and course commitments in order to interview her. I began each session with a statement explaining the purpose of the interview and the expected level of response. I wanted to make sure that each interviewee knew she could choose not to answer any question and that she could move into other areas that seemed important to discuss. Many times, conversations digressed into other topics, which often
proved more insightful than the starting points. The first round of interviews took place early in the project; the second round after all participants had first interview sessions. During or shortly after the second-round interviews, I collected most of the writing samples. Later, I asked one or two of the women for additional papers.

After doing preliminary analyses on the writing samples, I approached the women for follow-up responses. The information I asked for at this time—whether in person, by phone, or through written feedback on drafts—was extremely specific, clarifying or extending points already made in earlier interviews. I obtained this feedback from each woman as her schedule permitted contact. Eventually, I provided each participant a copy of Chapter III (and for the two participants for whom I developed more detailed analyses, Chapter IV as well) for her review, in order to make sure that nothing they had told me was distorted by the framework I was imposing upon the data, and that I had not revealed anything about them that they did not specifically authorize me to say. From each woman I received feedback not only on her own statements, but also many unsolicited comments in the margins and on backs of pages reaffirming and identifying with statements made by the others. These range from check marks, underlining, and exclamation points, to comments like: "Yes!"..."I feel
the same way"..."good attitude!"..."I am identifying with these women"..."this is also my heritage"..."I found this to be true in all of my writing, too." A few women also made more detailed statements and asked pointed questions about points in my own discussion. In their responses to each other's ideas, the women have, in an important sense, joined in community with one another. One woman even commented that she would like to meet her co-participants.

**Data Analysis:** I decided to incorporate a large amount of interview material into my document (particularly in Chapter III) because I wanted their voices to be heard clearly through this text. In analyzing information in the interview transcripts, I particularly wanted to note where the life experiences, perspectives, values, attitudes, and opinions of my study participants resonate with each other, as well as where they diverge from each other. I also examined their statements with an eye toward highlighting through direct quotation those statements where each of the women speaks eloquently both for herself and for the others.

Incorporating interview material into my text, however, presented challenges in editing the language of passages I wanted to use as direct quotations. The language of interviews is, of course, informal verbal speech with all the gaps, repetitions, colloquialisms,
vulgarities that are rendered intelligible by a listener at the moment of hearing. Converting the speech of these women into written text is a difficult act of translation. More significant than merely deleting obvious throat clearing gestures ("uh"s, "uhm"s), repetitions and so forth, I was faced with processing locutions which mark these women's speech in interesting ways (some are speakers of "Black vernacular" English), but which make a written text hard to read and may even trigger a negative reaction in some readers. I wrestled with how to preserve as much of the flavor of each woman's speaking voice as possible as I recast the women's oral language into a readable written form.

Several study participants have stated or implied that they "code switch" only selectively in academic situations, in an effort to resist constraints on their modes of self-expression. Nevertheless, many educated African Americans are sensitive to the fact that they are located in a highly contested discursive space. It is seldom possible in academic and workplace forums for an educated Black person to express herself credibly (primarily to Whites, but often to other Blacks as well) in culturally distinctive speech. On the contrary, many African Americans have been conditioned to believe that most "non-standardisms" (no matter how useful to a given discourse) inevitably signal at best a lack of sophistication, at worst low
intelligence. (There are telling examples in the publicity that surrounded former Philadelphia Mayor Wilson Goode and other Black officials/celebrities when it became known that they hired speech coaches to help them improve their public personas.)

In editing transcript material for inclusion in this document, I felt compelled to bridge both sides of this issue. It was not an easy task. I did not wish to display these women's words—as unedited verbatim speech—for possible ridicule by readers who would search for any excuse to (yet again) dismiss those words. To edit the transcripts in order to minimize possible distractions for those readers, however, seemed to invite the kind of standardization that would undermine a key premise of this study. I wanted to emphasize, through these women's very words, that culturally distinctive language can enrich, rather than diminish, the quality of a text, while offering important cues to the writer's identity. To uphold this premise meant keeping intact as much of the women's original language patterns as possible. After making what I thought to be judicious editing decisions, I took the draft back to my study participants, asking them to read and authorize my representation of their words. The transcript passages quoted throughout the rest of this dissertation testify to my efforts at representing the voices of my study participants.
A problem that I had previously encountered in planning and conducting interviews also arose in my use of certain transcript passages. In spite of precautions taken at the interview stage, sometimes statements showed up in transcripts that I realized were not meant to be public revelations. I had to continually be aware of when statements overstepped proprietary boundaries. In addition, as they revealed names of relatives, schools they attended, jobs the held, and so forth, I had to find ways of recasting details while presenting accurate portrayals.

Above all, I feared taking the words of these women out of their original contexts as I fit them into the framework of my discussion. Although I planned that questions would relate to my research questions, the interview material had to be shaped as my vision of the research problem changed. Add to that task the unanticipated directions that the conversations sometimes took. In addition, certain statements often signalled implicit meanings to me that I only partially remembered and that are not clear from reading transcript. For example, in one interview, a participant mentioned that she grew up in a housing project. Behind that statement was a tremendous range of nuances that contribute to a richer portrayal of a childhood environment than might be stereotypically assumed. In returning to such statements, which in transcript form seem woefully inadequate, I had to
rely upon my study participants in follow-up responses to help me complete the picture only sketched in by the original statements. Not only did I have to be careful of how and where I placed their input, but I also had to alter my conceptual framework to accommodate some of these directions.

Combining interview data and textual analysis has to take into consideration that the women's writing incorporates a multitude of diverse and colliding "heterogeneous voices, speaking from different positionalities" (Henderson 458). "I like to imagine the Other as Self and the Other as text entering into a relation based on mutual acknowledgement and mutual interrogation" (Henderson 436). In my analysis of their statements, I've accepted the assumptions and assertions of these women as a critical starting point—in other words, I acknowledge the "truth" of their perceptions.

I aimed to find out by my process of textual analysis what linguistic/discursive features seem to convey a sense of identity or ethos in my participants' texts. I developed a general analytical process—a way of reading for the persona or voice present in the text and determining what factors on the page seem to contribute to that persona. This way of reading is based on a method of textual analysis outlined by Karen and Sonja Foss, designed to focus the researcher's attention specifically on the
nature of the writer and her text, as well as on the situation to which the text is addressed (exigence), the intended audience, and the nature of the world created by the text (25-28).

I read each paper multiple times. On first reading, I acknowledged the general impression of the writer's "voice." Based on what I learned through interviews about the background, perspectives, intentions of each participant and the rhetorical contexts of her texts, I read the paper again, identifying specific textual elements (organizing principles, stylistic features, use of narrative, and so forth) that somehow carry out the writer's aims for establishing voice, as told to me in interviews, and I made note of when these elements seem influenced by race, gender and, culture. Finally, I re-read the paper in order to verify my interpretation. Chapter III brings this analysis into focus. In the descriptive sections, I have developed the interviews into profiles of my study participants as academic writers, and I have displayed excerpts from texts to illustrate patterns of rhetorical strategies.

Pulling these two sides--writer and text--together, and combining them with insights from my own experience as an academic writer, I have attempted to interpret meanings and articulate a theory of "cultural negotiation" to account for the rhetorical processes of self-representation.
uncovered by my research. Patton cautions that "the interpretive explanation of qualitative analysis does not yield knowledge in the same sense as quantitative explanation. The emphasis is on illumination, understanding, and extrapolation rather than causal determination, prediction, and generalization" (424). He describes qualitative study as a holistic perspective that describes the interdependence and relatedness of complex phenomena" (424).

Because, in terms of the needs of the project, I felt it important to show in some detailed way, some of the "problems" faced by these women and how their response to those problems played out as textual features. Therefore, I selected two of my participants, Alice and Maya, for extended "case study" analyses in Chapter IV. Extending my analysis there, as suggested by Foss and Foss, I developed interpretations of how each of these two women's identities seem to be shaped in their texts.

Interpretation means attaching significance to what has been found, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, building linkages, attaching meanings, imposing order, and dealing with rival explanations, disconfirming cases, and data irregularities as part of testing the viability of an interpretation. All of this is expected--and appropriate--as long as the researcher owns the interpretation and makes
clear the difference between description and interpretation.

The writer bears some responsibility to help the reader sort out the strengths and weaknesses of various parts of the description, analysis, and interpretation....In qualitative analysis the analyst must make judgments that provide clues for the reader as to the writer's belief about variations in the credibility of different findings: When are patterns 'clear'? When are they 'strongly supported by the data'? When are the patterns 'weak'? Readers will ultimately make their own decisions and judgments about these matters, but the evaluator's opinions and speculations, after he or she has struggled with the data, deserve to be reported. (Patton 431)

**Researcher Role:** As an African American woman doctoral student myself, my role as researcher cannot be characterized as that of a distanced, impartial analyst. I hold obvious membership in the group I am studying and, inevitably, I have developed friendships with several of my study participants in the course of working with them. My relationships with these women affect my writing about them, influencing what I will and will not say about them, and to claim some authority in "writing" them. Further, in constructing myself as "Other" in this work, my gaze must also be self-directed. As Henderson says, "when the self objectifies and authors the self as Other; when the Self must become an Other to the Self" (434). Because I have so positioned myself in this project, I cannot remain anonymous to my own readers, who I know will construct an
identity for me. It is here that I have an opportunity to influence how my readers will view me.

One of my biggest challenges, given my background (especially, having been educated in predominantly White schools from first-grade through college) has been one of how to write without "replicating the 'White' and 'male' models of power that excluded and marginalized both Black women and their texts from the class and curriculum in the first place" (Henderson 435). My education has been thus. "Our position in academia speaks to the contradictions of being a Black female/feminist writer in a White patriarchal institution" (Henderson 435). This is my dilemma, and that of my study participants as well.

As Valerie Smith points out, "the circumstances of race and gender [add class and sexuality] alone protect no one from the seductions of reading her own experience as normative" (qtd. in Henderson 434). Because I believe that discourse does not (and should not) exclusively serve the Eurocentric, patriarchal interests of the academy, my personal agenda--the impetus, in fact, for choosing this particular topic and research population--has been to create a rhetorical space in the academy where we might freely portray ourselves as African American women. This is important to me, given my background of isolation from other people of color. So, if my position is to privilege the study of Black women in such a way that we become "the
centers and subjects of our own experience—rather than corollaries of another's" then my goal in this dissertation is to reposition "the location of blacks and women in the academy and, at the same time, reposition the texts of black women in the academic curriculum—moving both from a position of margin to center" (Henderson 435). How odd and difficult is this position for me to come to, given that my socialization (assimilation?) into the White academic community has been so long-term and (seemingly) effortless?

In designing an interpretive frame for my study, and then in conducting and analyzing in-depth interviews with my study participants to fit that frame, I am not simply recording their self-representations; I am creating representations of them, based on my personal identification with them. Simultaneously, of course, I am engaging in my own acts of self-representation. This situation raises the critical problem of appropriation: Can I, even as a Black woman among other Black women, avoid "taking over" their identities and imposing a different identity—MY identity—on them?

"One way of working against totalizing or essentialist notions of what constitutes Black womanhood is to locate oneself in the body—that is for the teacher to represent herself as embodied text—produced by certain personal and historical experiences" (Henderson 436). I thus speak of my participation in the writing processes I am describing
for my study participants...my dissertation also becomes a "resource text"--in the sense that what readers are reading is located within a broader set of socio-historical and ideological forces that also have shaped the texts I am writing about. This dissertation is not the product of a "disembodied mind"--a distanced, objective, neutral researcher--but of someone who is mutually invested with the study participants in the game of representation. Have the women interrogated me? Yes. In the interviews I've conducted with them, the frequently posed question, "You know what I mean?" has been more than a throat-clearing, rhetorical gesture; it is a genuine quest for a meeting of minds, a community-building gesture.

But positioning myself in this text as Other--as an African American woman--also provides certain advantages. I enjoy authority that a Black woman writer brings to texts by other Black women--"an authority of experience and intellect that has been historically denied as incompatible with blacks and women" (Henderson 435). As a practical consideration, my explicit presence in this work illuminates for readers many of the assumptions behind the assertions I make. Telling my own story is not a mere act of self-gratification; this is a story with a point--that I, like the women I'm studying, continue to emerge from multifarious, dialogic communities and experiences. It is "an approach that focuses not on personal experience, but
reads it in terms of a broader social (con)text of difference and identity" (Henderson 435). She says:

"Clearly what complicates our efforts to address the issue of speaking for and about the other (even when we ourselves claim membership in a community of otherness) is precisely the intricacy of social identity and identification—that is, how we are defined by position and how position defines us. Because of the complex identities and multiple positionalities that each of us inhabits, our communities are always fluid and mutable. Indeed, it is this heterogeneous identity (always problematized in the instance of the black woman) that allows, even necessitates, our memberships in multiple and, not infrequently, conflicting communities. Such identifications make it difficult to define or to demarcate our various subject positions as blacks, women, mothers, daughter, mates, professors, scholars, activists—and these do not begin to speak to such variables as class, sexuality, regional background, political affiliations, and so on." (Henderson 434)

**Ethical issues—power and colonization:** In terms of our positions as graduate students, we have fairly equal power and resources. However, when one of us presumes to turn a critical eye on the others, for the purpose of representing them, that creates a power imbalance. How will this work be used? Will I be stepping over their bodies to rise another notch? Will I appropriate their ideas and not give them credit. Will I reveal secrets about them? Some women were more concerned than others with these issues, but all were sensitive to the academic context in which this work was being conducted, a context in which many do not feel completely safe. Feminist approaches to research (careful listening, a sense of
cooperation--not domination, and honoring trust) allow
these women to tell the story of their lives and work that
they want to tell. However, the expectation of my readers
for accuracy, exhaustiveness, and frankness in this
document not only force me as researcher to tell the story
I need to tell, but can make the research environment a
potentially dangerous place for sharing. Solving this
problem is not easy, but part of the trick is to negotiate
with participants the groundrules of the research process
and then to give my readers evidence that allows for the
participants perspectives and mine to work together.

I brought ideas and issues to the forefront of these
women's consciences which, in some cases, helped them with
their current writing projects. In return, these women
cared for me and respected my attempt to speak for them.
They often gave me suggestions which led me to other
sources, and so forth. Reading about themselves in the
draft as 'Other' these women helped me to negotiate
interpretations of the data.

I could not presume to understand a priori what is
relevant in the lives of these women (even though we share
the fact of being Black women) or, given the diversity of
our experiences, what are the important questions for each
of them. So, I extended a invitations to them throughout
the term of this project to suggest to me how they would
like to themselves. In doing so, I understood that I would
not be able to get absolutely consistent, comparable responses to questions. In writing up my "findings," I tried not to erase dissonances among the participants, but to emphasize resonances. Such resonances do not necessarily suggest that they have had similarly experiences as much as they point to instances and circumstances where their backgrounds, thinking, and behavior seem comparably influenced by social and cultural forces.

**Limitations of the project:** I am not suggesting that these questions alone, or this project alone, will generate the entire story of how African American women develop distinctive scholarly voices. I do not intend for this study to make a definitive judgment about the writings of African American women. Many related questions need to be addressed, among them: To what extent do our readers' prior acquaintance and/or interaction with us determine their perceptions of voice in our texts? How do readers' own interpretive frameworks, also conditioned by race, gender, and culture, contribute to those perceptions? What then are the consequences of those perceptions for us as academic writers, and how do they feed back into our sense of self and the resulting construction of rhetorical identity? Certainly, all of these questions and more must be studied in great detail.
In the end, I don't know if I have modeled readings of my study participants' texts that resists received notions of critical authority. What will be "read" by my own readers is my gender/racial performance in the context of the dominant cultural script. Hopefully, what I will have accomplished will be, as Henderson puts it, "a conscious self textualization which will generate neither simple nor reductive, but rich and complex, readings of black women" (437).
Notes

1 Because this dissertation is concerned with self-representation, I thought it appropriate to ask participants to provide their own pseudonyms. The rationales behind their names were diverse. Some chose relatives names ("Bernice," for her mother), others named themselves after public figures they admired ("Alice," for author Alice Walker), still others chose names with more symbolic meaning ("Yael," for example, which she says means "gazelle" in Hebrew and is also a biblical heroine from Judges 4).

2 After several discussions with this participant regarding ways to balance my need for relevant information with her desire not to be widely recognized, we worked out a compromise in which she allowed me to include in this text details about her background that we agreed were clearly important to understanding her writing. We kept other information intentionally vague. Handling this situation let me to carefully consider the relevance of information I wanted to include on all participants.

3 My assertion here is informed by my recollection of certain instructor comments I saw on at least one woman's papers which exhibited such features.
CHAPTER III
"SURVIVING INTACT": NEGOTIATING A SENSE OF SELF
IN GRADUATE SCHOOL WRITING

A moth is drawn to the light and is ultimately consumed by it. I do not want graduate school to be such an experience for me. The question hovers: how close to the light can I get and not be drawn into destruction? I must be cautious. I must resist impulse. I must survive, wings and spirit intact.

--Maya

Introduction

Scholarship across disciplines suggests that discourse may be thought of as an act of identity, marking speakers and writers both as unique individuals and as members of social groups. For Black women, these issues of language and identity are intricately connected to the sociohistorical forces that influence their lives, according to Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis. As I have suggested in Chapter I, a rhetorical theory of cultural negotiation explains some of the key features that are manifest in academic texts written by the African American women doctoral students I have worked with. To varying degrees, which will be discussed in this chapter, my study
participants conduct a conscious negotiation of cultural influences and statuses from both within and outside the academy as they compose their texts. Maya's words, above, express the desire of most other study participants to avoid the kind of cultural assimilation that they believe would rob them of a sense of self.

This chapter reports on and draws conclusions about what my seven study participants have said regarding their ability to write themselves into their academic texts. Such reporting necessarily articulates numerous impressions, sensitivities, and insights that my study participants and I have often called feelings. To say that this emotionally-charged "F-word" isn't exactly a 'god term' among researchers is to make quite an understatement. After all, feelings are usually taken to be merely an individual's intuitive awareness--essentially private territory that cannot easily be quantified, rationalized, generalized or counter-argued to others by those who set themselves up as neutral observers. But rhetorical studies increasingly acknowledge that even in a writer's quest for distance from her object of study, it is difficult to disengage feelings when asserting ideas she cares about. Whether clearly flagged as self-evident or heavily disguised as stances, positions, claims, and opinions, substantiated by discipline-sanctioned evidence, feelings are central to the writer's text.
In interviewing these women, I have come to a greater understanding of their challenge to exert agency as they learn to develop rhetorical identities (comprising facets of one's character that one brings bear in a text to help achieve a persuasive effect on readers) that their academic audiences will find appropriate. This struggle is also my own. At times we have all experienced considerable anxiety, frustration and anger toward readers whom we perceive to be ignorant of our feelings or apathetic or malevolent toward them. And while I am no psychologist, I ask questions about the perceptions of African American women that are central to this project: how might we channel these feelings into productive rhetorical identities? How do we use our academic writing, not merely to cope with--but also to influence--our readers' perceptions of us, and thereby establish ourselves as credible scholars in their eyes? And to what extent do we as writers believe we have control over these practices?

This chapter addresses these questions by enumerating several cultural and rhetorical issues that my study participants claim are important to those questions. Karla Holloway asserts that "Black women have a specific need to keep their instincts and childhood memories pure, immediate, and healing... because we can grow into women who impart feminine spiritual wisdom..." (Holloway and Demetrakopoulos 19). One of our greatest challenges is how
to prevent the various cultural tradeoffs we feel we must make in order to survive in predominantly White discourse communities distancing us from our home communities, where we are respected more for the wisdom alluded to by Holloway than for the mere designation of Ph.D. after our names. In fact, in some communities, Ph.D. actually distances us from those we want to remain closest to.

As they reveal throughout this chapter, several of the seven participants in this study have returned to graduate school, as I have, after—or while—raising children, working for years in government and the private sector, and/or serving in the military. Several are accomplished poets and storytellers. Representing faith traditions from Baptist and Jewish to Pentecostal, African Methodist Episcopal and Ifa (a Nigerian religion), they have vital spiritual lives that govern their everyday activities, and they often participate in church and civic functions. And perhaps most significantly, they have been profoundly influenced by elders in their families and communities whose authority is derived, not only from formal education, but also from lifetimes of hard work, a special brand of common sense known as "mother wit," and what some sources have called "the crucible of racism." As they grow older, their families and communities confer upon them the respect and authority that comes with the territory of being mature Black women. Several have already undertaken the task of
preserving and passing down the collective wisdom and knowledge of these communities, as writers and teachers in both formal and informal settings. Most view advanced education as preparation for careers devoted to "lifting others as they climb."

**Participant Profiles**

**Alice**

In her early 40's, Alice was born in rural North Carolina, but later moved to a larger city in that state. After her mother died (when Alice was four years old), she moved in with her maternal grandmother and subsequently was raised by an older sister.

Educated in all-Black schools, she received a major scholarship with which she pursued a bachelor's degree in English at an historically Black university in a neighboring state. While there, she maintained an "A" average, made the Dean's list every semester, and became editor of the freshman newsletter, the campus newspaper, and the yearbook. After graduating magna cum laude, she joined the military reserves while working, first, as a state employee and, later, for a major automaker. She then advanced to active military duty, serving both stateside and overseas and eventually rising to the rank of major. She went on to earn a master's degree in English Education,
obtaining a teaching certificate in the process. She is the mother of a teenage son.

Currently a research associate, Alice has found a place for herself within her discipline by specializing in African American women's literature, with secondary interests in basic writing and business communication. While she has presented seminar papers and conference talks in those subspecialties, she wants to concentrate her scholarly efforts on African American women because, she says, she senses something great about them: "what they do that keeps things going on, that perpetuates the race, that calls for scholarship, that makes life worth living."

Although she originally wanted to pursue her doctorate at Ohio State, adequate funding was not available when she first applied. Consequently, she began her doctoral work at a small, predominantly White university in a neighboring state. In the middle of her program, however, funding became available at her first choice, and she was able to transfer. The nature of her career plans has occasionally led Alice to occasionally questioned her decision to take her doctoral work at a predominantly White university, :

It's true that I've been exposed to new things and made to look at other things in different ways, but I've lived in this White environment for so long now that I feel unsuited for what I really wanted to do with my education--to work with "at risk" students at a Black school. Unless you're going to teach at the same kind of institution as the one you just got trained in, you still have to negotiate a space for yourself. In order for me to go back to the kind of school that I really had my heart set on going to and
do the kinds of things I had my heart set on doing, I've got to re-learn the politics of that particular environment and the discourses of that community. I'm uncomfortable about this because it makes me feel a little bit snobbish, and that's not how I want to construct myself. I don't want to be an academic snob; I just want to be a regular old Joe. But unfortunately, life hasn't dealt me that hand of cards. Being put into this program and being advanced to candidacy for the degree means I'm not a regular old Joe anymore. I need this PhD; I need to be able to speak and think at this level. But in certain respects, it's not what I want to do. It seems I'm always putting myself in conflict with myself and letting somebody else define my limits for me.

Despite the fact that most Black Ph.D.'s earned their degrees from predominantly White research institutions, Alice nevertheless senses that such settings pose significant obstacles to overcome. Her wish to avoid dramatic change in her identity that she believes can happen as a result of emersion in the culture of a predominantly White institution, is a sentiment that recurs in the conversations with most of the other study participants. In subsequent discussions, I will address how these women claim to deal with this uneasiness.

**Bernice**

Bernice is a student of nineteenth-century American literature. A divorced woman in her late 20's, Bernice was raised in what she characterizes as a "suburban" city in North Carolina. Both her parents have been Pentecostal ministers; her father was also a parts assembler at a major electronics corporation, while her mother has owned a
florist business for many years. Her parents are high school graduates; her mother also has taken a few junior college courses.

Bernice attended predominantly White elementary and high schools, with the exception of sixth grade when, to be closer to her mother's business, she went to a school in a Black neighborhood. "I was always a bookworm," Bernice recalls about her early education. "I did school very well and I loved doing school. I loved the praise that came with doing school, and I loved the affirmation that came with the teacher's remark, 'Oh, very good!' My teachers had extremely high expectations, which may have meant that students do all of their work and that they show up every day and that they're sunny of disposition—which I was able to deliver. I was always the good child.

She earned a bachelor's degree in English from an historically Black women's college in her home state. During her undergraduate program, she also worked as an intern for the State Department of Labor. She earned her master's degree at another predominantly Black institution in North Carolina and is now in her third year of doctoral studies in English at Ohio State, working as a teaching associate and preparing to take her candidacy examination.

Graduate school for Bernice is a battle of survival at this point, but she explains that the battle is more personal and professional than academic. "As I look around
at the very people I share 'school space' with and recognize that most of us are always tired, or stressed out, or feeling like just one more attempt/revision would have meant 'perfection,' I wonder how healthy this environment is, and how much longer I'd like to stay in it," she observes. "But there's a sense that once you have finished proving yourself, and you have, as several professors--old venerable people--told me, your 'union card,' your Ph.D., and a lot more psychic energy that you can give to tutoring or community activities."

