Text, context, and identities in Pointe Coupee, Louisiana: six young women positioned as writers

Patricia Meeks Smith
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, psmit11@lsu.edu

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TEXT, CONTEXT, AND IDENTITIES IN POINTE COUPEE, LOUISIANA:
SIX YOUNG WOMEN POSITIONED AS WRITERS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

by
Patricia Meeks Smith
B.A., University of Tennessee, 1992
M.Ed., Converse College, 1994
Ed.S., Louisiana State University, 1999
May, 2004
DEDICATION

For David
I want to thank my committee and the faculty of Louisiana State University for your patience and tolerance while guiding me through the doctoral program in curriculum and instruction. Each of you has added a vital component to my dissertation and my understanding of pedagogy. Thank you, doctoral committee: Professors Claudia Eppert, John May, Petra Munro, William Pinar, and Miles Richardson. Thank you, faculty: Professors Jill Allor, Earl Cheek, and Flo Durway.

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ABSTRACT

Texts are contextualized—tied to times, tied to places, and tied to the people who live in those times and places. This dissertation is based on a study of writing and identity set at Catholic High School in Pointe Coupee, Louisiana. For their senior English class, the six young women participating in the study produced a number of pieces of writing of various types, contrasting in genre, length, content, and register. These kinds of writing represent varying discourse practices, and it was within these practices that the young women positioned themselves or were positioned by influences in their social context.

The genres produced by the young women in my study were, for the most part, associated with the familiar school genre, the essay, which is common in English classes and in academic discourse. Essay types were the analytical literary essay, the problem-solution essay (or argument), the process essay, the descriptive essay, and the informative report. The genres also included creative writing, comprising stories and fables for all as well as poetry for some individuals. There were two kinds of writing explicitly addressing experiences and events in individuals' lives: personal narratives, which are a common form in school, and autobiographies, which are less common. One student wrote meditations. In addition, students kept journals, but these had few similarities to journals that people keep in the world outside of school.

The inquiry revealed convergence as well as tension among various positions associated with gender, race, class, place, and religion and also showed
evidence of recurring themes and conflicts in writers’ bodies of work. Also apparent, through the analyses, was an influence from genre, writers assuming a particular position when writing in a particular genre and not in others. In addition, there was some evidence of intertextual history—direct connections of texts with prior texts a writer had written. Most interestingly, the various writings showed the students to be dealing with future “possibilities” as well as present and past “realities” in their own lives, not only in writing that is considered to be focused on the self, such as personal narrative, autobiography, and poetry, but also in writing that is not considered to be self-focused, such as literary essays. To summarize, the study shows the multiplicity and flexibility of writing identity even in bodies of work produced for school.
CHAPTER 1
POSITIONS AND PLACE

False River, which is actually a lake, . . . materializes as an image which one can delve into for introspective purposes. It provides a quiet place to think. . . . It is a place to lose one’s self and to contemplate the world at large. Most importantly, it offers a haven in a hyperactive world.

—Elle, “Crystal Clear”

Texts arise in and because of contexts, and identities of individuals develop in and because of contexts. Texts and the people who write them are contextualized—tied to times, tied to places, and tied to the people who live in those times and places. Such is the case for Elle, a high school senior who wrote the words that I use as an epigraph for this chapter. To her, False River is a geographical place, but it is more. It is a facet of her own identity. This dissertation is based on a study I conducted in southern Louisiana at Catholic High School in the town of New Roads, Pointe Coupee Parish, as I investigated, during four months in the fall and early winter of 1999, how the writing of Elle and five other young women reflected the various kinds of social affiliations they were negotiating at that time and in that place. I studied the writing identities they constructed as they balanced roles and assimilated, accommodated, or resisted beliefs that were associated with various groups within their context. In short, I examined their “positioning.”

Catholic High is a place, New Roads a place, Pointe Coupee a place, and Louisiana a place. All are physical locales and have what Casey (1993) called the “ongoing cultural process and factility of implacement” (p. 31) or what Cresswell (1996) called the “uneasy and fluid tension between the material and the mental” (p. 13). Yet, all have social meanings and social groups attached.
The Place: Catholic High School of Pointe Coupee

Catholic High School of Pointe Coupee, established in 1904 by the Sisters of St. Joseph, is situated in a small-town, agricultural area of Louisiana near the bend of the False River, which has also been subjected to shifts and other transformations over time. This “river,” which is no longer an actual river, was given its name when the Mississippi shifted directions and abandoned a section of its riverbed. The town of New Roads, which traces its beginnings back to the French military poste established in 1712, is part of larger worlds—state, regional, national, international—but even today the attitude and perspective of the New Roads communities on the banks of False River seem at times to be politically as well as geographically ambivalent toward the “outside worlds.” Sometimes Southern oral traditions are present within the writings, historical, contemporary, and my participants (Crowder, 1990). Here in New Roads, there is the tension between local and global that has attracted so much attention in recent discussions of culture (e.g., Greene, 1997; Wilson & Dissanayake, 1996a, 1996b).

For the past decade or so, the population of New Roads has experienced much growth, and currently the town has a population of 4,966 people (US Department of Commerce, 2000). Generations of children have been born, reared, and schooled in the New Roads community. The 2000 Census provides some statistics: Ninety-three percent of the population of New Roads are natives of the area, and 65% have lived in the same house for the last 15 years. Of the other 35% (those having moved from one house to another), 81% stayed in Pointe Coupee Parish. As in many other small towns, many of these children often leave home to attend a state college or university. According to the 2000 Census Report, 197 people in New Roads are currently enrolled in higher education. Most return
afterwards, as in Casey’s (1995) “homecoming,” to live within the community where they were reared; few leave the community. In the community of New Roads, currently 59% of the community are high school graduates or higher, and 14% hold college bachelor’s degrees of which half is higher (graduate or professional degree).

Catholic High itself is relatively unthreatened by the competition of other schools within the area, since it is the only parochial school for Catholic students in the region and much of the population is Catholic. Within the area there is one other private school, False River Academy, which draws its students also from the New Roads population; and there is one public high school open and in use, Central High School. According to the 2000 Census, 68% of the children attend the public, school leaving another 32% in private institutions. In the past, there was another public high school, Poydras High, named for Julien Poydras, who had much to do with establishing education in the area and who founded the first public college. Poydras High closed after 1991, when the public schools were consolidated due to low attendance. Interestingly, public education in Louisiana had its beginnings right there in Pointe Coupee.

Pointe Coupee is primarily a Catholic community, and religion is a strong part of people’s lives. Catholic roots in Louisiana began early in the 1700s with the Capuchin Order, whose influences in elementary education are notable in the community even today. The Jesuit Order has also made educational contributions, which began in the mid 1880s with the secondary schools that began to appear in Pointe Coupee. The Jesuits had been in the region earlier, but had left for a period of time because of tensions with the Capuchins.
The People: Students of Pointe Coupee

At Catholic High (with its history as a school for white students despite its being a somewhat integrated school), there would seem to be a white experience and a black experience. The differences in the experiences of students from different racial backgrounds is an issue explored in a number of research studies (e.g., Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Hasseler & Bean, 2001; Horowitz, 1995; Kahaney & Liu, 2001; Kameen, 2000; Ogbu, 1988, 2003; Schultz, 1999). Most students at Catholic, white and black, come from the town of New Roads, which still exhibits much racial segregation, since different racial groups live in different sections. Of the population of New Roads, 39% consider themselves to be white, and 59% consider themselves to be African American; of the African Americans, fewer than 1% attend Catholic High (US Department of Commerce, 2000). Thus, the social factor of race is interrelated with place. There also seems to be a creole experience at Catholic High, since New Roads has a fairly large population of creoles de couleur (creoles of color), who trace their family lines to French (and sometimes Spanish) Catholics and to African American or Native American lineage. This affiliation of creoles is not to be confused with the Caucasian creoles of mixed Spanish and French heritage, although the lines often blur (cf. Tisserand, 1998). The creoles tend to see themselves as a distinct group—positioned differently from other African Americans because of the historical social status and freedoms held by their ancestors within the pre/post Civil War caste system.
New Roads was recorded to have been settled by French and French Canadians. Slaves from Africa and the West Indies began to be imported in 1719, and their forced immigration continued well into the 1800s despite slave trade laws. Because of the large land holdings and agricultural interest in Pointe Coupee, slave ownership in that parish was the highest in Louisiana both by whites and some creoles. While the Louisiana lands belonged briefly to Spanish control, French soldiers transferred to the Spanish army in order to keep their Pointe Coupee families and homes. On the 2000 Census, the current population of New Roads indicated their ancestry as follows: 17% being of French lineage, 8% French Canadian, 7.5% English, 5% Irish, 4% German, 2% Italian and 53.5% for other reported and non-reported nationalities, all of smaller percent. Interestingly, 3% claimed “United States or American” heritage.

Schooling at Catholic High is also a gendered experience, even though the student body includes both males and females. The ratio of the school population that is female relative to that which is male is 3 to 2 (according to the principal). In recent research on discourse practices and educational practices, gender differences have received much attention (e.g., Adams, 1994; Bernstein & Gilligan, 1989; Gil-Gomez, 1998; Katz, 2000; Keroes, 1990; Phelps & Emig, 1995; Rice, 2002; Roen & Johnson, 1992; Roen, Peguesse, & Abordonado, 1995; Roulis, 1995; Rubin & Greene, 1992, 1995; Sirc, 1989). However, gender cannot always be considered apart from various other factors, such as race. For instance, particular features of writing have been attributed to black females that have not been recognized in the writing of white students or black males (Abel, 1997; Kameen, 2000; Schultz, 1999).
In addition to race and gender, social class is another important factor in the context of Catholic High. New Roads has a large privileged class population, whose children make up much of the student body at Catholic High. Catholic High is known as a school for the Pointe Coupee elite, both academic and social, and a large number of the students come from families whose incomes and education levels rank in the top 10% of the area (according to the principal). Census information shows that 27% of the families in New Roads have incomes over $35,000, 20% of the occupations are at executive or professional level, 28% of people have had some college or above, and 39% of the race is white. Social class of students seems to be tied, to a great extent, with race. The census still shows the white populations with higher incomes, more professional jobs, and higher levels of education than African Americans. The school provided demographic information showing that the majority of parents (white) would fall well within the privileged-class ranges and that those students at Catholic High who have scholarships or are sponsored are often minority students. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, 59% of the New Roads population consider themselves to be African American, yet only 1% of the African American students attend this private school. Thirty-two percent of the population’s children attend two private schools, both of which are overwhelmingly single race. False River Academy, which was opened at the time of desegregation, is 100% white, and Catholic High’s attendance is 97% white. Interestingly, the tuition of a number of the privileged-class children is paid for by a grandfather (the family patriarch) who writes a single check to cover the tuition of all grandchildren attending the school.

There is also the Catholic experience for students, which differs, of course, for the Catholics and the non-Catholics who attend this parochial school in a
predominantly Catholic community. Some students have the affiliation of being Catholic High student but are not actually Catholics. According to Lesko (1988), many Catholic school students, especially those who are non-Catholic, tend to feel tension in their symbolic representation of self in school. While developing their cultural identities, students struggle as to which rituals or beliefs (religious or secular/ Catholic or non-Catholic) should be the basis for their actions. While many Catholic parents profess to send their children to Catholic High because of its religious education, the school also seems to be preferred for its social status into which the religious education becomes woven. Because many of the African Americans and their schools (primarily public) in the community are not as likely to be Catholic (even the religions are somewhat racially divided because of active recruiting from black Baptist churches), a “coming together” of race and religious affiliations exists at Catholic High—which prompts my unusual description of Catholic High as “somewhat racially integrated” when in fact only 3% of the school population represents the various “others.”

My Approach

My approach to understanding the identities of Catholic High School students was to look at the interplay among these various affiliations of place, gender, race, class, and religion. I built, to some extent, on the work of Homi Bhabha (1994a; 1994b) who had used the term “subject positions” (cf. Althusser, 1970/1984; Foucault, 1972) to describe the identities that result from tensions among race, gender, generation, institution, geopolitical locale, and sexual orientation. His particular contribution in current discussions of identity has been the notion of “interstices,” which is the space between subject positions that are produced in the articulations of differences. These in-between spaces, or interstices,
is where identity is signified and unique sites of collaboration and contestation result. In other words, in the overlap and displacement of domains of differences, new definitions of identity emerge and intersubjectivity and communal experiences are negotiated.

My study focused on the interstices—the negations “within-in /between” my participants’ subject positions in their identity construction. I limited my study to females because of my own interest in women’s identity construction and the body of work in the area (e.g., Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tartule, 1986; Bernstein & Gilligan, 1989; Gil-Gomez, 1998; Gilligan, 1992; Kameen, 2000; Logan, 1998; Gilligan, Lyons, & Hanmer, 1989; Gluck & Patai, 1991; Lather, 1991; McDowell, 1999; McRobbie, 1991; Munro, 1993, 1995, 1998; Phelps & Emig, 1995; Pipher, 1994; Proweller, 1998; Rice, 2002) as well as issues raised in other studies of women as writers (e.g., Adams, 1994; Finders, 1996a, 1996b, 1997; Gannet, 1987; Porche-Frilot, 1998; Rubin & Greene, 1992, 1995; Schultz, 1999). I was interested in learning how the students in my study dealt with various identifications, through their writing, and how they negotiated the various points of contact among subject positions. I analyzed their school writing produced over the course of four months (a semester), looking for various aspects of the writing that seemed to be tied to gender, race, class, religion and place; and I spoke to the students about their various positions, or affiliations, and possible “spaces” among those positions. I started out with categories, which I knew would be blurred as my work progressed. My attention ultimately was on the points of intersections among the social affiliations.
My “Place”

Catholic High was already a familiar place to me since I was employed there from the spring semester of the 1994-1995 school year through the school year of 1996-1997. During these two and a half years, I taught reading and English in the middle school and high school grades. My first semester at Catholic, I taught reading and English in two hour blocks to the eighth grade class (three blocks). The following year, I taught only reading courses, dividing my classes between the whole seventh grade (four classes) and half of the eighth grade (two classes). My final year at Catholic, I moved from the middle school building into the high school shadowing two of my previous classes teaching English to the ninth grade (last year’s eighth graders) and tenth grade (my first year’s blocked eighth graders). During the three years that I spent teaching at Catholic, I befriended faculty members, students, and parents.

My relation to the students who were to become my “cases” began before I initiated my study. I had taught these six girls as they moved through their early girlhood in the middle school and then again as they became more adolescent in their behavior as they entered the high school. Before the study, I knew the six students as young eighth and ninth graders; however, upon my return I found young adults who were entering their final year of high school.

I did not live in New Roads while I taught in the community school there; instead, I commuted from Baton Rouge. Likewise, when I returned to execute my study, I was not a part of the community. I held insight into the values, beliefs, and practices of New Roads as my friends and co-workers as well as students were from the community, but I, myself, could never claim “insider” privileges. While there were many times that I wished my commute to work was not so long and
there were times I got home past midnight from activities, such as football games and prom committee, I was also aware of the benefits that the distance allowed me.

As a researcher, I welcomed the distance. That distance allowed me the opportunity to reflect upon my experience without feeling as if my findings might in some way be biased by my personal life. Before beginning the study, I leaned toward the idea of an ethnography based on full immersion in the culture being studied. However, because of the distance, I could not stay in the field for the prolonged existence that such an ethnography would require. As a participant-observer, instead, I was able to proceed with the type of longitudinal study of writing that I envisioned while conducting frequent and prolonged observations and interviews over the course of a semester at the school. The physical distance again acted as a buffer for reflection.

The Study

The students who participated in the study were women enrolled in the senior Advanced Placement (A.P.) English class who had attended the school for their entire middle and high school career and who were and still are members of the extended New Roads communities. I was interested in studying the female experience at Catholic High, but I wanted to observe the variability within that experience. My cases, all female, were selected to provide variation within the areas of race, class, and religion, as well as to some degree social activities (high/low involvement, diversified/specialized, in/out of school). Each girl was considered to have academic ability in writing so that problems in written self-expression would be less likely to occur. In this report, I use the participants’ self-chosen pseudonyms instead of their real names.
I included six girls representative of differing self-defined positions; five of these are white, and one is creole. The white students were Aimee Lynn, Bailey, Elle, Kayla, and Kendall. The student who claimed creole heritage was Aaliyah. Unfortunately, there were not any students in the Advanced Placement English class who claimed strictly African American heritage without crossing into creole identities.

I initially selected the girls based on what I believed their positions to be; however, these domains soon became much more complex and overlapping. These were my initial positions that I identified for the young women:

Aaliyah: African American or creole, middle class, Catholic; Aimee Lynn: white, middle class, Catholic; Bailey: white, middle class, Catholic; Elle: white privileged class, Catholic; Kayla: white, privileged class, mixed religion; and Kendall: white privileged class, mixed religion.

Two to three days a week during the fall semester of 1999, I visited in the students’ classrooms, where I conducted observations, participated in interviews, and collected documents (their writings) and other school artifacts (see Appendix C). During my time spent with the participants, I observed their participation during their English class (cf. Gil-Gomez, 1998) and collected all of their formal papers and their ongoing journals. I conducted open-ended, but guided, interviews (cf. Patton, 1994) and thus explored their perceptions regarding their identities and various aspects of the writing they had produced. I also visited the participants in other classes and extra-curricular activities on campus. In addition to the time spent with participants, I conducted other interviews with the teachers and administrators of the school. The first interviews were with the principal of the school and the senior English teacher. I used the final interviews to get a better understanding of
the school and community from the perspective of local members of the community and also from those who commuted from Baton Rouge. I worked closely with the participants, administration, and teachers using “members checking” to verify interviews (cf. Lather, 1991).

Through my analyses of notes, interviews, and written texts, I looked for specific qualities, conventions, themes, and repeated references associated with overlapping subject positions. I developed profiles based on the transient subject positions which became apparent to me in the writings, actions, and words of each participant. Tensions, conflicts, and attempts to contend with the differences and similarities then became visible. Finally, I concluded a cross-case analysis to see comparisons and contrasts in the various subject positions assumed by the six young women.