Reflecting on her teaching experiences, particularly in what the academy calls "basic writing," Bernice says that she has always enjoyed working with small classes of "academically challenged" students, whom people believed might not succeed. She feels an affinity with these students who in many ways, she says, are not much different from herself. As much as she has accomplished (and as much as she loved "doing school"), she is sometimes surprised that she herself has been so successful academically. In terms of intelligence and background, she doesn't see herself as different from others who haven't been able to make it to this level. And so she ponders what missing elements have prevented more African Americans from pursuing higher education. Bernice is strongly committed to helping others like herself achieve the same kind of success:
While I think it's as important for those Black people who've decided to teach at predominantly White institutions to be there making an impact, that's not where I see myself making the greatest difference. Even though I have some research interests that might not be best served by an historically Black institution like the one I came from, I've made a decision to teach at a school where, despite a possibly lower salary, I will have a chance to replicate a little bit of what has happened to me. Many students go to an historically Black school, or any school, and want to be taught by Black professors. But universities have so few Blacks to hire, and I don't think that's going to happen in the near future unless some of us go to where the majority of Black undergraduates are and say to them that graduate school is accessible and that in fact they can get there.

It has also been a dream of hers to leave classroom teaching eventually to become a dean or administrator, or to perform some other sort of service. "I've always envisioned that no matter what else I do, I'll eventually end up overseeing some program that services the kind of people I study--Black women--who share the kind of interests I have," she says. "I'd like to pursue how it is that we do all the things we do, like be mothers and work, or be mothers and teach, or teach but also have time to have friendships and form relationships with people. I just don't see any other point...there's this wonderful Toni Morrison quote: '...if...it's not about my community, my village, then it's not about anything'...there's nothing going on."
Carol

Carol, in her mid-forties, is also divorced. Like several other participants, she received her early education in the late 1960's, the era of school desegregation. Neither of her parents, who were born and raised in the Midwest, have attended college; Her father, in fact, has an eighth grade education. Her mother had graduated from high school and while Carol, the oldest of six children, was still in school, her mother earned an LPN from the area technical college. Like most of the women in this study, Carol is the first in her family to earn degrees beyond the bachelor's. She did most of her undergraduate work at the flagship state university in Wisconsin; however, she finished her bachelor's degree requirements in sociology, and earned her master's degree in English, at a campus in her hometown in eastern Wisconsin.

Carol has had approximately seventeen years of professional work experience between her undergraduate and graduate work. Initially, she worked for a state job service doing job placement, which involved working directly with employers. She later worked for the state Equal Rights Division where she at first investigated discrimination complaints in employment, housing, and public accommodations and later worked with high school-age job-seekers. Her work at job services included direct
contact with employers but most of the work was with applicants. Special groups included high school students and food stamp applicants. After working for the state she worked for city government, first in community relations and later in city development.

"From the time I can remember, I was always 'supposed' to go to college," Carol says, recalling her parents' expectations for her. She recalls a crisis she had when she was finishing up her sophomore year. "At 17 as a freshmen and two years later just turning 19, I was supposed to decide what I'm supposed to do with the rest of my life by declaring a major in college," she recalls. Out of frustration, she left school at the end of that semester and worked for a summer in the advertising department at the local newspaper as a receptionist and "looking at the White women around me who really had nothing going on in their lives." She recalls:

I was replacing a woman there who was probably in her 30's or 40's, who was going back to school," Carol continues. "She had done most of her degree requirements part-time, but since she needed to do her student-teaching time, it was necessary to quit her job. Looking around at the other women there and seeing that where my predecessor was going was where I really wanted to be, I ended up taking off some time one week and going back up to campus to make sure everything was in line and enrolling in school again. I went back to my hometown and set my mind to finish the degree requirements and move ahead with my life.

An accomplished poet who has given several public readings during her time in graduate school, Carol is
preparing for her candidacy exam in Rhetoric and Composition while working as a teaching associate.

Lorrie Ann

Lorrie Ann is a doctoral student in the political science department. A single woman in her mid-twenties, she was raised, along with three brothers, in a small coastal city in southern Mississippi. For most of her early years she attended predominantly White primary and secondary schools where, she says, she was always considered "the 'star' student." She was heavily involved in school, church, and community activities.

After earning a bachelor's degree in political Science from an historically Black college in the South, she went directly to graduate school. She credits the college where she received her bachelor's degree for providing as high quality of education as she would have gotten from a major White university. "I think it's done a very good job in terms of preparing me, in terms of how to face the various obstacles that I was going to incur at a major White university and even in terms of presenting challenging situations to me and how to address them. Just because I came from a small liberal arts institution does not mean that I did not encounter problems and everything was just fine. In fact, some of the problems that I encountered in college are some of the identical problems that I'm facing
now. So, in terms of having the experience of facing those problems, I know more intelligently how to address them now, even though I could develop them better and be a little more diplomatic, which I'm not," she laughs.

Even after three years in her program, Lorrie Ann says she still sometimes asks herself if an academic career is what she really wants. "But as I progress through this program, I know what kind of an impact I want to make on the African American community." She sees her political science orientation as an effective way of making such an impact.

Throughout my education, I have always thought about how I can shape my career to help make society better for African Americans. What avenue, what path can I take in order to do this? Initially I thought it would be law, but after I got really involved in political science, I saw that there are aspects within political science where I think I can have that impact. I also think there's a drastic need to have more African American scholars to educate and broaden the horizons of our Black youth. And I think that something that we need to do as African Americans is try to someway infiltrate ourselves within that system to let our voices be heard and also at the same time, get some legitimacy and some credibility for those voices.

Maya

The mother of a college-aged daughter, Maya was born in California a few years after her parents moved from Mississippi after her father returned home from World War II. Like other Black families at this time, Maya's had financial resources; however, because of racial barriers in housing, they were forced to reside for a time in a
government-owned housing project. Maya grew up amid the turmoil of the Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam War, as did several other study participants.

She received her Bachelor's degree in English from a private women's college in California renowned for its language studies, after doing some undergraduate work at a small Catholic college. A former journalist, and an experienced public school teacher, Maya has returned to the College of Education to earn credentials that will allow her to work at a more effective level. Nearing the stage of writing candidacy exams for the Ph.D., she began her doctoral coursework at the same time that she was earning her master's degree.

In addition to her scholarly interests in English Education in college, secondary, and elementary schools, children's literature and literacy, she is also a poet and has several works in progress, including a work of historical fiction. Despite a hectic academic schedule, which includes supervising student-teachers and teaching first-year composition, she regularly participates in Bible study and serves her church community as director of Christian education.

Like several other participants, Maya defines her purpose as a teacher to draw out other people's talents and abilities, thus helping them to become the best they can be as they chart their life paths. Having taught for years at
several levels from kindergarten to college, she aims, through her specialization in literature- and writing-curriculum design, to help teachers to teach writing, reading, and literature. She knows that her future students will have diverse backgrounds and goals, and she believes she can make a valuable contribution to their lives. "We can't all be great writers," she maintains, "but we can use writing and reading to help us to become better people. We can think, we can share those thoughts, and build relationships with each other. We're helping to see where we are in the world."

Tanya

One of the youngest women in this study in her mid-twenties, Tanya is a single woman pursuing a degree in music history. A native of south-central Virginia, she is the oldest of three children and the only girl in her family. Her parents never went past high school, but all three children are now in college.

She says she was an outgoing child who sang in church choir, played piano, entered (and won) several talent shows. An avid reader, she says books were her outlet to another world.

After graduating from an integrated high school in Virginia with a college preparatory diploma, she received her bachelor's degree from the same historically Black
college that Alice attended, and recently earned her
master's degree from her present department. She is now
preparing for her candidacy examination.

Tanya recalls strongly arguing she had no intention of
going on to graduate school, but was finally convinced by
her advisor to go on for the master's degree. But fearing
what might happen to her ideas and ideals in graduate
school, she says she promised herself that "regardless of
what these White folks tell me, I'm going to do what I want
to do.

When it came time for me to pick an advisor, I went to
the woman who ended up being my advisor, and I said,
'Look--this is what I wanna do. You got a problem
with it? You let me know, 'cause you won't be the one
for me, and I can move on.' She said, 'Hey, I don't
know that much about it. If you wanna do it, I'm
willing to learn with you.' We kicked out a thesis
that was the first to be written on William Grant
Still's opera Troubled Island. It's the first opera
by a Black composer to be produced by a major opera
company. The text of the opera was written by
Langston Hughes."

Yael

Yael, whose roots are in the Baltimore area, is a
single woman approaching her thirtieth birthday. Her
mother has a career in social work administration for the
state of Maryland, and her father recently retired from a
major steel company.

She went from a Black Baptist nursery school to a
Black and Hispanic Catholic elementary school for first
through fourth grades, then transferred to a predominantly
White elementary and high schools. She then attended a small, predominantly White, Methodist women's college in Virginia, where she earned a bachelor's degree as a French/International Relations major, originally intending to join the Foreign Service. Becoming more and more interested in Russian (especially during her junior year in Paris), she pursued a second bachelor's degree in Russian at a large state university in her home state. After spending a summer in Russia, she decided to pursue Russian literature, and went on to graduate school in New York state.

"I think I sort of grew up a lot academically," Yael says of her college experience.

I spent...three years just sort of finding my way as a beginning graduate student, and that was where I really did most of my learning. I just found that after being told, 'well, gee, you're not an effective student because making this grade, you're not doing this, you're not doing this,' I sort of found out where my niche was going to be, and I just started making better grades, and just doing things better...

That niche was in literature. "When I went through and studied and passed my master's exams," she recalls, "I said, yes, this is what I want to do. It was kind of a validation that you passed exams, that you do have some value with this particular field. It's not like you're struggling, struggling, struggling, and you can never do anything. You know that you have the ability to do it."

Yael says she is concerned about having to defend her choice of Russian literature as her area of academic
specialization to fellow African Americans, who see it as a strange choice (even though they may praise it) for a Black woman. To say that I am teaching or am going for a degree in literature is more acceptable in the Black community. When she is asked about her field in general conversation, she prefers to drop the "Russian" from "Russian literature" because the term generic 'literature' seems to be more readily accepted by people. "If I tell people I'm into Russian literature, that this is what I like to do, I'm being viewed at as though I'm different and as though I suddenly sprung up as a peacock in a hen house...." She insists, however, that she has gotten used to this attitude, remarking that "my defense to that is to have a small circle of friends and family members who I can count on and rely upon, and I just keep myself separate from my work."

She is also concerned about defending her pursuit of a Ph.D., which has been viewed as being "uppity" at times both by Whites and by fellow Blacks. Usually male, non-family members who see her pursuit of education at this level as intimidating.

Despite the challenges she has had to face, Yael believes strongly that her broad educational and personal experiences, including her conversion from Christianity to Judaism 6 1/2 years ago, have contributed to who she is both as a person and as a scholar. "I've just always had
wide-ranging interests," she asserts. "I mean, it's never occurred to me just to concentrate on one particular thing. I happen to love writing, and I've wanted to do writing, and I've wanted to publish, not just in academic, but non-academic, too--there's that side of it." But she laments,

I've been finding out once you get to grad school and once you decide you want to do something, you're really limited in terms of wanting to do anything else outside of your department, outside of your field. My faith has helped me to see more clearly what I wish to accomplish in this lifetime and how I wish to do it--especially in the academic arena. My desire to help other African American students, especially those who might choose the "traditional" ways out (i.e., athletics, entertainment), has increased as I have struggled to get "through" the system--to be myself in the face of a society (academia) which wishes to mold those who wish to serve it into casts of inflexible predictability. I never wished to be either inflexible or predictable. And I think that it is necessary, for the future of our people in these united States, for others to also try for higher education. And by example, I hope not to be regarded as a "peacock in a hen house" (although I still feel that way) but as an example of what other opportunities are available for those who wish to pursue them (i.e., not just taking the easiest path of MBAs or more "acceptable" paths for African Americans, but paths like foreign languages, obscure or more difficult sciences, etc.).

Research Questions: A Closer Look

Coming to writing in an academic setting should enrich, rather than diminish, a writer's ability to be effective in all domains of her life. From this perspective, self, academy, and community all benefit from the writer's effort to integrate intellectual, social, cultural, and economic agenda for the good of society. If
academic writing both conditions one's self-concept and does real work in the world, then writing assignments in graduate school should encourage and reflect those functions. This assertion underpins the analysis of my research questions. Although the study participants have varied backgrounds and interests, they all seem to share a common desire to write a kind of academic prose that will both satisfy the expectations of their evaluative readers and achieve these larger goals.

The research questions enumerated in Chapter II have led me to two primary points of focus. First is the influence of a writer's background on shaping the "rhetorical identity" that she constructs within a given text for particular purposes and for specific audiences. My research suggests that all of the elements of a writer's background enhance her ability to establish rhetorical agency for herself in academic prose and help her to expand the range of options and resources she can call upon in establishing a credible image of herself in the eyes of her evaluative readers. Further, the image shaped by the writer in her text shapes the writer in return, if we acknowledge that the act of writing is an important means of crystallizing and reinforcing one's identity. The self-image constructed on the pages of an academic paper becomes another cultural voice that speaks back to the writer, reinforcing her sense of herself as a scholar.
The academic writing that will be referred to in this chapter consists mainly of ten- to thirty-page seminar papers produced over the course of perhaps five weeks out of the quarter. Writing in some disciplines also includes reports and informal response papers, which several women count as academic writing since they are addressed to their professors. Bernice even counts the writing she does as she prepares for exams and her dissertation as academic writing, even though such writing might not get seen by a larger audience, "because it helps me to get to where I can even go into a professor and say 'I've been thinking about this.'" In addition to this classwork, a few women have produced conference presentations for wider academic audiences.

The second point of focus in this chapter deals with what is at stake for African American women, as student-writers in predominantly White graduate programs, in attempting to assert rhetorical identities that foreground the differences as well as the similarities between themselves and their evaluative readers. While a graduate-student writer may perceive that she has access to numerous rhetorical strategies, derived from her experiences at home, church, school, and community, the use of many of those strategies carries risks within her disciplinary community that she must weigh against any potential benefits. If she chooses to build rhetorical features into
her papers which not only challenge the discursive expectations of her evaluative readers but also portray her as a different kind of thinker, with a different cultural agenda from those readers, she probably does so expecting them to adjust their interpretive frames to accommodate the meaning and goals she intends to achieve by using such a strategy. Ideally, such an interchange of perspectives on the page can open up viable space for the writer within the discourse community. However, sometimes the graduate student writer assumes that the goal of an evaluative reader of her paper is to supervise her mastery of an established (White male) interpretive frame rather than to accommodate the innovations which the writer brings to the discourse. This perception may exist even when the reader may not in fact have that agenda. Mixed signals may be sent in the course classroom conversations and individual conferences. Lessons learned from previous experiences also color the writer's assessment. Whatever the source of negative messages, by the time the writer begins to compose based on assumptions that don't square with reader expectations, then purpose and effect--both for writing and for reading--tend not to match, often with negative consequences.

In assessing such difficult situations that can develop between herself and her reader, the writer considers a range of rhetorical options. At one end of
the continuum of responses, the student can attempt to limit or erase from her text all traces of deviance from an established convention. This strategy may make the text acceptable to the reader but, of course, also limits/erases her authorial presence. This option does little to open up space for the writer's cultural perspective within her disciplinary discourse. Echoing bell hooks' statement regarding the pitfalls of African American women using academic prose (Chapter I), factoring in reader biases, there is no guarantee that the writer's work will be respected even if she manages complete conformance. At the opposite end of the response continuum, the student can boldly establish self-representational markers in the text, a tactic which may surprise--and alienate--the reader. Depending upon the predisposition of that reader and the importance of the text, this option can cost the writer her grade, her very status in her program, the respect of the reader, and any future opportunities that depend upon that respect. Most of my study participants say they continually struggle with the considerable challenge of placing their attempts at textual self-portrayal somewhere in-between these two extremes.

These two focal points--the assertion of rhetorical agency grounded in their cultural experiences, and the assessment of the risks involved--are captured in my participants' responses to the questions that guided our
interviews (Appendix C). As mentioned in Chapter II, I saw my job as interviewer as does Dana Jack, "to follow the narrator's lead, to honor her integrity and privacy, not to intrude into areas that the narrator has chosen to hold back" (Gluck and Patai 25).

In terms of constructing rhetorical identities, my study participants repeatedly indicated an awareness that their self-concept is continually shaped by the voices of their families, neighborhood communities, church congregations, and other social groups. They are also aware of voices internalized from the media and from interpersonal interactions with individuals and groups outside their immediate communities, including the voices of their teachers, mentors, evaluators, peers, and textual resources encountered in the course of their formal educations. They further sense that academic voices sometimes conflict with voices from outside the academy and, further, that these academic voices often signify discrimination based on race, gender, generation, and social class, and so forth. However, in these interviews the women speak not only of negative voices but also of voices reaffirming and celebrating their own cultural positions.

Numerous issues are involved in shaping their self-concept; this study pulls out only a few out for closer examination. Certainly, issues of like gender and social
class cannot be ignored because they play a large role in identity formation. However, as my study participants considered the premises which guided the interviews, few raised these factors as the most significant considerations in their negotiations as writers. Even when I asked specific questions to elicit response to such issues, the women generally skimmed over them and directed discussion back to their chosen focal points—family and church community. Just as Kathryn Anderson has observed from her own experience as an interviewer, I found that my study participants desired to "reflect upon their experience and choose for themselves which experiences and feelings are central to their sense of their past" (Gluck & Patai 17). There is great significance to the fact the women did not choose in these interviews to move beyond issues of family and church community.

It seems clear that the women took the opportunity provided by the interview sessions to assert from their own perspective what is important to their writing. Why they did not speak more extensively about matters of social class, for example, is important, however. Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis reports on social class among African Americans,

early historical and social trends in Black America generated numbers of college-educated black women who were dedicated to "racial uplift." They were encouraged to obtain an education in order to contribute to racial progress. Teaching, of course,
was the most acceptable career choice for these women. (49)

As evidenced by the comments of my study participants that appear earlier in this chapter, the goals of these women seem to resonate with the social and historical trends articulated by Etter-Lewis. She asserts that the pattern by poor and middle-class Black women maintain their respective social statuses are changed most often by education. The influence of advanced education may explain the reluctance of several study participants to even acknowledge the relevance of social class to their self-concept. One participant in this study stated, "education is the great equalizer," meaning that advanced education affords individuals relatively equal social standing. Even though class distinctions do indeed exist among educated African Americans, Etter-Lewis claims that "social class in and of itself may not be the single most important determinant of the course of a black woman's life" (49). Because my study participants did not speak extensively on issues like social class, I refrain from further comment on those issues. Instead, in keeping with the feminist-oriented research mandate to allow my study participants to tell their own stories on their own terms, I discuss at length here two sites of influence that the women themselves foreground as being major influences on identities as African American women scholars: their families and their faith communities.
Family influences: The comments of my study participants regarding important people in their lives and writing are perhaps the most extensive and resonant with each other. Several women saw specific influences of family members on their self-concept, including many of the values they have internalized that support their racial heritage and their relations with people of other races. These values have enabled them to envision themselves as members of culturally diverse academic communities, and this ability, they report, has served them well as they move into culturally diverse arenas like their graduate programs.

One of the most profound influences on Bernice's confidence in her rhetorical abilities have come out of her relationship with her mother, whom she characterizes as a traditional yet independent woman. Bernice recalls an incident in which she heard her mother tell someone that her husband is the proprietor of her florist shop. Although she defers to her husband in situations like this, and accepts primary responsibility for the home and the care of her three children, she has also taken on important leadership roles in business, church, and community. Despite her mother's duties outside the home, Bernice recalls, "I've always sensed that my mother was the primary source of family unity," Bernice says. When her writing displays a sense of independent thinking and a
sense that what she wants to say can indeed be said, "moments when I think, 'this is not impossible...anything can be done,'" she reflects, "it's to my mother that I look back."

Bernice believes there have been more subtle influences on her sense of racial identity coming from her family than she consciously realizes. There weren't overt observations of holidays like Kwanza, and her parents didn't give her an African or a pseudo-African name. She believes those things didn't happen partly because of the time at which she was born and her parents' age, and of course their own philosophy or ideology. Another factor for her has been seeing role models from the Black community. She says,

I have to go back to the family business and say that since we were constantly surrounded by Black customers whom I aspired to be like. Our customers were not only people of the same class as us, or people with the same interests or backgrounds, or fellow parishioners. Some of them were doctors, lawyers, teachers, and other professionals--people who had by some definition 'succeeded.' And it was exciting to see all of these people even briefly and even if it was only for potted plants.

In terms of dealing with dominant culture, Bernice says she doesn't remember her family advocating race pride on a conscious level, but she believes that dealing with racial prejudice was a unifying force. "To witness at an early age, for instance, my mother's struggle with wholesalers, or to see people from whom she vended treat her differently from their other customers, was a telling
thing. For them to put her on an immediate payment plan rather than a thirty-day account or relate to her condescendingly on the phone made some very definite impressions on me that things were not equal nor well..."

Bernice's statements about her mother's influence have particular meaning for negotiating rhetorical identity, in that making traditionally and independently conceived ideas work together in her life carries over into her writing. She brings this sense to her negotiating process in the act of writing. Her mother's model of unity and of balancing roles serves Bernice well as she sits down to write academic papers. Bernice has found it possible to do the same kind of balancing in her writing as her mother has done in her life. She says she is fairly comfortable in saying what she needs to say in her course papers, and showing the kind of image she intends to show within the framework of academic prose.

For example, a seminar paper on challenges facing Black churchwomen, which Bernice wrote for a Women's Studies course, shows considerable evidence of her attempt to balance three key roles that make the paper's message relevant to the academy, to her church community, and to her family. In the role of academic writer, she seeks to attach intellectual significance to her subject.

As a female member of a patriarchal faith community, Bernice wishes to communicate how deeply she is affected by
the unequal power relationships reinforced by the sexual politics of that community. As a loving daughter, she is personally concerned about the wellbeing of her parents, who work within the framework of that community. Playing out these roles for her professor (who, although keenly interested in the dynamics being explored in the paper, is ultimately responsible for passing judgment on the effectiveness of the text), begins her display of scholarly discourse with an extensive narrative passage which contextualizes her family's relationship to the subject of the paper.

Throughout the paper, in illustrating some of the problems women in the Black church face, she draws examples from her mother's experiences with her own church hierarchy. As a result of her strategies designed to situate herself and her subject in the world outside the academy, her professor was moved to suggest that she allow her father to read the paper, "as a way of bridging the academy and the community." This illustration suggests that, at least under some circumstances, Bernice can successfully bring a variety of self-representational resources to bear in her academic work.

Maya has had a resonant experience in dealing with racial issues. As a child, she says, her parents instilled in her a high regard for herself as a Black person, not by saying "Black is better...White is bad" but by modeling
fairness and honest and critical thinking and involvement with all people. She credits her parents for teaching her that Whites were not intrinsically superior to Blacks:

My mom always taught us to treat everybody fairly," Maya recalls, "and so I didn't see White people in our community as being the "haves" and the Black people as being the "have-nots." In fact, the White people that I came to know initially were in some ways worse off than the Black families: the fact that they lived in a predominantly Black and Mexican housing project actually made them low men on the totem pole. I also knew that Black people had options. When I would travel into the South to visit my relatives, I knew that what people described as wealth in California and as far as the eye could see, we had in Mississippi.

Bringing this sense to writing, Maya's work reflects the great care with which she articulates her concern for all those who are concerned with her work (this work will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV).

Alice's family background has set the stage for a more problematic approach to self-portrayal. After the early loss of her mother, Alice recalls that her family was constantly uprooted. Because they had no mother to anchor them, she says, they traveled about and were shuffled among relatives. Part of what she has been learning in her classes on how African American women come to voice has been that a strong mother figure is the source of their inner strength and self-authorization. The mother figure is the nurturer, the one who tells a young girl who she is and then grants her permission to be the woman that Alice Walker talks about in her definition of "womanism." As Alice phrases it, "If you are being 'womanish' or 'grown'
in your antics as a girl, it is because you are mimicking the role model of the established woman--mother--as you attempt to put on your own sense of sureness--womanness--self assurance or authority." For Alice, that root, or role image, was snatched away with her mother's death. And no grandmother or sister could quite fit the image of that root in her mind. The major part of her quest for education, she remarks, has to do with finding a "rootedness," a sense of belonging to an intellectual community.

While almost all of the women in the study can claim multi-racial heritage--primarily, Black, White, Indian, most affirmed an unwavering sense of Black identity. Some, however, expressed a need to be rooted in what was accepted by society. Although Alice, for example, has had access to Indian culture ("Indian" is a term that Alice and others prefer over "Native American") throughout her childhood, having spent considerable time at the home of her maternal grandmother where her relatives emphasized their Indian heritage, she nevertheless adopted an African American identity for herself. "In all my years," she recalls, "it's been hard for me to adjust to the fact that my family disavows anything African American, when on the other hand people in the Black community keep telling me, 'Well, you look Black to me...you talk Black...you act Black.'" Socialized in Black communities and educated in Black
schools from kindergarten through college, she pointedly asks, "What else--economically, politically, or educationally--can I call myself, except Black?" Even though she has struggled to remain loyal to her family's cultural values, she complains, "My race-consciousness has caused ambivalence for me all my life. Despite my family's attempts to influence me, I've been so steeped in Black tradition that representing myself as a Black woman is what's real for me."

Alice's acts of self-portrayal in her course papers (which will also be discussed in more detail in Chapter IV) strongly resonate with searching she connects with her family history. As she enters a disciplinary community, her scholarly identity seems heavily conditioned by her expectation that professors and other scholars will play the role of intellectual "mother," in that they will serve as the "established" thinkers from whom she can derive a sense of "authority." From this relationship Alice hopes to establish the sense of "rootedness" she has so long sought. However, as was the case with her grandmother and sister, the professors she encounters never quite live up to her preconceptions of them. Her writing assignments turn into sites of tension, cues of which are visible on the page, as she struggles to negotiate a position from which to write with confidence.
The backbone of Lorrie Ann's support system has also been her mother. When she was a child, she says, her mother always kept her involved in activities and decision-making situations, giving her a sense of how to use her own independent judgment. "I think she saw that I was developing into a very aggressive, outgoing, candid individual," Lorrie Ann remarks, "and she respected that." Lorrie Ann's negotiation of family influences in her construction of effective rhetorical identity seems to result in a scholarly persona that exudes confidence. The stances she takes in her papers are unambiguous and passionately defended, whether they run with or against the established opinion. She emphasizes that whenever possible she chooses subjects and positions in her course papers for political science that resonate with what she believes are the interests of black communities.

While Lorrie Ann bestows high praise upon her mother for nurturing her individuality, she will say nothing more about her father than that he is not a significant part of her life. Carol, on the other hand, foregrounds her father's support in particular and is especially proud that she and her father have always been able to talk to each other. "Probably my whole approach to language and the way I approach people generally comes from him," she asserts, "because he was the one who told me that no matter how high you get, no matter how much education you have, if you can
not speak to the lowest man on the totem pole, you're ignorant." Carol characterizes her father as a man who has been educated in the streets, and because of his influence, she says, "I can walk into a back-street bar as well as a penthouse restaurant and feel comfortable." Alice, too, has recognized the impact of the males in her family. She says that perhaps the reason she has chosen the paths she has and the challenges she has assumed may because those paths and challenges fall within the male domain, and the tangible heroes within her family were her father, her maternal grandfather, and her oldest brother. As leader of our family, my mother's father was my idol for as long as I can remember," Alice says.

Carol believes her grandmother also has had much to do with helping to build her literacy values. "It was my grandmother who told me there wasn't a book written that wasn't meant to be read" Carol recalls. "My mother used to read "trashy [romance] novels," and I could accept that, but when she took a box of them to my grandmother...I was shocked that my grandmother would be reading them. It was important for me to realize, however, that growing up in the 1890's, reading was a privilege, not something that everyone had access to." These relationships with her father and grandmother helps Carol to keep her own academic work open to possibilities for growth. "The relationships and the things I've learned from them help me to remember
who I am and where I came from," she says. "It's only possible to chart a path for where you're going after you know where you've been."

Because of her schooling and her parents' support, Carol never thought of herself as less than anybody else. For Carol, growing up in a predominantly German and Lutheran Midwestern city during the 1960's, the dominant culture permeated her household. "If you look at White Anglo Saxon Protestant values," she maintains, "they are probably exactly what my family held: hard work and going to church." She claims that she didn't see herself separate and apart from the White community in a lot of ways. "I knew the color of my skin," she asserts, "but I was not uncomfortable with it and I wasn't thinking that it set me apart as having any different qualities than anybody else." Carol doesn't remember openly encountering discrimination in her hometown, although she knew it existed.

Carol's papers demonstrate considerable reflection on an extensive range of experiences, from the domestic to the spiritual. Her papers demonstrate confidence in her ability address topics from her own perspective and in terms that fit her audience. Her papers on topics in composition, literacy, and literature exhibit such a strong personal dimension, captured in a prevailing "I"-voice and frequent references to influences and events in her life,
that readers come away from her work with a clear sense of knowing her. Like Bernice's paper on Black churchwomen, Carol's paper on locating people of color in composition studies displays the expert interweaving of relevant personal experience into scholarly discussion. In defining an identity for herself on the page and explaining what that identity means to the subject being discussed. Further, the expression of her relationships to others, which she uses to illustrate points, serve to indicate to the reader the kind of person she is, where she has come from, and where her opinions have originated from.

Tanya reports that her own ninety-year-old great-grandmother has been one of her greatest inspirations. This woman was not allowed to attend school past the third grade, according to Tanya. However, despite the prohibition of that time against allowing Blacks to read and write, Tanya shared her grandmother's account that a young White girl befriended and tutored her secretly. Against many odds, she eventually earned a GED and became a registered nurse. Tanya reveals:

I have a letter from her that I keep. Every time I think I'm going to get depressed, I open that letter and read how she's so proud of me, how she never thought that she would have a great-grandchild who would reach goals that she could only dream about, how I could get the education that she was denied, how she had to struggle, how somebody had to sneak and teach her how to read, and how she had to keep that a secret instead of sharing it with the world. And I say to myself, now here's a woman who is not saying I've become like the White people...that I've become ["bourgeois"]. She's been like, go...just go."
Like Alice, Tanya also claims a mixed-race heritage: her mother is half Indian and half Black and, she says. Her father's people "range from the fairest- to the darkest-skinned." "I never heard my mother say anything about the cause of Black women," she recalls. "Her side of the family prides itself in having that Indian blood in them more than they have African blood in them. But I think that's because of the generation they grew up in." Within this mixed race consciousness, Tanya says she strongly asserts a Black identity, a choice that nevertheless causes her some concern. She observes that it seems that the lightest side of the family is the most loved side of the family. She said that it never occurred to her, until she started going back home after she went away to college, to see how her family has really bought into certain images and preferences for things like "good hair." Unlike Alice, however, Tanya has never wavered in her affiliation blackness, which makes her keenly aware of those instances when she must project her racial identity to challenge stereotypical images and correct misconceptions, refute racist arguments, etc.

People who have influenced Tanya have been a major factor in her search for research topics, one of the ways in which a writer's sense of self manifests itself in the writing process. Tanya reports that she frequently feels tension to balance the requirements of her program--that
is, to cover traditional (European) composers and works from traditional (Eurocentric) perspectives—with the mandate from her family and community to reflect and promote personalities and issues that are important to African Americans. People like her grandmother have been instrumental in helping her to maintain that balance. Partly in response to her grandmother's struggle for literacy, Tanya works whenever possible to develop in her writing what she calls a "Black point of view." whenever possible. She believes that her sense of self as an African American woman operates in her writing process even in those situations when she chooses (or is forced) to write in more conventional ways. Her paper reporting on a research project she conducted on body conception in the Black community (for a Women's Studies course), demonstrates through rhetorical choices her concern for using academic writing tasks to make a difference in the world outside the academy. She opens her work, as do several other study participants, with an intensely personal narrative recounting her own struggles with body image, designed to identify her with other Black women as well as with fellow researchers in Women's Studies. Throughout the paper, even as she develops a scholarly discussion, she provides important links between writing for intellectual purposes and writing to take action in the world.
Yael's attitudes toward writing have also been shaped by influences from family members. Both of Yael's parents are highly educated: her mother majored in history and economics and has done graduate work toward a library degree; her father majored in history and political science as well as a year of law school. Both parents perpetuated a strong moral background and ethical fabric and spirituality. Her mother's education her values and belief in education come from her mother's father, says Yael. Her mother pushes her academically, keeps a folder of Yael's accomplishments. Yet Yael's father is more influential in spiritual ways; he encourages Yael to try her best. Her mother encouraged her to read, write, and pursue artistic endeavors. Even now, Yael reports, she is actively involved in her daughter's life. Because her mother instilled a sense of independence, Yael says, she doesn't feel restricted in coming up with ideas in her academic work. "My paper ideas are not always conventional," she remarks. "I like ideas that are slightly off the beaten path...that keeps me energized."

For Yael there is Indian background on her mother's side (great-great-grandmother) which is respected and is now being honored and researched by her uncle, the family historian. "We are proud of being Black and while I only recently found out this part of my heritage (last summer) it is not frowned upon. It is lovingly accepted. No
conflicts. Mixed race marriages are also present in our family and are accepted." However, she insists that she doesn't see things through a "racial" lens in front of her eyes to look at the world. It is not necessary for her to explicitly relate everything she says back to her own personal heritage. She has gotten past a stage of reading to feel resonance of Black culture.

Even while acknowledging that people do notice her blackness ("It's hard for people not to know you're there, who is speaking"), Yael sees her 'self' as a multi-cultural, non racially oriented individual. She rejoices in the differences in people, an that comes out in her writing, reading and choice of music.

Yael's paper "Numerology in Pushkin, for example, explores the intricate relationships among the numbers found in Alexander Pushkin's "Pikovaia Dama" and suggests a possible influence of the occult on the author's writing. Even though this paper contains few "personalized" statements, Yael's arrangement of claims and evidence reflect a finely honed reasoning process that suggest her confidence as a literary scholar.

It can be inferred from the recollections of these women that family role models have imparted in them a sense that they can build into their writing a complex sense of themselves and a motivator for them to work toward integrating all aspects of their experiences into their
academic work. Psychologists now believe that an individual's sense of self derives from a sense of relationship to those around her. According to Alan Fogel, for example, "communication, self and culture are present and inseparable from the beginning of the life course" (15). If, as Fogel posits, people can only comprehend themselves "in the context of their community, in the historical time in which they live, and in relation to the forms of communication by which they express themselves (14), then my study participants have long been active participants in particular cultural systems. Their relationships parents, grandparents, siblings, contribute significantly to the negotiations they engage in as writers.

By this point in her formal education, each of my study participant has developed a particular self-image defined in large part in relationship to the experiences of those who have been part of their early lives. From this socialization, each woman extracts values toward race, gender and other cultural components, appreciation of literacy, and independent thinking strategies; they are able to balance the traditional and non traditional roles in the manner they have internalized from observing significant people in their lives. They develop resources they can bring to their discursive situations.
Faith tradition and church community: In addition to the support and inspiration these women have received from their families, their spiritual lives and church communities have significant impact on the development of their identities.

Lorrie Ann's church has supported her not only spiritually but also in her academic aspirations, and she speaks enthusiastically about how her faith life and church community have impacted virtually every phase of her life. Throughout her undergraduate years, she had been very active in religious organizations and groups, but when she entered this program, she says she saw a drastic need to develop a strong, personal relationship with God. In fact, she credits the Lord for helping her make key decisions in the process of seeking admission into the Ph.D. program:

I believe God let me know what was essential for me to do in order to get into this PhD program. When you continuously listen to other people and you don't listen to the main source of power, then that tends to get you off track and you don't know what to do...you become confused, disoriented. Daily prayer and communication with God helped me to say, "Lorrie Ann, you and your higher source of power are ultimately the only ones who can determine your destiny."

Lorrie Ann's remarks about the depth of her spiritual convictions (particularly that she has achieved her success not on her own but with God's guidance) has particular meaning for negotiating rhetorical identity in her academic papers. Members of church communities have also provided support for other women as well. Tanya, for instance,
regularly attends one of the oldest Black Baptist churches in Columbus, where she is affectionately called "the little professor." Being a member of the Baptist community has been very important in shaping her character. "I feel accepted by the church and its members more than I feel by my own family," she remarks. "When I go home and I go to church, I constantly hear the church members saying, it's so refreshing to see young people making something of themselves but haven't forgotten where they've come from."

According to Tanya, her pastor continually reassures her that her education should not be considered a sellout to White people, but an empowerment and a way to achieve more empowerment for African Americans. "My pastor wants to create an African American music department that will serve as a laboratory for people who want to study Black church music, and set up laboratories in different Black churches as research sites. 'We're gonna change things,' he says. 'Me and you...we're gonna change things at Ohio State.'"

The Black church has exerted a powerful influence on Bernice's life as well, but in ways that, perhaps, are not wholly encouraging. Both her parents have been ministers in the Pentecostal church, and Bernice stresses that she cannot escape that influence. But the outward trappings that usually identify Pentecostal churches are so different from those of academic life, that often when people find
out that her church background is Pentecostal, they're surprised to learn that she is also an academic. Religion and intellectualism don't necessarily blend together, particularly in Pentecostal churches, Bernice explains, "which have been generally populated by people in lower socioeconomic groups--people who are not just uneducated but who are antagonistic to education. They believe it somehow interferes with the spirit: 'the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life' is a widespread belief, although I think that is a misreading of what it means to be spiritual and also intellectual."

She realizes that she must have had some role models somewhere within the church, perhaps among those Pentecostals who wanted to take an intellectual approach to the Bible, but these people were often considered dangerous influences by those in the church community who valued the power of inspiration.

They were people who wanted to 'theolologize,' we say—which is a made-up word, of course—'theolologize' more than they wanted to be inspired. There is room for both, but one has to keep a very delicate balance between the inspiration and the study and rhetorical practice of preaching. People are constantly making the moves that say, "even though I'm standing here before you saying this, it's not really me saying this." They need to be seen instead, as being used by some higher force.

Bernice believes her religious upbringing has much to do with her dissatisfaction with the way she has been dealing with certain people on campus or in her life. She says that she defers a lot more quickly and easily than she
would like in cases where she thinks she is in the right. 
In her efforts to build confidence in her academic 
positions, she feels that same kind of mystical sense of 
somebody speaking through her as much as she feels that she 
is speaking for herself and defending herself. "Instead of 
really putting myself out there or making my opinion 
adamantly known, I'll back up into a sort of denial: "Well, 
I would say this, but--I'm not saying this, this is not 
really me." For one thing, I will not be held entirely 
responsible if this turns out to be a mess, and I said so-
and-so...and also, there's not as much of an emotional 
investment."

Carol's spiritual journey has taken more diversions 
than those of some of the other women. She says she was 
raised in a "more or less" Christian home. "I say more or 
less because church wasn't necessarily a part of it." Her 
mother was raised in the AME church; her father in the 
Lutheran church. She says she was supposed to be raised a 
Lutheran, according to the faith of my father, but she 
insists that neither of her parents tried to force religion 
on her. "You could sit down and talk to my father, 
however, about anything in the Bible," Carol maintains. 
"Almost anything you would bring up he would have a 
biblical response to it. I never remember him going into a 
church except for a wedding or a funeral."
Because spirituality was a part of her upbringing that wasn't really part of church, she says she went back and forth in terms of determining whether or not church was really necessary. She did not get baptized and actually belong to a church until she was an adult. Then she joined an AME church where her aunt and uncle attended, and where she had a number of friends. "I was not always necessarily satisfied with that," Carol explains. "It met some spiritual needs, but I had my own spirituality within me. The last few years I had started doing some reading on other religions and last year I converted to Ifa, a traditional Yoruba (Nigerian) religion which doesn't have a set church. A lot of what you do is within your own house or with small groups. I think it really fits my needs in particular. It is not something I had to mold my beliefs around, but something that fit the beliefs I had already developed." "I realized I had gotten to the point that I didn't have ultimate control over my life. I put my life more or less in the hands of whoever was there and asked them to guide me and I've been doing very well."

Yael's religious heritage is also widely varied: "Baptist on my father's side and just about everything else on my mother's side." After spending her junior year of studies in France (during which time she lived in Jewish and Moslem homes), she started going to services at synagogue, converting to Judaism. My faith, both what my
family, especially my Baptist father) and my choice of Judaism, is what keeps me going—no matter what. As is the case with Tanya and several others, people in synagogue encouraged her in her pursuits. One of her advisors is Jewish and occasionally attends services with her. The process of conversion took approximately two years of intense study. She says the philosophies, the idea of learning, the reinforcing of ethical values in the Judeo-Christian tradition, have all influenced her self-concept. In particular, the idea of serving as teacher, regardless of one's profession (In Judaism, teaching is respected, as the title bestowed upon their spiritual leaders, "rabbi"—"teacher," pointedly emphasizes) has been important to her. Writing, for Yael, is a culmination of a learning process and a forum for teaching readers—of educating readers about matters at hand specifically from the writer's perspective.

Alice calls herself a "non-denominational Christian." Having visited churches of many faith traditions, she asserts that "Wherever God is, I want to be there." Her grandfather, a minister in the Holiness Church was the wise man who explained things (what things?) to her. Alice believes that she is able to bring what she learned—the biblical references, the knowledge base shaped by the early church life—to her academic papers. "Your early spiritual experiences and church experiences shape your perspectives
...they make you believe in rituals and other things that academia thinks are illogical. I can't live outside of my spiritual self; it's always with me. Nothing academia can do to me is going to shake my religious grounding."

As noted earlier, it was the men within Alice's family who shaped her self-concept. In the community, however, it was the women who pointed her way toward her career. While her family expected her to become a teacher, she always wanted to be like the older women in her neighborhood, who were not all academic women. These women were holding positions in the community that she was to strive for. Strong women in the community, school principals, beauticians, community matriarchs.

When and why might orientation toward family, faith community, other kinds of non-academic influences and experiences not serve these women well in their process of negotiation? In situations where non-academic habits of thinking, speaking, and writing are at odds with academic ones, writers sometimes feel they must choose an allegiance to one over the other. This seems more likely to happen (although it certainly is not always the case) when those non-academic influences such as family and church members have not been through the same kinds of educational processes that the women are now engaged in. While the general value of education is usually passed along in this situation, the idea that a loved one might become
assimilated into what may be perceived as "White" ways of speaking and behaving may mean that that loved one may be estranged from family and church in many important ways. Such devaluing of advanced education by those close to the writer can have tremendous impact on how they want to present themselves in written (and spoken) discourse.

While the ideal for most of my study participants is to strike a balance between academic and non-academic worlds because both have much to offer them, some of these women do feel pressure to choose one orientation over another. They believe they must either remain loyal to the habits their home communities have conditioned them in and and consequently suffer in the academy, or adopt wholesale the mindset and discursive practices of their academic communities and consequently alienate themselves from their home communities.

Having to make such a choice affects these women's negotiation of rhetorical identity and sometimes interferes with their ability to elicit positive ethos from their evaluative readers. Carrying out a decision to choose one or the other option is a difficult undertaking. On the other hand, trying to achieve a balanced stance between them is difficult as well. Clearly, balancing would be healthier for the individual and for her communities she relates to. A sense of balance seems to make the writing stronger and more satisfying for writers and readers alike.
Writers, it would mean that they can bring their experiences to bear on their work. It would also mean that readers have a means by which to sense the distinctiveness of the individual's perspective without feeling that the writer has not mastered important facets of disciplinary writing. At the graduate level, however, based on my work with the study participants, it seems to be relatively uncommon for students to have mastered this point of negotiation for every writing task. Sometimes their efforts to negotiate rhetorical identities that satisfy both themselves and their readers fall short, and there is evidence in the texts themselves that such a breakdown harms the quality of their writing. Choosing to resist academic forms and features may be picked up by some readers as an important act of resistance to elitist convention, or it may be interpreted as a failure to write well.

Balancing the problem of negotiating a stance between academic and non-academic worlds, negotiation of rhetorical identity would ideally take advantage of the benefit of the experiences they've had, the stories they've heard (and told), the observations they've made and the insights they've come to in other areas of their lives. However, these factors must be measured against the theoretical nature of academic thinking. Many of my study participants have said or implied that they do not trust "Theory" as it
is often valorized in their disciplines. They see often little connection between the abstract explanations of phenomena that teachers and texts emphasize and the personal knowledge of those phenomena that their hands-on experiences in the real world has provided them. Therefore, they face a difficult negotiation of rhetorical identities for evaluative readers in papers where they foreground and even create such theory. Where are these women to place themselves in the text between theoretical ideas and reader who will judge them on those ideas?

**Taking risks in asserting textual identity:** So far, my discussion of role models and spiritual influences has emphasized racial issues, about which these women had much to say during our interviews. I now turn attention to the second focal point of the study: what is at stake in foregrounding particular cultural aspects of a writer's rhetorical identity? All writers are cultural beings and thus all writers have choices to make regarding what to include in their writing. The extent to which a writer believes she is able to construct an identity for herself in her written work speaks to the relative freedom and constraints felt by the writer. My study participants considered how much of their identities as scholarly women of color they felt can be projected in their academic
papers. As Maya questions: "How close to the light can I get and not be drawn into destruction?"

My study participants have indicated that throughout their writing experiences, they have had to negotiate a way through numerous dialogic voices in order to affiliate with or distance themselves from their readers. Mediating all these internalized voices place them in rather tenuous positions in their programs. Since these voices speak both with and against each other, the combination becomes more or less significant as they shift insider/outside roles. As cultural insiders in many of their non-academic communities, whose "credentials" derive from particular voices of family, church, and community, they come to the academy as cultural outsiders, being asked to call upon scholarly voices in order to be granted insider status. There is a great need for these women to be aware of the situated ethos that is part of the rhetorical context for their work, and how that ties in with the invented ethos they have more extensive control over. They don't call it that, but they to varying degrees they say they consider of the circumstances that surround them as Blacks, as women, as students, and so forth, and how they feel they need to

Bernice comments echo the sentiments of several other women regarding the way their academic papers represent them. "I know I'm only presenting one small part of myself anyway," she maintains, "and I've recognized after awhile
that you can't explain or justify to people who don't get where you're coming from. The more you do that, the more you limit yourself and box yourself in."

Comments by study participants indicate that they bring particular agenda to certain writing situations. In poetry and other creative writing that some of them do, they tend to rely more on personal expression or on invoking some of those voices that they know their audiences will identify with, and most of their non-academic work is generally directed toward African American audiences. Maya and Carol in particular tend to tap into experiences and voices related to Black experiences, and their work is recognized and appreciated by Black audiences. However, the extent to which these women and others can find a place for those kinds of voices in their academic and professional writing varies considerably. Carol recalls a successful analytical paper she wrote on Jamaica Kincaid's "At the Bottom of the River," for example, in which she was able to match the creativity of her non-academic writing. "This seminar paper reflected a voice I had heard before," Carol says. "There is a distinct voice that comes through in [Kincaid's] work. I was able to adopt that voice in writing about it, and when people read my paper they can read into it that extra something." She also recalls another paper, on the success of African Americans in composition classrooms, that she constructed
as a "double narrative." "I did the academic portion, and then I did my own personal commentary on what it feels to be an African American woman and a graduate student going through this type of research," she says. "The double narrative came about with the frustration I felt in not finding [the success stories] I was looking for and in fact finding things much worse than I had expected."

Other kinds of non-academic writing have presented problems when the writer brings that baggage to the academic situation. For example, Alice's tenure in the military had a profound effect on her ability to represent herself in her texts. During the third of her life she spent in the military, she was first made to feel unsure of her self as a writer. "Especially a supervisor who told me that 'there is no pride in authorship.' He used this as a tool to prevent my work performances on even routine tasks as a staff writer." Her tours of duty overseas meant that she had to learn a new culture and language within a culture (German) in military which are two separate discourse communities from the academic one.

Several women spoke at length on the issue of including an overtly personal voice in academic writing. Their attitudes toward constructing cultural identity in their writing fall into two areas. First, in desire to foreground racial/cultural issues/angles as subjects to write about; second, in applying a racially/culturally
conditioned perspective to any given topic, whether or not it represents a "Black topic."

In the first case I found differences in the women's attitudes toward seeking out racially oriented issues to write on. Some women do look for such topics or at least feel most comfortable when they can write in these areas (Alice, Maya, Tanya, Bernice); others feel limited in their disciplines, and prefer not to pursue an overtly racial topics (Carol, Yael, Lorrie Ann).

On the second point, there seems to be unanimous agreement that whatever topic, they cannot help but approach them from whatever lens they have developed. For some, it is a conscious racially colored lens--can't help looking at things from a "Black point of view"; for others it is not. However, these two points do not line neatly up. For example, while some women may be able to assert perspectives specifically as "Black women" (whatever that term signifies to them), they feel that in some cases in disciplinary writing, that option is not available to them, doesn't seem appropriate to the subject matter to infuse it with an explicitly "personal" approach. The rhetorical situations are complex. Sometimes, both subject matter calls for the writer to be more explicitly present (as in response papers); other times the subject matter calls for a "neutral" approach.
Carol, in particular, expresses distinction between adding personal statements to an academic text and personal texts that actually become academic texts. According to Carol, "my literacy history in sociology would not be constructed as an academic text because of the conventional parameters of that field, whereas in [rhetoric and composition], I can safely say that my literacy history is academic writing, because it has been sanctioned by the powers that be as legitimate." Understanding the parameters of what counts in their fields gives women like Carol considerable freedom in terms of what they feel they are able to project in their work. They do not feel pressured to conform totally to the conventional.