Purposes of the Study

My study focused on the tensions created within/between the variegating subject positions assumed by six adolescent women who were all students at Catholic High School in Pointe Coupee. The following questions guided the research:

1. What are the differing subject positions of the six selected adolescent women from Pointe Coupee?
2. What differing subject positions are identifiable within their writings?
3. What evidence is there within the writings of tensions within/ in-between differing subject positions?
4. How do these tensions develop and change?
CHAPTER 2
IDENTITY TO IDENTITIES

If the focus is on individuals' texts, instead of the larger sociocultural patterns, one must still be aware of the social nature of individuals' knowledge and the cultural factors that influence their reading and writing practices. The synthesis at the individual level occurs because writers are social beings, who are constituted by the values, beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge of the various communities to which they belong and who engage in social activities and practices.


In this chapter, I discuss the concept of identity from a historical view, tracing the notion as it moved from the Enlightenment era to the Romantic era to the late Modern era, and finally to the current situation, as discussed by various theorists. I then review studies that have focused on particular aspects of identity as they relate to student writing. I attempt to show how that work is moved from a Modernist notion, based on discrete identity categories, to a conception that allows for more complexity and multiplicity.

Identity: From Enlightenment to Modern View

In much of Western thought, identity has assumed a stable entity, which might have been the reflection of a rational identity tied to the Enlightenment, a Romantic's view of an esoteric identity, or a late Modernist's perspective of a predictable identity. The world has perceived a constancy for each of us which fails to fall susceptibly to a constantly changing world. It is Shakespeare's anchor which alters not. It is his “ever-fixed mark” (Shakespeare, 1609/1979). It is Whitman's (1891/2001) drop of water which travels unscathed from other drops to the sea. It offers us confidence, dependability, and assurance within a less dependable society. This unique and
constant identity offers a home to which one may return from explorations and adventures. Stuart Hall (1989) likens this view of identity to a kind of “true self” often related to “the search for a kind of authenticity of one's experience” (p. 10). The Enlightenment, Romantic, and even late Modernist eras all incorporate this solidarity of identity into their respectively different views. Gergen (1991) has written a particularly informative essay on the chapter in thinking about identity through the years.

As Gergen has pointed out, the modernist concept is being challenged. If verbal language is an interpretation of thought and writing is an interpretation of speech, then identity is an interpretation of whom we interpret ourselves to be or whom others interpret us to be at any given moment in our social exchanges and experiences. To define identity perceived by today's societal, epistemological, and paradigmatic understandings, I begin with past theorists' understandings of identity.

**Enlightenment and Romantic Conceptions of Identity**

The Enlightenment era's concept of self, as developed by numerous philosophers, including Descartes (1641/1998, 1644/1996) and Kant (1790/1999), was the rational, humanistic, autonomous individual. Reason and observation were held in high esteem as emphasis was placed upon the individual's power to observe, determine an outside truth, and choose appropriate actions based on that knowledge. In this view, science was portrayed as enabling the individual to have a sense of control over nature (as opposed to worshipping mysteries). Politics also was influenced by the emphasis on reason. The individual gained the authority and agency which had previously been
reserved as the sovereign's “divine right.” With reason and observation, the
individual—even the “common man”—had risen in status. Men who were not royalty
were given a sense of agency; they had the power to know the world around them.
Though humans were now viewed as a priori having the capacity to observe and
determine truth, that truth was still dualistic with right and wrong answers.

The self, as agent of observation and discerner of truth, became central to
knowledge. Identity was a solid, unchanging truth which gave humans supremacy over
other creatures because of their ability to reason. A human had an individual identity;
however, not all identities were equal. In other words, the sovereign's “divine right"
was replaced with the common man who seeks knowledge as long as this common
man adhered to positivists' accepted truth.

During the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century, this view of the
individual was challenged in the movement known as Romanticism by German
philosophers (e.g., Hegel, 1807/1956; Schelling, 1807/1993) and British poets (e.g.,
The Confessions. Rationality, as articulated by Descartes (1641/1998, 1644/1996),
Kant (1790/1999), and other philosophers of the Enlightenment, was, to some extent,
replaced by emotion, and increasingly the individual looked inward to find truth and
knowledge. Poetry of this period reflected the poet's “true self" as it was reflected onto
the surrounding landscape. Place became an important factor to the Romantics as an
encapsulation and immortalizing of their identity. In other words, the “true self” was
projected into the physical surroundings of the writer through poetry creating a
connection or eternal bond with that moment in time. Notions of a “Romantic self” emphasized feelings, and identity became more substantial given the title of “soul.” Agency and esoteric identity belonged not so much to the common man but to those men who bore the unique gifts of “genius,” the ability to see to the heart of a situation, and “imagination,” the ability to gaze beyond the everyday “here and now.”

Whereas the Enlightenment portrayed knowledge as residing “out there” in nature to be objectively observed and recorded by the individual, the Romantic era moved the source of knowledge inside, deep within an indeterminate and often unconscious part of the individual. Through that unconscious, the identity was manifested in particular places visited by the poets. The sense of power and control was shifted from solely over the world to a sense of power and control over one's self as it was situated in the world. Identity began to take on an element of singularity and uniqueness. Concepts such as “friendship” and “love” were ethereal bonds between two uniquely different identities or souls. The intangible and imperceptible parts which make up the essence of identity were soon named. *Imagination*, unique within each soul, allowed for the escape from the mundane, and *genius* represented a projection of the soul to other objects and events such as art, music, and poetry.

**Late Modern Identity**

With Modernism, the concepts of rationality and observation again moved to the forefront of societal interest. Often called the Neo-Enlightenment era, the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries restored interest to that which was rational, reasonable, observable, and objective. Central to the late Modernist conception was
the notion of progress, and an important influence on the neo-Enlightenment ideals was Darwin's (1859/1998) *The Origin of Species*. As questions of human survival emerged, Darwin, through empirical procedure and rational thought, answered. Rationality through science was able to restore control and confidence in a time of discordant darkness after the First World War which had shaken faith in the coherence of Western society. New sciences, even literary science such as the “new criticism" (e.g., Brooks & Warren, 1938/1976), began to appear in social areas taking on the rational and procedural ways of positivism. In the social sciences, people became objects of study, and they were categorized into groups. Place became important in their sort of groupings, as social Darwinian took hold and there was much interest in contrasting “primitive" cultures in non-Western places with the “advanced" cultures of the West.

Modernism, according to Lyotard (1984), became a quest for knowledge as truth viewed as “a metanarrative tale." The quest for universal truth within parameters of Western society's metanarrative produced patterns of an upwardly mobile climb towards a goal, a utopia. As in F. Scott Fitzgerald's (1925) representation of the great American dream in *The Great Gatsby*, the dream of universal truth was thought possible to achieve. Positivism, although claiming objectivity, told a scientific, historical, and literary tale from the gaze of privileged white, Westernized man. The development of the Modern identity was, in essence, *his* tale and *his* place in the world. With identity, an ideal archetype needed to be found through empirical studies which would explain and predict human behavior and identity as it is socialized.
through the individual's environment. This model would also explain how an individual became endowed with preferred qualities of character such as trustworthiness, dependability, and rationality. Kenneth Gergen (1994) has claimed that the metaphor of man as machine, as used by Bertrand Russell (1924), added "autonomous reliability" to the notion of identity. If an individual were placed within an ideal setting, then his psychological development would reflect that setting. While the Romantic identity had the self hidden deep within the interior of an individual, the Modern conception, created in large part by the disciples of psychology, had a self that could easily be exposed and studied by observing behaviors—and eventually a self could be changed by modifying those behaviors. Behavior modification techniques (e.g., Eysenck, 1953/2001; Pavlov, 1926/1962; Wolpe, 1958/1982) were used to shape a more perfect identity free of neurosis. If identity were like a machine, surely it could be programmed through culture and family to produce a stable, trustworthy individual. It is here that social scientists began to study and categorize empirically the construction of identity within predictable phases unique to all individuals (particularly the Western male).

According to Kenneth Gergen (1994), a transitional figure in psychology was Freud (1896/1983), who transported the notion of a singularly unique, esoteric entity of self into the science of psychology, thus merging Romantic and Modern thought. Supporting Romanticist assumptions of the hidden interiors of the mind, Freud incorporated abstract notions of identity with emerging need for evidence. The self, or
identity, was transformed by labeling and analyzing the calculated atomic parts which converged creating the whole.

More distinctly in the late Modern movement were such psychologists as James Cattell (1950/1981) and E.L. Thorndike (1903/1999). As the transition was made from the Romantic concept to the late Modern concept of self, Freud's protege, Erik Erikson (1968/1994), worked under the influences of Modern thought to further Freud's notion of the ego within a more social view of identity. In *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, Erikson (1968/1994) proposed that identity is not only the essence of the individual but also a process deep within the heart of society. He created a systematic formulation of identity which moved the individual from the stages of identification as a child through the autonomous phase of adolescence. He saw crisis as the key to achieving an "ego identity." The outcome was commitment and dependability, like the well-programmed machine. Society entered as a source for occupational and ideological role models from which the individual assumed an acceptable identity for his environment. Although identity was seen as a process, it was idealistic in nature achieving only one true outcome epitomizing some true essence of the individual. Identity was "achieved" instead of being an ongoing process. Failure to proceed through each of the stages of identity development resulted in a psychological or moral deficit within the individual. Because agency belonged to the individual, the neurosis was labeled as a failure on the part of that individual.

Erikson's theory of identity was made more empirical by Marcia (1966) in his development of four stages which represent different levels of crisis and commitment:
identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievement. In identity
diffusion, the individual has not undergone a crisis and has not yet explored different
occupational or ideological roles; commitment has not been reached. Foreclosure
shows that a commitment has been reached but without the crisis which is seen as key
to commitment. In moratorium, the individuals are in the process of an identity crisis.
Finally, in identity achievement, the individuals have experienced a crisis and have
emerged with a commitment of occupational and ideological positions. Slugoski and
Ginsberg (1989), who explored problems associated with this view of identity, have
suggested that the theory has failed in the area of gender as well as race. The identity
process epitomized privileged white men situated within a particular contextual time
and place. Slugoski and Ginsberg explained: “Erikson's theory of ego identity
formation is seen by us as a model of culturally sanctioned ways of talking about
oneself and others during a certain stage of life in Western societies” (p. 51).

During this time, much attention was given to categorization. For instance, in
linguistics, Saussure (whose work was published posthumously, 1916/1965)
differentiated between the langue (language or system) and the parole (product which
can be observed) in order to show that cultural significance comes to a word only
when the cultural binaries position the word giving it meaning. Another practice that
came about during this era was the division of binary opposites. “Signs,” which are
Saussare's units of meaning, are conceived through the differences between the
signifier (sound pattern) and the signified (concept). Thus, both differences in sound
patterns and, more relevantly, differences between concepts, or binary opposites, are
observable in conceiving meaning. This structural view in linguistics eventually carried over into literary criticism.

Another major view of identity, which I consider late Modernist, has come to be known as social identity theory. This theory, associated with British psychologist Tajfel (1981), portrayed identity formation as occurring through an individual's membership in various groups. According to Tajfel (1981), “the term ‘group' denotes a cognitive entity that is meaningful to the individual at a particular point in time” (p. 254). A group is composed of individuals who share systems of beliefs, values, ideas or even shared experiences. Tajfel, who developed the social identity theory based on his personal experience as a holocaust survivor, defined social identity as “that part (his italics) of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (p. 255). This presumed that the construction of identity was interconnected with the social group or groups with which one associates oneself at any given moment. Although its membership changes, the features distinctive to a particular group tend to remain relatively stable.

The old conceptions of identity are still pervasive in today's shifting epistemologies. Traces of the Romantic identity can be seen in the language an individual uses to explain himself or herself to others. The language of love and friendship still embeds the Romantic ideals in genres such as poetry and journal writing, as quite often do other discourses, like those surrounding authorship. Writing is often still viewed as a baring of one's soul, an isolated act free of cultural influences.
Also, Enlightenment and Modernist notions of identity hold underlying assumptions that every person is grounded in logic and rationality and has the right to understand the world. In academic writing, “good” writing still assumes an objective or rational stance. This understanding of writing is also assumed free of cultural influences.

Current Challenges to the Modern Conception

In some circles, contemporary theorizing has undercut traditional Western and Modernist thinking to which we have become encultured, rejecting the idea of simple categories and binary opposites and moving towards a multiplicity of meanings.

Fragmented Identities

Identity, as manifested in language, is a process which never reaches “achievement” with a final or stable core. It is a process which is never-ending, much like the process of writing with no beginning or end. The speaker's voice disappears into the many voices which create society. The notion of intertextuality, discussed by Kristeva (1967/1986), called into question the idea that a text has distinct boundaries and a single authority source. Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) “heteroglossia,” which influenced Kristeva's intertextuality, was the multiple, and often conflicting, voices that comprise other voices.

With globalization and the expansion of communication and technology, more cultures are able to come into contact with each other creating various points of exposure. Kenneth Gergen (1991) discussed the nature of the “saturated self,” or the “splitting of an individual into a multiplicity of self-investments” (p.73). Gergen's conception, the saturated self, was identity as consumed within global communication
and depicted as the numerous selves which we might become depending on the voices that are internalized and the choices that are made (p. 73). At one time, relationships were limited to the people with whom one would come face to face. Today, we find ourselves encountering countless voices across the globe via technology. The pool of individuals with whom we interrelate has increased dramatically and in so doing has forced us to adjust to the variety of relationships as well as the way in which we affirm them.

To Kenneth Gergen's notion of the socially saturated self, Mary Gergen (1986) added the notion of “social ghosts,” multiple voices generating a dialogue within us. The voices are the internalized images we hold of significant others within our lives, voices of past and present whose presence and absence merge to construct our contextually, temporal identities. As our networks grow, so do the number of possible voices to which we relate or after which we model ourselves. Contextual identity is constructed in the sense that each situation allows for modification and adjusting of identity, and temporal identity is constructed in the sense that from moment to moment our identities change based on the contextual situations and the tensions within those situations which we find ourselves. For example, women, whose voices have long been absent from Western thought, are defining themselves within many different ethnicities, gender, and classes.

Kenneth and Mary Gergen were not the first psychologists to speak of multiple “selves” as part of the normal, as opposed to abnormal, experience of identity construction. Back in 1986, Markus and Nurius had written about the “possible future
selves" that people construct as they make decisions regarding the course of their lives. Ivanic (1998) built upon Markus and Nurius's "possible future selves" when she suggested that people present three particular selves in writing. The autobiographical self, the discoursal self, and the self as author come together to create what she calls "possibilities for self-hood."

The notions of multiplicity and change have led some theorists, such as Stuart Hall (1989, 1996) to the discussion of fragmentation. Hall has argued that the centering of a stable and collective identity around such individual positions as race, gender, or class can no longer hold. He has also deconstructed the stable notion of class as a reflection of one's social location in the world. Rather, fragmentation of one's "true self" occurs locally and globally at the same time. Places are often associated with these fragmented communal and personal identities, since they are tied to conflicting cultural traditions, practices, and values. There are times when one self is subdued to another in specific contextual situations. Hall's "true self" denoted a multiplicity of positions seeking an unattainable stabilization within/between a globally fragmented world. Hall suggested a need to revalue traditions and inheritances of ethnic origins.

Pinar (1998, 2001; Pinar & Grumet, 1976; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995) has also conceived of identities as dynamic and multidimensional, but his position has been more phenomenological. Pinar and Grumet (1976) first developed the notion of currere—which is the Latin root word for "curriculum," a verb referring to "running the race course." Currere focused on an individual's educational
experience as it is perceived and articulated by that individual—a type of reflective accommodation. “Rather than working to quantify behaviors to describe their surface interaction or to establish causality, currere seeks to describe what the individual subject him or herself makes of these behaviors” (Pinar et. al., 1995, p. 414). Through autobiography, individuals are able to refocus on the changing process, not the product, of the connection between identity and knowledge construction as they are interpellated by educational curricula.

Subject Positions

The term “subject positions” has proved useful in discussions of identity since introduced by Foucault (1972) and Althusser (1970/1984). The notion of subject positions, as developed by Foucault, emphasizes the relationship between speakers and the “places,” or sites in society, from which they are speaking. Foucault thus considered “positions of the subject” relative to various domains or societal discourses, arguing that what is considered to be a speaking subject is instead a manifestation of various “enunciative modalities.” To Foucault, written “discourse [was] not the unfolding of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but on the contrary, a totality,” a field of regularity to place or control various “positions of subjectivity” (p. 55). For Louis Althusser (1970/1984), whose work was written after Foucault's but published before, the subject was the self-awareness that is constructed by institutions perpetuating ideology. The places “interpellate” subjects; that is, institutional places call people forth as subjects and provide the conditions and context in which their subjectivity is manifested.
Subjectivity of identity has also been interpreted by feminist theorists. For example, Munro (1993, 1995, 1998), problematized the concept of a subject within history, which she attributes to a Modernist description of a “grand narrative.” Munro, in seeking to engender history, questioned whether women as subjects of history can be incorporated during an era when the subject no longer exists. “Rather than abandon history as a ‘relic of humanist thought,’ I seek a feminist poststructuralist reading of... history which attempts to disrupt the search for origins and to decenter the unitary heroic subject, either male or female” (p. 263). During a time when the “subject” is being questioned, the subjectivity of an individual, for Munro, is an incorporation of lived experiences within an encultured environment.

Positions in Place

The notion of place within the shifting notions of identity, though always present, has come to play an even more prominent role. Place, like identity, had been previously defined as “named, bounded physical spaces associated with unique social and personal meaning” (Lavin & Agatstein, 1984 p. 52). This concept of place as a physical geographical location is somewhat limiting, even though it was expanded by the implication of social and personal meaning which widens it. Today, theorists such as Bhabha (1994b) have taken the notion of place and linked it to position, particularly, subject positions, and focused on the within/in between social groupings from which the subject is positioned. These groupings which Althusser (1970/1984) identified as institutions and Foucault (1972) described in terms of textual discourse practices, Bhabha has moved to view the social construction of the individual’s
identity as it is related to his or her reality in that society. Bhabha has described place as the convergences and divergences among communities focusing on the interstices that create this abstract area. Place is, then, defined as both “here” and “there” and neither “here” nor “there” at the same time. This conception of place introduces the “other” into the equation but problematizes the notion of a separate “other.” Unfortunately, Bhabha's concept of place as an all-encompassing, abstract answer to the question of communal identities leaves us dangling on intangibilities. To balance this abstractness, I prepare for the reinstatement of the physicalities and localities of the “regional and interpersonal here” (Casey, 1993, pp. 53-54) alongside Bhabha's alluring, yet intangible interstices.