By contrast, some women have more doubts about whether personal voice has any place in their academic prose unless, that is, they're dealing with a subject matter that is specifically geared toward race. And for Yael, in particular, that doesn't happen very much at all in Russian literature.

An incident in Yael's experience highlights diversity of thinking among the women with regard to thinking "Black": At a conference, a speaker presented a paper on Russian author Alexander Pushkin (who has Black ancestry). The speaker represented his position as being representative of African American scholars who look at the author differently from traditionally-oriented Slavic
scholars. Sitting in the audience, Yael says, she was made uncomfortable by the speaker's implication that all African American scholars would take a racial approach to Pushkin's work; that an African American mindset could be brought over into Russian literature. She acknowledges that it is valid to discuss how race is described and used in Pushkin, but at the same time, race is not a significant topic of discussion in Russian literature, which grew out of a virtually all-White culture, unlike the distinctly multi-racial cultural ground of American literature. Russian authors may take up ethnically-oriented issues, but primarily write about broader, more generic topics like motherhood, etc. Her point is that a scholar of Russian literature, even a Black woman like herself, should be free to pursue investigations of the literature that do not depend on racial implications. A scholar of Russian literature must not fall into the trap of appropriating that literature or trying to fit it into a different cultural frame. With the exception of certain aspects of Pushkin's mixed racial heritage, Blackness is not foregrounded in most Russian literature; therefore, race is irrelevant for her.

Tanya expresses a major concern that is shared by several other women: "I think I'm going to get lost in the sea of Whiteness because the writing I do in my field just doesn't offer me opportunities to express myself as a Black
woman." Tanya imagines that if she had a perspective other than the accepted White male Eurocentric viewpoint on some subject in music history or musicology, she probably would not be allowed to express it:

Say for example I decided to purport a theory about Mozart and his music, saying that as an African American woman, I feel Mozart's music is a reflection, not of the music of that time, but of his particular environment. I really think they would look at me like I was crazy!!! If I were to go in and say that, as an African American woman, I think that the problem of drug abuse within the jazz community is a product of the racism or the environment or the lack of support for the music, that would be widely accepted because they would assume I had some special insight there. But anything dealing with Europe...just saying there is a cultural perspective that I want to offer that may be overlooked if you look at it from a purely European point of view...No.

She also believes that a lot of who she is and what she is trying to do with her education is bound up in asserting a "Black point of view." She remembers that her parents instilled in her a love of music early in her childhood, although she also recalls that they sometimes criticized her musical options. "I saw my parents really engrossing themselves in Black art and music. But although I took lessons for many years, I was learning classical music. My parents were like, 'we don't want you to learn classical music. We want you to learn gospel. We want you to learn jazz. We want you to learn blues.' They said, 'classical is okay, but that's not who you are.'" For Tanya, that Black point of view is often best received outside of her area of specialization. Tanya shared two
papers which emphasize this point: a paper she wrote for a Black Studies course where her writing was praised for its presence, and a Music History paper on Mozart which was conventionally neutral style, but nevertheless was not well received. The frustrations mount for her.

However, Tanya does see increasing opportunities to assert a "Black point of view" in certain work that she is doing now in Music history and has done in the recent past. She explains that her research on Black composers is breaking new ground in music history. Although there are a few Black scholars in the country who do historical research in African American music, Tanya has seen or heard of few in her department. She wants to help put African American composers and artists in the forefront of scholarship, in order to give them credit for their accomplishments.

Tanya says that with her undergraduate degree and teacher certification, she could have taught in any music school in Virginia. But during the year that she was student-teaching, she saw virtually no information on Hispanic, Asian, or African American performers. "I'm standing in front of a classroom that was 95 percent Black, trying to relate Mozart to them," she recalls. "They're looking at me like, 'He ain't nothin' but a little short White man playin' on the piano. I don't wanna hear that.' But there was no literature out there that I could pull
together and say to my students, hey, here's a Black man that composed the same type of music Mozart did."
Complaining to her advisor, she says she was told, "I hear you complaining, but what are you going to do about it? Somebody's got to get in there and write the literature, 'cause they're not gonna write it, we already know that. If they were gonna write it, we would have these types of books." She concludes, "That's the total reason I came to grad school--to help write that history."

On many occasions, the women say they put a great deal of work into a project, but don't feel a personal investment in it. And they generally don't think they are able to do much about these situations; they seem resigned to the fact that they must write papers that don't reflect their voices just to survive in their programs. They believe that at this point in their graduate studies, their textual voices are still developing. Bernice explains, for example, that writing her exams has been a liberating experience. She says that her examiners "have cleared space for my 'voice expressing.'"

Before arriving at Ohio State, several of the study participants believed they were "good" writers; professors and peers alike had told them so. But finding themselves in another arena with a different population, reaction to their work has been often considerably different. In order to maintain some sense of sanity about their abilities,
some of these women have even gone as far as to get feedback on their work from people outside their departments and even outside the academy (Maya's sisters, for example, who have college degrees, two of whom were trained as teachers although they do not currently hold academic jobs). Tanya complains that she has gotten a number of confusing mixed messages about her writing, often from the same professor.

I've gotten to the point now that when I get papers back, I just throw them in the corner with the other ones. I don't even want to read what these professors have got to say. One professor gave me an "A" in a class, but he ripped one of my papers apart and wrote on the back of it, 'you need to work on diction.' But when I wrote another paper for the same man--in the same style--he was like, 'oh, wonderful, wonderful, wonderful!' I've gotten to the point where I'm like, nothing pleases him. And I don't care anymore.

In terms resonant with Tanya's, other study participants clearly articulate what is at stake in revealing a culturally specific voice that does not conform entirely to some "White male" paradigm, and emphasize their beliefs about their ability to express cultural difference in their writing. Despite numerous challenges, Carol and Bernice believe that they have rather successfully integrated aspects of their culturally-mediated voice together with the expected academic voice. Yael and Lorrie Ann, by contrast, believe that a distinctly Black cultural voice has a very small role to play in their typical disciplinary discourses. Alice would like to be able to incorporate a stronger culturally-grounded voice into her
writing, but struggles to find effective strategies. After her military service, a professor in her master's program told her she wrote like a "WASP male". She had soaked up the impersonal bare-bones, unpadded with flowery descriptive features. After being told, "there's no pride in authorship," she was encouraged to adopt a masculine style of writing in the military, which she saw as an occupational rather than a gender-based style.

Maya and Tanya pick their spots for infusing cultural aspects into their writing—in certain kinds of papers, and/or for specific professors whom they have come to trust. The driving force behind most of these women's rhetorical decisions seems to be their considered assessment of how much of their own background and interests in their course papers are likely to be accepted by their evaluative readers. They also consider in part their own received notions of what "academic writing" should look like, as well as the explicit signals given by their professors: markings on papers, comments in conferences, and so forth.

In such a climate of evaluation, however, some of these women say they don't necessarily feel terribly constrained by their student status; that it doesn't seem to undermine their confidence or effectiveness in many situations. Carol, for example, asserts that she often presents herself as an expert on many subjects she writes
about, because few of her academic readers know much about them. For instance, she says, no one on her master's examination committee had any specific knowledge of the topics she had written about, such as the theoretical groundings of Afrocentricity, its use as a methodology and implications for college composition teachers who are faced with students who have received Afrocentric educations. "The three professors there ended up discussing my paper more among themselves than asking me questions," she laughs. "I was put in an expert's position of sorting out the extraneous questions they had, and I found myself actually having to insert myself into their conversation." Carol says the experience may have taken pressure off her in an exam situation. However, it also caused her considerable concern:

While it felt good to know I was in command of my subject, but I was also in a situation with people who were supposed to be teaching me, helping me to find ways to gain knowledge, and the roles were reversed. I knew that any work I continued in this or related directions would be on my own. This ultimately had at least some impact on my switching programs during the Ph.D."

Much of the insights these women learn from interaction with their professors transfers back to their role as writers, in terms of making an effort to leave clues in their papers about their identities and perspectives, so that readers will be able to understand their work as it was intended. While it is difficult to achieve this in any situation, some of the women who do
cross-disciplinary work, face particular problems outside their major areas of concentration. Tanya, for example, says she can express herself more effectively in Black Studies (where she takes a considerable number of classes) than in music. She believes there are more avenues for her to contextualize her views explicitly as a Black woman. She recalls that when she wrote a paper for one professor in Black Studies, he told her that it was advanced work even for a doctoral student. However, when she attempts to write the same style of paper for her music history professors (although the topics are not necessarily similar), they treat her work as a "first draft." After seeing that other (mainstream) students were having similar problems in writing effectively for the discipline, she says she has come to realize that more than race is involved in writing assessment. However, she recalls, "At first I felt like they were giving me a hard time because I'm 'The Black Girl,' and I remember thinking, 'These professors don't think Black people can write, so they're just trying to analyze me.'"

While Tanya's early perceptions may not have matched the "reality" of her situation, such perceptions represent a considerable problem for a writer to overcome. Not only are women like Tanya trying to find a place for themselves in their work, but they're also trying to accommodate several different perspectives on that work. Tanya says
that at first she would always try to act on her professors' comments on her papers, but that didn't solve her problem. "I would try to incorporate those things into the next paper," Tanya reports. "Well, then I would write like that, and they would say 'no.' And I would think, wait a minute--didn't you tell me to do this very same thing?"

Asking when (and to what degree) these women choose to write in compliance with, and/or in resistance to, representations of self which they believe are being imposed on them by the academic institution, and what rationales guide their choices, relates to what is involved in achieving rhetorical agency. Such a question gets to choices a writer makes, the contexts within which she uses particular strategies, reactions to what she senses about the expectations of her reader.

Graduate school experiences provide a context in which the choice to comply and/or to resist becomes an issue. As Bowser, Auletta, and Jones frame the experience:

There is a special burden that accompanies people when they invade traditionally all European-American institutions. The invaders are seen by some as tokens, sometimes as affirmative action hires, and sometimes even as threats to the academic integrity of the institution. They are seen by others as the proverbial missing link to higher education" (xiii-xiv).

This idea resonates with my study participants' attempts to develop rhetorical identity, in the sense that these "burdens and baggage" are all part of their typical
rhetorical situations. They constitute part of the 'backdrop' in front of which their writing stands out in relief. Bowser, Auletta, and Jones put forth several alternatives for addressing the general problem of "racial exclusion and putdowns made by even the most well-intentioned White colleagues." They categorize these as "three no-win choices" which parallel certain writing strategies:

First, he or she can mention the offense in conversation, but this not only violates the middle-class European-American's social rule of politeness but presents additional costs: Besides being considered rude and possibly maladjusted, the injured party usually will be ignored, excluded, or labeled a troublemaker from then on. Second, he or she can avoid speaking up. Say nothing long enough, however, and the victim is left to struggle with mounting internal anger, pain, doubt, and blame. Third he or she can disassociate from other people of color and work toward being accepted as an individual apart from his or her race. This approach also has its price. The individual is never perceived simply as such. At best, this "honorary White" status lasts only as long as he or she is seen to be like a real White person and supports White interests. (17, emphasis added)

The entire graduate school experience colors and shapes a student-writer's rhetorical identity in her texts. Writing papers is one of the ways we present ourselves before reader/evaluators in order to be judged worthy of enfranchisement within their communities (through passing grades and awarding of degrees), worthy of their material and social investment in us. This is part of the rhetorical context in which we must produce "effective" academic prose.
Virtually all of us are to some degree English-Americans in our public and professional thinking and behavior. But only a few of us are only English-American in our private, community, and family lives. The reality is that race is cultural as much as European ethnicity is cultural. Apart from social class and circumstances, what distinguishes one "race" from the other are variations in historic attitudes, beliefs, values and memories. The content and inner worldview of these cultures are learned. They are not acquired by nature, innate inheritance, or "blood" ancestry. This means that anyone from one race (culture) has the potential to learn the elements of another culture despite being perceived as a member of another race. The key is knowledge, being accepted, and then being allowed to participate. So a person of African descent has the potential to become a European-American in mind and participation just as a person of European descent has the potential to become an African-American" (24).

The first key--knowledge--is something that we can gain for ourselves by writing in graduate school. The latter two keys--granting acceptance and allowing participation--are in the academic reader/evaluator's hands! What we try to do is put ourselves in position to be accepted. But our reader/evaluators, by virtue of their positions and cultural status in the academic institution, bring an unequal power relationship to the text! When we foreground our cultural perspectives in our texts we are in a sense asking our readers to participate in them as if they are African American women--inviting a closer meeting of minds where each side identifies itself with the other (mutual identification). We may be saying to them, this text isn't really for or to you. The potential for this exists, as Bowser, Auletta, and Jones have pointed out.
Bernice, for one, has not felt much of a problem using academic prose to express her ideas. If she has felt tension at all, she has tried more to find a better academic way instead of abandoning an academic discourse. She almost never goes into a situation thinking, "This can't be said adequately, or this just can't even be said at all," because she recognizes how inadequate any academic or any other kind of register language is for really saying what one's concept is.

In expressing my racial or gender identity, for instance, writing about it doesn't become a further problem. I haven't been so angry, so adamant, so motivated by race or gender in a way to say something that I couldn't say academically. In other words, I don't feel as if I'm waging a war, although I am conscious of the fact of having to prove that my being here is not the act of affirmative action. At the same time it's so exhausting to always be trying to write and then to go "is this position Black enough, is this position enough of a woman"--I know that whatever is happening on the page is always already Black and womanist.

Whenever she reads literary works and critical texts written by Black women authors, Bernice says she senses their personal investment in the texts, a presence that she believes is often disdained by academicians who devalue such personal involvement. These works reveal to Bernice that

these people had grandmothers and great-grandmothers that they see in the text that they read or that they sat around kitchens and had the kinds of conversations that, thank God, somebody, maybe one among the thousands was able to sit down and actually record, but they tap into something personal. I like that.
She, too, is working toward an unapologetically subjective approach in her own writing. "I think now I sort of do it nervously. I write the personal into the academic very cautiously, going, 'Okay, I hope I can just make this work this time' and not get caught."

Some of these women have said that they understand when they're addressing White people that there are certain things about themselves and their experiences that they cannot automatically reveal. Several women agree with Bernice when she remarks that she must keep telling herself, "This is not about you. This is about getting this over." The troubling thing, she says, is that she doesn't even have to stop to think consciously about what can and cannot be said in her academic writing, because so many options are already closed to her. "Admittedly, I lean toward giving the professors what they want, particularly in terms of style," Bernice says. "I hardly ever get defensive or offensive in demanding the right to certain dialectal twists." She does expect to represent faithfully the people about whom she writes. "If my community were to read my work, and if it were held up as an example of something that is sensitive to and positive about my Black experience, I wouldn't be ashamed of that." Bernice doesn't see academic writing as excluding her voice totally.
While Carol realizes and understands the complexities of academic language, she tries to avoid the jargon and high level verbosity evident in some academic works. "I try to make my writing fairly simple and direct and use my knowledge of how language/writing is structured to complicate my writing," she observes. Still, she says, she can slip into more sophisticated language when the situation demands it, and has felt comfortable about taking direction from certain professors.

I've been used to writing for different audiences and in some cases I realize that I need to adapt to a particular professor's whims for the duration of my contact with him or her. Others, however, have pointed me in directions I felt were helpful in the long run and I've continued to follow their advice. I guess I make decisions about taking directions based on what I feel is best for my writing and that will help me get my point across.

Tanya also feels fairly comfortable switching dialects, realizing that, in order to communicate with all age groups and backgrounds, she has to master not just the conventions of academic English, but other prose styles as well. That mastery requires a little bit more expansive knowledge than just learning what we call everyday "White" English--edited standard English. "Switching dialects doesn't bother me as much as it probably would have six or seven years ago, before I came to this environment from an HBCU," Tanya reflects. "I could see my language patterns changing when I was there, but I think they REALLY have advanced since I've been here, because I've become more
aware of the world around me and the things that other people say."

Carol tends to look at paper topics in terms of her own personal interests, even as she considers the expectations of her evaluative readers. One key issue in Carol's writing is the responsibility of those readers for meeting her work on its own terms.

In a given paper, I may have my own agenda of ideas I want to examine and people I want to reach, and if I know there are going to be specific issues of interest to people outside the academy, then those issues often get included in my papers. There have been points where I have said very directly to my readers that while they may have questions about my discussion, this isn't the place to answer them. Readers coming to this piece might need to go and do some other research on their own because my paper is approaching the subject on a particular level. If those readers are not at this level, then I believe I'm asking them to take some responsibility for coming to the text informed.

These women expect their readers to value what they say because of who they are as writers. They believe they are giving readers something valuable in giving themselves. They often feel compelled to make their voices more distinct in discussions of topics that they feel have been neglected by mainstream scholars.

When she was writing her master's thesis, Tanya says her advisor kept telling her that she tended to "romanticize" her ideas, creating unacceptable "smoke and mist." (Maya, recalling the work of Toni Morrison, Gloria Naylor, and Alice Walker, remarks that such "'smoke and mist' is the point--the show!"") "I was really into the
emotional side of writing then," Tanya remembers. Not only was I trying to get you to understand what I felt, I wanted to make you feel whatever I was trying to say. My advisor was like, 'Well, you just don't do that in music history.'

Tanya feels strongly that in many ways her field has stripped her of identity. She claims that she is not able to come to the academic table as an African American woman scholar, but that instead she has been placed at the table as a "generic" scholar. "But it's never really 'generic,'" she argues, "because 'generic' usually means White. In many ways I feel that they have neutralized my color. It upsets me sometimes, but then I say to myself, 'are you allowing yourself to be stripped, or are you fighting to retain your identity? And if you're going to fight, how are you going to fight?'

Tanya has decided that her work will be a reflection of that fight. "I'm not trying to be the Alice Walker of Music History—or its "savior"—but I can give voice to Black women in music who didn't have a voice." She can recall many instances when she wanted to express something in a particular way but felt that there was no way to do it using conventional academic prose. She tells of one instance that speaks of her competence and authority to advance the terminology of her field.

I was working on a paper about a particular piece by a Black composer, and I found that there was no adequate terminology for what he was doing. None of the terminology that we had in the field would fit this
work because the composer did some pretty unconventional things. But my professor wanted the paper to rely on conventional terminology. When I attempted to coin my own terms...talk about static! "Where did you get this term from? Why did you use this?" And I replied, "first of all, you don't have a term to explain what I'm talking about." It was like he was questioning whether I was just making up stuff. There are countless scholars who just make up terms! I started to ask him, "Do you really have a problem with the terms you claim I made up or point, or do you just feel that this music is inadequate? Is that the problem from the get-go? Maybe it's my subject matter you've got a problem with." And essentially I think that's what it was. We had a major falling out. I didn't have any off-the-wall 'supercalifragilistic' kinds of words, you know what I'm saying? If you looked at the music, you knew exactly what I was talking about based on what I said in the paper. My professor didn't like it, but that didn't stop me from doing it."

Most of my study participants have similar stories to tell about working through difficult rhetorical situations, and they feel that their professors often do not seem to value their efforts. They've also learned that the language system they've been asked to use in the academy is not as expansive as one might think; it doesn't fit everything that they do.

Given each woman's aims for establishing identity in her writings, what rhetorical strategies for accomplishing those aims does each woman say she uses, and how do her aims and strategies correspond to one another? I have said earlier that the dynamic of our enfranchisement in academia is at least partially related to our rhetorical effectiveness, particularly in the impression of their rhetorical identities that they suggest in the minds of our
academic readers. Therefore, each of these writers carves out a rhetorical identity for herself from these innumerable cultural influences, a representation of self designed to influence her evaluative reader(s) in some way. Thus, her negotiation is written into her text as a "voice" or "signature" that, ideally, locates/specifies her as the shaper of the text. Some markers of rhetorical identity I found in the texts of my study participant are the positioning of author's voice among the other voices present in the text, the writer's choice of references, sentence structure and word choice, etc.

Depending upon discipline and formality of papers, and perceived expectations of their evaluative readers, these women sometimes write in an "academic prose style" which may not always take into account the particular positions and ways of working through arguments that fit their considered perspectives on a given subject. Only to varying degrees these women have been able to establish a "self-defined standpoint" in their academic writing. Those who seem most satisfied with their writing (regardless of how it may be perceived by their readers) feel they have been able to negotiate such a standpoint in the text, and that such a standpoint reflects their sense of self. As much as this negotiation of identity shapes the text, the text also helps to reshape and locate the writer both for herself and for others. Thus, when they are satisfied with
their identities, regardless of how closely the writing conforms to the conventions of the discourse expected by their evaluative readers.

Developing Self-Representational Strategies:
Some Final Assessments

What has this chapter shown to be the chief concerns of my study participants? If the Black "self," conceived as part of a group, is a recurring theme in African American women's lives, as Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis asserts, then my study participants' comments throughout this chapter indicate that families and church communities are vitally important to their sense of self. Etter-Lewis invokes Nellie McKay's assertion that such community identity is essential for at least two reasons: (1) it allows for the rejection of bankrupt self-images "imposed by the dominant culture," and (2) it permits "marginalized individuals to embrace alternate selves constructed from more positive (and more authentic) images of their own creation" (qtd. in Gluck and Patai 53).

My study participants' self-concept has been and continues to be shaped by influences that are partly non-Eurocentric. In this sense, their ways of coming to knowledge are multifaceted, and they value those ways for their creativity. These influences also help the women to make useful contributions to their communities. These
study participants are concerned that wholesale assimilation into academic habits of mind may cause them lose their ability to make sense of the world in multiple ways. By emphasizing these particular areas of influence--family and church community--the women affirm their status as "outsiders within." If they were to center their sense of self on the values and practices of the (Eurocentric male-oriented) cultures of their academic discourse communities, then perhaps there would be less need for the strong acknowledgements of grounding in home and church communities that these women have been so eager to express. But there is such a need. So many of the experiences and reference points these women say they want to bring to their writing processes are not necessarily recognized as relevant to the discourses of their disciplines. The women have said that their attempts to establish those experiences and reference points, both as valid grounding for the positions they take in their papers and as defining aspects of their scholarly identities, have often been met by some evaluative readers with everything from misinterpretation to outright rejection. Sometimes, however, they say that they can frame these identity markers in ways that do bring about understanding and acceptance on the part of their evaluative readers. This, for them, is the ideal goal of negotiating rhetorical identity. Nevertheless, in the opinion of most
participants, that goal can be reached only part of the time.

When these women complain about the negative connotations associated with readers' responses to their work, they indicate that they have assessed their situated ethos, as constructed by those in the race- and gender-conscious academy, as one of underpreparedness, a priori judgments of unworthiness often colored by the same kinds of racist and sexist attitudes that the women have encountered outside the academy. They are concerned about being placed in relationships these evaluative readers, yet feeling stymied by rules of engagement those readers have established for the relationship. They are particularly frustrated in struggling to assess the implicit agenda behind readers' stated expectations. In such situations, they see themselves as "outsiders within"—being let through the door but not being shown the secret handshake.

When the women assert that they write with audiences in mind that range beyond the evaluative reader, they also acknowledge that their goals and agenda don't always coincide with those of the "gate-keepers." They understand the tendency, given the nature of how institutions work toward maintaining the status quo, for those who are entrenched there to protect and socialize newcomers into that status quo. These women want to do things with their
educations that could level the playing field, empowering those who previously have been oppressed, and which would bring them to the academy in increasing numbers, perhaps jeopardizing the intellectual and material positions of those already there. Might this be a reason for the resistance these women feel to their work?

The participants understand that not all their readers hold them in low regard; however, they do believe that many readers do. The main point they wish to get across is that is that, in negotiating who they must be to these resistant readers, they are compelled to act in according to their instincts about them.

When and why might their attitudes toward their evaluative readers not serve them well? Some study participants can remember one or more past teachers who were sensitive, supportive, and interested in learning from diverse students. More often, however, they have had teachers who (either deliberately or through ignorance) silenced or ridiculed them. The women have brought with them into their graduate programs emotional baggage from previous experiences with such faculty. Often, the frustrations left in the wake of those experiences condition these women to mistrust future encounters, desiring to protect the self that gets exposed to those readers through their writing from further abuse. One significant effect on a writer's negotiation of rhetorical
identity and the generation of effective ethos becomes a more distanced, impersonal tone that may not support the writer's desire to infuse the text with her voice.

Other variables also come into play, such as the differential general skill levels that the women bring to the act of writing. Like graduate students generally, not all these women are equally skilled at forming and following coherent patterns of thought on the page. When papers consistently get returned with markings on them, they may seem to be evidence to the writer that her very personhood, as it is manifest in the text, is being critiqued. If the writer has been conditioned in some way to mistrust the reader's position towards her, then a certain precautions may be built into the individual's rhetorical identity to protect it from abuse. Suppression of "I"-voice, a flatness in writing from an otherwise vivacious personality through passive constructions; a tendency to write only on subjects and to take stands in that writing that the writer believes the reader will accept (regardless of the writer's true positions)--all these may be signals of the writer's attempt to protect herself.