Supported by the notion of “displacement,” Casey (1993) has argued that distinct communities create place by allowing the place to become transient and temporal based on the interrelations and migrations of its circles of inhabitants. In other words, those individuals who inhabit a place may be forced to migrate leaving a void or sense of homesickness. However, the geographical/physical locality of place can not be overlooked as Casey has stressed “the ongoing cultural process” and “facticity . . . of ‘implacement’” (p. 31). Physical placement can allow a community to construct an untouchable and fiercely independent attitude about its “world” and “outside worlds.” These types of struggles, tensions, and contradictions can actually parallel Bhabha's tensions within/in-between the interstices of subject positions. Wilson and Dissanayake (1996), interested in the “transnational imaginary” and global/local relationships within place, also sought to rediscover localism through the
unevenness of race, class, and gender. “This new localism of Postmodernity seems creolized, ever more cagily constructed” (p. 9).

Richardson (1984) has paralleled Casey's more geographically oriented conception of place while positioning the physical within the socially constructed. “It [place] is a human construct, which is to say, it is both grounded in the physical world and partakes of that world's earthiness and it is lodged in the world of symbolic discourses and shares in that world ghostly illusiveness” (p. 1). Place as both physical and symbolic is seen, by Richardson, as being both fixed and fleeting. The physicality of the place is affected by the geographical phenomena of an area, yet the human constructs imposed upon the society's understanding of that place are symbolic in nature. Cresswell (1996) mentioned place as “duplicitious” in that it cannot be reduced “to the concrete or the merely ideological” (p. 13). Cresswell’s “uneasy and fluid tensions” between the two combine these material and ideological positions (p. 13). This is not to contrive a view of place as a homogeneous, stable community complete with tightly woven traditions which construct solid communal ties and kinships. Awareness of the importance of Casey's “regional and interpersonal here” and Richardson's “world's earthiness” of place in no way should be misconstrued as bonded homogeneous thought or nostalgic representation of a-time-gone-by. Previous categories used for place distinctions are being questioned. For instance, Wilson and Dissayanake (1997) have suggested that the local and the global are bound together, and Casey (1993) has pointed out that something can be “either 'here' and 'there'” or “neither 'here' nor 'there'” (p. 31).
Bhabha's (1994b) work on “borderlines and borderlives” provides a useful way to think about shifts in identity. While place, traditionally, has been defined in terms of geographical boundaries or physical structures, it is an aspect of identity which is all inclusive and exclusive at the same time. People's identities become a more complex and temporal perspective negotiated within and between the subject positions they fill. These in-between spaces of difference, which Bhabha (1994a) referred to as interstices, are where the articulation of cultural differences are negotiated. It is in between the community positions, the overlap and the displacement, where new strategies of constructing selfhood are formed and new identities, communal and personal, are created. These are sites of contestation and collaboration which define society itself.

Thus, there is negotiation and flux for those “categories” previously conceived as a constant; there is negotiation and flux. For instance, gender, which may have once been defined as either male or female, has moved to include various interpretations of male/female positions based on the intertwining of other factors (e.g., race, social class, or sexual preference). Each of the positions is intertwined with others to create a more complex identity. Sameness can encompass difference in the notion of borderlines or borderlives. These overlapping areas are the interstices where the negotiation of identities are articulated.

Identity in Writing: From Stable Categories to Multiplicities

Much of the research on identity and student writing has employed classifications and categories, and has tended to look at only one factor at a time, such
as race or gender, without considering its complexity and variability. In recent years, there has been an attempt to study shifts and changes manifested in writing and to explain the multiplicity associated with writing. For this review, I begin with studies representing fairly stable categories and move to studies attempting to allow for multiplicity by criss-crossing gender, race and ethnicity, or social class. I move then to more longitudinal studies which show multiple positions of identities within the writing, specifically case studies which show an interest in shifts in identities in writing. I conclude these more longitudinal studies by focusing on the revelation of shifts and multiplicity of students' bodies of work as they have developed over time.

**Gender and Identity in Writing**

One of the categories used in studying identity in writing is gender. Some feminist research has directed attention to differences between women and men in their writing. As noted by some feminist theorists, women's psychology is at least 20 years behind men's psychology (Gilligan et. al., 1989; Pipher, 1994). Most past researchers have been basing their knowledge on the research of men who studied other men without considering that women may possibly have a different understanding or experience in life. In composition studies, attempts to readjust the view turned to equalitarian ethics rendering the sex of the writer indeterminate. Unfortunately, this did not account for differences in style or content. The focus has now turned to include both sex and gender within the study of composition in order to determine differences without passing biased judgment based on the dominant culture's norm (Roen, Peguesse, & Abordonado, 1995).
Do women write differently from men? Researchers employing various means to detect difference have tended to focus on either style or content. While most agree that there are differences in gendered writing, many still argue whether the differences are due to ideological social factors or a conscious positioning of self or voice. In addition to these two broad areas of research, there is another dealing with the assessment quality of the writing. Research in assessment has become a means to study individual responses to gendered style and content in writing. Each theorist, despite the division in the research, adds his or her own theological twist to the field of differences in gendered writing.

**Style.** Some research in this area has shown that women tend to have certain gendered characteristics in writing; however, researchers are now inquiring more closely into the context of writing that appears to be “gendered.” Rubin and Greene (1992, 1995) have summarized the prior research, which suggests that women are more likely to use “egocentric formulae” (“I guess,” “I think”), to include exclamation marks, to employ hedges (particularly auxiliaries of possibility, e.g., *could, might*), and to acknowledge legitimacy to the opposing side of the argument. In their study, designed to test the supposition that men's and women's writing styles differ, Rubin and Greene have found that differences due to the mode of discourse were more widespread than differences due to biological sex or gender. However, at the points where men's and women's writing did diverge, the divergence went according to socially-gendered, predictable patterns.
Rubin and Greene have found that these features thought to be characteristic of women's writing tended to appear more so in women's spontaneous expressive writing to an intimate audience but to disappear or become suppressed in the revised, instrumental writing to a distant audience like a university official. For example, one female writer moved from a narrative-centered, tentative style in the spontaneous expressive draft to a more linear, conclusionary style in the revised, instrumental draft. Men also tended to use more egocentric sequences ("I guess," "I think") in writing first drafts of expressive messages to friends as opposed to revised drafts of persuasive messages to a university official. When women wanted to address a distanced audience, they converged with the style common in the men's writings. Based on the findings of Rubin and Greene, a type of gender "code switching" seemed to occur as the writer encountered different writing genres.

In another study examining style, Roen et. al. (1995) built upon Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tartule's (1986) concept of the "feminine voice" as a powerful way of knowing in order to study sexed (biologically female) and gendered (socially female) composition. They found strategies of politeness being used often by women especially in attempts to save positive face for themselves or their addressees. Roen et. al. focused on the research of gender and persuasive discourse in order to evaluate units of politeness within the written arguments. They were able to distinguish strategies of politeness which were used by more women than men in their writing in order to maneuver their argument into possession of social support and understanding. The areas that were defined in the data analysis were hedges, questions,
intensifiers, personal involvement, and ways of knowing. Women were not more likely to use opening politeness strategies; however, they were significantly more likely to use closing politeness strategies. Women were also more likely to use a variety of strategies in order to attend to the positive face of the addressee and their own positive face.

Content. Content of the writing represents another aspect being studied as gendered writing. For example, Geoffrey Sirc (1989) has sought to determine constraints regarding gender within our language and its forms. Responding to the notion that our language reflects the concerns and values of a socially dominant (male) group, Sirc has proposed that ideologies are being perpetuated through composition examples which students use to construct their authorial identity. He found a number of differences between women's and men's writings; these included the writer's attitude and his or her approach to the specific content or topics chosen. He studied content features, which showed more general cultural determinants, in narratives belonging to 20 women and 21 men in a beginning composition class. The assignment was “to recreate for me in words a single incident in which you were involved or which you witnessed” (p. 5). He found men typically using an authorial stance of exclusion or exaggerated agency as they wrote about an “epic” incident in an apocalyptic tone. The incident was presented as a quest or “mission,” and the locus (his term for the organizational approach) was one of control, which included a proclivity for facts. The men's papers did not mention the opposite sex. Women, on the other hand, typically taking an authorial stance which he called “realistic” agency and/or
reportage, wrote about an anticlimactical incident in a nurturing tone. The incident was presented as an anecdote, and the locus was what he called “confusion,” which focused on details rather than facts. The women's papers frequently mentioned the opposite sex. Sirc concluded that “writing formation” was not only apparent in gendered writing but was influenced by the social culture of language itself. As Sirc explained, “I feel strongly that our writing, like our reading, is not a pure unacculturated activity; we similarly write through screens, and gender, like race, seems an almost impossible screen to abandon or write around.” What Sirc also went on to say is he places blame on the ideologies of the language.

Another study focusing on content was conducted by Keroes (1990), who based his inquiry on the expectation that women would produce writing that showed more evidence of “connected response”—that is, more empathetic or nurturing—while men would produce writing in which they were more autonomous—that is, with a strong sense of self as agent and little reference to the audience or others. He expected to find these differences, because of the theory espoused by Gilligan (1982), that traces themes of connectedness in women's responses to moral dilemmas as opposed to themes of autonomy in men's responses to those same moral dilemmas. When Keroes asked male and female students to write two prompted proficiency tests—one which asked the students to identify an unreasonable demand that had been made of them and another to identify a decision they regretted making—he failed to find the expected difference in their tests to which Gilligan's theory alluded. He offered two possible explanations: first, that he was dealing with fairly mature people, college students,
actively seeking autonomy from parents, and second, that the students were writing in a test-like situation and knew to produce the kind of writing their examiners wanted. Of the two explanations, the latter seems to have more support. Standardized tests have been questioned in the past with respect to the marginalization of nondominent cultures. Women writers, especially in test situations, have come to suppress their gendered voice in order to use the dominant (or “correct”) style and content. Again, a gendered code-switching, which was dependent upon the context and writing genre, had occurred.

Assessment. Are teachers biased by the perceived gender styles of student writers? Roulis (1995), who tried to answer this question, found some evidence in his study with college students that the readers prefer the rhetorical style more typically used by the male-authored papers. Empirically, a pattern was established that readers responded differently by the number of directives to the gender-linked style regardless of manipulated attributes of gender. It seemed that the rhetorical style written by more of the men was more positively viewed than the interpersonal style written by more of the women. For example, one essay written by a woman in a stereotypically-associated, male rhetorical style was received more positively than the other two women who wrote using a definite interpersonal style. While Roulis was quick to conclude that a gendered style was being used, he failed to take into account why the writer wrote in the style he or she chose.

Interestingly, Roulis included his qualitative examination of the readers' comments which tended to show that male writers received criticism that was more
positive and constructive than that given to female writers. The readers made harsher comments to correctly identified, female-authored papers such as “You give advice like a good mom,” “Must you continuously reference yourself,” and “THIS NEEDS TO BE REWRITTEN!” In correctly identified, male-authored papers, comments were more specific and offered more advice such as “Enhance your good ideas with stronger sentence structure,” and “Consider the justice aspect of your essay; write more to that in your next draft.” In the falsely-identified papers, the number of directives was still overall higher for female papers (labeled as male papers) than for male papers (labeled as female papers); however, the number of negative comments per paper was considerable less and the grades were higher and closer together. For example, female-authored papers (labeled as male) received comments on organization such as “Introduce an overview to your work.” and male-authored papers (labeled as female) received comments such as “Why are you telling me about this . . . WHY?” While Roulis has taken the stance that gendered style is perceivable within the writings, the bias seems to lie in the constructive or criticizing comments made by the readers.

Current trends. While focusing on gender is one way to begin to examine these areas of identities in composition, it is not the whole answer. Feminism was once viewed as the uniting of many voices to a single voice even though many studies have identified different kinds of female features. The problem arises when the many voices, though sharing the commonalties of being a woman, speak a different story. The stories are different according to the many other positions in the lives of the women. Feminist scholarship was defined as “by, for, and about women” (Gluck &
Patai, 1991, p. 2); however, this seemingly uncomplicated definition oversimplified the situation. This definition now seems both naive and problematic. *By, about, and for women* is problematic, first, because feminist voices are diverse even in their definition of and relationship between self and feminism and, second, because due to this diversity, the voice of gender does not always transcend class and racial differences. McDowell (1999) wrote that:

> what people believe to be appropriate behavior and actions by men and women reflect and affect what they imagine a man or a woman to be and how they expect men and women to behave, albeit men and women who are differentiated by age, class, race, or sexuality, and these expectations and beliefs change over time and between places. (p. 7)

The study of men and women who are differentiated by age, class, race, and sexuality shows that not all women speak from the same voice; they are differentiated through social or subject positions. There is no single “female voice.” Women vary their writing and speech in accordance with the situations they find themselves. In speaking situations, for instance, Carol Gilligan (1989) found that the women adapted the language according to the audience.

Because of the diversity among women, composition analysts would be remiss to oversimplify the notion of gender and its influence. As researchers, we must look to contextual factors in writing which change with each situation. From theorists like Pinar (1997), we know that in order to understand one position (e.g., white), we must understand the other multiple positions (e.g., African American, Latino) which one is not. Multiple identities, however, become more apparent as sociopolitical positions are explored, and the ability of people to blend/mix voices is articulated. The binary
dichotomies of woman have been fragmented by the exploration of the many and the multiple “others” which have been contextualized all within their transient places, situations, and also their perceived audiences. This diversity has led to the fragmenting or multiplicity among women’s voices

Race, Ethnicity, and Identity

As Pinar et. al. (1985) have argued, “race is a complex, dynamic, and changing construct. Like gender, race is not biologically given, and the cultural weight it has been made to bare is out of all proportion to any biological or morphological differences among groups of people” (p. 316). Differences within racial groupings cannot be reduced to specifying styles or indicating levels of oral features in writing; however, these tools are often used by members of various races in attempting to construct collective identities and to position their own identities through racial affiliations.

Style. Much of the research on race or ethnicity has been directed towards African Americans and has focused on the use of the dialect known as Black English Vernacular (BEV). BEV grew in importance in the theoretical literature in the 1960s and 1970s, when a resolution was passed by Conference on College Composition and Communication titled “The Students’ Right to Their Own Language” (Butler, 1974). The paper's position was that no one can or should prevent any social group from using its own dialect. The argument had a linguistic basis: the claim that all variations of English are equal—linguistically. Unfortunately, these policies were met with criticism. The critics of the position interpreted it as meaning that the teacher should
not teach standard English and that any linguistic variety should be allowed in the classroom. Today, many researchers and educators knowledgeable about language differences emphasize contextualized practice which focuses on developing the linguistic repertoire of the individual to allow him or her to code switch and use language forms appropriate to the social situation. Important grammatical aspects of BEV include the lack of agreement between subject and verb (“They runs home”), copula deletion (“He tall”), and absence of the /z/ possessive morpheme (“That boy hat”) (cf. Baugh, 1983; Feagin, 1979). Standard-edited English, or SEE, is seen as a cultural line being opposed by the cultural differences of BEV or Black English vernacular. Some studies (e.g., Cleary & Linn, 1993; Linn, 1995) have shown that African American students, when writing to audiences which they perceive as African American affiliations, produce texts showing more examples of BEV than when writing to audiences perceived to be of white affiliation. The work of Ferguson (1959) and Brown and Gilmore (1960) showed that speakers often code switch according to the person to which they are speaking.

**Oral features.** Historically, as McHenry and Heath (1994) have pointed out, very few examples of African American writing exist prior to the 1830s when African American literary societies were initially formed. However, oral forms of literacy, according to McHenry and Heath, were held in high regards such as the genre of sermons, political oratory, and spirituals. While these oral literacies appeared to be spontaneous constructions, they were deeply rooted in written literacies. Oral forms connected to written texts memorized through quotations (often biblical quotes),
rhetoric, and convoluted syntactic development and heavy nominalizations from Latinate style as this example McHenry and Heath took from Lee (1849/1988):

> My parents being wholly ignorant of the knowledge of God, had not therefore instructed me in any degree in this great matter. Not long after the commencement of my attendance on this lady, she had bid me do something respecting my work. (p. 3)

Written forms such as the Bible and other “authenticating texts on spiritual, philosophical, legal, and political matters” were primarily used (McHenry & Heath, 1994, p. 423). While a practical connection or study was not made by McHenry and Heath to today's African American style in written texts, other researchers have developed evidence of these oral techniques within the written prose.

According to these other studies, the oral features of African America writing, besides the grammatical ones tied to BEV, showed “performance” strategies written best in high-context situations. Linn (1995) focused on stylistic familiarity in BEV writing under the assumption that many African Americans tend to work best in high-context situations with shared familiarity with the situation and the people. Writing, although, is often a low-context situation where the reader and writer may never meet; many African American writers tend to carry over high-context strategies to the low-context situation of school writing. Linn found features of stylistic familiarity in African American students' writing. For instance, there was frequent use of the “intrusive I” and the subjective individual approach in their texts. Linn put it this way:

> As they grow up, African Americans present their material as advocates and show that they care passionately about it . . . . In contrast, college writing students are trained to relate their material as presenters, not as advocates. There is the belief that the truth and other merits of a written composition should be intrinsic to the idea itself. (pp. 38-39)
In much the same vein, Horowitz (1995) has shown a close correlation between spoken and written texts belonging to African American students. She categorized and provided examples of conversation-like speech found in her participants' writings. It might have informal, colloquial language, unexpected topic shifts, vernacular forms of language, and reader-writer reciprocal questions or comments, the insertion of such oral forms as “hmmm,” and the use of long run-on sentences of many clauses. Horowitz's findings suggest that some African American writers link many qualities of spoken and written text incorporating their own primary language dialect.

**Collective identity.** Use of one's primary language dialect can be seen as means of maintaining identity with one's own cultural group. There are other means that students use, too. Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) study of black America in District of Columbia high schools showed not only students' need to be understood within the collective identity of the race, but also to be identified through oppositional social identity (in opposition to the white mainstream culture). Oppositional social identity is seen by subordinate or castelike minorities who develop “an oppositional cultural frame of reference which includes devices for protecting their identity and maintaining boundaries between them and white Americans” (p. 183). These devices are developed as certain forms of behavior and activity which are seen as acceptable or not acceptable through which to define themselves and their culture. By crossing the cultural line by behaving or acting in a way that is clearly interpreted as the cultural other, an individual is seen as trying to “act white,” conspiring with the enemy. Attitudes and behaviors of “acting white” were seen in the study as speaking standard
English, listening to white music, studying, working hard to get good grades, doing volunteer work, and reading or writing poetry.