For example, Maya admits that she often writes two papers for many assignments--one to express herself for herself (and sometimes for non-academic audiences) and one designed to meet what she perceives to the (rather limited,
in her opinion) expectations of her professor. Alice's suppression of "I" voice and foregrounding of scholarly sources over her own authorial voice and her reluctance to take an authoritative stance (which will be discussed in the next chapter) is another example of a possible protective stance.

Several study participants admit to the safety measure of falling back onto whatever has "worked" for them with other evaluative readers. In situations where one has been validated in other courses, other graduate programs at previous educational levels, and in non academic work, it is natural for the writer to incorporate those features into writing for the new situation. Like any writer, these women make mistakes that are common in encountering new discursive situations. Sometimes there seems to be an inflexibility--a static quality--about their processes. In the writer's mind, negotiation of identity has been settled to her satisfaction through previous writing tasks. However, rhetorical situations often change at the doctoral level, and writers must be willing to adapt to such change. Relationships between writer and reader (in this case, student and professor) sometimes change as well. As one progresses through doctoral studies, expectations on both sides evolve, as teachers and students make steps toward being colleagues. Taking risks in writing always involves mistakes in language choices, sentence construction,
sequencing and supporting ideas. Add to that the writer's risk on certain occasions in asserting (cultural) difference from readers, then the context within which errors are made in a text can be heavily culture-conditioned. When mistakes are made within the context of perceived racism, sexism, and so forth, that is, when the writer doesn't trust that the reader has her best interests in mind, then this can cause some holding back of textual identity as the writer seeks to protect her self.

There is also danger in relying on previous experience if one does not adapt that experience to a given writing task in light of critical assessment of the current audience (in this case the evaluative reader). Some women do not do an effective job of negotiating this point, and so miss the mark with their readers. It is not merely a question of using or not using a particular strategy but also a question of how and when. In Alice's case, it has not always been wise to fall back on patterns and forms that worked well for her in previous programs. Expectations and levels of tolerance for particular features vary from context to context, and in her case old habits sometimes missed the mark in a new situation.

One specific example of when expectations and tolerance may vary is with oral usage patterns. Oral features that do not easily translate into written form need to be used carefully and with a sense that a
reasonable reader will grasp the significance of their use in written form, and in a way that will satisfy the requirements of the discipline for general level of edited written (so-called "Standard") English. Certain locutions and patterns of speech have little meaning for some readers, and for others, while the meaning is clear, these may be considered "substandard" or otherwise inappropriate for the writing task at hand. Readers who hold such attitudes may look upon the writer as unsophisticated and/or unprepared. This attitude can cycle back onto the writer's sense of self, and each time she writes, an increased sensitivity may contribute to a lessening of markers of identity and a more stilted, formulaic kind of writing.

Not all these women (across disciplines) have the same amount of experience in writing for academic audiences. Not all have the same level of response to or mentoring in writing that would make them comfortable users of the discourse features of their fields. Not all have had positive teacherly influences at higher levels of education. As with the other areas of negotiation, what the writer believes about her effect on readers is important. In this case, where extensive help is not available and an attitude of "you're on your own...either you pass this test or you don't," it is usually left up to the writer to pick up whatever she can in the way of
audience assessment, and hope that it works. When evaluations are inconsistent from one paper to the next and one course to the next, it is hard to develop a range of reliable feedback upon which to base a comfortable, relatively stable scholarly identity. If there are inconsistencies within the range of each woman's writing experiences, frequent misreadings of rhetorical context and audience expectations, and lack of confidence in who she is supposed to be to her readers, her negotiation of rhetorical identity can break down and the resulting confusion in the paper can negatively influence the reader's opinion of her and her abilities.

To conclude, these assessments point to a CYCLE of identity formation and reformation, coinciding with a CYCLE of ethos formation and reformation. Those who have been able to negotiate through the minefields described above and achieve a balance of academic and non-academic experiences tend to be more successful with their readers than those who, for whatever reasons, are not as able to negotiate through these areas and balance experiences in their writing. To strike a positive note, however, the works of my study participants do contain evidence of at least some struggle to achieve a "voice" that is appropriate for their readers and satisfying for themselves.
It is important to emphasize, finally, that racist and sexist constraints often force African American women to alter their self-images and to invent devices and strategies that would endow their stories with the appearance of authenticity. We are constantly expected to prove that our situations are radically different from those of White women. If not, then our lives are considered unremarkable. As Etter-Lewis recalls:

Several readers who have reviewed the narrative accounts in my descriptive study of black professional women commented that these women seemed to be just like white middle-class women. I have then been advised to undertake a comparative analysis of black and white professional women's oral narratives in order to establish 'genuine' differences between the two. In the readers' minds, black women must earn credibility by claiming features unique to their own embedded subgroup. Otherwise they are viewed merely as white women in black face. Such attitudes are uninformed and counterproductive. Whether or not black women measure up to such superficial standards has little to do with the reality of their struggles and the quality of their lives.

This statement resonates strongly with study participants' commentary about their experiences. My discussion is not meant to ignore the fact that the dynamic processes of negotiation are indeed similar for most writers, White and Black, male and female. All have the same kinds of culturally-grounded issues to consider in terms of the rhetorical contexts of the writing tasks, their own and their readers' situated ethos, their overall agenda and particular goals. These factors, as well as the writer's deliberations over them all take their shape
within the interacting cultural frameworks of all combinations of readers and writers. Nevertheless, for African American women writing in the academy, many details of the cultural frameworks which come into contact with each other in the act of writing are distinctive, and it is that distinctiveness that makes their textual encounters with readers interesting and useful. The next chapter extends this discussion of interacting cultural frameworks that are manifest in texts by two of my seven study participants.
Notes

Following the American Psychological Association's ethical standards for the treatment of research subjects. These standards provide some guidelines for thinking through issues of researcher intrusiveness.
CHAPTER IV

BRINGING A "SELF-DEFINED STANDPOINT"

TO ACADEMIC WRITING: TWO CASES

[W]e will always be able to see something in the text—and in most cases we will be able to imagine the "real" voice of an author, in relation to the rhetorical effects a text produces. When we feel rhetorical effects, we tend to attribute them to the agency of another personality, outside us, working the rhetorical effects of language on us.


My professor stated in an evaluation of me that he wasn't impressed with my writing. He couldn't have been impressed with my writing—he didn't give me a chance to write my writing!

--Alice

I think that true intellectuals use their thinking and their feeling—they use their whole being.

--Maya

Introduction

I have asserted in Chapter III that my study participants encounter a variety of self-representational issues in accommodating the often shifting, sometimes restrictive, expectations of their evaluative readers. This chapter examines several specific rhetorical strategies aimed at self-portrayal and the attendant construction of ethos which I have observed in papers written by Alice and Maya. I selected their papers for
close reading because these women have been especially articulate in revealing the conditions under which they write. I have found that their papers attempt to solve interesting self-representational "puzzles" in ways that resonate strongly with the methods of other study participants. These papers, however, should not be seen as "models" for the works of others. My discussion of Alice's and Maya's work in this chapter is meant primarily to illustrate how writers act upon their perceptions of situated ethos as they construct invented ethos in their texts. For both Alice and Maya, I chose texts that I believe illustrate both significant ethos-related issues and my approach to examining them.

In Chapter I, I noted that Sharon Crowley's discussion of situated and invented ethos contributes much to a theory of identity negotiation. I invoke her discussion of ethical proofs at this point as an analytical tool with which to explain the dynamic of self-representation and its connection to ethos generation in specific texts. In doing so I emphasize that my discussion is not about the situated ethos that one might observe after accounting for the reader's point of view. While such a perspective adds an important dimension to a discussion of the negotiation process, I have not collected such data for this project. Instead, because my purpose has been to foreground the writer's point of view, I focus on how a writer's
perceptions of her own situated ethos and her social location relative to her professors affects the choices she makes in constructing invented ethos in her papers.

In addition to grounding my analyses of these women's papers in Crowley's discussion of ethos, I locate their rhetorical features within the framework of claims about their composing processes which the writers made in interviews and other conversations about their composing processes. My analyses are also influenced by my own experience as an African American woman attempting to establish a credible ethos for academic audiences, overlaid by the scholarship on ethos that I have reviewed in the course of researching this project.

I first present a seminar paper written by Alice that dramatically illustrates this focus on writer's perceptions. By her own account, Alice perceives herself to be negotiating an "outsider/within" status in that she does not see herself as a fully enfranchised participant in the scholarly discussions taking place in the text she herself has authored. She sees two roots for this. She is, first, adamant about not changing her discourse style to imitate the dominant discourse patterns of her discipline. She honors her rural North Carolina roots and has emphasized on several occasions in our interviews that she fights to retain that aspect of her identity in both speech and writing, in academic settings, in both patterns
of speech and writing. Further, she acknowledges and accepts that academic audiences are sometimes put off by her discursive practices, but she also notes that at other times, her stance as an individual is respected. Thus, she makes a significant trade-off.

Second, Alice looks upon the practice of citing scholars as often unnecessary and even a hindrance to her aims for making points in her text. Ironically, although she reads widely find out what other scholars have said on topics, and while has decided that she must make extensive use of their words in her texts in order to meet reader expectations, she nevertheless feels a high level of resentment at having to rely upon those very sources. As I detail below, their overwhelming dominance of her work and subsequent relegation of her own words to a subordinate position with relation to those sources, is tangible evidence of her ambivalence toward them.

Following my discussion of Alice's paper, I examine a series of three short response/position papers by Maya. These papers also speak to this concept of a student-writer's relationship with her evaluative reader, but Maya's work casts the effects of such relationships in a more positive light than does Alice's. I do not, however, offer Maya's work in direct contrast with Alice's. The rhetorical contexts surrounding Alice's seminar papers in literature and Maya's position papers in educational
curriculum design are vastly different in terms of level of formality, relationship with audience, and disciplinary expectations. In addition, positioning the author's voice among other conventional scholarly voices a less striking feature in Maya's work than it was in Alice's papers. Therefore, the two sets of papers are not presented for comparison of that issue. The major point of focus in Maya's papers is a striking convergence of stylistic features constituting a strong personal "voice."

Maya's work illustrates another area in which self-representation and ethos-generation takes place, but one that is no less problematic than Alice's. Because the specific rhetorical context of her writing assignment described here allowed her to express ideas she perceives to be emanating from her own experience, and uncluttered by the reader's expectation to surround herself with academically-sanctioned authorities, Maya's challenge became how to select the rhetorical materials from her own experiences that will draw her reader closer to her position. But even in this situation, as I have interpreted it from her interview remarks, she also sees herself as an outsider within." She knows that by infusing her papers specifically with Christian and biblical references, which for some readers do not constitute legitimate support for academic arguments, by foregrounding her own experiences, experiences that may differ greatly
from those of her reader, and by making pronouncements from a strong moral position, which may be seen as "bias," she risks jeopardizing the effectiveness of her ethical appeal.

Alice: The Challenge of Positioning Self
Among Other Scholarly Voices

"Another Look Behind the Scenes," a twenty-page seminar paper in nineteenth-century African American literature, was written during Alice's first term in the doctoral program for a Black male professor whom I will identify as Professor Jones. Alice expresses considerable excitement about her assignment to write about Elizabeth Keckley's autobiography, Behind the Scenes. Or Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House. "I get a thrill from finding dusty old books that nobody reads and bringing them to life for others," she asserts. "So, Elizabeth Keckley was truly a 'find' for me."

This paper attempts to define Keckley's work as a model of exemplary slave narrative, a postbellum ascent/immersion narrative, and an example of the battle against the "cult of true womanhood." In the process of asserting this definition, Alice argues against an implied position among many critics of nineteenth century American literature (suggested in class lectures) that the work does not merit being viewed in those terms. The paper's main strategy is to establish essential features of the genre
and incorporate passages from Keckley's work that match those features. A secondary strategy in the paper is to put forward commentary by literary scholars who do in fact support Alice's view. These basic strategies apparently conform to an analytical model which Alice indicates the professor had endorsed for the class to use. Based on that model, Alice re-tells Keckley's life story within a framework designed to define the autobiography in a way that is "approved" by the literary authorities she cites.

**Situated Ethos:** As discussed previously, the relative social standing of writer and reader in a rhetorical situation can affect a writer's persuasiveness. Between student-writer and professor-evaluative reader, differential power relations exist outside of the immediate rhetorical situations of the paper being written. These power relations affect the degree to which an invented ethos can be effective in that paper. How does Alice's sense of her professor's image of her (as black woman student with an HBCU background) affect her choices regarding invented ethos—establishing credibility, intelligence, moral character in the paper itself? Her comments regarding her need to be "better than" to be "equal to," and her need to "research things to death" before offering her opinion, suggest that Alice perceives that her situated ethos is shaky. She thus feels she must
continually prove herself anew to her professors before she can feel comfortable about writing to them. She claims to write most effectively when her intelligence and character are affirmed by her academic readers, when the classroom environment makes it possible for her to publicly demonstrate her abilities before those who would judge her work. Some of her experiences with professors at predominantly white institutions, she says, have led her to believe that they operate from the assumption that students like herself, coming from black colleges, are not adequately prepared to be effective thinkers and writers at the upper levels of graduate work. In our interviews, Alice often stressed her obsession with overcoming these perceptions of her.

The situated ethos that contributes to the context of the Keckley paper is evident in Alice's self-described relationship with Prof. Jones. She claims that their relationship, including his orchestration of student participation in class discussion (which had a bearing on his perception of her), had a major impact on her composing process. She says she came into the classroom expecting her experience with him to be similar to past relationships she'd had with black female professors--collegial and supportive--the kind of relationship that established a positive reputation in their eyes. Her sense of ease with these professors suggests that her racial and gender
affiliations with her professors satisfy her need for rootedness embodied in these professors as intellectual "mother" figures. As these relationships develop, Alice places increasing trust in their ability to understand her point of view. She recalls that one black female professor in particular "acknowledged that people came with different backgrounds, and she gave us the chance to become authorities in our own way, to approach things she said in our own ways." This reassurance from that professor contributed to Alice's expectation that other professors in her program would provide the same kinds of opportunities for self-portrayal.

At the very least, she hoped that her dealings with Prof. Jones would be better than her typical experiences with white professors (both male and female), which in her mind had been fraught with signals that her distinctive textual presence was not important to them. She attributes her unsuccessful papers to this downplaying of her presence. In courses where she felt that the relationships between her and her professors had soured, she says her writing suffered from her frustration and her paper grades reflected that.

Alice recalls that she began the term with Prof. Jones excited about studying under a fellow African American who, she anticipated, would encourage and understand her the positions she expected to take on issues. It turned out,
however, that Prof. Jones did not invite the expression of ideas and authority from her that she had hoped for and that she needed in order to assure herself of his regard for her. In what she believes to be a typical masculinist move that overshadowed any racial affiliation that might have developed, she saw that he seemed more concerned with delivering lectures than with facilitating the kind of discussion which, she maintains, is key to her ability to write: "The things I want to happen in my papers can't happen if I don't get to talk through my ideas in class." She maintains that much of her thinking process is tied to vocalizing. "My brain is engaged through my voice first, and then I can set it down on paper. If you let me play with an idea, as we're doing here, I can go back and write about it later, you see, because you've immediately authorized what I have to say." For Alice, the role of talk represents authorization in a community-relationship with professor and classmates. It is the power that comes with asserting a vocal presence and experiencing immediate validation as an authority embodied in her black womanhood, that is a powerful tool both for individual enfranchisement within a community and for the development of that community as well.

Being denied a forum for developing ideas and seeing them validated by Prof. Jones as part of her situated ethos, feeling that she has made little contribution to
building the discursive community she is obliged to write within, and having little control over defining her place with the community, she became extremely apprehensive about the prospect of asserting a self-defined standpoint in this context.

Her comments on the basis of her dissatisfaction with her treatment by the professor is significant:

In conferences, he suggested that I merely had to show how the paper fit the model he gave us. In class, he held most of my enthusiastic interjections about texts at bay. He never allowed us room in the seminar to sort through our own impressions, form our own models for the writing. Then he critiqued me for "regurgitating" what he had taught, when that was exactly his guidance. I think he assumed we understood that it was okay to take independent positions in the seminar paper (which counted for the greatest percentage of our grade) when we hadn't been allowed to do that in the classroom all term long.

This kind of treatment, she felt, did very little to enhance her reputation in his eyes. Looking back on that situation, Alice complains that while the professor strongly encouraged her to work with a black woman's text, she nevertheless feels robbed of the opportunity to test her own ideas in her major field of study, as well as to assure herself that he held a favorable view of her as a bona fide scholar of Black women's writing. She had wanted to impress upon the professor that her judgments were just as worthy of consideration as those encountered through critical texts she had been assigned to read, but she complains that by the time of writing her seminar paper, she was extremely frustrated. "Every time I'd come up with
an idea in class, especially one that was different from his, he'd put me aside, saying things like, 'we'll get to that later.' He was so busy pushing his own ideas, that he never paid attention to the voices of his students. My ideas just didn't count. Eventually I got the message—just shut up and let him talk." From this treatment, she interpreted Prof. Jones's image of her as a person who did not "count." Alice's negotiation of rhetorical identity and the attendant construction of invented ethos in her paper is complicated by the gender-related issue of a woman's voice being less worthy of being heard by a male audience. Along with that, she must factor in her perception of Prof. Jones' situated ethos (who, according to Alice, was teaching one of his first graduate-level courses) as The Authority and her situated ethos as the student (even a doctoral student): the receiver—rather than (co-)maker—of knowledge.

This feeling seems to have been exacerbated by the additional pressure of having to alter deeply engrained discursive habits that she claims had been nurtured during her years at an HBCU. While challenges related to making the transition between programs can also be found in the experiences of White undergraduates, Alice specifically attributes her disorientation to the contrasting cultures she encountered between predominantly black and predominantly white institutions.
As I was finding my way into what I considered a mega-metropolitan university's discourse community, I tried to negotiate the rhetorical space in the same fashion as had worked for me in the past--give the professor back what s/he had given you in class as a model or try to "read the teacher's mind." Unfortunately for me, the professor responded that I regurgitated what he had given us (on my graduate evaluation). My response to that was a pained and angry feeling because in the times that I'd talked with the professor in the office and in class, I came away thinking my directions were to simply show how the life and writing of my "person" fit the model the teacher had given us in class.

The nature of Prof. Jones' comments (as Alice reports them) suggested to Alice that she should not take an independently conceived stance. Her situated ethos deriving from her (supposedly inferior) status as female and student, which conflicted with his (supposedly superior) status as male and teacher, overshadowed the status they shared as African Americans. She could write successfully only if she adopted his model--and his standpoint. Sadly, Alice believes, she was placed in a no-win situation. Given the lack of mentoring she felt she had received, she fell back on a) the few cues given by the professor, and b) her previous procedure for writing to professors, namely, to follow their lead. She was wary of going beyond those tactics. Even though she had originally wanted to write in a way that met the professor's apparently hidden agenda (i.e., to conduct an independently conceived analysis of the chosen text), she believed she had no explicit authorization from him to do so.
(authorization that might have been signalled in class if
discussions had allowed for it).

The mismatch between Prof. Jones' explicit and
implicit expectations for Alice's paper and Alice's
(mis)interpretation of those expectations lies partly at
the door of each party. Coming to the class with an
expectation that students would be addressing issues from
their own positions, yet by continual lecturing, failing to
facilitate the development of those positions through
classroom interchange, Prof. Jones' position toward Alice
did not serve her well in negotiating the kind of scholarly
image that would satisfy them both. Further, as discussed
in the previous chapter, several participants, including
Alice, have explained their "fall-back" position: when all
else fails, relying on the identity negotiated for other
readers. Given the outcome of this writing experience for
Alice, she may have done better to alter her strategy to
press further in private conversations with the professor
for more accurate insights into his expectations and the
image of her he held in his mind. In the end, Alice
believes, Prof. Jones graded her down for applying his
model: "he didn't allow [the expression of divergent
approaches] in the classroom, and then he shot me down in
my paper for not coming to ideas in my own way." It is
more likely, however, that the reason for the poor
evaluation was a misreading of expectations on both sides.
Up to this point, I have reported some circumstances under which Alice felt she was compelled to write. For Alice, these circumstances diminished her perceived situated ethos. Her writing process suggests a model of identity negotiation that depends on developing relationships between herself and her professors. Over the years, Alice has had many, often conflicting, experiences arising out of her military and civilian careers as well as a variety of academic programs. As much as she may want them to, these experiences do not fit neatly together. She needs to find a consistent way to manage those experiences into a coherent authorial identity for specifically targeted readers. Therefore, before Alice sits down to express her ideas and her self in writing for her evaluative audiences, she seeks to establish clear "ground rules" with them and to obtain validation from them. These "codes of conduct" help Alice make decisions about what she will say in her work, as well as who she will be to a given reader. As she indicates above, she gets these "ground rules" and affirmations from class discussions and conferences with professors; these provide a basis upon which she can make informed decisions about, among other things, the image of herself she ought to project in her course papers. Over the course of her academic career, she has come to rely on feedback from her professors, which serves as guideposts in her writing process.
As Alice has become painfully aware, this reliance on the professor's "model" and personal affirmation can be as harmful as they can be beneficial. Even against her better judgment, as she said was the case with Prof. Jones, she places trust in his perceived ability and willingness to help her negotiate. When those signals are not provided, or when they are mixed, Alice construes it to mean that her trust has been betrayed. Because the mixed feelings she experienced in the act of writing are reflected in the tenuous nature of her text, particularly in the way she subverts herself to both the professor and to the scholars she invokes in her work.

What makes Alice's case more complex is her position as an African American woman dealing specifically with asserting rhetorical identity in writing for an African American man. The dynamic of misinterpretation of expectations can operate in any reader-writer relationship. But for Alice and Prof. Jones, the negotiation of identity hinges upon their positions in relation to each other and the subject being written about. Having a claim on the subject matter counts to a large extent. As a black woman writing about another black woman, Elizabeth Keckley, Alice needs to write about the author in terms that a black male (Prof. Jones) will accept. At the same time, she must write in terms that accommodate and extend the point of view of (male) critics she invokes in
the paper. Given the evidence she has that Prof. Jones has established distance from her (in class) and imposes a particular model on her, she finds her negotiating position of strong situated ethos in some jeopardy.

Given such a diminished sense of her situated ethos, Alice's challenge in composing an effective paper is to compensate for that diminished situated ethos by adding features to the text which show her to be competent, well-informed thinker who can bring the life of this woman into focus in terms that both meet her evaluative reader's expectations and at the same time allow her (and Keckley) to maintain identities as strong black women. This is no easy task, and Alice's work reflects the way she felt she had position herself.

I now want to turn attention to specific details in the Keckley paper which reflect her frustrated attempt to negotiate rhetorical identity through elements of invented ethos, as she deals with conflicting agenda ingrained within this writing assignment.

**Demonstrating Intelligence:** Sharon Crowley, in a section of her text titled "Demonstrating Intelligence by Doing the Homework," posits that "rhetors can create a character that seems intelligent by demonstrating that they are informed about the issues they discuss and by refraining from using arguments that are irrelevant or
trivial" (Crowley 89). Alice's paper shows evidence that she has made considerable effort to "do her homework." This effort grows out of Alice's conviction that she needs to read everything that's been said about a subject before making her own statement about it. In the writing, she relies on her ability to collect and report on other sources, so that audiences can see that she is "intelligent"--i.e., well read, and has considered what others have to say. Her belief is an important factor in how she develops her reputation. As Crowley puts it, "rhetors who wish to appear intelligent and well informed must demonstrate that they have done whatever research and contemplation are necessary to understand an issue..." (91).

A reader may sense from Alice's reluctance to create her own framing discussion of her subject matter is that she is not capable of critically contemplating the ideas she presents. This may not be true in fact. In my conversations with Alice, she has pointed out many of the connections she makes mentally about the subject matter. Unfortunately, much of this thinking about the sources does not show up on the page. In terms of satisfying that condition of invented ethos--demonstrating intelligence--her effort seems short-circuited.

**Demonstrating moral character:** Crowley also asserts that "in order to establish their good moral standing,
rhetors may cite approval of their character from respected authorities..." (82). Alice's inclusion of her professor's remarks in a paper (Keckley) targeted to him is interesting in this regard. The introductory paragraph incorporates a statement from her lecture notes which Alice attributes to Prof. Jones:

This modeling of the slave narrative is based upon "the assumption that every working community depends on a common way of talking about the human condition," and that Americans "find unity in agreeing that humans should live by their own designs."

The next paragraph contains a lengthy restatement of the professor's lecture remarks, designed to reinforce the ideas in the first paragraph:

Within the rhetoric of American culture, ["Jones"] identifies six elements that recur in the slave narrative but which are also common to the other more canonized narratives of the lives and experiences of Benjamin Franklin (Autobiography) and John Woolman (John Woolman's Journal), and which are grounded in the ideology of America as the land of new beginnings and the fount of individualism which leads from rags to riches as espoused in the writings of Thomas Jefferson, especially as he crafted the American Declaration of Independence and the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau as they promoted the individual and self-reliance (["Jones"], October 14, 1992).