While this collective identity explanation helps explain the experience of race in the view of the individual, Fordham and Ogbu did not seem to move beyond the issue of race to address the experience of race as it is seen through the eyes of a black woman. Their social theory of race is exclusive in that the concentration excludes other positions which play into individuals' identities as they move away from a purely collective identity. Ogbu has, however, dealt also with tensions between class stratification and racial stratification in other works. In his 1988 article, Ogbu identified a stratification among the black population: the successful middle class and a depressed underclass. He stressed that although race is recognized as a variable, racial stratification is ignored: “The preferred view of American society is one stratified by social class in which all racial groups and all ethnic groups participate in the same class system” (p. 165). Ogbu has concluded that, although white and black students from the same social class are compared in academic settings, the black students, on average, do not do as well as their white counterparts. It is here that Ogbu has mentioned that the collective identity crosses over class lines. This point is an important one, I think, particularly, with respect to the situation in Louisiana where issues of the creole culture is sometimes identified as a overlapping of races.

The notion of oppositional identity has been pursued by Katherine Schultz (1999) in her study in a large, urban school in northern California. She sought to investigate the role of labeling and identity of urban females of color, and thus the
intertwining of gender and race define two unique positions of young women in her study. Schultz collected narratives in which the students insisted “I know who I am” (p. 80). These narratives fell into overlapping and multiple negotiations which Schultz was able to center around two different areas—oppositional identities, or acts of refusal, and contingent identities, or acts of participation. Writing within the narratives showing oppositional identities showed girls who refused to accept the future which others placed upon them. These participants actively resisted both the difficult realities of the lives around them as well as the voices of other significant females in their lives such as their sisters and mothers. Interestingly, the students appropriated their oppositional attitudes to transcend between the fabricated cultural buffer which differentiates mainly poor and urban African-Americans from the mainstream culture. Whereas at times the students would resist doing well in school because it would be to “act white,” other times the students would appropriate the oppositional attitude towards the difficult realities of their lives insisting on a better future. These oppositional attitudes are important because they are often the ones that surface in writing. Schultz summarized by explaining that in each narrative, “gender is braided with race/ethnicity, class geography, and the historical moment in which the events took place” (p. 98). While the narratives of these women of color suggest a pattern for their successes and failures, it is important to understand that the identities were each different as in the many ways they were similar in shifting and changing during the course of their high school experience. These narratives act as a snapshot as to how the students both resist and participate in their school literacy.
With respect to race and ethnicity, the situation is not so simple as some would have people think. There is no single “black style” just as there is no single “white style.” As Fordham and Ogbu (1986) had begun to examine, while situations of alliances exist, each individual constructs his or her own position within/in between the groups. The individual will author his or her own technique for coping with these situations depending on the context of each situation along with his or her other unique positionings.

**Social Class and Identity in Writing**

Important to composition analysis of identity, especially because of the intertextualities and connections between race and gender and class, is social class and social structure. As Gilligan (1992) said, “Social locations of class, gender, age, and for many race/ethnicity places them (many individuals) in a socially marginalized position that does not grant a public hearing of their experience, strength, or knowledge?” (pp. 18, 21). Research on the structure of class and the identities in working-class schools and communities has a well developed history. Ethnographies in the 1970s and 1980s addressed the working-class youths’ perceptions of their own culture and the effects of that perception on their lives both inside and outside of the classroom. However, these ethnographies concentrated their attention on the reproduction and resistance of social classes as they were reflected and affected by the school system.

**Resistance.** The question of class structure and schooling moved into the limelight with Paul Willis's (1977a, 1977b) classic study of working class “lads.”
resistance to formal academic schooling, *Learning to Labour*. Even though the study was conducted in England, Willis's work became very influential in the United States. Willis introduced the possibility of resistance within the school system which denounced the reproduction theory. His study showed that the working class “lads” resisted both the official and hidden curriculum of the school in favor of the practices of their own family and social class, the shopfloor culture. Following Willis, a large number of ethnographers began to invade American schools hoping to build upon Willis's resistance theory.

It was not until the late 70s and early 80s that feminist sociologists began to question the male-dominated ethnographies. Angela McRobbie (1977) opened the door for feminist ethnographers to enter the school as a place where girls, also, resisted the dominant culture's message and reproduced their own values and where place, gender, and class work were all influential. Mixing gender and race with class in *Feminism and Youth Culture*, McRobbie (1991) called into question the invisibility of girls in the research of youth counter-culture. She showed how Paul Willis's (1977a, 1977b) study of motor-bike boys, *Profane Culture*, failed to mention the girls except in passing or as a response to the boys’ culture. The girls' responses to his questions was to retreat into the background in giggles. She concluded that in Willis's case the girls probably felt awkward and self-conscious about being asked questions about a situation in which they held little power or control, especially by a male ethnographer who was representative of the views of the motor boys. If subcultures are not open to
the inclusion of girls, what are the different but complimentary ways that girls organize their cultural life?

In “The Culture of Working-Class Girls,” an excerpt from a 1978 study of girls counter-culture, McRobbie (1991) focused on the ways in which working-class girls understand femininity and quietly resist the dominant school culture’s attempt to shape them into this ideological image. Like Willis's “lads,” McRobbie's girls stressed their own self-reliance and self-image as women. They were extremely suspicious of outsiders, especially the researcher who appeared to them in the image of a middle-class figure of authority like a teacher, career advisor, or social worker. By the time these girls hit high school age, they were receiving messages from schools on how to create a feminine career at home (familial and school-sanctioned literacy) as well as other messages from popular culture and the media (social or medial literacy). Although these messages were similar in nature, each viewed femininity differently. The girls assumed the role of underachievers in academic school, yet they viewed the school version of femininity within the overt curriculum as well as the hidden curriculum (needle-work and cookery) as boring and chose instead to hang out in the bathrooms applying make-up and fixing their hair. McRobbie found that the girls' resistance, though less obvious than the “lads,” was equally as extreme. They resisted the ideology and literacy of the school, including school-sanctioned writing, and created their own forms of femininity.

Local knowledge. During the last decade, a shift in research has shown a more intricate and complex inquiry into how students' identities are developed through local
knowledge within the social structures of the community and the academic environment of the school, both examples of place. For instance, Foley's (1990) ethnography, a look into the social reproduction and resistance within a southern Texas town, showed a more conscious form of resistance to the dominant culture when Chicanos imposed and validated their own forms of knowledge. By resisting success in academics, including writing, the Chicanos affirmed their identities as a culture resisting the values of the white culture. Interestingly, one faculty member of Hispanic heritage developed a means of helping students of both cultures achieve success in their own terms among their own culture. The band leader, Dante Aguila, managed to cross racial and cultural boundaries by pursuing excellence in all of his students and by ignoring the political agendas of those around him. Using his knowledge of International Latino sounds to create a more uptempo beat to his music, he was able to achieve academic success by utilizing his own heritage and his students' cultural heritage.

Similarly, Finders's (1996a, 1996b, 1997) ethnographic study of two sets of adolescent girls who were self-proclaimed best friends found a unique connection between literacy and political and social positions. Literacy proved to be a tangible means to document the social allegiances, to claim status, and to challenge authority. One example showed the notes passed between the girls juxtaposing childhood and adolescent interests: “Lauren, What's up? You have to find me a boyfriend . . . P.S. Can I go trick or treating with you if you can go? P.M.S. I'm so desperate for a boyfriend!” (Finders, 1996a, p. 97). The findings of the study emphasized the ways
which the girls used literacy, first as an act of self-presentation, and second as a ritual of exclusion.

**Borders.** Amira Proweller (1998) has argued that identities are constituted along borders that separate who one *is* from who one *is not.* Using this idea of borders in an ethnographic study of an elite, private girls academy, Proweller closely investigated the role of social status among the students at Best Academy, a school that undertook to mold its students especially through references to the school's late Victorian published catalogue or guidelines (cf. Adams, 1994). While the majority of Proweller's data came from group interviews and field notes, written literacies of the institute were considered. For example, class codes were distributed every morning through the ritual of "Morning Meeting." The principal's comments continually called attention to these written codes which value the "cultivated persons" also described in the school catalogue published in 1852. Interestingly, while institutionalized writing was taken into account in order to contextualize the school and the molding of the girls, no current writing was portrayed in the study either by students, faculty, or the institute itself. This would have made for an interesting comparison and documentation of assimilation, accommodation, or resistance. Proweller did attempt to document this through oral interviews. Her reconceptualizing of "borderlands" moves the overlapping identities into a contextually situated site where identities are being constructed through the influence of this school site. However, Proweller did not contextualize the school site within the community other than to recite a brief history of the school showing changes in its enrollment demographics. Her main focus was
rather the students’ voices as they articulated or attempted to position themselves as individuals.

Religion and Identity in Writing

Very little recent research has focused specifically on Catholic schools as places of writing. In fact, Goodburn (1998) has mentioned that religion in general has long been overlooked as an influential position in the writing of students. Based on Althusser’s (1970) work in ideology, interpellation, and subject positions, it seems that religion and religious institutions might make for an interesting point of departure in a study of writing. As it is now, very little exists in religious influences in writing; however, as educators, Catholic school faculty are showing an interest in new understandings of literacies, especially in the symbolic form and purpose of writing (cf. National Catholic Education Association, 1991).

In her study of symbolization within the rituals of a Catholic school, Lesko (1988) was able to extract structural conflicts in the school system and show how the school worked towards a mythical resolution. Lesko had mentioned that the culture of the school could be understood as a myth, told in words and seen in the actions of the faculty and the students. The cultural identity of this school was constructed through the cultural tension with which it contended. Students found themselves in a struggle as to which rituals and beliefs should be the bases for their thoughts and actions.

Complexity of Social Factors.

As I examine the construction of identities, it is natural to see the parts—gender, race, religion, place, class—in construction of identities. Each of these
positions, though significant in its own right, is but one of a multitude of positions which an individual has in his or her life experiences. The social theory of identities has considered elements which are reflected in the lives of individuals; however, social constructivists need not look only at the social influences of the community but can look also at how these communal ties are associated with an individual's identities. Several current theorists and researchers (e.g., Bhavnani & Phoenix, 1994; McDowell, 1999; Proweller, 1998) have begun to view the multiple parts, and some have situated the individual within overlapping communities and looked at shifts and changes over time and across situations.

Development of Social Identities in Composition

As writing is being reconceptualized to include these contextualized agents of self, some researchers are examining identity development and change as reflected in writing. Inquiries into the social activity of writing has moved researchers like Rubin (1995) and Linn (1995) to broaden their focus to incorporate more dynamic constructions of self. Other researchers like Roulis (1995) have looked towards the idea that authors intentionally assume identities in their writing in attempts to affiliate with or to resist their audiences. Fleckenstein (1997) has sought the heterophonic voices within individual texts, and Adams (1994) has developed an ever-changing understanding of femininity and identity as archetypal figures were manifested into the writings of her middle school participants.

Three other studies, in particular, focus on identity in writing in which the participants' experiences over time are tied to development of their authoring
identities. Spivey's (1997; cf. Nelson 1998, 2001) study focused on the development of six college students' professional identities in their writing over a four year period. Sternglass's (1994, 1997) study examined how academic performance—particularly in writing—was influenced by the participants' experience outside the college. Finally, Ivanic's (1998) study focused on the discoursal selves used by authors in constructing academic identities. Issues of identity arose in their academic essays. Each of these studies adds significant information to the interrelated fields of composition analysis and identity to which I add my own study.

**Shifts in Identity across Situations**

In recent years a number of researchers have taken an approach to inquiry undergirded with a more broadly based conception of social identities. For example, viewing writing as a social activity, Rubin (1995) has argued that the construction of social identity is identifiable in writing through “socio-linguistic markers” (p. 5) but that these markers can change when people assume other identities. He proceeded by saying that the dynamic constructs of identity show that speech accommodation theory can provide a useful perspective in the process. “When conversational partners perceive themselves to be similar one to the other, their speech patterns tend to converge” (p. 8). Similarly, resistance towards specific speech patterns also arise, as Linn (1995) described in his analysis of BEV style in writing: “People sometimes expend considerable effort in marshaling language to create and maintain a minority culture identity. Linguistic resistance does not arise from ignorance of standard forms; to the contrary, maintaining nonstandard forms often entails considerable language
awareness" (p. 8). Rubin has moved into the interactional perspective of social identity as he shows how the construction of writing can also be self-appropriated as well as other-ascribed.

With African American students' writing for African American audiences, Redd (1995) constructed two experiments in which she assigned two audience adaptation assignments in an argumentative paper; one addressing African American opponents and the other addressing white opponents. Her results showed that the African American writers tended to use more style affiliating with their racial identity in papers written to same-race opponents. Similarly, a study of gender and the assessment of writing, Roulis (1995) found that the reader also assumes a socially gendered style within papers as perceivably written by men versus women. The rather static concept of subjectivity which is so prevalent in the realm of writing has also been challenged in the work of Fleckenstein (1997). She studied diary passages written longitudinally by four volunteers in an attempt to differentiate between the cultural terrain and the psyche in order to create a stable, yet heterophonic voice. Her study showed that the heterophonic voice which she wanted turned instead into a cacophony of voices. The heterophonic voice was defined as "a temporarily, stable identity that reflects an orchestration between socio-historical context and individual circumstances" while a cacophony of voices were defined as "culture and psyche gabbled cacophony of different voices, tones, pitches, keys, and durations" (p. 475). Fleckenstein pointed to one strategy used by her writers and labeled it the "performing self." This is manifested when the author rehearses realities and transforms voices. The
other strategy used by the writers was called the “framing self.” The framing self allowed for the imagery from within culture which the writers used to frame their performing selves. While Fleckenstein sought to find the orchestrated blending of culture and psyche, she found instead that the writers only ended up fragmenting themselves further.

Expanding the area of content, Adams (1994) has introduced the idea of girls' narratives as a means of studying identity. As the middle school in her study attempted to mold these girls into “proper little ladies,” the girls constructed their own life stories about gendered identity amidst the conflicting and contradictory expectations of them as adolescents and as females. Adams discovered the girls' understanding of femininity and masculinity in identity as “unfixed, fluid, and contextual” as they repositioned themselves through race and social class in different situations. Identity narratives developed by the students focused on the archetypal figures such as the cowboy, the gangster, the goddess, and the good woman. Adams suggested that these stories or narratives were greatly impacted by the participants' race and class as well as gender.

Development of Writing Identities over Time

Studies which were most relevant to my own inquiry were conducted by Spivey and Mathison (1997), Sternglass (1993, 1997), and Ivanic (1998). Each of these studies draws upon the notion of multiplicity in identity and discourses through analysis of students' writings; however, it is the undergirding research questions dealing with individuals' identity which were of most interest to my study.
In several recent essays, Nelson (1998, 2001a, 2001b, 2003) has argued for a social conception of authoring identity—maintaining that an author's identity comes not only from perceived similarities within the person's body of work but also from perceived similarities to (as well as distinctions from) other authors. The similarities may be in textual genres, linguistic features, or writing conventions, and may also be manifested in thematic content (addressing the same or similar topics or issues). Thus, identity comes from social connections that are forged through writing—one author is tied to other authors. Identity, according to Nelson (2003), is dynamic, not static, since writers’ social affiliations shift and change and because other people are involved in the socially constructive process. Although published authors often do much to mark their affiliations through citations, allusions, and acknowledgments, their readers create many of the ties themselves, as they note these similarities and often make associations that would not be made by the author himself or herself. The audience for the writing develops and changes over time, and makes new and different connections among authors.

Several years ago, Nelson, who was writing under her former name, Spivey, reported on a longitudinal study she and Mathison conducted with six undergraduate psychology majors (Spivey & Mathison, 1997). The study began when the students were freshmen at a private research university, just beginning to pursue their studies and learning more about the terrain of their chosen field, and it continued until their graduation four years later. Over the four-year period, the researchers collected all papers that the students wrote for courses in their major, and they also conducted
extensive interviews with the students. The focus in the study was on the students' emergent identities in their chosen field—the decisions, subject to change, that they made about the specific subfields in psychology that they would eventually enter, the kinds of psychologists they would eventually be. It was also on the students' emergent authoring identities that were associated with these choices. Not surprisingly, all students marked their social ties to the disciplinary community of psychology by adoption of its genres and many of its discursive conventions.

Four of them also began to make many of the moves relevant to identity creation that are characteristic of disciplinary scholars. Over the four-year period, they created bodies of work composed of interrelated texts with recurring themes and recurring citations. They had—or they found—particular issues that they returned to in numerous pieces, and they had also located particular people in the field with whom they identified. Through their writing, they marked their affiliations, sometimes with citations and other times with more general allusions. They were beginning to create more specialized “communities” within psychology in which they placed themselves.

Identity shifts also occurred as these students seemed to try out what Markus and Nurius (1986) had called different “possible selves.” For instance, Arjun, whose identity had been tied for his first two years to cognitive science and to particular cognitive scientists, wrote a paper his third year in which he applied the notion of parallel distributed processing from cognitive science to public policy, a field he had begun considering for a different kind of career. This reflected a possible shift in his career identity and also his authoring identity. Another student, Barbara, developed
two identities through her writing as she moved through her program of studies: one focused on women's issues and the other on issues of behavioral reporting in clinical psychology.

These students were, in a sense, locating themselves in particular parts of the field and were positioning themselves for future careers and adult lives. Much of this locating, positioning, and shifting was reflected in their writing.

Another researcher, Sternglass (1993, 1997), also dealt with college students and their writings as she attempted to understand the multifaceted social factors in the lives of the writers. Sternglass had undertaken a six-year longitudinal study in which she sought to trace the development of analytic abilities as reflected in writing. In 1993, she reported a case study exemplar focused on Linda, who continued to work on one major issue in her paper—the role of women in society—over a period of time. Although Linda had not yet become a proficient writer, she grew in her ability to reflect upon ideas and to question the assumptions of the society around her.

Sternglass (1997) published the fuller report of her longitudinal studies with undergraduates in her book *Time to Know Them*. Of specific interest to my study, Sternglass studied the effects of her participants' complex social experiences on their academic performance. Wanting to know how multifaceted social factors in students’ lives affected the academic process, she found areas of race and ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, social class and ideology. Her major interest was in how academic performance would be influenced by experience outside of college, in the home, in the workplace, and in their communities. She saw considerable change over time. She
found that these participants would apply their "old" knowledge of the world to their "new" academic knowledge in their field, often working to translate concepts into their own language.

In contrast to Spivey and Mathison's high achieving students in a department in a research university where authorship was highly valued, Sternglass's participants were studying various subjects and attended City College of New York, which had previously held an open admission’s policy. Of the 53 participants who initially started the project, 17 participants graduated, 10 transferred, and 18 dropped out. Sternglass was left with eight participants. Her analysis also differed as she attempted to construct a full portrait with the academic fleshed out by life experiences. Her focus was on the construction of academic and personal identities.

Like Spivey and Mathison, Sternglass looked for recurring themes tied to areas of interest. Her categories, marked by her participants' chosen affiliations were often deeply intertwined. In one example, Chandra demonstrated in her papers from 1991-1993 the intertwining of race and gender. Her position as a proud African-American woman developed as she became increasingly aware—and critical—of media portrayals of African American women. She displaced her interest in acting with an interest in directing—wanting to have a sense of action within and upon the social world around her. Many of the participants experienced complexity in asserting their identities. While maintaining sense of pride through gender, racial, and social affiliations, their experiences were fraught with pressures to conform.
The third researcher whose work is most relevant to my own study is Ivanic (1998), who also worked with college students. Ivanic focused her work on the construction of the multiple selves of the writer as autobiographical self, discoursal self, and the authorial self—which come together to create possibilities for self-hood. She wanted to know how discoursal identity was constructed in academic writing. She focused on the alternatives to academic conventions that individuals brought with them from their experiences outside of the school. Her participants at Lancaster University are “mature students,” a specific student category in England of individuals over 25 years of age who had returned to school. Ivanic wanted to understand the dilemmas they faced as well as the nature of the pressure placed on them to conform. She found present in each written paper multiple subject positions for the writer showing at least two of more discourses or identities intertwined.

Ivanic approached her study using linguistic analysis. While a great number of linguistic features were identifiable in each participant's writing, Ivanic found that detailed counts and isolations of particular sections of text outside of the context were not fruitful. Instead, much like Sternglass and Spivey and Mathison, she looked at the texts as a whole and found the important linguistic examples and themes which marked areas of interest to the study. In the case study, Ivanic traced the autobiographical construction of self as a social worker in the writing of the student whom she called Rachel. Ivanic described her findings in this way: “I show how the complex, ambivalent self which Rachel brings into the act of writing is the product of her social opportunities and of the allegiances she has formed” (p. 121). Within one of
Rachel's written text, multiple positioning could be traced including her identity as an apprentice social worker and as author of social work casenotes and social work visit reports. This assignment also showed her identity as a member of the academic community, as an Applied Social Science student, and as an academic feminist. Finally Rachel's identity was seen as Rachel—the person—and as Rachel—an entertainer and a person with a sense of humor. Thus Ivanic sought to understand Rachel as both an individual and as a writer within her academic field.

Conclusion

In building a notion of a culturally-based, dynamic, and interactive activity of writing, I have attempted to focus my reader's attention again on the authors and their intentions, implications, and revelations (whether conscious or unconscious) about their social identities. More recent work in composition analysis has developed the need of adapting context and social methodologies into the study of composition; however, few projects have actually transcended past the categories imposed by Modernist thought or looked longitudinally at an individual's writings. The social worlds are multiple—building from self-appropriated and other-ascribed positions including their actions, behaviors, attitudes, values, and beliefs which are attributed to endless combinations of variant positions. Even place, both constructed and concrete, becomes one of many positions distinguishable within a social community of individuals with competing perspectives.

I identified the need for my study, reported in the following chapters, which focuses on high school seniors, prior to involvement in a college environment, and
showed how identity positions are manifested into academic written discourse. Following the lead of Spivey and Mathison, Sternglass, and Ivanic, who have all studied authoring identity of college students, I sought to study identity construction by looking at texts. However, I focused on identity being constructed by high school seniors. While each of these significant studies has addressed areas of interest to my study, none of them has focused on the age group which will be moving into college. The outside influences that Sternglass and Ivanic, particularly, sought should be apparent, I thought, in the lives of my students while they were in high school living “at home” and in-place in their home towns. I was interested in catching the students before they entered a college environment.

In analyzing the academic writings of these high school seniors, I sought evidence of how identity positions, in both their personal and the academic lives, were reflected in these students' academic writing. More research was needed to contribute to this field, especially in how individuals deal with tensions among the varying positions they assume. Like Spivey and Mathison (1997) and Ivanic (1998), I considered textual elements in the individuals' writing, but my focus, more like Sternglass (1997), was on the life experiences tied to particular interests. Like Spivey and Mathison and Sternglass, I also conducted my analysis by looking for recurring themes, searching, as Spivey mentioned, for patterns of “sameness” or consistency, but at the same time seeking the shifts and multiple identities. I incorporated some aspects of the sort of linguistic analysis used by Ivanic to distinguish social positions. My intent was to conduct a study of identity construction that would be richly situated in a
complex setting with students who seemed at first to have much in common with one another. I wanted to see the various positions these students would assume—the various social affiliations that would become salient—as they dealt with identity issues. I sought both how they positioned themselves as well as how they were positioned within the context of their society
CHAPTER 3
CONTEXTUALIZED IN POINTE COUPEE

Driving into New Roads: One route—I can drive up through the tourist city of St. Francisville, cross over the Mississippi by ferry, and emerge on Levee Road which connects onto River Road, north of False River. I follow River Road as False Bayou on the left subsides being replaced first by the tributaries and soon the lake herself. I cross the connection of the railroad as it crosses the bayou over Patin Dyke and continues to parallel the city moving out more perpendicularly away from the river to enclose the town of New Roads itself and head north to upper Pointe Coupee. I know that the tracks will fall as a color line representing “back ’o the town” and the river will become “the front” or Main Street. River Road becomes Main Street as I pull into town stopping at the one traffic light in front of the courthouse, then turn right at St. Mary’s Catholic Church, away from the river. Four blocks back into the Creole -Victorian neighborhood and two blocks to the left places me just inside the gates of Catholic High’s faculty parking lot.

Or—I can cross the New Mississippi Bridge looking back to see the industrial, chemical outline of Baton Rouge complete with casino boats and the castle silhouette of the governor’s mansion. I cross north past Port Allen and head west driving down Highway 190 for 25 miles or so; turn to follow Hwy 1 north down the historic False River Road. The morning sun glinting off the “river side” of the ox-bow lake as I pass Suburbans parked in front of 100 year old family plantation homes. The Bienvenue “welcome” sign is posted by the River Road in front of a piece sur piece style house from the 1770s now used as the welcome center. I continue driving next to False River passing Riverside Plantation, the Merrick Plantation, Austerwitz Plantation—named for, yet spelled differently from, the French Napoleon battle not German heritage, Parlange Plantation, eventually wandering upon a Wal-Mart and McDonald’s at the intersection of Hospital and River Road. This is the contemporary section of New Roads which I intersect before moving into the stately Victorian homes nestled near St. Mary’s Catholic Church. Crossing myself as I pass the church—a New Roads habit more superstitious than traditional, I believe—I turn left, drive four blocks into the Creole-Victorian neighborhood and then blocks to the left into Catholic’s parking lot.

Or, my favorite route—I can cross the “Old Bridge,” driving west straight down Highway 190 until I see a tin shed with Landry’s and a large, weathered crawfish painted on its rusted roof. This is my turn-off onto Buesche Roads. I find myself again paralleling the snaking Mississippi. From this point I must drive through the cane fields, around “the island side” of the lake (False River), past Cajun
electric, the prison, and the five lonely graves in the middle of a plowed field in order to reach Catholic High on the far side in New Roads.

This route leaves me dodging sugar canes falling from ventilated trucks baring “Raising Cane” bumperstickers headed to the mills, and the road is enclosed by these cane fields on one side and the Mississippi levee itself on the other. The levee—a green hill curving gracefully towards a blue, tree-lined sky silhouetted just beyond its edge—is dotted this time of year by interspersed, freshly-picked hay barrels and grazing cattle. The land itself rolls down to the road divided only by a posted barbed wire fence, a few cattle gates, and a chain of wild Golden Rods growing in the ditch. A stray dog glares questioningly at my car while a hawk sits post upon the levee fence. A solitary chimney in a field surrounded by barrels of hay marks the remains of a family home. As I drive around the final bend, False Bayou at the upper corner of False River, the road becomes lined with pecan trees and “shot gun” houses with rusted tin roofs and weathered, stripping paint. Emerging round the curve, I am ironically heading back south now crossing the railroad tracks to fall in line with the busy morning “river front” on New Roads' Main Street. Gray and white motionless egrets still frame the Fausse waters as I pause in the traffic (three cars stopped at the one light) on Main Street. I can see the new Satterfield's Restaurant, a Baton Rouge tourist attraction, overlooking the water and in its shadow—the more locally popular Morel's Po'boys behind the police station. On the right side of the road, I pass the principal's family grocery store, the pharmacies, the courthouse, Doris's Park—a small park area in memory of one of my students’ grandmothers—and finally turn at the St. Mary's. Well, you know the way from here.

—Written from my Fieldnotes, September, 25th, 27th, and 29th

These descriptions of my trip from Baton Rouge are based on notes that I made on some of the trips to Catholic High in New Roads over the four month period of my study. With the previous chapters, I attempted to contextualize my study in the literature, and with this chapter, I attempt to contextualize it in the setting of New Roads in Pointe Coupee Parish. I point to various aspects of the place and to the peoples and meanings associated with the place. In doing so, I focus mainly on the historical background of the area, basing my description on a number of published
histories of which the following are only a few. One of the local professional writers, Costello, contributed notably with, among his publications, *New Roads: A Community in Retrospect* (1993), *The Catholic Church of Pointe Coupee, A Faith Journey* (1996), and *A History of Pointe Coupee Parish* (1999). Many other local writings grew out of social club projects or personal interest. They include two books by David—*Our Pride, Pointe Coupee* (1981), and *Historical Sketch of Early Pointe Coupee* (1976)—as well as *Pointe Coupee Parish History* by (J. Riffel, 1983), *Beautiful Pointe Coupee and her Prominent Citizens* by Sanford (1986), and the artistic (1999) *Fleur de Lys and Calumet* by Morgan (1999).


I was also able to build upon scholarly master's theses like Lorio's (1932) *The Place-Names of Pointe Coupee Parish*, Manning's (1942) *Trends in Secondary Education in Pointe Coupee Paris*, Pellegrin's (1949) *A Sociological Analysis of Pointe Coupee Parish Louisiana: A Study in Social Structure and Organization* and Gremillion's (1967) *Pointe Coupee Parish* and from the other scholarly works like

I realize that I am excluding a considerable amount of information by not eliciting “silenced” voices, and that I may create an unbalanced, even biased, perspective. As local author Costello (1999) stated in his prologue,

> The published accounts are in effect no more than particles (some of it purely apocryphal and/or flattering) of the “Pro” native, white population around False River proper, with little account being given to Pointe Coupee’s aboriginal cultures, the blacks, the creoles of color, the Italians and the population of northern or 'upper Pointe Coupee as a whole (p. vii).

Early History of the Area

**The Native Louisianans**

The Pointe Coupee area, where I conducted my study, is rich in history, beginning with the Native Americans, who were inhabitants there before the Europeans began arriving in the seventeenth century. The tribes who lived at various times in the area, at one point or another, included the Mobilian, Oumas, Bayogoula,
Choctow, Okelousa, Natchez, and Tunica, all of whom are mentioned by the Spanish and French explorers. When the Pointe Coupee poste was established in 1712, as Rummler (1982) pointed out, the Tunicas were the only tribe remaining in the immediate area, though other tribes, such as the Natchez, lived not far away. As the French-Canadian trappers were settling in the area, the Tunicas abandoned some of their cultural practices, including mound building. There was some intermarriage, also. When French, and later Spanish, planters settled the area, some Tunicas were enslaved, and many were killed by epidemics.

Today, symbols associated with the Native American cultures include such landmarks as the ancient burial grounds, which are now major tourist attractions. The culture also provided many names of places, most notably Mississippi itself, which comes from either mechesebe meaning “Father of Waters” or misi meaning “great” and sipi meaning “water.” Native American cultures are also responsible for the naming of Baton Rouge, called isotrouma meaning “red stick,” or baton rouge in French. According to D'Iberville, a French explorer, it was named for the red-painted posts which marked hunting ground divisions of the Ouma and Bayogoula nations. (Morgan, 1999). According to Lorio (1932), Bayou Atchafalaya’s name is also of Choctow origin coming from huncha meaning “river” and falaya meaning “long.”

Other names originating from Native American cultures have undergone French language assimilation such as Lac Cabanosce from hankhoba and anosi which translated to “wild duck roast”; it has been assimilated by locals into Cabance or Cypre (Lorio, 1932). Other unique, if not disputable, assimilations coming from Choctow,
Latin, and French are the area names of Fordoche and Latenache. Read (1927) showed that “fordoche” may be Choctow for “lair for wild animals” or French nautical *fardage* or *dunnage* meaning “rubbish” or “trash.” Today, many people in that area use the term to refer to trash. “Latenache” is a corruption of the Latin work *latalia* which refers to the prevalent French Laranier or Fan-Palmetto commonly seen on the banks of these and other Louisiana bayous. The word, according to Read, was assimilated with its neighbor bayou, Bayou Fordoche and incorporated all three—Choctow, Latin, and French—languages.

Very little of the Native American culture, except for place names, is evident in the people of New Roads despite the fact that many creoles claim Native American heritage.

**French Exploration and Settlement**

The French influences in Pointe Coupee, so noticeable even today as in the *Bienvenue* “welcome” sign for drivers on the highway, began long ago. During the seventeenth century, France began its entry into Louisiana and into the Pointe Coupee area. However, the first European exploration was conducted, not by a Frenchman, but by a Spaniard named Hernando DeSoto, who died of a fever in 1542, while traveling down the Mississippi and reaching the point where it converges with the Red River and the Old River (Sanford, 1906). According to David (1981), DeSoto’s men, fearing an attack by the natives, placed his body in a hollow tree trunk and submerged it off the shores of the Mississippi at Pointe Coupee.
The French explorer La Salle passed Pointe Coupee on his way to the mouth of the Mississippi, where he erected a cross in 1682 and claimed the river for France. Seven years later in 1699, when the French wanted to protect their interests against Spain, d'Iberville entered the mouth of the Mississippi. It was his exploration that led to the name *Pointe Coupee*, which translates to “cut through.” According to d'Iberville's journal records (edited by Brasseux, 1979), the name resulted from a short cut suggested to d'Iberville by the Ouma peoples.

The 18th: We found a creek 6 feet wide that went out of the Mississipp River. The Indians told me that, if I could get my longboats through it, I could shorten my journey by one day's travel . . . I found a raft of trees thirty feet high...blocking the way through. I put my men to work to clear a way . . . and with pulleys I had the boats dragged from the other side and launched on the river. I finished this at nine o'clock at night by the light of torches . . . This is why that neck of land now bears the name Pointe Coupee. Penicaut. (Iberville, ed. by Brasseaux, 1979, p. 239)

In 1708, French-Canadian trappers, or *coureurs de bois* (translated as “wood-runners”), began to settle in the Pointe Coupee area, many of whom took wives from the native tribes. Their main interests focused around subduing the wilderness and earning a livelihood in order to survive. By 1717, the first permanent *poste*, or fort, was erected by Bienville, d'Iberville's brother, who established a militia for the protection of the slowly growing number of settlers. The *Poste de Pointe Coupee* was located about a mile up river from the area known as Waterloo, considered to be the first community settled in Louisiana. New Orleans was founded a year later in 1718 by the Company of the West. According to his letter, written in 1733, Bienville believed the *poste* would be abandoned once the “war with the natives” was over. However, the
poste was not abandoned during French rule, though it was moved several times due to river shifts.

The Mississippi River changed its course between 1713 and 1722—a shift that affected the future of the area because the False River was severed from the major means of transportation. The little bayou that provided the shortcut had become a channel for the river itself, and the former bend of the great river was sealed off, thus becoming the False River (*La Fausse Riviere*), to which I referred in my introduction to this chapter. French settlement in the area was increasing now that land grants were being awarded. The west bank of the Mississippi—the newly forming False River—was divided into large land grants and the east bank—or “island side” was divided into smaller grants. Still today “remnants of these happenings of long ago” are visible with the plantations on the “river side” and the *habitations*, or smaller plantations worked by the masters alongside their slaves, on the “island side” (David, 1976, p. 2). Many of the students from Catholic High grew up in the plantation homes or on the back property of the plantations; some even come from the smaller land holdings on the island side (Chenal/Rougon area).

It was during the early 18th century that another major group of people was introduced to the area—black slaves. These people, forced in chains to immigrate to this foreign land, would make cultural contributions to the region, and they would have children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren for whom Pointe Coupee would be a home. In 1733, there were 53 blacks on the west bank and 13 blacks on the east bank of the Mississippi (J. Riffel, 1983). These numbers were to grow as slavery
became increasingly prevalent because of the cultivation of tobacco and later successful sugar cane. According to the extensive work on the African creole culture done by Hall (1992), many of these enslaved people were documented as being from Senegambia, Ibo, the Congo, and the Bight of Benin (which included Yoruba and Mina), while others were documented with just the vague terms of creole and guinea. In addition, many Haitian slaves were brought to Louisiana from the French Islands because of the close national ties between these colonies. Many of the people in the area trace their ancestry to these early slaves.

Mixed heritages increased with intermarriages. People of African, Haitian, Native American, French, and Spanish descent began to form a unique creole culture. The term creole in Louisiana becomes confusing as different groupings of creoles define themselves differently. For example, some people differentiate between Caucasian creoles and creoles de couleur, “of color,” and even within these groupings, there are different defining factors. For example, many Caucasian creoles were first defined as first generation, American-born French people. Others believe the Spanish and French mixed heritage constructed the creole culture. As for the term “creoles of color,” this seems to have become a popular term as for peoples of African, Haitian, or Native American heritage mixed with the “whites,” who were French or Spanish. These mixed progeny were, in the first generations, born of slaves, but were often treated as freemen, and even, in some cases, treated as heirs to their masters. Many creoles originally defined their social connection as within the context of “romance” languages (French or Spanish) and their Catholic upbringing. As the culture
developed, these people, who had gained social privileges and freedoms as well as professional trades and a distinctive education, constructed more complex social connections (cf. Dorman, 1996; Tisserand, 1998). Today, according to Costello (1999):

A large number (creator de couleur) refer to themselves as “African Americans,” in honor of their rich racial heritage. Individual descendants of the elite colored creole families of antebellum Pointe Coupee now call themselves “white,” “black,” “African-American,” or simply “creole.” In some Pointe Coupee families, full-blooded siblings use differing ethnic and/or racial designations (p. 234).