In assessing Alice's purpose for including these remarks, it is useful to consider the factors involved in her audience analysis. Continuing to reflect on her classroom experiences with Prof. Jones, Alice maintains that he "never made me feel as if any preferred audience existed other than the audience of one, and that one was
the teacher." Given that her stated target audience is the professor himself (and that the professor seemed very self-focused in the classroom), Alice's use of his commentary in the critical early stages of the paper seems to be a sign of her focus on him. Her incorporation of his ideas seems to reflect her assessment that his ideas, more than any independently conceived ideas she might develop, should drive this paper. Given her need to bolster her situated ethos in Prof. Jones's eyes, as she has assessed it, she seems to trade off some of her independent thinking for a closer association with him.

Through this inclusion of her evaluative reader's voice in her paper—a paper addressed specifically to him—Alice identifies herself to him as an attentive student who applies what she has learned in his course. As a member of the class (a position established earlier by her use of inclusive pronouns), she can derive authority for herself in the paper by showing that she has absorbed his words and that her thinking indeed resonates with his. She thus sets up a textual relationship with Prof. Jones in which her voice becomes significant as an echo of his voice.

Incorporation of Prof. Jones' commentary in a paper addressed to him also suggests that as a culminating exercise to the course, Alice may finally be seizing the opportunity to engage in conversation with him, an opportunity she feels was not offered to her in class. Her
inclusion of his remarks honors him and his ideas for himself and for other readers. She places his ideas on a par with those of the other great names she has invoked. In addition, she shows her respect for him by showing she has paid close attention to his lectures. In addition, she identifies his ideas with her own, showing that they are of a similar mindset. If she believes as he does, then she is as credible and authoritative as he is.

This aspect leads into another function of ethos, achieving good will. "Modern rhetors can demonstrate their good will toward an audience by carefully considering what readers need to know about the issue at hand," according to Crowley. "They should supply any necessary information that audiences might not already have, but should be careful not to repeat information the audience already knows" (94). In Alice's papers, the question becomes, how has she assessed what the readers already know and what they need to know? Evidence from Keckley paper itself (she takes considerable pains to retell the large portions of the autobiography) suggests that the reader may not be terribly familiar with the work under discussion. On the other hand, however, even if the reader is familiar with the work under discussion, the issue around which Alice's paper turns is a way of reading/interpreting that work. In that case, she would want to guide the reader along a path of reading that will lead him to the conclusion she wishes
him to draw. Thus, if the reader must "re-read" the Keckley's work as Alice wishes it to be displayed, it makes sense to have that text represented in her text in a detailed fashion. This strategy can be considered an act of good will toward the reader in that he does not have to rely solely on his own memory to reconstruct Keckley's work, or be forced to re-read the work at the same time as he is reading Alice's paper.

Another marker of moral values appears in the form of modifiers like "some," "most," "virtually," and "all" and even the omission of a qualifier which tends to signify "all." Crowley states, such qualifiers "indicate, however, subtly, that someone is present, making judgments about degrees of intensity" (Crowley 108) Alice's use of qualifiers becomes a significant marker of her presence in the text and her moral judgments about the material she presents. There are few, if any, places in the paper where Alice deliberately and explicitly makes arguments or challenges the material she presents in the paper. If she did not invest herself in the text in those obvious ways, qualifiers do the work of expressing Alice's attitude toward the situations she describes. These signals, further, point toward her loyalties and allegiances, key indicators of how she wishes to portray herself to her reader. These expressions are found within brief commentaries at the end of paragraphs, which infer her
feelings about incidents recounted in Keckley's work. She almost always attaches these commentaries at the end of her summaries of materials (which constitute most of the paper); rarely does she interweave them throughout those passages. These word choices are a short-hand for ideas that could be expanded into one or more sentences of commentary:

With such progeny as this, Mr. Burwell certainly ought not to have had the energy nor the inclination to foist himself upon Elizabeth's mother and his other female slaves.

"Certainly" expresses the disapproval--as if Alice were commenting, "how could he..."

It is contradictory of this woman to concur in separating from this slave her own sexual partner in view of the fact that the mistress' husband has slept with the woman to produce Elizabeth. This same cold hearted mistress had caused Elizabeth to be lashed when the child was only four—the cause being the child's inability to handle a woman's chores.

Characterizing the mistress as "cold hearted" indicates Alice's attitude toward the incident that took place.

Of course Elizabeth resisted the flogging in much the same manner as Frederick Douglass rebelled against Covey's attempt to beat him.... / Unlike Douglass, Keckley did not achieve freedom from further beatings through this act of resistance....

Taking Keckley's response as a matter "of course" suggests that Alice believes it is a normal reaction that stands beyond question.

...With all of the many women available to her and with Mrs. Welles already at her side, why would Mrs.
President call for somebody she despised or felt was incommensurate with her own self?

This last passage is structured a little differently. Asking a rhetorical question here has a function, similar to inserting a modifier, of asserting opinion. These word choices express her feelings about the incidents recounted in Keckley's work, and through those feelings a sense of Alice's voice in this paper may be extracted.

It is true that she stays away from engaging the critical voices she brings in. She addresses her commentary to events described in Keckley's work. This highlights part of the difficulty she faces in engaging in dialogue with the other voices who speak with authority in her paper. In interviews, Alice has stated her literary training has focused on close readings of texts, and she feels most comfortable with that kind of writing. The text suggests that as far as she is concerned, her strength and authority (by virtue of her training in "close reading" lies in engaging the primary work, not in engaging other critical views on the work. The fundamental self-representational effect of this strategy is to signal to her reader that her sphere of authority, her research interest, and indeed her sense of what is important to emphasize in a literary paper, are all centered on the primary work.
Even though she "does her homework" by reading critical perspectives and even incorporating them into her writing, she is reluctant to engage in that area of literary study. My reading of these passages leads me to expect that she derives authority from bringing a woman's perspective to the discussion of the work that the male professor (and male critics) might overlook, that as an African American woman, she can derive authority from the fact that she shares with Keckley status as a black woman. She seems not so much to be submitting herself to the voice of her sources (she feels required by her assignment to include) as she is ignoring them.

Establishing appropriate rhetorical distance:
Stylistic features affect the rhetorical distance that can seem to exist between rhetors and their audiences. What kind of rhetorical distance does Alice establish between herself and her evaluative readers and what function does it serve, and what features in her texts indicate its existence? As Crowley remarks, "rhetors who know an audience well, or whose audience is quite small, can use an intimate distance, unless some external relationship prevents this" (97). Markers of that distance that are most striking in the Keckley paper are her use of grammatical person. Again, I refer to Crowley's explanation of "distance":
Generally, first- and second-person discourse creates less distance between a rhetor and an audience than does third person discourse, because the participants in the action are referred to directly. In third-person discourse, the issue or subject is foregrounded instead, and references to the rhetor or the audiences tend to disappear. Thus third-person discourse creates the greatest possible rhetorical distance. First- and second-person discourse are used in situations where rhetors are physically proximate to audiences...." First- and second-person discourse have interesting and complex ethical effects in writing...since the persons participating in these rhetorical acts are not physically proximate to each other. (Crowley 98, 99)

In terms of creating the kind of proimimity Crowley refers to, it is interesting to note that Alice uses personal pronouns only in the opening paragraph:

While investigating the status of the African-American autobiography in American literary history, we have focused our attention upon the slave narrative as a paradigmatic origin of American literature in much the same way as one might view jazz as the model upon which American music is founded. Essentially, this investigation leads us to believe that the African-American’s contribution to American literary history has more significance than it has been credited with in the past.

These pronouns are used for a particular reason, and they have a particular self-representational effect. This passage establishes a relationship between the writer and the professor as reader/evaluator. Alice’s use of these pronouns identifies and positions her as a member of the classroom community of inquirers into this subject. She speaks as a member of the class, rather than an independent researcher.
Her use of collective pronouns here suggests the reader's prior familiarity both with the ideas supporting her topic and with her as a person. It would be important to Alice, from a self-representational standpoint, to speak as a member of the class, because it would establish part of her credibility, that she is a co-inquirer into the issues with the other members of the class.

Even in this paragraph where she groups herself with others, however, there does not seem to be much personal responsibility for the material under discussion.

"Absolutely," Alice agrees regarding her lack of investment of self: "My point was merely to concur with the teacher's point of view and thus add my reading of this author to his own research." Such an attitude leads Alice to a related strategy, that of suppressing references to herself throughout the remainder of the paper.

"Use of this grammatical (third-person) voice announces that its author, for whatever reasons, cannot afford too much intimacy with an audience. Third person is appropriate when rhetors wish to establish themselves as authorities (Alice) or when they wish to efface their voices so that the issue may seem to be presented as objectively as possible. In third-person discourse the relationship of both rhetor and audience to the issue being discussed is more important than the relation between them" (Crowley 103)
The passage early in the paper that presents her thesis represents a seemingly conscious decision to suppress the "I" voice. First, the personal pronoun "I" is never used throughout the entire paper. Instead, in places where, grammatically, she needs to establish a presence, she chooses to make that presence an impersonal one. For example:

This paper will show how Keckley's recounting of her life fits the model of exemplary slave narrative....

She also inserts the impersonal pronoun "one" in places where she might have referred directly to herself (or perhaps to the reader).

Such comments as this and other instances of reticence in Keckley's narration as regards the white men she encountered might lead one to believe that Elizabeth was conscious of the reasons for many of the hardships imposed upon her by her mistress.

However, one has only to look at the photo at the head of Garrett's article in Notable Black Women (616) to see that there is no doubting Elizabeth Keckley's beauty whether judged by Black or white aesthetic standards....

Examining Alice's suppression of personal voice, it is also important to take into account why Alice decided NOT to write from a first person ("I") position. It is clear from interview statements that Alice believed Prof. Jones never permitted her an opportunity in class to introduce and sort through her own independently conceived ideas. Her encounters with him led her to believe that it would be ineffective and/or inappropriate to position herself as "I" in this paper. The professor's discussion of the
assignment, her individual conversations with him, and his modeling of analytical procedures in class all apparently led Alice to sense that she should not place herself in the paper.

There seem to be three primary considerations for Alice's self-representational choices. First, it may suit her purpose to enfranchise Keckley's autobiography as an "important" work, for Alice—as a black woman—to be "absent" from her own paper by minimizing markers of Alice's personal status. Perhaps, by creating the illusion that the paper's argument is not bound to a "partisan" person, (along with aligning herself with other scholars) Alice may be able to convince readers to believe that her claims are coming from a "mainstream" source. However, it must be noted that texts do not write themselves; therefore, it can be assumed that this text does indeed reflect the writer's viewpoint. From a stylistic perspective, Alice's use of impersonal pronouns, as well as the suppression of "I," seem to signal increasing distance between writer and reader throughout the remainder of the paper, especially compared to the illusion of intimacy she establishes with inclusive pronouns in the introduction. The effect is a sense of a lack of confidence on the writer's part. The absence of "I" may also reaffirm the limited composition of her audience; it signals that because she is already known to her target reader, Prof.
Jones, she has judged that any extra identification in the paper comes across as redundant.

Finally, there is the issue of level of formality. The traditional caveat in academic discourse has been to avoid "I" in "formal" writing. Another possibility for Alice's choices rests on her perception that this seminar paper for a doctoral-level class demands a relatively high level of formality, and therefore an almost total abandonment of "I". The expression of formality of course, resonates in Alice's use of the impersonal pronoun "one."

These features of Alice's paper add up to an image of a writer who desires to make a strong assertive statement in her writing, but allows other voices to dominate her discussion. Her uneasy relationship with Prof. Jones, added to her habitual use of authorities to speak for her in her papers, contribute to a paper which seems to push her voice to the background.

Maya: The Challenge of Foregrounding

Cultural Resources In Disciplinary Writing

If Alice's story highlights some of the situations in which my study participants are discouraged from "writing their writing" in graduate school, Maya's story suggests when and how they might find the courage to assert greater personal control over their work. An examination of a series of response papers written by Maya points to the
necessity of asserting a "self-defined standpoint," especially in texts that focus on issues of difference. It is a standpoint that incorporates thinking and feeling, Maya's definition of true intellectualism. Indeed, a "personal signature" that runs throughout her academic papers is a foregrounding of a decidedly spiritual dimension of her life. She maintains,

> It is very important that I stay spiritually strong. It means a kind of centeredness, an understanding of myself, my purpose, and my relationship to the world. I try to focus into creation and the creator, and I don't think the world revolves around me.

Maya recognizes those relatively few opportunities that come along that allow her to come to full voice in her course papers. "My less formal work is more representative of me," she reflects. "I take the opportunity when the instructor gives it to me to use the full range of freedom those kinds of assignments allow for." She was given the opportunity to write from a standpoint which may be called both "self-defined" (one which she determines) and "self-defining" (one which shows her as a unique personality), in a series of three response/position papers on curriculum design ("What's the Big Idea?") that she prepared for Prof. Wyatt (a pseudonym) in a course on education policy and leadership.

**Situated ethos:** Like most of the other study participants, Maya is profoundly concerned about the
restrictions placed on the papers she composes. She maintains that she must continually monitor both who is evaluating her writing and who or what those evaluators represent. She is particularly wary of those professors—typically white women who are younger than she is and who have less "real-world" experience than she does—who are often tied to texts, theories, curricula that do not adequately represent or serve the needs of students like those with whom she has worked. As a result, she generally feels severely restricted in what she can accomplish for herself in writing for such readers.

Maya insists, however, that she felt very little of this tension in dealing with Prof. Wyatt, now a professor emerita. She had actually sought out this professor, before she even began coursework at the university, after hearing from others that the two women might share scholarly interests. Maya came away from their initial meeting impressed with Prof. Wyatt's attitudes toward teaching and learning. "She's a very wise older woman," Alice remarks, "who values the voices of her students." Over the duration of the course Maya subsequently took with Prof. Wyatt, the two developed a relationship, based on trust and respect for one another, that allowed Maya to feel comfortable and even excited about writing for her. In fact, a more intimate approach seems to have been invited by Prof. Wyatt. For example, when the professor
asked questions during class discussions, Maya says, "It was because she really wanted to know what we were thinking. She had no interest in hearing her own words repeated back to her, and she never posed outrageous questions designed to embarrass or punish us." Maya's experience contrasts drastically with those of Alice, and the difference seems to have contributed to drastically different results in these women's texts.

Part of Maya's rhetorical challenge is to determine how much of her "self" she can safely reveal to her readers, balanced against her fear of exposing herself to professors (and classmates), who are liable to use her as a "spokesperson for the race" or to dismiss her entirely if she becomes to assertively "Black." She thus faces the risk of being silenced as the sole dissenting voice on issues where her experience and knowledge contradicts the prevailing conventional wisdom. What she brings to her writing is, for some readers in her discipline, revolutionary in the sense that she sees evidence that her associates have not brought such ideas into their thinking. She must constantly figure out how to handle these pressures, and remain true to herself, in situations where her grades--an important determiner of progress through her program--hinge upon negotiating a way through these turbulent waters.
Maya's perception of her situated ethos has a bearing on decisions she makes in constructing her invented ethos—what she must do in her text to enhance the representation of her identity. It was because Maya felt that Prof. Wyatt was genuinely interested in hearing her voice and was willing to allow Maya to pursue her own agenda instead of mimicking the professor that the voice of these papers are so richly resonant.

**Establishing Moral Character:** The feature that stands out remarkably in Maya's papers is her depiction of her own moral character. She builds into her texts features which serve notice to readers that they are dealing with a spiritually-oriented person whose judgments about subject matter are based on Christian foundations.

This sense is evident in all kinds of ways. First, there are direct references to Biblical passages, as in this epigraph that begins "Curriculum Challenges and Trends":

"Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he shall not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6"

She continues with other generally spiritual or specifically Christian references, as in this reference to Jesus' laws of love:

"We need to love our neighbors as ourselves. And we need to teach this to our students."
Maya approaches this from a self-defined perspective, making use of the images that resonate strongly in her experience. She acknowledges that she is not able to make such strongly and explicitly Christian statements in much of the more formal writing she does. The secular character public school education is staunchly defended by many educators and parents alike. Circumstances under which Maya may be able to assert an explicitly spiritual orientation toward educational issues are somewhat limited. In asking readers to envision her from such an orientation, she risks having her ideas and her reputation as an educator judged negatively by those who disagree with her values. However, she is not apologetic about her approach to writing Christian references into certain papers. She maintains that knowing the kind of person she is is important for readers if they hope to understand the "fulless" (her term) of what she has to say. She works toward a writing style reflects a balance between the spiritual and the secular so that readers become receptive to her message. Because she believes strongly that a spiritual perspective is much needed in discussions about educating children, she accepts risks whenever she feels it necessary.

It is no accident that she chose this particular statement from the Declaration of Independence to introduce one of these papers:
We hold these truths to be self evident that ALL MEN are created equal... and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.

Much of Maya's standpoint in these papers comes from her sensitivity to Biblical references as an important cultural resource. She recalls that while she maintained a certain distance from formal religious studies during her early college years, the more she saw that the literary canon was laden with biblical imagery--and the more her own experiences resonated with that imagery--the more she came to realize the profound influence of Sacred Scripture on her writing. "Even if someone doesn't recognize the divine origin of the Bible," she argues, "it nevertheless contains excellent stories that are part of our cultural matrix."

The way Maya weaves these references into the text strongly suggests her determination to infuse the secular domain of education with spiritual and moral values.

Religious and secular parables and personal narratives have become an important part of Maya's "signature." The following passage resulted from Maya's search for a way to describe what it takes for teachers to really reach their students. For her, a love of children that transcends skin color is an element missing from many teachers' repertoire--a love that enables caring teachers to make connections between the day's lesson and the child's experience. As Maya searched for examples of exemplary teachers to illustrate this idea, she decided to incorporate a Bible
story from the "Master Teacher," familiar to Christians as Jesus' parable about the Good Samaritan:

According to the lesson of an ancient text that served as a reference for the founders of this nation and the first primers for the students of this new nation, the future teachers of the world asked the Master teacher which Big idea of all the ideas was the most important to Him. The first word out of his mouth was "Love." 'Love your creator.' And the second, eh said, is much like the first. "Love thy neighbor as thy self. On these two Big Ideas hang all the others.' And because their community had become like ours...peopled with folks from many nations, this group of teachers further asked Him '...and who is our neighbor,' To which the Master teacher told the parable of 'The Good Samaritan, which teaches that all men are neighbors.' Sounds like cultural diversity to me.

Occasionally a word-choice appears that reflects religious imagery:

Cultural diversity should be appreciated and valued. Not tolerated or presented as aims or viewed as a pejorative.

This word is not treated specially (e.g., not bracketed with quotation marks), but incorporated into the natural flow of the sentence. It is as though Maya expects readers to get the significance of the word without calling special attention to it by putting it in quotes or underlining (italicizing) it. Its use in this way suggests that Maya expects the reader to have some kind of Christian frame of reference; it also suggests that she herself is not uncomfortable in revealing such a framework for her experience.
Establishing Intelligence: How does she establish intelligence by "doing her homework"? A striking feature of Maya's writing is her use of references. Writing for teachers/practitioners, not theorists/academicians, Maya has judged that, in order to meet the expectations of these people, to retain a sense of identification with these readers, her writing needs to be simpler and more concrete than what she perceives to be conventional academic prose, writing that makes use of reference points that resonate with the experiences of black readers, young people, public school teachers, and so forth. She achieves this in several ways. In "Sources of Curriculum," the second paper in the series, Maya continues the trend of Christian references in the opening epigraph:

"When a library expels a book of mind and leaves an unexpurgated Bible lying around where unprotected youth can get ahold of it, the deep unconscious irony of it delights me. -- Mark Twain"

In addition to religious references, she also makes occasional references to black popular culture, for example:

You may ask the same question that Tina Turner put into song, "What's Love Got To Do With It?"

A reference such as this seems to accomplish two purposes. Because Maya is writing directly to her white professor, she may be trying to bring the reader to a point of reference that will invite her to think in terms of "blackness." Also, given the broad range of teachers for
whom she is ultimately practicing her writing, she may insert markers that make her stand out specifically as black while identifying her more closely with blacks among those potential readers.

**Establishing distance:** Maya also establishes rhetorical distance from reader by incorporating stylistic features. The first two paragraphs of "Curriculum Challenges and Trends" (the first paper in the series), orients the reader to the writer specifically as subject. The first paragraph further establishes a personal connection to the forthcoming discussion, so that from the very start, readers get a sense of the writer's identity. Even more than Alice does in her "Cereno" paper, Maya deliberately locates herself in these papers through her use of an "I" voice, positioning herself between the ideas on the page and her readers. Unlike Alice, who uses first person sparingly, Maya's use is more frequent and varied. For instance, she uses "I" (and "you") to speak directly to her target reader, Prof. Wyatt:

So I thank you for asking me "What's the Big Idea" with regard to my ideas on curriculum challenges and trends. I appreciate the solicitation, the ear and the opportunity to respond. I will share five of my Big Ideas which in retrospect seem so small and simple. I hope I make them understandable. For even if they are not viewed as significant to others they are important to me.

She uses "I" to relate personal experiences and preferences, as in these three passages:
I have heard so many people describe the success they could have...if they only had the time,...

I would rather have a short, simple well thought out answer than a long-winded, quickly produced one.

The more I thought about my Big ideas, the more they seemed like little ideas. They are not new. And for me they essentially come down to one word. LOVE.

Most of the remaining uses of "I" in this paper are introductory to assertions--"I think" or "I believe," for example:

I believe that each person has within himself a blueprint for who he is and what he is to become.

This "I" statement focuses attention on the fact that what is being asserted comes from a particular source, a "belief"--her acceptance of or conviction in the truth of the statement she is making. Labeling this statement as her own belief gives this statement credibility, especially if the reader respects and trusts Maya (and in the situation of the response paper assignment, it seems clear to Maya that such a statement will carry credibility. Further, if the reader's identification with the writer holds true, the reader will be persuaded to accept this statement as truth or at least recognize the validity of the statement for Maya.

In another example:

I agree [with unnamed others] that there should be some degree of common knowledge within our culture that becomes the basis for our communication and education system.
This "I" statement serves to flag for the reader where the assertions come from: agreement with others, (perhaps so many others that it can be considered "common knowledge") have put forward (even though she does not name a specific source)... These sentences focus her discussion on her observations and experiences as a teacher. They serve as "evidence"--further orientation for the reader as to where her views have come from.

Although later in the paper she continues to make references to herself singularly as "I," Maya switches over to using inclusive collective pronouns, "we," "our," etc. For example:

We need a greater understanding of who and what we look to shape our values and our world. Through this process we will also gain a stronger understanding of who we are and what we are to be, think and do. We need to do everything we can do to identify and attract the people who are supposed to be teaching to the teaching profession. We need to elevate salary structures and respect for the teaching profession. When we identify those people who are teachers and attract them to the classroom and alleviate the red tape they face daily, then teachers will be able to teach and students will be able to learn more effectively.

Many times our most valuable lessons are learned by having a good example set before us. Many times however it is equally true that valuable lessons come by doing something poorly because we do not have a good example set before us. We fail and we learn not to do it that way again.

As in the first paper, several passages in "Sources of curriculum" interweave both "I" and "we," reinforcing her personal connection to the broader audiences. For example:
Even the notion of what constitutes a story becomes an interesting issue. Not that I think European stories are bad. I love them. I have read and studied them for a long time. But they convey only part of the story and can offer only a limited perspective in a world so rich in cultural diversity. Let us go back to some of the texts that offer moral education. Let us hear some of the stories from other parts of the world. Let us give some validity to stories from other parts of the world and allow our children to hear them. I think we will be pleasantly surprised with the results in both moral education and cultural diversity. It is a less painful way and I think it is worth a try.

In using these inclusive pronouns throughout the text, Maya accords herself the same professional status as her evaluative reader, and places the professor and herself with other members of the teaching profession. Maya sets herself up as someone whose insights and experiences as a teacher have given her a valuable vision of what needs to be done to meet the challenges of teaching. How this plays with the rhetorical situation of the paper—writing as a student to a professor—stepping back from the "trenches" by virtue of being in the graduate program, gives an opportunity for this paper to observe the world of teaching, to frame its challenges in particular ways, and offer some "answers," not just for others but for herself as well. Thus, she seems to be writing as much for herself and for the other teachers as she is for her professors. This also suggests an intimacy, a common frame of reference on what is being discussed.
Although this strategy can be powerfully persuasive, especially if the reader already respects the writer, it can also be dangerous in that the writer may be perceived as leading the reader where she may not want to go. Nevertheless, she exhibits confidence before this reader that her personal voice will be taken seriously.

Metaphor and simile constitute important part of her "signature." "I create images for people to hang their ideas on," she maintains.

If you don't know what to do with this right away, then you can hang it here on this hat rack until you're ready to get dressed. I know a lot of the African and Eastern writers have used lots of metaphors. One of the reasons I use metaphor is that certain words in our communities, in our schools have so much force. So if I can use a metaphor that doesn't have as much force, it's not so powerful - people can understand that and then they can shift gears after they get somewhere into the middle of the paper, they understand the metaphor.