Costello has pointed out that the defining and redefining of the racial classification of creoles continues to be in flux especially as civil rights movements have marked a “reassessment of identity by nonwhites” (p. 234).

Some of the Tunicas were also enslaved. DeVille’s (1974) study, based on Louisiana church records, shows evidence of “Indian slaves” who were baptized, buried, and sometimes married by the Catholic church. For instance, one record shows “Jeanne, daughter of Marie, Indian slave belonging to Guillaume Le Moine, resident of Point Coupee, baptized 28 September 1738. Witnesses; Louis Richet and Jeanne Gairnard.” A later record shows a marriage between two Indian slaves belonging to Guillaume Le Moine, one of whom was named Marie. Some of these people intermarried with African and creole slaves which further separated them from their aborigine cultures.

The French, along with Haitian slaves, brought Catholicism—a major influence in the region and a significant factor in my study. The Catholic orders which administered to the area greatly impacted the developing educational beliefs of the
people. The first group of missionaries to make their home in the area were the French Capuchins, who came in the 1720s and were known for their interest in elementary education. It was they who established Pointe Coupee as a Eucharist community in 1728 and oversaw the building of a church—St. Francis. They were later to be in conflict with the Jesuit order, known for their founding of secondary schools in the British colonies. Their Louisiana missionaries were limited, however, to the native tribes. The Jesuits were expelled, according to Manning (1942), in 1764 due to the religious tensions, and they did not return until 1823 after Louisiana had become a territory of the United States. The impact of these different Catholic orders would be seen in the development of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century schools.

The church structure built by the Capuchins changed locations twice, because of problems with river shifts and flooding, but some of the artifacts have been preserved over time including, according to legend, the original timbers themselves. Of particular importance is a statue of St. Francis, said to be carved by Tunica people. As J. Riffel & Gernon (1983) have reported, the story goes that the statue had often floated away in flood times but has always been rescued. Carefully maintained records also exhibit active parishioners of the initial church with the still common French names of today’s congregations including Pierre Haussey, Jean Barra, Mocholas de la Lour, Guillaume Le Moyne, Antoine Patin, and Louis Riche (David, 1981). The similarity of these names point to the possibility of some early French inclusion within the Pointe Coupee area, the restricting of migration to those immigrating into the new territory, and the importance placed on retaining family names.
Spanish Control, French Retention, and British Borders

During the next four decades from 1762 to 1803, the Louisiana lands switched hands a number of times each impressioning the area peoples and their transforming cultures. France was forced to cede the Louisiana colony to Spain in 1762. Spain, in turn, ceded the portion of Louisiana east of the Mississippi to Great Britain. New borders were created along with cultural tensions.

Immediately, the new Spanish governor abandoned the French *postes* leaving only seven, of which Pointe Coupee was one. The majority of the Spanish troops were sent to Havana leaving Spanish, who were converted from the French, officers and soldiers to “remain” in Louisiana. One example, which illustrates their loyalty to the Louisiana Territory, was when a lieutenant in the French Army, Bathazar Richard DeVillier, was ordered back to France. Because he had made his life in the Louisiana Territory, marrying a Louisiana-born woman and having a young daughter, he resigned from his position and swore allegiance as a Captain in the Spanish army. All nine of the commandants of the Spanish post *Punta Cortado*, previously *Pointe Coupee*, were of French lineage. Even with the change in government control and the immigration of the new Spanish settlers (whose names like Aguillard, Ortis, and Pamias are still common in the areas today), much of the area retained its French names and heritage.

Along with change in government control, the social structure, also, was changed—thus affecting the culture's educational beliefs and interests. The prominent—powerful and wealthy—French had previously settled on much of the more
fertile and logistically convenient land along the “river” side of False River. Now the new Louisiana-Spanish aristocracy began to further fill in this area. The holdings of large landowners were on the riverside of False River, and small farms called *habitations* were on the island side of False River, which was more difficult to reach. The growth expanded from 782 inhabitants in 1769 to 1,524 in 1785 and 2,004 in 1788 (Manning, 1942). According to French and Spanish beliefs which arose out of feudalism, education was expected only of the wealthy plantation owners; these young creole men, both white and black, were sent to France to receive their educations. For example, Charles Louis Boucher de Grand Pre, a French creole born in New Orleans, exemplifies this early French attitude towards education. Charles, or Carlos as he was called under the Spanish command, studied law in France before returning to receive command (1776) of *Punta Cortada* (Pointe Coupee) and beginning his 27 year military career with Spain (J. Riffel, & M. B.C. Riffel, 1983). A few women of this privileged class either attended secondary school in New Orleans set up by the Ursaline Sisters, or received education in small circles from hired tutors or priests. Children from the lower classes received elementary education from Capuchin priests, but their education was limited to reading and writing with a little work with numbers.

Tensions also arose as the French and Spanish people of Pointe Coupee sought to maintain a distinct culture separate from the British, who were beginning to settle at on the east side of the Mississippi River. Even Bayou Sara (which became St. Francisville) architecturally shows the British influences brought back from India and even today in many of the existing plantation houses, such as Oakley Plantation, where
John James Audubon (who became known for his naturalist artwork) took residence as an instructor to the daughter of the owners. Conflicts often resulted over navigational rights of the Mississippi. The Mississippi was still the main artery of transportation to agricultural communities who needed to get their goods to market, either in Baton Rouge or New Orleans. Thus, the country that controlled the river held an advantage over the other. One incident, which illustrated cultural tensions, occurred in 1771 and involved the manipulation of the Tunica people. An honorary medal was given to the Tunica Chief commemorating the peaceful relationship between the Spanish and the Tunica. This offended the British post commander, who viewed it as an alliance against the British. Five years later, war was officially declared between the Spain and Great Britain (during the American Revolution). Many Pointe Coupeans, now, interpreted Spain’s aggression against Great Britain as American nationalism. According to (1983), the Pointe Coupee militia made a “great contribution to the American Revolution” by helping to clear the Mississippi valley of British forces (J. Riffel, 1983).

Revolutionary ideas, including those of Jean Jacques Rousseau (1782) which served as the underpinning philosophy of the French Revolution, created new tensions in Spanish Louisiana within the Haitian and African slave communities (Hall, 1992). Two important Louisiana revolts took place in Pointe Coupee. As a result of the first revolt in 1772, the Spanish Governor Carondelet issued a new regulation urging the “humane” treatment of slaves. However, less that three years later, the Pointe Coupee slave conspiracy of 1795 was planned and executed from Poydras’s plantation.
Because of intermarriages between plantations, Poydras’s slaves were not alone.

This second conspiracy sheds more light on the influences of French revolution on the slave population in French/Spanish Louisiana. J. Riffel (1983) provided these details:

In April, 1795, Captain Duparc learned of a plot by the slaves to force their masters into giving them their freedom . . . . Soon afterwards, several Negroes and mulattos were arrested . . . . By May 15th, there were 60 prisoners, and before it was all over, 63 persons were implicated and eight were sentenced to hang. (p.14)

Hall's (1992) work on early Louisiana African creole culture brought to light much evidence supporting the conspirators' motives in overthrowing the Spanish government. "It was not a movement of blacks against whites. . . but. . . a manifestation of the most radical phase of the French Revolution, which had spilled over from Europe to the Americas" (p. 345). France and Spain were at war while African American slaves in Louisiana were rising up against social injustice. Reports of the abolishment of slavery spread to the American colonies by way of seafarers' tales of successful revolts and freedom. The results of the revolts in Louisiana are still seen today in Pointe Coupee with the “fictive kinship" among people of African American.

The Louisiana Purchase: An American Territory

Louisiana was transferred to French possession with the signing of the Treaty of San Idelfonso on October 1, 1800. Napoleon Bonaparte planned to rebuild the French empire in the New World; however, after losing Haiti in the slave revolt, he realized he would be unable to protect his newly acquired land against the American
or British. The United States expressed interest in acquiring the land in order to protect dumping rights at the north of the Mississippi River and made an offer. On April 30, 1803, the Louisiana Purchase was concluded. For 15 million dollars, the United States had acquired a vast territory, and Pointe Coupee again changed hands. At this time the poste, consisting of “an old wooden building with four or five apartments, a garden and 30-40 acres of ground,” was officially turned over to the parish judge (J. Riffel & Gernon, 1983, p.20). It was also early during the possession of the United States that the interesting county/parish division appeared. Louisiana was now divided into twelve counties, of which Pointe Coupee was one. Upon the second meeting of the Legislative Council, nineteen parishes, of which Pointe Coupee was one, were also formed. While the counties were not abolished, they eventually just died out. The parish system, along with other traces of “Napoleonic law,” is still in common use today.

Education, influenced by French and Spanish ideals, began to become more widespread. Wealthy people hired tutors for their children, while less rich people formed groups and divided the costs of education. According to David (1981), many private boarding homes were established for education. Freemen of color and creoles, who were also prominent landowners, became providers of excellent education, and donated rooms in their houses and hired tutors. David pointed out that “at this time the literacy of these blacks exceeded that of the whites" (p. 54). Some of these schools were kept well over fifty years. Many young men of creole heritage were educated in France and often returned to Pointe Coupe to educate both their own children as well
as white children. Interestingly, Costello (1999) adds that of the nearly 220 families (creole or African) free before the Civil War, only one family was illiterate, while illiteracy among the white population was as high as 20 to 35 percent. In the present day, creoles still continue this valuing of higher education, and many of them pride themselves on their cultural and educational achievements. Many creoles of more prominent families send their children to Catholic High today.

The Emergence of the “Place” of New Roads

Paralleling the outgrowth and migration of the communities, the Pointe Coupee Catholic Church began to grow towards the mid-1800s as St. Francis's Church gave birth to several daughter missions including St. Mary's, built in 1823 in New Roads. With the increase in population came migration. As the Mississippi moved, so did the communities. Some towns were abandoned to create spillways and levees, like Raccourci in 1848; other towns disappeared into the river, like Waterloo in 1884. It was then to the growing area of New Roads that the Pointe Coupee people repositioned their affairs.

The Plantation, Transportation, and Borders of New Roads

The river and the plantations—many people still believe that the incorporation of these two economic resources created and still sustain the growth in New Roads. In this plantation relationship, there is a continuing emphasis on the social stratification and New Roads continues to be, into the twenty-first century, a racially segregated town. Transportation between the Mississippi and the plantations was one of the landowners' greatest interests, which enabled the city to sustain itself on the severed
shores of False River. The first economic structure of importance was Poydras's store, which dates back to 1792. Transportation, according to Costello (1993), came by way of the old river bed that still connected False River with the Mississippi, now False Bayou. Goods for the plantations along False River usually arrived by flatboats, sometimes called *pirogues*, which entered from the upper end of the horseshoe. However, by 1800, the old bed had shrunk into a bayou, now called “Fausse Bayou,” and goods had to be carried by wagon from the Waterloo port (to the south) on the Mississippi by wagon. The road still has the name “New Roads-Waterloo Highway,” despite that Waterloo was washed away by the Mississippi by 1884. Later, the railroad would act as another means of transportation and bond to the outside communities.

The plantations along the river were served by the central church, St. Mary’s of New Roads; this church acted as another means of communication. The priests, while centered at the parish seat (St. Mary’s of New Roads), traveled within his territory to administer to the people's religious and educational needs. This range of service is illustrated in the records of Fr. Fabian Laforest of Raccourci Parish:

Stations served: St. Joseph's chapel; Red River Landing; Bayou Sara (across the river), every other month; St. Francis of Pointe Coupee, every other month; Raccourci, I say mass at Cat Isle, Tunica, New Texas Interior and Fordoche about four times each year (*Historical Sketch of Saint Ann Parish: Golden Jubilee*, 1966, p. 17).

Plantation and settlement chapels were given preference to smaller gatherings of Catholics where only two or three families might meet. Besides the family, these chapels were often opened to close neighbors, creoles, small farmers, freed men of color, and slaves, though people of lower social status worshipped from the back or
the galleries. This type of stratification was present in the town of New Roads as well. Stratification was seen as black Catholics worshipped in a side aisle of the old St. Mary's and from the galleries in the present brick church until St. Augustine was founded in 1923 specifically for African American Catholics. Though tensions existed between race and social status, these positions could sometimes become transient. For example, in one situation, individuals might position themselves as white when patronizing a store owned by a creole, and yet position themselves as black when worshiping at church.

The church marks another unique type of stratification—stratification through materialism creating Pointe Coupee's unique social classes based on wealth. This partition subdivided the racial divisions and repositioned new black/white relations using wealth as an exclusionary factor. The church served all parishioners regardless of class or race; those who could, built chapels or donated land to the Catholic Church. Similarly, as in other rural areas, families “owned” pews within the church as an acknowledgment of their gift. Cemetery lots, as well, were reserved for specific families as stipulations in land donations. Creoles, slaves, and freed-men found this stratification of particular importance and used it as a means of building social relationships with the privileged French creoles. They worked to build churches and maintain schools through donations from creole and African American landowners. These relationships with the church were not without tensions and racial problems, however. One example from Costello (1999) shows that ten years before Chenal's Immaculate Conception Chapel was built, Leufroy Decuir, a former slave, provided
for the first Catholic chapel on the island. His widow, Francoise Antoine, however, was forced to file suit in 1883 against the Archdiocese of New Orleans because the Church was not maintaining the chapel. She won reclaiming the land. Nothing further was found about the chapel.

Tensions and movement of racial and social positioning created a complex culture of individuals affiliating and resisting affiliations with other individuals. Socially, these people positioned and repositioned themselves through the course of their lives as they moved from one contextualized situation to another consisting of different individuals. The social affiliations between individuals who were white, creole, or African American were even more complex. As Costello (1999) pointed out, creoles of color often asked prominent white members of the community to “be the witness of their weddings, godparents to their children, and executors of their estates. In turn the colored creoles were sometimes chosen as godparents for white children” (p. 107). Sometimes an individual’s racial heritage could only be determined through family name or possibly by the variation of the spellings of popular area names.

The Hub of New Roads

Naming the area turned out to be another source of great contention as well. The community created documentation that named and renamed the place now called New Roads, and hence repositioned its collective identity. A number of names were documented before its more common and place-oriented name finally stuck. The first documentation of the name “New Roads,” according to Costello (1993), is in an 1822 survey. When Dame Catherine Dispau subdivided her plantation, the eastern boundary
was a road leading from False River to the Mississippi called *chemin neuf* meaning “new road” (p. 10). This name was not unanimously accepted for the town, since many preferred a more impressive name. In 1858, an eight year request was fulfilled when the post office of “False River, Louisiana” was opened. After the war in 1887, the post office was reestablished; this time as “St. Mary’s, Louisiana.” A public debate can be traced in the town paper as the name war raged. The town name was changed again the next year to “New Roads.” Finally, the town was chartered in 1894 making the name of “New Roads” permanent, though some still fought the connotations it carried and wrote “New Rhodes” in an attempt to refine their town identity.

The Church of St. Mary's of False River was the first and only religious institution during the nineteenth century for the town of New Roads until St. Francis, now a mission, was moved there for its final time in 1891. The first St. Mary's was located on land donated by Marie Pouciau, whose plantation covered the western half of today's New Roads, originally part of the Dispau property. The brick building there today is 20 feet west of the place where the original frame church stood. Many Pointe Coupeans’ remains were transferred to the new St. Mary's cemetery during 1885-1891, when St. Francis Church cemetery fell into the Mississippi and the church structure was demolished and rebuilt in New Roads.

**Early Schools**

In the early nineteenth-century, the only public schools in Louisiana were in Pointe Coupee, prompting Governor Claibourne, on January 14, 1809 to write to the legislative council: “In the parish of Pointe Coupee provisions have been made for the
support of two or more schools, but the other parishes do not seem dissuaded to imitate so worthy an example" (as cited in David, 1981). A gradual growth of segregated public schools began in 1811 when public funds were provided. Many of the white schools were called "poydras schools," named for Julien Poydras, a local planter and statesman who greatly contributed to public and private education in the area. During this time, transportation was difficult especially for those families who lived a considerable distance from the schools. According to Costello (1999), “working class parents often discouraged school attendance and preferred for their children to assist them in the family agricultural efforts . . . . Only 1,074 of the parish 9,119 school-aged children were actually attending classes” (p. 231).

In 1829, Julien Poydras, literary figure, statesman, philanthropist, and land/slave owner founded the first endowed Louisiana college when he bequeathed $25,000 for the establishment of a school in New Roads, according to Abbot (1935). (Poydras's will also provided each slave at his six plantations a pension of $25 a year and freedom after 25 years. This was never fully realized even after endless legal actions were taken. There is still money in New Roads being used today from the Poydras fund.) According to Sentell (1935), Poydras College was founded fifty years before Tulane, three and a half miles from New Roads, and was endowed in 1855. In 1856, Zenon Porche left another $20,000 to the college along with $5000 each to his five creole children. The college closed in 1861 during the Civil War but reopened in 1873 as a Catholic girls' school for whites and African Americans.
Early elementary schools—“free” schools—began to emerge, though most of the privileged class and, according to David (1976), still retained private tutors. So did less privileged people who believed that attending a “free” schools would be charity. According to *Historical Sketch Saint Ann Parish: Golden Jubilee* (1966), Fr. Clark of Raccouci erected the earliest known Catholic grammar school in Pointe Coupee at the cost of $1475 with two paid teachers (older boys) and an enrollment of 35 students (18 younger boys and 17 girls). Later, Fr. Ferguson, his successor, opened, for a short time, an African American Catholic school which closed in 1902 due to lack of funds. In 1895, St. Mary’s of New Roads opened a school for African American children which served nearly 20 students. After nine years, the school was discontinued, but it is said that several women of the St. Mary’s congregation began to operate a “short-lived” school for the white children.

**Civil War and Post Reconstruction**

For four years, the Civil War disrupted the lives and cultures of New Roads as men left to fight for secession from the United States. In Louisiana, the concept of seceding did not seem as radical as in other states that had been involved in the original foundation of the Union: Louisianians had held the status of American citizen only for about 60 years, and many of its people still spoke a French creole language. However, Pointe Coupee whites, as well as some creole and freemen landowners, were quick to take up arms, and Pointe Coupee Parish was the first Louisiana parish to send militia. The consequences of the war—the emancipation of slaves—would soon change the lives of the New Roads people in many ways.
Repositioning the Social Structure

Following the Civil War, many changes took place, most notably the rearrangement of the social structure. Many former slaves felt threatened in their own home towns because hostile white landowners saw them as the cause of social upheaval and economic decline. In the meantime, these newly freed African Americans were in need of work to sustain themselves and their families. A caste system developed, much like the French and Spanish feudal systems. Similar to the social situation before the war, creoles were positioned into a privileged position as landowners and apprenticed tradesmen.

Women’s roles also underwent a change as described by Pinar (2001). Many of the privileged class women had depended on the racial social structure as a means of upholding their own positions. During the war, women had to take on many of the roles formerly performed by men, especially the role of teacher. Women also took on jobs held by plantations owners and overseers. As they entered the workforce while maintaining family plantations without the help of their husbands and sons, women experienced liberation as well as great hardship. Upon the return of the men, at war's end, the women fought to maintain their new positions in society, but in order for men to reestablish their positions of power, they had to reaffirm racial stratification. This gave white privileged woman a superior position through social status as well as racial status thus reinforcing the stratifications.

Although during the Antebellum period, Pointe Coupee was the South's most prosperous plantation district, its economy collapsed following the Civil War.
Contributing to this downfall was the loss of capital when slavery was abolished. Civil order also reached a low point, as people experienced corrupt reconstruction politics, lynching, and yellow fever epidemics. *Historical Sketch of Saint Ann Parish: Golden Jubilee* (1966) described it this way:

The difficult period of the reconstruction was in the midst of political turmoil, poverty, and efforts of plantation owners and farmers to adjust themselves to a new order without slave labor. Memories of depredations and invasion of Union Troops were still vivid as this part of Pointe Coupee Parish suffered considerably. Federal soldiers camped on the Morganza plantation, prisoners were exchanged at Creole Landing. Bitterly disillusioned people were striving to adjust themselves and make a living. (p. 13)

According to *Tales of the Eight Grade* (Smith, 1996), written by my former students, folk legends originating from this time were centered around Union troops’ invading the New Roads's plantation homes and church grounds and violating these sites so central to their culture. For example, one story tells of the soldiers’ camping out at the St. Mary's Church grounds on the spot where the cross now stands (*Place de la Croix*). Stories of Confederate heroism and legends of hidden or missing treasures were constructed and are told even today by the students in my study. In one such story, a priest, locally known as Fr. Mittle, was the heroic protagonist arrested by antagonistic Union soldiers for blessing the Confederate flag. Upon his release from jail, one of the soldiers attempted to steal the priest's horse (East, Brown, Schley, & Mims, 1991). Grabbing a sword from one of the soldiers, Mittle began to fight; and the soldier soon ran away, leaving the horse.

In 1898-99, the Texas and Pacific Railroad came to New Roads, bypassing many expectant towns hoping for this new line of transportation, communication, and
economic opportunity. Raccourci, for example, was soon bereft of community members as people began to migrate to places where the railway depots were built. New Roads had taken on much of this growth as well as other developing areas like Morganza, Maringuoin, Chenal (now Rougon), and Livonia. According to Costello (1993), “after nearly a decade of rumors and speculation, New Roads finally received a railroad” (p. 29). The T & P line was set on a northwest-southeast axis behind the community. It ran north through Morganza into upper Pointe Coupee and northern Louisiana; and south of New Roads, the tracks crossed into the old riverbed using Patin Dyke and continued through the island interior to Chenal (now Rougon), eventually running down through Port Allen and the following the Mississippi south.

Along with the railroad came new inventions like electric lighting, and the town boomed. Many new streets, according to Costello (1993), were surfaced along the old Dispau division, including St. Mary’s, Railroad, Courthouse, and Harrell, creating paths from “the front” Main Street to the railroad “back o’ town.” A block division was later created by using the two east-west streets already formed by the old Dispau subdivision and adding others. The Main Street was commonly referred to as “the front” or “the drag.” Water pipes were laid in 1905, and a water works plant was built in 1906. Community-wide electricity came, also, in 1906. Prior to that, city streets were lighted by kerosene lamps set at intersections (1898-1901), and a few of the downtown stores used gas light or generators. The Crescent Saloon was known for its elaborate ceiling fans system run by hydraulics. Soon with electricity, the False River Telephone line opened its switchboard at 124 West Main, “behind the balcony”
above the Bank of New Roads. Cars were first seen about 1906, and by 1914 they were considered common by the town of New Roads. In 1920, traffic signals, using a revolving light placed in the middle of the road, were installed on Main Street both at Cemetery and Richy.

The Privileged and Their Divides

Due to the success of plantations along the Mississippi, the Pointe Coupee area had been one of the most heavily populated slave areas in the state. In the census of 1860, there were 63 large slave owners, specified as owning 50 or more slaves. The African and Haitian slaves who were freed during the Civil War continued to live in New Roads and its surrounding area. The town remained segregated, although an increasingly more complex culture of creole developed with family interrelationships—creating ambiguity towards racial classifications. Even today many students at Catholic who appear to be white are often from creole families. Likewise, many African Americans base their racial classification along political lines instead of visible biological attributes. One participant in my study spoke of such differences as faux blanc (false white) or passer blanc (those absorbed into white community through marriage with whites).

Creole-Victorian style homes, built by a growing population of middle and upper-middle class “whites,” began to appear around 1907 in new neighborhoods between North Carolina and the current Oak Street. Poydras Avenue was nicknamed “silk-stocking alley” holding Victorian homes of the 1902-04 vintage belonging to the prominent privileged class, many of whom also owned family plantation homes. Other
homes were built on Main Street, east and west of the business sector. Often the people who lived there had camps (initially men's hunting and fishing camps which evolved into second homes for family recreation) along the river for the heat of the summer months.

“Like other Southern cities, New Roads had segregated areas,” explained Costello (1999, p. 49). African Americans were located north of the railroad tracks, “back o’ town,” with an occasional clustering on Napoleon and Olinde Street. The earliest African American businesses were located on upper Richy and New Roads Streets, and most of the churches established during this time were African American. Land was donated by individuals, or the money was raised by the congregation to purchase the land. The oldest African American congregation in New Roads (1833, moved from Waterloo) is the St. Peter African Methodist Episcopal Church located on land that was donated by the widow of Frank Yearby, a slave.

It was not until nearly the 1960s, Vatican II, however, that priests specifically set out to recognize African Americans within the Catholic church and even then there was much contestation. One extraordinary example of an African American priest is Fr. Plantevigne, a Pointe Coupean. He was allowed to say mass at Our Lady of Chenal during the week. Fr. Plantevigne planned to open a Catholic school for African American children in Chenal, but his request was denied.

The Growth of Pointe Coupee Schools

Pointe Coupee stakes the Louisiana claim of being the mother of education for founding both the first endowed college, Poydras, and also the first public schools. But
it was not until well into the 1900s that public education became commonly accepted, and no longer considered “charity.” Manning (1942) has mentioned the return of the Jesuit order as another significant factor in this change of attitude towards secondary education. The secular leap in educational institutions was accompanied by few parochial institutions. However, this is important in the present situation of the private and parochial schooling currently in New Roads and Pointe Coupee. As I. O. David (1983) wrote:

In the early 1900s there was a small one- or two-room school in each community in the parish, however . . . . [T]he thinking of the people was to turn towards secondary education. Being able to read, write, and cipher no longer meant a satisfactory education. (p. 56)

Poydras Academy continued after the Civil War and saw new growth as a private boarding school. By 1900 at Poydras, the boarding section was added for those students who lived outside of the area, and in 1912 due to the overwhelming popularity of the school throughout Louisiana, it outgrew its funding. The Pointe Coupee Parish School Board took over the school. In 1923, Poydras Academy became Poydras High School, and a new building was built on the present site (Bueche, 1935; McGinty, 1935). In 1991, it was converted to an elementary school but closed within the year. The current principal of Catholic High worked previously at Poydras before it closed.

Another cultural transition was set in motion in the early part of the twentieth century: the eradication of the French creole language. While French creole remained the primary language in the schools well into the 20th century, there was a change. Children began to speak French creole only at home and English in the school. One of
the reasons that the creole language remained active in the white population, according to Costello (1999), was because overall education levels remained low and thus were not "Anglo-educated" in English. The schools began to insist on English. Also, African American and creole populations migrated to jobs outside the community that required the use of English. The French creole language began to die out in these populations long before their white neighbors let go of the language. Anglicized renditions of the French names are apparent in today's pronunciations. For example, Robillard, was once pronounced with an original French pronunciation. However, some names still retain their French pronunciation, such as the most common surname of the area, David, with French pronunciation.

**New Roads's Catholic Interparochial School**

Catholic High of Point Coupee, the site of my study, is located in New Roads and had its beginnings in 1904 when Fr. Bacciochi invited the Sisters of St. Joseph to open a school, St. Joseph's Academy. According to I. O. David (1983), the Sisters purchased a four-room house, in desperate need of repair, which was placed on donated land, and in September 1904 they opened, and enrolled 70 students. Numerous disasters happened, to the school and convents. They were once destroyed by a pecan tree that fell on them and later by a fire. However, members of the prominent community were generous in their donations, particularly Joseph Richy, who donated land for the school; George Pourciau, who gave money for building; and Louis Clairbourne, who contributed a double donation of property for the convent, both before and after the fire. After the fire, which occurred in 1928, the community
appeared to rally by offering locations for the schoolchildren to meet; however, only
the Masonic Hall was large enough to hold classes. By September of the next year,
which also marked the Sisters 25th anniversary in New Roads, the new school
building was ready to be opened in a celebration which was blessed by the Monsignor
Gassler. Under Fr. Hanssen, St. Mary’s Parochial School was built, and now houses
Catholic Elementary. The buildings that now house Catholic Middle School and High
School were added on at later dates as the Catholic Interparochial School of Pointe
Coupee was consolidated and formed.

Area Public Schools

The first three decades of the twentieth century also saw much growth in public
schools in the areas surrounding New Roads. In Morganza, a push in 1906 brought a
new, three-room building as well as more qualified teachers and the addition of more
subjects. While St. Ann’s of Morganza felt the need for a parochial school, its funding
allowed only for a bus to send resident children to New Roads’s St. Joseph’s (which
preceded Catholic High). Also, in 1906 the Innis family donated three acres of land to
build the Innis Consolidated School which, was accredited in 1928. The present school
of Livonia was built in 1915 and consolidated in 1916 with Valverda and Dreyfus.
Previously, Livonia's school succeeded under a plantation owner who set up schools
for white and African American children. Across False River in Rougon, the old
Chenal area, another campaign for education took place. Land and buildings were
donated for Rougon Graded School and consolidated with Beuche School in Jarreau.
Education for African Americans

During this period, there were also important developments in education for African American children. In 1900, Rev. L.A. Planving founded Pointe Coupee Industrial and High School for African American children, located four miles south of New Roads on the banks of False River. Three years later, he was ambushed and killed while walking home from work. There was much speculation in New Orleans that he was killed because of his creation of this school. According to Costello (1999), the murder went unacknowledged by the local paper, *The Banner*, and there was no coroner's record found for Planving. Planving's widow sold the school in 1905 and moved to New Orleans with her two children. The school no longer exists and no records indicate what became of the building.

Catholic education for African American students increased in 1920 when the Sisters of Holy Ghost opened St. Augustine's School next to the St. Augustine Church on upper Cemetery Road. Although the school was eventually merged with St. Mary's and St. Joseph's into Catholic Interparochial School system where my study takes place, at this time and well into the 1950s, many of the African American children were educated only if they were in walking distance of a Baptist church. The school term was shorter for them than for white children, according to Costello (1999), presumably so these children could remain in the field for the planting and harvest seasons. For reading material, they often used Bibles and discarded catalogues because they did not have the funds to purchase books, and many remember being “threatened, pelted with vegetables and beaten by whites for reading” (p. 229).
Changes at Mid Century

According to Costello (1999), during the 1950s, the Pointe Coupee Parish Schools consisted of five schools for white children, one high school for African American children, and 26 small grammar schools; in 1955-1956 there were 3,072 African Americans and 2,436 whites. From 1965 until 1968, a few African American children began to transfer to all-white schools; however, no white children transferred to all African American schools. White enrollment in Pointe Coupee public schools dropped from 2,346 white students to 255 white students a year later. Once a freedom of choice law was passed in, to eliminate forced busing, the elementary schools began to increase slowly in the white population. Public high schools were not as quick to increase. Many of the newer middle class white students entered Catholic High of Pointe Coupee in New Roads. Five other private schools were opened at that time in Pointe Coupee. Of the five private schools, only one, False River Academy, is still open today, and no African American has ever enrolled to date.

Merging of Schools

New Roads High, located on upper Cemetery Street, was the high school established for African American students. It had been established in 1948 and was merged with Rosenwald Elementary in 1958 to form Rosenwald High. Also in 1958, the Batchelor High School of Pointe Coupee was established after consolidating eight smaller schools in the area. When integration came to Pointe Coupee in 1969, the Batchelor and Innis High Schools were partnered, and the students were bused
between campuses to participate in different courses. By the mid 60s many African Americans were beginning to receive prominent positions in the community like Thomas Nelson, who became the first black member of school board in 1970 and was later elected president in 1987, and Norbert Hurst who became the first black parish assistant superintendent in 1987. The gains were made by the African American population, but many white children were no longer attending public schools. In 1980, the Batchelor location became Upper Pointe Coupee High School and the Innis location became the elementary school. In 1980, Rosenwald was paired with Poydras, becoming the only public high school in New Roads. Eventually, though, it returned to the status of an elementary school after the opening of Pointe Coupee Central High School in 1991 and then closed altogether. Pointe Coupee Central High, a consolidated school, is the only public high school left near New Roads, and it is located northwest of New Roads on the New Roads-Morganza Highway.

**Historical Tensions**

The tensions and complex cultural positions associated with the communal history of New Roads were long in developing and slow in resolution. From the histories, I am able to demonstrate how these positions work in individuals to represent the hybridic nature of the culture. The evidence of tensions within/between these positions is articulated in the early histories and continues in the society of today. I was able to find evidence solidifying some early rooted relationships of some positions as well as the contemporary redefining of these older positions. I now seek to find evidence of these positions within the current Catholic High participants.
Current Pointe Coupee

As the history section concludes, I now move into the modern community of New Roads and Pointe Coupee in order to contextualize my participants within the atmosphere of their community and their school. As tensions between subject positions and various groupings of individuals were part of the history of Pointe Coupee, so are the tensions part of the modern Catholic High. I seek to contextualize the students in the specific place of Catholic High by delineating the differing subject positions in that context.

First led by the sisters of St. Joseph, and later by lay people from the community, Catholic Interparochial School system began as St. Joseph Academy, later becoming St. Mary's Parochial School, and now unified as Catholic Elementary, Middle, and High School. The class and racial tensions of the community have ushered this school into the role of a predominantly white, middle to upper-middle class private institution. Those people who attend this school claim to do so because of the Catholic education and the preferred academic environment. Whereas many of the parents speak of a Catholic education and a family tradition, some mention, off the record, that the reason their children attend Catholic High is because they do not want them in the white lower class and African-American population of the public school. I have heard the term “public school mentality” used to refer to those students who tend not to succeed in school; who make lower grades and resist teacher authority. The students who come to Catholic from other private schools or from the public elementary schools complain that Catholic High is much more challenging, although
their grade point averages seem not to be affected. Others commonly speak of False River Academy opening in 1969 as a result of desegregation. Some of the newer middle-class and working-class African American and white people in the community view attending Catholic as an upward social movement.

The atmosphere of the school is affected to a large degree by the social tensions experienced by its students. After considering the social tensions within the history of New Roads, I concentrate in the next chapters on these tensions as they appear in the lives of current students at Catholic High. Because of the strong community involvement and social status reflected on Catholic attendees, many of the same tensions which are present in the community are also reflected in the school. The school itself is governed by the school board, which is made up of “prominent" members of the community. Their same fears and concerns are then reflected upon the school. The administration and faculty are mostly made up of members of the community. The authority is held by specific communities through the school board, the principal, and the faculty members.

Conclusion

Pointe Coupee creates a unique place for the site of my study. The cultural heritage that is so rich creates an irreplicable combination of place positions, gender positions, racial positions, positions of social classes, and religious positions in which to situate this study of written identity construction. From the native tribes to the French and Spanish settlers to the forced migration of African and Haitian Africans as slaves, the culture of Pointe Coupee has brought rise to a “new” social culture of
people, including those who call themselves creoles. The growing place of New Roads as an economic and cultural center for the surrounding plantations intermingled these complex cultures. The pre- and post-Civil War years and even through to the times of desegregation gave rise to mounting tensions where roles of race and class were being redefined, as depicted in the novels of Ernest Gaines. Boasting to have been the beginning of education in Louisiana, Pointe Coupee lays claim to the founding of the first endowed college and the first public schools, yet over 30% of its school population attends private schools. Even now, these contemporary times find the local and global identity positions at odds and in contest with each other. These contestations between places, genders, races, social classes, and religions lay the groundwork for a rich context in which to perceive personal and communal identity constructions.

In Pointe Coupee, subject positions come together and break apart—creating the stresses that result in what becomes known as history. Today, Catholic High has its own differing subject positions and the tensions created within and between them. Now, I move to the study conducted in this unique context—the school attended by Aaliyah, Aimee Lynn, Bailey, Elle, Kayla, and Kendall.
CHAPTER 4
METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The ethnographic experience is not only an intellectual exercise in social science research but an exploration of the pleasures and risks of intimacy. You find yourself in places that have been carefully guarded and distanced from outsiders, amazed that you have somehow been let in on secrets and into silent parts of individual lives about which most of us will never have the privilege to learn.

—Amira Proweller, *Constructing Female Identities*

My field based study at Catholic High of Pointe Coupee in New Roads lasted for four months from September, 1999, through December, 1999. During the four months of my field study, I observed the senior Advanced Placement (A.P.) English class, conducted interviews, and collected my participants’ writings. On days that I was not observing or interviewing, I was continuing my study of the historical and community context by researching locally published manuscripts and historical documents. The purpose of my study was to gain a better understanding of how tensions created *within*/*between* varying positions are articulated in the writings of adolescent women.