Addressing this and other strategies she uses in her work, Maya says,

In music, you can't have a chord without having more than one tone. But the whole notion is that they're strung together or put together so that you have something that's a little deeper than just one tone. That's what I strive for. I look for chords when I'm writing. Can I bring two to three things together that's going to give a richer sound even though there is a difference there. A little bit of that tension that I was talking about.

She establishes these chords most strikingly in these examples:

...school is the place where children from many different cultures, with parents who have a diverse
set of values, come together to draw from the well of education...

On entering our school systems, many students experience awkward feelings as they hear, perhaps for the first time, ugly terms and labels applied to them.... They use so much energy setting up barriers to block the piercing darts aimed at their dignity...

How then can we identify our true leaders, our trailblazers who, statistics have shown, are not usually the students with the top grades. It is much like rewarding kindergarten students according to who has grown the tallest within the year. That student had within him the blueprint to grow taller anyway. He did not need school for that achievement. The measuring stick should not be the reward system. By the same token neither should the measuring stick be used to beat down the students who do not measure up or stand as tall in some areas. Interestingly enough, in years gone by teachers used rulers to punish students who did not measure up to their expectations. The inches on our educational measuring sticks have become our 'RULERS', dictating who can be knighted and who can reach the ivory towers.

She also uses a variety of modal auxiliaries like "need to," "should," "must," "ought to" that function as signals for her opinions and assertions. She does this quite frequently throughout all three papers. For example:

We need to do everything we can to identify and attract the people who are supposed to be teaching the teaching profession. We need to elevate salary structures and respect for the teaching profession.

I agree that there should be some degree of common knowledge within our culture.... This should include a well-rounded liberal arts and humanities curriculum...

At first glance, one might wonder about the scholarly "bases" of such assertions. What gives her the right, the authority, to make the claims she does in these papers?
Maya has bases that are tied up intimately with both the writer's and the reader's sense of who Maya is. What might be the underlying bases for, or assumptions behind, her use of assertions: reflections on her experience that she assumes she and her reader(s) already share. As a response paper, the writer's observations are not expected to be formally supported with statistics, the voices of outside authorities, results of research, and so forth. These elements may be brought in at the writer's discretion, but do not seem to be required. What is valued is the opinions, beliefs, values, of the writer herself. Maya reminds her readers of things they already know—bringing certain ideas to the forefront of the reader's consciousness so that writer and reader together can be drawn in the same direction. This allows the writer to establish a common frame of reference with regard to the paper's bottom-line message.

"Sources of Curriculum" employs a combination metaphor and parable. She first calls to mind the image of trout swimming upstream:

Going to the source to spawn our next generation or to hatch the Big Ideas that will carry us into the next century is good.

She continues with a series of stories:

But what is the source and where is it and how do we get there from here? The salmon know. They fight their way up stream to the environment that they are sure will work for them each year. It's uphill all the way...no one told them it would be easy. But it is their job to go back to the source...no matter how
far they have travelled away from home...to provide just the right environment for the next generation of their schools of fish.

The Monarch butterflies know as they travel over hundreds of miles to their ancestral birthplaces. They go through a metamorphosis that literally renders them unrecognizable from one week to the next. Much like our educational structures. But there is a system and a plan to the changes they go through. They start out crawling but they eventually fly.

But perhaps one of the most fascinating trips to the source that I am familiar with involves the swallows who annually make the pilgrimage to the Mission at San Juan Capistrano in California. Thousands of birds migrate thousands of miles every year, like clockwork to return to their source to prepare for their next generation. But why this place? Why this time? Why this source? The Mission at San Juan Capistrano has a colorful and significant history...not only for California and Mexico and the Catholic Church but the birds seem to have tapped into the spiritual intuitive connection too. Or maybe they just hear the bells tolling, calling them. Could the swallows' radar somehow have turned them into a deeper, truer, simpler time, place and source? A source that nurtures their sense of direction so that they always know the way back. A place that offers a safe place to nurture their young until they are developed enough to fly? And timing that secures a warm, fruitful climate. I often wonder about these same kinds of processes and patterns when I look at our educational system. Yes, going to the source is good.

While this opening may seem rather drawn-out for a five-page paper (double-spaced), it illustrates a key relationship in Maya's mind between such an indirect method of getting to a point and maintaining clarity in a multicultural discursive context--for her, one of the prime markers of "good" writing. She explains her strategy this way:
Say you were traveling along a highway and your exit—the most direct route to your destination—is blocked off with those orange barrels. Then you have to go around—you have to take another route to get there. There are times when you know there's heavy traffic on a certain street, and you go around because you can get to where you're going faster. These are clearer routes even though they're not the most direct routes. It's this way with writing—you use the routes that are available to you. There are routes in readers' minds, particularly cultural differences, that close off directness. Someone may look at me and make assumptions about who I am or what I know that will affect their willingness to hear what I have to say. Directness isn't always possible in those situations. Sometimes it may be simpler and more effective to come at an issue in a roundabout way. That's why you'll find so much metaphor in African and Indian stories (and I mean both Native Americans and people from the subcontinent of India).

Maya believes her metaphors and stories make it easier for writers and readers to connect with one another. "And it's not judgmental." she adds. If used effectively, any faults out there are not directly placed on the reader."

Here is an example of what I call a "secular parable" (defined here as "a simple story illustrating a moral or religious message"; I see the principles underpinning this story as an ethics of making use of whatever resources are available, and moral values of sharing and respect):

The old Black school teachers in Mississippi fifty years ago had no materials to speak of. They had no books to hand out ...not a set where everyone could read from the same text at the same time. But they managed. They thrived. What they did have was love for the students and a belief that they could learn and a good understanding of what they as teachers did and didn't know. There were no special education classes. Several levels, several subjects, several ages all worked and learned and taught each other within the same little shack of a one-roomed school house. They all learned something. In addition to
academics they were taught to appreciate each other and to share. And the children and the community and the parents had respect for the Teacher....

It is also important to note the stylistic pattern of passages. The repetition of "let's" is an interesting feature in the following passage. The words are reminiscent of the liturgical command, "Let us pray." The repetition reminiscent of the recitation of a litany (a prayer that relies on repetition of verses and responses for its effect). The effect is sermonic.

We need to look to nature and natural life patterns as a source. Sitting within the four walls of the average classroom is enough to bore any young mind and most older ones. Let's get outside. Let's look to the sky and the sun and the stars and the moon and the natural motions of the universe to tell time. Let's look to the water; the rain, the rivers, the tears, the water tables that run under the ground, the springs, the mountain runoff from the snow. Let us look to the birds of the air and the fish in the waters and the animals and bugs about us. And the butterflies. let us look at the trees and plants and growing things. let us look to light and darkness. We have a wonderful laboratory about us. Let's use it.

We want students who want to be doctors because they want to heal not because it is one of the highest paying professions. We want lawyers who want to help serve justice not who want to make as much money as they can. We want carpenters who build houses for people to live in not because real estate pays well but because people need basic shelter. We want people who want to be mothers and fathers and cooks and farmers and teachers. These are still noble professions to me.

Given her background contributes to the image of Maya as a person who allows her spiritual convictions, influences, etc. to permeate her writing. She allows her
writing to exhibit a spiritual dimension, both in images and structural choices.

In the third paper, "Curriculum Design and Organization," Maya engages in yet another kind of storytelling, Maya constructing an extended narrative from her own experiences. In making her point she tells the story of a classroom exercise she once conducted. This story illustrates several features that typically occur in her writing.

When I taught kindergartners how to count money I also came to a greater understanding of what money is and its connections to other things. I put 100 pennies neatly in ten rows of ten pennies each. One dollar! It was in sync with our counting lessons. What I did not realize was just how hard it was for young child not to take a shiny penny and put it into his pocket. Dr. M--- [she addresses her reader directly], you raised the question in class earlier in the spring quarter of what a penny is and what it is worth and would we pick it up if we passed one on the street. Well, I'm here to tell you to a kindergarten student a PENNY is still a thing of value! Most of them would most definitely pick it up. On their first view of the spread pennies, I heard comments like "Mrs. C--- is rich!" as they gathered around the table examining and coveting the 100 shiny pennies. Well, with this being such an exciting lesson the bell for recess rang before we finished. So the students went out to play. And I escaped to the teachers lounge, the copy machine and the bathroom and the telephone (as elementary teachers are prone to do at recess). When we returned to class the students were still excited about the pennies. They had told everyone on the playground what big fun we were having in class playing with real money. We regathered around the table and began to count. "One...two...three..." "Look, look Mrs. C--- they're not all there," shouted one student. Let's finish counting," I told him. "But its not ten in this row and it's not ten in this row," he said. Most of the other children agreed; there were definitely not ten pennies in each row. This was one of those teachable moments. But I didn't realize the fullness of the lesson myself. Our lesson turned to the
subject of honesty. It was just about storytime and I was able to put my hands on a storybook about honesty and integrity. It just so happened to be about Abraham Lincoln. Oh how they wanted to be like him. Honest. Well I had that book because it just happened to be February and President's day falls in February and we had been studying the calendar. "Mrs. C----, Mrs. C----, I've seen him before," one student shared. "Who?" I asked. "That man," "The president." "Who? Where," I asked. "On the penny. See!" And he got up and walked over to the penny table. O, how the students marvelled. So at art time we took the penny and rubbed the face of Lincoln's image onto art paper. We had before us a profile in honesty. And by this time most of them could read an they discovered the "In God We Trust."

When the lunch bell rang we went to lunch and when we returned we went back to the table to count the pennies and they were all there. All 100. So we all counted together and everyone was happy that all the pennies had made their way back to Mrs. C----'s stash. So we learned that day about money and counting and presidents and history and the calendar and art and honesty and ethics and forgiveness all in the same lesson. And how honesty can rub off onto those around us. I was indeed a rich woman. I have subsequently planned "first money lessons" in February and have been met with similar results. And each time I learn that I am a little richer as the discovery happens all over again.

In this passage, Maya demonstrates her expertise at pacing a story; even the sentence patterns (conjunctions joining sentence parts) speaks to Maya's storytelling style, linked to her experience with young children, as well as the simplicity of the information providing a powerful message in a simple medium; and her intent to draw the reader (in this case the professor) directly and unambiguously into the story. She also demonstrates in this passage how an oral quality can be incorporated into a
more sophisticated discussion meant for an academic audience.

Maya's papers were well received by Prof. Wyatt, partly due to the relationship of trust that apparently developed between the two women. Such trust comes in large measure from both women's willingness to envision and respect the other's vantage point. For Maya, these papers are also a reflection of the values toward intercultural communication instilled by family and church communities. Further, as a result of her wide-ranging professional and academic experiences with people from diverse cultures, she allows her own voice of authority as a Black woman educator to dominate over any other voices she invokes in her texts. Her writing reflects the positive outcome of relationships both on and beyond the page: the negotiation a highly distinctive voice that comes from an identifiable cultural position (i.e., the culture of Christianity as it is filtered through Maya's African American oral tradition).

Some Concluding Assessments on Writing Selves

These papers by Alice and Maya illustrate just a bit of the range of factors that these women must take into account when they build relationships with evaluative readers through their texts. The rhetorical strategies which they employ seem to sometimes support, and sometimes undermine, their intention to create useful scholarly
voices for themselves. This kind of inconsistency is fairly common as negotiation of identity, standpoint, and ethical position becomes visible in their texts.

Alice's papers illustrate that negotiating a way through to a position of one's own relative to the acknowledged (and powerful) scholarly voices she builds into her academic papers is a formidable task and, for many women in many other writing tasks, the negotiation is not always successful or satisfying to either writer or reader. I refuse to merely dismiss the end product of this struggle as "bad writing," however, since such a term has a rather static and blaming connotation about it. Rather, I prefer to envision such writing as a dynamic site for testing, pushing up against, the voices and positions of others. If studied carefully, these texts can reveal important aspects of the writer's experience. Alice's writing (and the writings of those like Lorrie Ann, Tanya, and Yael who struggle with her) tells much about the nature of power relationships both established within the text and surrounding the text. Maya's writing (like the writing of Bernice and Carol) suggests that in the face of the difficult challenges posed by writing within those power relationships, ways can be found to make discursive space for women writing "differently."

Such relationships between writer and reader that develop through the process and product of writing are
present across disciplines, as the disciplines represented in this project begin to suggest. Even though the particular details of convention and expectation vary from discipline to discipline, the evidence of these women's words suggest that a student-writer's decisions regarding when and how to conform to or challenge those conventions and expectations seem to be made in similar ways most of the time.
CHAPTER V

WRITING SELF INTO ACADEMIC PAPERS:
CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This dissertation has tried to establish that because writers and readers are culturally-grounded beings, a writer shares with her readers the negotiation of the writer's identity, which in turn contributes to her ethos--her reputation and character. The particulars of a writer's lived experiences and her relationships with readers and others condition the content and process of ethos-building. For African American women and others who bring diverse cultural orientations to the prevailing (regarded as Eurocentric and masculinist) culture of their academic discourse communities, the negotiation of textual identity is further conditioned by their "outsider/within" status in an institution that they regard as racist and sexist. This study has shown that biases which exist both in the academy and in the larger society have impacted these women both in their personal interactions with others, and in the negative assumptions about them that they believe pervade their disciplines. It seems evident (based on their interview statements and close reading of
their texts) that they understand how crucially their academic writing has been shaped by the course of their lives, whatever that course entails for each woman.

In Chapters III and IV I discussed the efforts of my seven study participants to negotiate textual self-portrayal in their course papers. In those chapters, I have tried to represent these women as they represented themselves to me, as responsive and responsible intellectuals who tend to "use their thinking and their feeling...their whole being," as one participant has remarked, in revealing themselves to their evaluative readers. Analytical readings of both formal research-oriented papers like Alice's and informal response/position papers like Maya's reveal much about how these women use opportunities provided by academic prose to engage in the kind of discursive practices that will empower them to speak from Patricia Hill Collins' "self-defined standpoint."

It has become clear to me from talking to these women, that they do not desire to be assimilated uncritically into the discourse communities that they seek to join. They have indicated, explicitly and implicitly, that they would rather negotiate a way into their disciplines that will keep their sense of self intact, facilitate the acceptance of culturally diverse expression of ideas within their disciplines, and empower them to have a positive impact
within their numerous and overlapping non-academic communities. Given their varied personal and professional interests, they want not only to be able to use their skills and scholarship for the betterment of their communities, but to carve out a place for themselves within the academy that resists the kind of wholesale assimilation that serves only the interests of the academy's dominant groups. In other words, they wish to gain enfranchisement as the people they are (and are becoming), not as imitations of those they find there. They wish to make the academy acknowledge its growing diversity. Thus, they see that they must do more with their writing than exhibit traditional academic conventions; they sense that their graduate-school writing must be a practice for the real-world writing they expect to use to accomplish their political and social goals. And they know that if they are to be effective scholars within the academy, and retain a sense of self as African American women, their writing must reflect that identity. They are therefore learning in graduate school to balance their academic audience's expectations with those of other audiences they wish to reach.
Relating Research Findings to a Theoretical Framework

Drawing on evidence presented in earlier chapters, this section accounts for a dynamic of self-representation that I envision to be operating in my study participants' writings, in a way that will provide insights into the larger picture of ethos and self-portrayal in graduate school writing. Some significant dynamics of textual self-representation are mapped out in Fig. 1, below, which illustrates sites of negotiation described in previous chapters, and completes the picture of those negotiations by accounting for the perspective of the evaluative reader. This diagram is more suggestive than definitive; the nature of such negotiations is much more complex than any diagram can reasonably capture. Many more points of negotiation exist than is practical to show. Additionally, because for any number of reasons I did not ask about—and my study participants chose not to reveal—many details about their experiences, it is important to emphasize that my conclusions about influences on their self concepts must remain preliminary and tentative. The discussions which follow Fig. 1 explain each component of the diagram in relation to my findings regarding my study participants.
PATTERNS OF NEGOTIATION* 

Rhetorical Context for Writing 
- Assessment of Reader's "Situated Ethos" 
- Reader's Image of Writer 
- Purposes 
- Goals 
- Agenda for Writing 

WRITER 
- "Situated Ethos" 
- Cultural 
- Self/Identity 
- Influences 
- Act of Writing 
- Strategies of "Invented Ethos" 
- Voicing "Rhetorical Identity" 

TEXT 

Rhetorical Context for Reading 
- Assessment of Writer's "Situated Ethos" 
- Purposes 
- Goals 
- Agenda for Reading 

READER 
- Reader-Constructed Ethos 
- Response to/Interpretation of Voicing of "Rhet. Identity" 
- Act of Reading 

EVALUATIVE 

*Double lines between boxes signify relationships of negotiation

Fig. 1. A model of identity negotiation.
Cultural influences on selfhood and identity: Fig. 1 represents a model of identity negotiation that highlights relationships of negotiation for both writers and readers. While my study focuses on the writer's perspective, the entire model shows that in the larger scheme of reader-writer relationships, points of negotiation for evaluative readers mirror and interact with those of writers.

A starting point for examining the negotiation of self-representation in writing is the set of nested boxes in the writer's half of the diagram in Fig. 1 labeled "Self/Identity" and "Cultural Influences." This area signifies the writer's sense of self embedded in layers of social and cultural influences continually negotiated within the writer's mind by influential voices that come into contact with her. My study participants have reported experiences which support research findings in the social and behavior sciences that define identity and selfhood as products of interwoven social and cultural influences. In Chapter III I examined at length their reports about the influences of their families and church communities. Based on my experiences, conversations with others outside the context of this study, and published statements authored by others, these women's reports resonate strongly with experiences common to many African American women and other individuals who perceive themselves to be "outsiders within."
"Situated ethos": Within the context of writing for academic audiences, numerous cultural influences, such as those described in previous chapters, help to place the writer in her initial negotiating position. The outermost nested boxes on the writer's (and reader's) side of the diagram represents the fact that the culturally grounded identity further interacts with numerous social elements that result in the writer's (and reader's) "situated ethos." For the writer, this element is a dimension of her identity that is by perceived by those who 1) know the writer personally 2) know of the writer indirectly, and/or 3) have preconceived ideas about people like the writer. Writers rely heavily on their understanding of what their readers expect of them. Included in the deliberations of African American women writers is a suspicion of hegemony that places them in subordinate positions relative to their readers.

The women participating in my study have formed their sense of self from relationships with others and from previous experiences in writing. Based on the information they have given me about these relationships and experiences (both within and outside academic contexts), I have found that most of them have considerable understanding of the interplay of culturally grounded factors on shaping the kind of scholarly writers they are and/or wish to be. Each woman's discussion of how her
attitudes towards writing as a scholar have been influenced by family, church, and so forth, suggests that these attitudes and strategies have been nurtured, in some cases, from their earliest experiences. They also have insights about their situated ethos as it is revealed in their positions on being Black, on being women, on being of a certain age (whether younger or older), on being students.

Some study participants' perceptions of cultural and power inequities have grown out of real conflicts with people they have judged beyond doubt to be consciously malicious. Others believe such inequities to be borne out of ignorance or mistakes by well-meaning people. Regardless of the source of their perceptions, however, the cumulative effect of such conflicts has caused several study participants to call into question the kind of persons they are. Each attempts to reconcile roles, positions, and attitudes she has developed from her non-academic relationships with the image of her that develops from her academic relationships. This reconciliation is fortified by those whom she trusts (usually, but not always, from home communities) and hindered by those whom she believes have betrayed that trust (usually, but not always, from academic communities; Alice's relationship with her black male professor suggests that when relationships based on expected race and/or gender solidarity fail, feelings of betrayal may be magnified).
Part of each woman's negotiation reflects back on herself as she makes adjustments in how she views herself and how she would like to have her readers view her. As she continues to encounter conflicting relationships, attitudes, and behaviors directed toward her, she internalizes those messages, acting upon what social and behavioral scientists have referred to as "self-fulfilling prophesies. Where there have been strong positive influences on identity, other influences fall into a balance. Where the positive influences have not been as strong, the conflict results in confusion, which then also shows up in the writer's ability to write from a clearly self-defined standpoint.

**Rhetorical Context for Writing:** I have asserted in Chapter I that for each of my study participants, textual self-portrayal is often a difficult negotiation, a series of well-considered trade-offs made in an effort to achieve those goals that are important to them. Many of these tradeoffs are made in consideration of elements I have grouped together in Fig. 1 in the boxes labeled "Rhetorical Contexts for Writing." I intend this section to represent a broad context of writing in general. Overarching any specific writing task that the writer must compose are elements which answer the question "Why write for a particular purpose, audience, and occasion associated with a given discourse community?"
Located within this context are two important interacting elements. First, the writer interprets and evaluates her reader's social standing or situated ethos as well as the writer's own impression of how the reader must view the writer. Several of my study participants have indicated that they "read" their target audiences. They want to know the same kinds of information about the character, reputation, and expectations of potential readers that they understand about themselves. They have gathered cues directly from their readers and/or they have preconceived ideas about how those readers may envision them as people and as purveyors of information. These ideas also condition and are conditioned by the purposes, goals and agenda for writing in a particular way for a particular reason for a particular audience. These negotiated positions become "voices" that enter into dialogue with other voices that constitute the women's perceptions of themselves, and in turn their sense of self imposes a framework onto the rhetorical context for writing.

The rhetorical context for writing, as I have illustrated in Fig. 1, is also shaped by the writer's assessment of her purposes, goals, agenda for writing. The writer's perception of what her reader "must" believe about her image and reputation interweaves with what she wishes to achieve in her writing with regard to the reader whose
situated ethos she has constructed. In return, the writer's goals and agenda, which have grown out of the cultural matrix of her own life, continue to help her figure out what her audiences "must" think of her. These points of negotiation—among writer's situated ethos and elements of her rhetorical context for writing—interplay with her own sense of self.

My study participants have indicated that they receive and send messages about themselves, and are deeply concerned with what numerous facets of society (including the academy) expect them to be, as African American, as women at various ages, as students, as scholars, as community leaders, and so forth. They are keenly aware of conflicting expectations between Blacks and Whites, within Black communities, between academic and non-academic settings, and among other societal institutions. In negotiating their roles and statuses with respect to these communities and institutions they have come to various positions. Some, like Maya, are very conscious of their roles, while others, like Yael, seem to see themselves as more of a single, all-inclusive identity.

Given that diversity, however, the majority of the study participants do perceive that because of inherent biases in the academy, what an evaluative reader may want from them may not always be in their best interests. Most are aware of this aspect of their rhetorical context and
intend to work toward balancing diverse, sometimes conflicting, agenda. They have said that they can usually judge situations where they can and cannot attempt to "write themselves into their writing" through specific rhetorical strategies like storytelling and extensive use of "I"-voice. These are judgments that all writers must make; however, for these women, given their awareness of the potential for biased responses from their readers, their decisions about whether to employ culturally distinctive self-representational markers often carry considerable risk.

The Act of Writing: The next move to be made in Fig. 1 is to the box labeled "Act of Writing." Although all of what I have been discussing to this point may be considered part of a writer's composing processes, I use the term "act of writing" to refer to the point at which the individual focuses her attention specifically onto a given writing task. I view this as another significant point of negotiation in that she must bring to bear on the act of writing the text at hand all she has learned from previous life experiences, acts of verbal discourse, and previous acts of writing. The focus at this point is on how the act of writing selects, frames, and crystallizes prior experiences, which in turn influence the course she will take in shaping the present composition.
My study participants indicate that they see the need to assert themselves as Black women when the rhetorical situation seems to demand that their status as Black women matters in relation to the topic being discussed, although those opportunities vary in relation to the nature of what is sanctioned by each woman's disciplinary discourse. The increasing emphasis on cultural diversity in subjects like American literature for Alice and Bernice, rhetorical and composition studies for Carol, political science for Lorrie Ann, and curriculum design for Maya provides a relatively large number of opportunities to exploit the kind of credibility that status as African American women can inspire. But writing about European male composers, for example, offers few openings for Tanya in music history to establish credibility from an African American woman's standpoint (although she does have some leeway to write as a Black woman when the subjects are Black composers). Even more constraining for Yael, topics in Russian literature usually do not explicitly call for a "Black woman's" point of view. For African American women writing in disciplines like Tanya's and Yael's, opportunities to practice culturally diverse self-expression are rare. And even in the other women's disciplines, opportunities exist only insofar as departments and professors allow. In some courses these women enjoy more freedom to write from their own standpoints; in many courses, less freedom is
conferred. As Mae Henderson has observed, "our position in academia speaks to the contradictions of being a Black female/feminist writer in a White patriarchal institution" (435). Thus disciplinarity, and more specifically, the predispositions of evaluative readers in disciplines, has an important bearing on the ability of African American women to represent themselves distinctively in their writing.

Since each woman speaks only from the perspective of her own discipline, it is left to me to find threads that suggest the impact of disciplinarity. These threads include:

• The appropriateness of exhibiting a particular kind of presentation of self.

• Whether it is useful to the message being sent to position oneself as anything other than a generic "scholar."

• Whether it is helpful to put forward a point of view on an issue specifically as a Black woman, or whether one can assume that any point of view, position, or stance evidenced in a paper is a Black woman's point of view by virtue of the fact that a Black woman authored it.

Some women hold the view that whatever image they project is authentically theirs, regardless of whether it has overtly "Black" or "female" characteristics. The
extent to which formal/informal opportunities are provided to practice self-representation usually depend on the nature of discourse in a given field—e.g., what kinds of discourse strategies are prevalent or marginal in the fields's scholarly journals, at conference presentations, and so forth.

It may be true across disciplines, as Tanya's remarks suggest, that a specifically Black voice is acceptable—expected—in writing that raises obvious issues of race and/or gender. But in areas where established authority is reserved for the sanctioned positions, viewpoints, authorities, lines of arguments, of the disciplinary establishment, it is infinitely more difficult for students to speak from a place of "otherness." In graduate school, my study participants believe, the evaluative reader has the power to shut down the voice of otherness as she sees fit.

**Strategies of "Invented Ethos":** The negotiations outlined to this point converge in each woman's act of writing. The rhetorical context as it is filtered through and interanimating her sense of herself, also interanimates the rhetorical strategies she uses. I have described these strategies in previous chapters as including styles of argument, word choices, references to sources, and so forth. As instruments of self-portrayal in academic texts, I assert that writers use such strategies of invented ethos
to counterbalance perceived deficiencies in their situated ethos and to capitalize upon the strengths they believe their situated ethos affords them.

My study participants seem to understand that a large part of what goes on in readers' minds (I refer here to the "evaluative reader" section of Fig. 1, which roughly mirrors the "writer" section). A key factor in negotiating identity at this point lies in the fact that sometimes these women do not acknowledge the professor as the sole audience for their writing. Nevertheless, that reader is usually the only one who is allowed to voice criticism which speaks for all other potential audiences. If the writer is not careful to assess the relative importance of the evaluative reader's criticism, she may find herself negotiating self-concept from a faulty basis.

Ideally, in situations such as this, the writer's negotiation is something like Maya's view of movie critics: "Sometimes their poor rating signals to me that I should go see the movie...they probably missed the point. And it is out of their very ignorance that they are allowed to speak and pass judgment!" If the evaluative reader's critique doesn't seem to fit with the writer's intentions for her other targeted readers, then considering the limited perspective of the critiquer can certainly help writers to place the critic in better perspective. In Alice's case, for example, it would seem that uncritically internalizing
her professors' negative comments did little to build positive self-concept and confident writing. Maya, on the other hand, tends to balance any negative criticism she may receive from her professors with positive feedback she receives from both academic and non-academic sources. Negotiating such a balance seems to have given her a basis for more confident writing.

Voicing "Rhetorical Identity": I asserted previously that the more African American women make themselves "visible" to academic readers, signalling different characters and statuses from those readers, the more strongly they may be judged (often negatively) as "Other." The desired effect of voicing rhetorical identity in any text is to make an audience see a writer as intelligent, knowledgeable, credible, and trustworthy, so that the audience will agree to be led in the direction the writer wants to take them. To influence an evaluative reader, the writer considers other goals: to persuade such a reader—who is in a position to license, validate, bestow credentials (as well as to trivialize, marginalize, exclude)—that the writer is worthy, not just as a scholar (although that is probably the primary reason the individual is in a graduate program), but as a person with something valuable to offer the community. Writing from both a position of expert and supplicant requires extreme skill in negotiation. In terms of the women in my study,
my findings suggest that Bernice, Carol, Yael, and Maya, seem to negotiate this duality with some degree of comfort, while Alice, Tanya, and Lorrie Ann seem to experience more difficulty in balancing these roles.

Text as a site of negotiation: As both a manifestation and shaper of rhetorical identity, the writings of these study participants are the medium through which they are expected to demonstrate mastery of the stylistic conventions and habits of reasoning that mark scholarly discourse within the academy. It has been argued by a number of literacy scholars that the typical discourse of the academy usually identifies a writer as a White European male voice. I am concerned that such discourse does not accommodate the styles and modes that mark other voices. This study has tried to address the participants' struggle with the challenge of how to write without "replicating the 'White' and 'male' models of power that excluded and marginalized both Black women and their texts from the class and curriculum in the first place" (Henderson 435). I conclude from the papers I examined that the efforts of these women—however earnest and well-intentioned those efforts are projected in their interview statements—are not always successful in achieving this goal. This lack of success may mean that some of these women's sense of self is in a particular stage of development, that the negotiation skills are not complete
at their particular stage of graduate work. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that regardless of relative success, these women intend very much to develop this sense in their writing.

Obliged as they are to follow instructions from professors and other academic readers, they often perceive that their advancement within their programs depends on conforming with the expectations of those readers. Some of these readers, of course, have greater insight than others into the dynamic of writing for multiple, culturally diverse audiences, and thus can recognize and appreciate what the writer is attempting to do. Some readers, however, at least as they are perceived by the women in this study, not only are ignorant of the nature of these women's attempts at self-portrayal, but sometimes seem threatened by the presence of a specifically non-White voice. Responses on student papers become dialogic voices which feed back into the writer's self-concept. The writer's readerly reaction to her own text thus brings the discussion of negotiation back to the starting point on the diagram—-the development of self-concept, identity, and the writer's situated ethos.
Implications of This Study for African American Women, Graduate Programs, and Rhetorical Studies

For African American women in graduate school: While my data has allowed me to make only preliminary assessments, I have observed that my study participants seem to possess a fairly sophisticated understanding of their positions within the academy. They desire to balance diverse perspectives in their texts, even if they are not always able to make their rhetorical identities work persuasively for their readers. Just as importantly, when they find they are not able to do so, they can articulate the reasons for their choice. In short, they are aware of their rhetorical power and of the consequences of wielding it.

This investigation begins to suggest that, at least part of the time, these women do intend to perform such balancing acts, even if they are not always able to persuade readers to validate the culturally-mediated voices they have infused into their papers. In reflecting upon comments made by my study participants regarding the impact of their participation in this study, I further suggest that it is important for African American women (and indeed all writers) to continue to reflect upon the rhetorical dimension of graduate school writing and consider what more we can do within our disciplines to exploit our rhetorical power. The task we face is not to leave one community in
order to enter another (Min-zahn Lu), but to reposition ourselves in relation to several overlapping and often conflicting communities. My research suggests that, as we continue press for changed attitudes within the disciplines we have joined, we also need to continue to assess ways in which our textual self-portrayals can move us further toward the center of our disciplines.

Part of the graduate school experience for African American women in predominantly White disciplines seems to be a profound sense of isolation from others like ourselves, as well as considerable reliance on preconceptions about our readers that may not be accurate. Reflecting on my experience in researching this project, I envision several areas in which African American women could enhance their self-portrayal in graduate school writing. First, I came away from my investigation feeling that my study participants would benefit greatly from meeting with each other and sharing insights and strategies. Perhaps the sense of isolation which many women feel might be lessened to a considerable degree if they could make themselves more available to each other.

My research also suggests that some women might benefit from building more trusting relationships with professors so that they could better understand each other's rhetorical context for reading and writing and that most African American women might create even more
opportunities to write for academic texts themselves. The lesson I learned from Maya's writing process is that one shouldn't give up self-expression in writing, even if it means taking the extra effort, as Maya does sometimes, to write separate papers for self and for reader. Such an exercise can be a valuable tool for discovering who we are in relationship to readers.

My study suggests that as African American women, we wish to make the academy acknowledge its growing diversity. Thus, we see that we must do more with our writing than exhibit traditional academic conventions. We sense that their graduate-school writing must be a practice for the real-world writing we expect to use to accomplish our political and social goals. And, we know that if we are to be effective scholars within the academy and retain a sense of self as African American women as well, our writing must reflect that identity. We must therefore balance our academic audience's expectations with those of other audiences we wish to reach. However, we have found that often the best avenue for expressing that voice is in texts on Black-related subjects. We have found it more acceptable for the assertion of identity in Black works than in works dealing with other ("universal"?) subjects. Perhaps this is the case because such works can be easily identified, and classified as marginal rather than central to the agenda of the dominant culture. Whether a Black
woman can assert her identity in other areas is questionable, in the opinion of several of my study participants. And they say such positioning is seldom encouraged by their professors. Even when a self-defined standpoint is encouraged, these women often feel that they are being asked "speaking for the race," to offer the resident "Black" view.

For teaching, mentoring, and evaluating African American women writers. My study participants have not characterized all of their professors as ignorant or malicious. Much of what the women have articulated seems to come as much (if not more) from their perception of the academy's general tendency to protect the status quo, which they believe women and people of color have had little hand in shaping. In fact, most of my participants have pointed to professors they've studied under, as well as other scholars and educators they've known, who have been inspirational and supportive of their efforts to develop distinctive scholarly voices. What comes out of this investigation is a deep and widespread concern that even when these readers have the best intentions, they fall back onto response and evaluation practices that contradict their stated values and frustrate these women's efforts at innovative writing. I believe that such concerns contribute to a special rhetorical context within which
evaluative readers must consider appropriate responses whenever they encounter student texts.

Evaluative readers might consider, for example, ways in which many of their own (ostensibly innocent or "value-neutral") scholarly practices have actually contributed, as Edward Said has suggested, to the marginalization of politically and economically disenfranchised groups within the "conservative culture" of the academy. As subjects to the power of evaluative readers, student-writers need to be able to trust that their professors wield their power responsibly in bestowing or withholding the authority to voice difference in academic writing.

Such trust also demands that evaluative readers also demonstrate an understanding of the extent to which their academic discourse also teaches the biases of academic inquiry, as Deborah Brandt asserts. This dissertation's Survey of Scholarship (Chapter I) discusses the Eurocentric, masculinist orientation of academic conventions in many disciplines. A focus on these characteristics closes off knowledge that can be made from modes that African American women and other writers often rely upon in making knowledge through discourse. While schooling students in the discourse strategies which the students themselves believe will need to acquire to be successful academics, graduate faculty should at the very
least be prepared to help them to consider more carefully the consequences of internalizing the "master's" discourse.

Further, evaluative readers might look for ways to transcend the traditional dichotomy of academic versus non-academic discourse. As academic writers, African American women increasingly desire to compose their texts in ways that encourage interpersonal and intercultural interaction with their audiences. Writing and reading in the academy thus becomes a truly intercultural undertaking. In order to feel confident about using all the resources at their command, these writers need the assurance that readers are cognizant and appreciative of the nuances of other ways of knowing and being which writers bring to acts of composing. Engendering trust at this level also means developing strategies for helping writers exploit effectively their culturally distinct resources in composing texts designed for academically-oriented purposes and audiences. In sum, evaluative readers should plan to encounter the texts of their doctoral students in ways that make it more likely that genuine communication is taking place between culturally different but equally enfranchised people. It is a matter of reading to understand the writer as well as the text.

For rhetorical studies. The issues raised in this study have important implications for rethinking rhetorical
studies as cultural studies. Today's traditional teaching of rhetoric in the academy (whether in writing courses or in other content-area courses) evolved from classical rhetoric, which itself was developed in a society that educated only men. This discipline, further, evolved within Western societies where students were educated in formal (Latin and Greek) languages that were not spoken in their homes. For many people now making their way through advanced levels of education, the structures and functions of disciplinary discourse remains distant from home communities. Those who desire to maintain viable links to multiple academic and non-academic communities come to rely on rhetorical strategies to help position themselves appropriately with relation to those groups. Through its focus on the rhetoric of self-representation, this study asks how rhetoric serves (and might better serve) the interests of individuals who celebrate their multiple locations in academic and non-academic communities.

This project, as does rhetoric generally, concerns "relations among texts, writers, readers, and cultures" (Smithson, English Studies/Culture Studies 1). The academic papers examined for this project, like the literary texts alluded to by Isaiah Smithson, "are always cultural texts and that readers read differently according to the cultures from which they derive their identities" (1). Rhetorical studies have begun to examine these
cultural connections more closely. I believe that in order for rhetoric to remain relevant for all those who study and practice it, both scholars and practitioners must continue to sharpen this focus on the culturally-defined—and defining—rhetor.

Areas for Future Research

The research documented in this dissertation only begins to map out the territory of identity negotiation in academic writing of African American women doctoral students. In future work, I am most interested in pursuing two areas that have only been touched upon in this study—the effect of a writer's age and the way(s) that one's spirituality, religious training, and moral upbringing, impact on representation.

Several other key areas that my study has identified might be moved forward by future research projects. First, my study addressed at length only two cultural influences on identity formation, family members and church communities. I see the need for many more research projects which factor in other cultural influences such as social class. Research in this area should attempt to treat these influences in relation with one another, rather than as separate, discrete elements.
Along with such research, projects need to be designed which will investigate in greater detail how the self-representational strategies of women whose previous experiences have been at diverse institutions (HBCUs, women's colleges, and so forth) impacts the development of scholarly identity when the women change academic environments. My research suggests, for example, that there may be a distinctive difference in attitude by women who come from HBCUs and women who have attended predominantly White universities, and that there may also be distinctive differences in their discursive practices.

Future studies of self-representation in graduate-school writing should also move beyond course papers (as I have focused on) to written examinations and dissertation projects. What are the resonances, discords, progressions, disjunctures, in the development of a writer's identity and ethos as she moves to other tasks that get closer to the professional writing that she will do after graduation?

Many more women need to become involved in studies like this one, both as participants and as researchers, so that a more comprehensive picture can be constructed. While this study has brought together a considerable amount of information, my sample population is far too small to generate anything more than preliminary assessments. Not only are more studies of graduate students needed, but studies need to be longitudinal and follow these women as
they progress in their academic careers, to see how their scholarly voices continue to develop and to see how that aspect of their writing relates to their advancement.

Along with expanding the population base, another step in developing a fuller picture should be to examine the point of view of the academic evaluative reader, as well as the broader (e.g., general African American) audiences that may have an interest in these women's work. What "cultural baggage" do these audiences bring to texts, how do they perceive writers' identities, and how do their perceptions not only contribute to a writer's ethos but also influence the writer's subsequent choices in constructing her identity for them?

As a continuation of my theorizing about negotiations, I perceive that readers undergo the same kinds of negotiations as writers. In fact the act of reading has been characterized as an act of constructing, composing. Indeed, the act of reading is, in part, an act of composing an image of the writer that will help the reader interpret what the writer says. The reader also builds a relationship with the writer and the text. Further work needs to be done to bring the evaluative reader of an African American woman's writing into the discussion so that relationships of negotiation between them can be usefully explored. One side cannot be fully understood without the other.
A Final Word

Feminist and womanist scholars have pointed out that while African American women share experiences, opinions, beliefs, attitudes about our ability to assert rhetorical identity in our writing, our ways of coming to those experiences vary. Alice's truth is not Maya's, or Carol's, or Tanya's...or mine. And our truths are shaped not only by individual backgrounds, but also by the disciplinary communities to which we have oriented ourselves. Nevertheless, we share the experience of being academic writers. Though the content and conventions vary from discipline to discipline, we have all been in similar places with our writing processes, in terms of searching for comfortable and appropriate means of self-expression. In addition, our writings have all undergone the intense scrutiny of academic critique. In response to such experiences and in conversation with each other, we have learned enough about what we share so that we feel comfortable about saying, "Yes, sister, I know where you're coming from." This cherishing of sisterhood has been the spirit of this project from the very beginning, and I hope that others who take up investigations of the lives and work of African American women in the academy do so in a similar spirit of mutual respect and trust.
APPENDIX A

A Study of
Self-Representation in the Academic Writing of
African American Women Doctoral Students

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

My name is Juanita Comfort, and I am a doctoral candidate in English (Rhetoric and Composition) at The Ohio State University. This statement briefly describes my dissertation project and invites you to participate in the study.

I am seeking the participation of African American women doctoral students from a range of disciplines who are considering academic careers and who write extensively in their graduate programs. I invite you to engage in this project by taking part in three one-hour interviews and possibly a one-hour peer-group discussion, and by providing several samples of your academic writing for rhetorical analysis--seminar papers, research reports, conference papers, drafts of dissertation chapters, or whatever else you happen to be working on and would feel comfortable
about sharing. As the study proceeds, several women may be selected for further interaction for the purpose of developing case studies. The average participant can expect a time commitment of about four hours over a six-month period.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY: Standing at the threshold of my own academic career, I am keenly interested in the struggle of other African American women academics to assert their identities as intellectuals, *identities negotiated from the totality of their culturally-mediated life experiences*. Discouragingly, the literature I have reviewed on the status of African American women scholars indicates that our voices continue to be stifled within the academy. Nevertheless, I believe that graduate programs are obviously important settings for the development of strong scholarly voices. It is within the rhetorical context of writing for instructors, examiners, dissertation committees, and conference reviewers—all of whom represent the academy at large—that we begin to develop the kind of authorial presence that, theoretically at least, should empower us in the academic arena. This is the basis of my desire to examine the ways we begin to develop our scholarly voices through the experience of writing in graduate school.

As a rhetorician, my understanding of contemporary discourse theory has led me to speculate that in
significant measure our fate as scholars is tied to our ability to negotiate credible identities for ourselves, through language, within academic relations of power. The authority and persuasive effectiveness of the texts we produce are largely the result of many conscious and unconscious decisions about how we as writers wish to portray ourselves to our readers, balanced against what we understand to be our readers' expectations for us.

To illustrate the connection that I believe exists between academic effectiveness and discursive practices, my study aims to examine the rhetorical dynamic of self-representation in academic writing done by African American women doctoral students. I define "self-representation" here as a writer's attempt to project a credible image of herself onto readers, through features she builds into her text. Operating under the theory that an individual constructs her self-concept from competing social definitions of self which surround her, I posit that the rhetorical exigencies of a given discourse, plus a writer's own personal history, beliefs, and values, together define a range of possible roles she might assume in her text. Her identity, as it is built into that text, results from negotiation through a maze of social forces as she accepts some roles and resists others.

In order to write effectively for our graduate-school audiences, I believe we necessarily learn how to bring an
array of culturally-grounded resources to bear on our
texts, regardless of whether the institution itself intends
to teach us how to do this. My study will take a small but
much needed step toward understanding the nature of our
discursive negotiations between the academically-oriented
rhetorical situations we write for and our diverse
sociocultural backgrounds.

My data collection methods are designed to elicit a
"profile" of you as an academic writer, and should help me
address at least the following research questions:

*What do you perceive to be significant influences
upon your identity as an African American woman?

*To what extent do you believe you are able to
establish that identity in your academic writing?

*When might you choose to write in compliance with,
and/or in resistance to, roles established for you by the
academy, and what rationales guide your choices?

*Given your aims for asserting identity in your
writing, what rhetorical strategies for accomplishing those
aims are evident in your compositions?

I believe this project can lead to much productive
inquiry into the lives and work of African American women.
I would invite you as a participant to use the space
created by this project to assert and reflect upon your
experiences as a student, scholar, and writer. If you
contact me at the address or phone numbers below, I will be
happy to provide additional information about the study and answer any questions you may have. Thank you for considering this request; I look forward to speaking with you personally about my study.
APPENDIX B

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL RESEARCH

I consent to participate in a dissertation project on self-representation in the academic writing of African American women doctoral students.

The researcher, Juanita Comfort (or her authorized representative), has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected duration of my participation.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Further, I understand that I am free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me.

I have been assured that strict confidentiality will be maintained in all uses of material collected. Audiotaped interviews will be transcribed by the researcher or by a typist who will also be committed to confidentiality. Pseudonyms will be provided for my name in all interviews and writing samples. In any situation in
which the researcher may use my material, she will not reveal my name, names of people close to me, or the name of my college or city.

I understand that in addition to the dissertation itself, the researcher may use some of the material collected from me for journal articles or conference presentations and may also write a book based on the dissertation. If, in these projects, the researcher wishes to use any materials in any way not consistent with what is stated above, she will ask me for additional written consent.

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form, and I agree to participate in this study under the conditions stated above. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: ______________  Signed: ______________________

(Participant)

Signed: ______________________

(Researcher)
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

First Session

Introduction: For this first interview, I'd like us to engage in a conversation about what your life is like as an African American woman, as a student at this level, and as an scholar/intellectual. Besides helping me to understand more about who you are and where you've "come from," this conversation will hopefully lead you to reflect on (for next time) some ways you try to project some image of yourself onto your readers through your academic writing.

*I'm primarily interested in YOUR values, attitudes, and feelings, and--eventually--how they give meaning to your writing.

*I'm also trying to find out WHERE YOU THINK your feelings, attitudes, and values originate in your own life experiences (personal/spiritual, work- and/or education-related), and in your relationships with family, friends, co-workers, mentors/role models, church communities, teachers, and so forth)
Questions:

Black ... female ... graduate student--obviously you are these, and much more. Can you describe for me your own sense of who you are, and how you've come to be who you are? [TOPICS: family, friends/peers, co-workers, organizations, institutions, etc.]

In general, how would you describe your relationship to language? (How do you feel about yourself as a language-user?)

How have people in your life outside of the school environment generally used language (orally or textually)? For example, how would they a) tell stories; b) make arguments or attempt to persuade others?

What recollections do you have of family members, friends, and colleagues as writers (letter-writing, work-related, personal journal, creative writing, etc.)? How have these people been role models for you as a writer?

Do you now write, or have you in the past written for non-academic reasons? What are/were these?

To what extent, if any, do you think the language skills you've developed in the academy have changed your relationships with the language communities you belong to outside the academy (family, friends, church community, other organizations and institutions)?
Second Session

Introduction: I'm going to ask you a set of more focused questions today than I did in our previous interview. These questions will specifically target your experiences as an academic writer. Your answers will help me to better analyze and interpret your writing samples. As in our first interview, I'm primarily interested in your own values, attitudes, and feelings, what influences might have shaped them, and how they give meaning to your work. (When I refer to "academic readers" or "academic audiences" I mean people like professors, fellow graduate students, and conference audiences.)

Questions:

Describe the scope of your academic writing: hat are your typical assignments and projects?

Are you expected to publish in scholarly journals as a grad student?

What formal courses, individual instruction, tutoring, and/or mentoring have you had specifically in academic writing—as an undergraduate and as a graduate student?

To what extent do you believe those experiences have prepared you for the writing you're currently called upon to do?
Based on your experiences as a reader and as a writer of academic prose, what do you consider to be most characteristic of academic writing in your field?

How does the process of writing academic texts make you feel?

What makes you feel most confident about the academic texts you produce—what in your writing works most effectively?

What would you most like to improve in your academic writing?

How many desired improvements are based on what would satisfy you personally, and how many are in response to evaluations that others have made about your work?

How much of your identity as a scholar and as a person (specifically as an African-American woman) do you feel is/can be projected in your academic writing?

Does this ever change with the type of project you're doing?

Can you recall any instances when you wanted to express something in a particular way but felt that there was no way to do it using conventional academic prose, and how did you resolve that tension?

How would you define the term "formality" in writing?

Do you write on more than one level of "formality"? Describe the situations.
What kinds of topics usually come up in your writing tasks?

How often and under what circumstances are you free to choose your own topics and/or design your own projects?

When you are allowed/encouraged to write on a topic of your own choosing, how do you come up with your ideas?

How often do you consciously consider issues of race and/or gender when developing these topics?

What is your writing process like—that is, how do you typically go about completing a composition?

Do you modify your process in any way according to the type of paper you're called upon to write, and if so, how?

What kinds of resources do you typically rely on to support your ideas?

Do you ever consciously attempt to locate/consult/use secondary sources specifically authored or compiled by women and/or African Americans, and if so, what do you believe such resources might contribute to your work?

Do you have a sense of what resources by women and African Americans are in fact available and regarded as appropriate for scholarship in your field?

To what extent, or at what point, in your writing process do you envision or target readers as you are composing?

Who do you envision—e.g., professor only, professor and some other audience?
Generally speaking, what kinds of things do you sense about the capabilities and expectations of academic readers that might influence decisions you make as you are composing?

How much do you revise your compositions after the first draft? (by revising, I mean reworking the entire paper or sections of it in order to clarify, simplify, reorganize, or redirect your discussion, and not merely editing for grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and spelling)?

What role does obtaining feedback from others play in your writing/revising process?

Whom do you trust to give you the most constructive responses and why?

How would you define the term "writing style"?

How would you describe your own writing style(s) in your academic writing?

If you think you use more than one style, how are they different from each other, and in what situations would you use each one?

What kinds of responses do you typically get from readers of your finished compositions? Are they usually positive or negative?

Do these responses refer primarily to content, supporting evidence, clarity, style, or something else?

What do readers seem to like best about your work?

Least?
To what extent (if any) do you believe that the opinions, perspectives, argumentative positions, organization, writing styles, etc., you express in your academic papers arise—either directly or indirectly—from your experiences/knowledge base as an African American woman? In other words, how aware are you of a culturally-grounded source for your own academic perspectives?

To what extent are you able to separate your role as a scholarly writer from the rest of your life-experiences? How do you feel about that?

(If you have writing samples to give me): What can you tell me about the assignment/situation that gave rise to this paper?
WORKS CONSULTED


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