Context of the Study

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Catholic Church made a strong foundation for itself within the French Catholic community of Pointe Coupee, and education followed the lead of the church. Historically, New Roads and Catholic High have been the site of social and racial tensions. Catholic High of Pointe Coupee, the setting of my study, has been positioned into the role of a predominantly white, upper-middle class private institution. In 1999, the demographics of the senior class, which is largely representative of the school, is
approximately 1% African American, 2% creole, and 97% white. According to the student profiles written by the seniors for their English class, fathers are either self-employed as lawyers, pharmacists, farmers, or small business owners (approximately 30%); work for large oil, electric, or papermill corporations (approximately 30%); work for the city or state especially as police (approximately 20%); or work lower wage jobs for the small business or outside businesses in the community (approximately 20%). Very few of the mothers work in full-time positions, but those who do are considered white-collared, professional jobs such as nurses and teachers. Education-wise, approximately 90% of the parents have high school degrees, and approximately 80% of the students have parents who both hold baccalaureate degrees.

The A.P. English class I studied was Katie Langlois’s third period class, the only one of which was considered to be accelerated. This teacher’s name is a pseudonym. These students in the class who wished to take the Advanced Placement test for college exemption of freshman English were encouraged to do so, but the course did not focus on the Advanced Placement test or curriculum. The students were tracked into the class according to their prior grades in English (students with a grade point average of a 3.5 or higher in English).

Each student, by gaining admittance to the course, had previously demonstrated competent writing abilities through his or her English grade point averages. I chose the A.P. class so that I was less likely to contend with low achievement or the inability to write. The class itself was made up of 27 students:
11 male and 16 female. Twenty-six members of the class were considered to be white; only one was considered to be either African American or creole. Twenty-three of the students came from privileged or upper-middle class social backgrounds (three from families with large landholdings), while four came from working class backgrounds. Of the 27 students, all had spent their entire middle and high school experience at Catholic High, and half of them had also attended the connected elementary school.

Participants

I chose only a small number of students as case studies by employing purposeful sampling from those students enrolled in the A.P. class. While the prior research discussed in Chapter Two has examined identity construction among the working-class, African-American, and gender-specific schools or communities, I focused on a community that might be a considered primarily white, privileged class, co-educational school in order to distinguish the tensions among what Bhabha (1994) called “interstices.” My focus was on positions created from place, gender, race, social class, and religion. The uniqueness of the Pointe Coupée community, which is the home of these students, lies in its political and cultural separation as well as its somewhat agricultural yet “privileged” social class.

The seven students initially recruited for the study were women enrolled in the senior English class at Catholic High. All had been attendees of the school for their entire middle and high school career, and appeared to be members of this small-town, largely privileged class extended community of New Roads. I selected
purposefully for maximum variation within the areas of race, class, and religion, and to some extent extracurricular activities (high/low involvement, diversified/specialized, in/out of school). Although the location of their homes was not a factor in the initial selection, there was variation there also. I looked for students who had displayed the ability in written discourse through their grade point averages from previous English classes.

Each participant was representative of varying combinations of race, social class, feminist/gender attitude or position, years having attended the school, family heritage, religious beliefs, and location of home in proximity to New Roads. Each student seemed to show levels of tension among the positions that she occupied and the positions to which she was pulled. Because each girl had academic ability in written discourse, I hoped that these positions and strategies for dealing with the tensions between subject positions would be well articulated within their writings.

Although I had initially selected seven young women, my number became six when I dropped one participant from the study. The student was not participating in the writing that was required. A brief description of the six remaining participants follows. Each participant chose her own pseudonym to be used in this study.

Aaliyah

Aaliyah, a Catholic, aligned herself with the creole culture and claimed Native American heritage. Aaliyah, a tall young woman with light skin and dark hair, came from a local family whose ancestors owned relatively large amounts of
land. While she lived within the limits of New Roads, her home was across the racial divide, the railroad tracks. She socialized at school with many “outsiders,” that is students who did not attend Catholic Elementary (although she attended Catholic Elementary) or who perceived themselves not to conform to the social hierarchy prevalent within the school and community. She emphasized her religious involvement and was active in the school’s extracurricular church activities as well as activities at her family’s church. She was a deeply religious Catholic who tended to release her emotions through poetry or written meditations. She portrayed an open and honest personality at school and did not lack friends.

**Aimee Lynn**

Aimee Lynn, a Catholic, was a self-proclaimed “outsider” in the community of Catholic High despite the fact that her parents grew up in the New Roads area. Because her parents worked in Baton Rouge and she attended the public school in earlier grades, she viewed herself as an outsider and sought others’ validation of this “outside” position through her actions and alliances. Aimee Lynn, who was socially active in school activities and never lacked friends, was a petite young woman with a bright, alert face, thick, distinct eyebrows and short, dark hair which she sometimes wore pulled back with her burgundy pony tail. Around her neck, she often wore a leather necklace with small silver and aqua beads which hold a small ornate silver cross. Much of the time, her attitude and efforts seemed concentrated upon her desire to distinguish herself from the community and to stress autonomy from her parents. She believed that she already had “experienced” life, and that the
other students who attended Catholic High had no idea about what is “out there” in the world.

**Bailey**

Bailey, an intent young woman with blondish-brown hair, came from the smaller town of Maringuoin just outside of the New Roads area. Although she first attended LaBarre Elementary School, a public school in the Pointe Coupée district, her parents suggested that she attend Catholic Middle and High School for her secondary education. Bailey was an athletic girl whose interest in dance led her to extracurricular activities like the school’s Stingerettes Dance Team. She also competed in dance performances outside of school and had assisted her coach by teaching some of the younger children and organizing dance reviews for the girls. Bailey, who became pregnant in December of 1998, ended up missing the second three weeks of the study when she gave birth to her baby, but still managed to keep up with her school work. Being the only child, she was finding difficulty adjusting to the multiple roles of being both mother and child within the same household.

**Elle**

Elle, a Catholic, was mostly representative of the white, elite social group in New Roads. Her father owned his own business, and her mother recently left teaching at Catholic to work at one of the public schools. Elle, a casually dressed girl with a clean-scrubbed, natural appearance, fair skin, thick eyebrows, and neatly cut long brown hair, was a popular, outgoing young woman who often took care of two younger sisters and was especially protective of the youngest. While she and
her sisters attended Catholic since kindergarten, her two sisters were recently moved to attend the public elementary school where their mother recently began teaching. Elle appeared to be socially protected, not showing awareness in classroom discussions of differing social classes. She explained that she was unaware of her “popularity” at school until she befriended Kendall, another participant, who did not perceive herself as part of this “clique.” She has always been extremely active in school softball and basketball until a recent knee surgery forced her to “retire her jerseys” for her senior year.

Kayla

An accepted member of the white, elite New Roads social group, Kayla, a Catholic, attended Catholic since kindergarten. She dressed stylishly from her modern styled bobbed hair to her pressed, light tan Gap pants and white button-down blouse, still in accord with the school uniform. She came from a large family with three younger sisters. Her parents were separated at one point, but they reunited. Her father was a plantation owner and farmer, while her mother was working as a nurse since her initial separation with her husband. Although the parents were together at the time of the study, the separation seemed to have dramatically impacted Kayla’s attitude towards relationships and life roles. She assumed much responsibility for her three younger sisters in addition to leading a diverse and hectic extra-curricular lifestyle on her own. She was actively involved in many school extra-curricular activities such as cheerleading, softball, 4-H Club, Beta Club, Student Council, Fellowship of Student Athletes, and Louisiana Junior
Brahman Association. She sought a career where she does not have to be dependent upon anyone else, and she worked actively towards her goals by applying for and receiving scholarships and awards for community service, academic talents, and athletic abilities.

Kendall

Kendall, a Catholic, attended Catholic High since kindergarten but never felt that she “belonged” until her freshman and sophomore years when her friendship with Elle began to flourish. Physically, Kendall had a tall physique and mid-length, dark, curly hair with her dark eyes being her most prominent feature. She was one of the most academically talented students at Catholic, and her extra-curricular involvement was diverse—focusing on writing contests and academic bowls and participating as one of the two female managers of the football team. She had an older sister who graduated from Catholic High in 1996, and who began attending the University of Southwestern Louisiana, and a younger sister who also attended Catholic. Kendall, well aware of reputation among the faculty as a “good student,” often took it upon herself to mediate students’ grade disputes. She hoped to become an English teacher at a local school working part-time while raising a family.

Data Collection Process

I have organized this next section by the type of data which I have collected. Later, in the section on data analysis, the organization will change to a more chronological approach. This section begins by discussing my unique role as
researcher and then moves to discuss the types of data that I collected. I have also included logs, giving dates and details of the collection of the different types of data.

**My Role**

The study had an interactive nature in that I was a participant observer, a former faculty member, and student mentor as well as researcher. Having been a teacher at Catholic High in the past, I easily resumed my position as a trustworthy member of the school environment. Because building trustworthiness was not a problem, I was dedicated not to betray this trust. While remaining centered on the content of my study, I wanted nothing to damage the reputation or psyche of my participants, the faculty and parents who have helped me, their school, or community. This, however, led to complications as far as my synthetic persona (which I define as a coming together of my personal identities and the role of researcher) and my own ethics were concerned. My synthetic persona is a trust-based collaboration, non-artificial, synthesis of self and others. Having been a member of the school community and continuing my personal relationships with the administration, faculty, parents, and students, I worked through my own personal beliefs about that culture through writing in my journal.

For my data collection, I relied upon ongoing field observations, collection of written and historical artifacts, interviewing, and the compilation and organization of written manuscripts from the participants which I gathered throughout the course of the semester (Spivey & Mathison, 1997). The overview of
my in-field experience is presented in Table 1. I attempted to achieve triangulation through employing multiple instrumentations and sources: multiple copies of one type of instrumentation (a participant’s view of her identities as seen in interviews, observed in class, and read in papers and journals) and different participating sources of the same information (different people’s perspective of their school/community situations). While my focus was on the writings of the participants, I wanted to cross-reference, through observations and oral language, the written perspectives. As the observations were dependable within qualitative methodology, especially when ethnographic in nature, these informal and semi-structured interviews were an attempt to explore my own tacit knowledges, or hunches. In any case, I felt a need to understand my participants better through shared time and dialogue. I directed the conversation to cover the areas of interest to my research and paid attention to each participant’s own understanding of the community as well as its racial, social, gendered, religious, and placial relationships.

I learned about my participants by asking them questions, and thus I got their perspectives—their “truths”—which were of major interest to me. Now as I write up this report, I consider my own “truth”—and thus my own subjectivity in what I chose to analyze and how I interpreted and analyzed what I found. At the time of this writing, I lived in Texas, which gave me some physical distance from the study and, I hope, clarity.
Observations and Artifacts

As mentioned above, the study lasted one school semester, beginning in September, 1999, and continuing through December, 1999. As I describe my data instrumentation and collection, I have provided organization by clumping similar types of instrumentation together; however, all data were simultaneously gathered during the entire course of the semester. During the study, I engaged in an interwoven technique of observations and participation as well as exploring the nature of the contextual setting of the school. I was working primarily with unstructured data, that is, data that have not been coded at the point of collection in terms of mutually exclusive positions. However, during the process, I employed constant comparative methods of analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1979) in an attempt to begin basic coding of overlapping positions as they emerged towards the end of my study. I used inductive analysis to create and refine my coding system. My field notes included notes from observations of classes, notes from my trips to and from New Roads, notes from a trip with an amateur photographer, and notes on visual

Table 1
School Observation Log—Overview of In-Field Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Prior</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Prior</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Group Interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
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<td>--------------</td>
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<td>Group Interviews</td>
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<td>Group Interviews</td>
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</tr>
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<td>9-6</td>
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<td>2 Interviews</td>
<td>1 Faculty Interview</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>10-15</td>
<td>8-1</td>
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</tr>
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<td>2 Faculty Interviews</td>
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<td>8-1</td>
<td>Class Visit</td>
<td>4 Interviews</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10-27</td>
<td>8-1</td>
<td>Class Visit</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>10-29</td>
<td>8-1</td>
<td>Class Visit</td>
<td>4 Interviews</td>
<td>1 Faculty Interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10-30</td>
<td>8-10</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Interviews</td>
<td>1 Faculty Interview</td>
</tr>
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<td>11-3</td>
<td>8-1</td>
<td>Class Visit</td>
<td>4 Interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>11-4</td>
<td>8-1</td>
<td>Class Visit</td>
<td>3 Interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-5</td>
<td>8-1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 Interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>Day of Recollection/Mass and Confession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>11-6</td>
<td>8-10</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Interview</td>
<td>1 Faculty Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>8-41</td>
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<td>8-1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>11-17</td>
<td>8-4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>3 Interviews</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thanksgiving: No School</td>
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<td>8-1</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 Interviews</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>12-3</td>
<td>8-1</td>
<td>Class Visit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>12-8</td>
<td>8-1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Debriefing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>12-13 to 12-18</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nine Weeks Exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>12-20</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Christmas: No School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>2-23</td>
<td>8-4</td>
<td></td>
<td>7 Interviews</td>
<td>Text-Based Interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and written artifacts. The fieldnotes which I took filled 118 typed pages which were converted from hand-written notes.

Situated in the A.P. English class, I observed the six student participants two to three days a week throughout the first semester of their senior year. As Table 1 shows, I expended 19 class hours of direct observation in the participants’ English class, evenly spread over the course of the semester in addition to 255 hours that I spent at the school. Additional time was spent observing, conversing, and interacting with the other students, parents, teachers, administration, and local townspeople of Catholic High and the New Roads community. I ended with 36 pages of field notes from the classroom observations, 10 pages from the
geographical descriptions, 5 from the photography trip, and 67 pages from the field environment.

Table 2
Classroom Observation Log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Objective or Focus of Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8-25</td>
<td>class visit</td>
<td>teacher directed writing instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8-30</td>
<td>class visit</td>
<td>teacher directed writing instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9-1</td>
<td>class visit</td>
<td>teacher directed writing instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9-3</td>
<td>class visit</td>
<td>teacher directed writing instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9-8</td>
<td>class visit</td>
<td>Practice writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>class visit</td>
<td>Practice writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9-13</td>
<td>class visit</td>
<td>teacher directed writing instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9-15</td>
<td>class visit</td>
<td>Practice writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9-22</td>
<td>class visit</td>
<td>Practice writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10-1</td>
<td>class visit</td>
<td>Practice writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>10-4</td>
<td>class visit</td>
<td>teacher directed writing instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>class visit</td>
<td>Introduction to group research project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10-25</td>
<td>class visit</td>
<td>group work for research project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10-27</td>
<td>class visit</td>
<td>group work for research project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10-29</td>
<td>class visit</td>
<td>Practice writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>11-3</td>
<td>class visit</td>
<td>Teacher/text directed discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>11-4</td>
<td>class visit</td>
<td>Teacher/text directed discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>class visit</td>
<td>Presentation of research project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>12-3</td>
<td>class visit</td>
<td>teacher directed review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My classroom observations, as shown in Table 2, were directed towards defining the environment of the senior English classroom. These observations focused generally towards the atmosphere of the classroom in which my participants were contextually situated and directly affected. Conducting observations in the formal spaces of the classroom, I took a “fly on the wall” stance (Proweller, 1998) in which my presence in the far back corner of the room next to the teacher’s desk did not distract from the lesson. Since I had been a former teacher of the class, the students and teachers were quick to adjust to my more
formal “observer” presence in the classroom while including me back into their conversations during free time and after class. During group projects, which represent a less formal atmosphere, I became more of a participant-observer moving from group to group in order to interact with my participants. My goal was to focus on the context of the classroom and my participants’ roles within it.

My observations were also based on the area (10 typed pages from jotted notes) as I drove the one hour to and from Pointe Coupee. As I noted the geography, I sought to create what Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein (1997) have termed “a sense of memory” about the land and people (p. 99). I incorporated most of this material in the previous chapter on the historical context of Pointe Coupee. By observing the physical, geographical place documented in my fieldnotes, I also hoped to identify some of the points of unity and tensions within the land as the physical positions overlap (e.g., the railroad tracks representing the color line).

Several weekend day trips were spent with an amateur photographer willing to photograph some of the area under my direction. While the camera allowed for a detailed recording of visual facts, it did what Flick (1998) promised it would do—transferred me as researcher to a more analytical and subjective position. I was able to construct visual and artistic displays of tensions as they occurred naturally in the town. An example of this, though not pictured in my dissertation, is a photograph taken outside of the Pointe Coupee Tourist Center, a rural, humble two-room building with a truncated tin roof indicative of the area. While it portrays a simple past existence, and places an importance upon the community’s representation of
history, caught in the background is a top-of-the-line Suburban sports utility vehicle. The actual lifestyle of the community members is one of a very complex modern world. I also collected reproductions of historical photographs which portray the community and people from the gaze of the members. Early amateur photographers as well as the modern counterpart, the average person with a camera, often seek to portray their own cultural values of what is important through the lens of the camera. The “gaze,” as Lutz and Collins (1991) refer to this phenomenon (term adapted from Foucault, 1972), is significant in the ways in which the photographers view themselves and their world.

I also took notes regarding various kinds of visual and printed material. For instance, I took notes regarding pictures and plaques on the walls of the school, newspaper clippings posted about students, quotes attained from the diocese in the teachers’ lounge, and graffiti written on student desks. I also made photocopies of some documents, such as the yearbook and newspaper, and included these in my notebook.

Interviews

As illustrated in Table 3, informal and semi-structured interviews were interwoven with observations throughout the course of the study; however, I am reporting all interview instrumentation together in this section. Four different kinds of interviews took place: (1) initial group interviews, used for acquainting myself with the participants as a whole; (2) ongoing individual interviews, used to position each participant; (3) text-based interviews, used to get a better understanding of
each participant’s writing; and (4) faculty interviews, used to create a cultural picture of the school and community.

Group interviews. The group interviews took place with my student participants during the first week. These, roughly three hours of tape, acted as acquaintance sessions and debriefings for me, so that I could know my participants better as

Table 3
Interview Log

<table>
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<th>Students</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
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<td>Katie</td>
<td>10-13</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11-18</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2-23</td>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

individuals and as students of Catholic High and so that they might gain a better understanding of the aims of my research. I began by following the lead of Proweller (1998), who gathered her participants into focal groups. While Proweller divided the girls according to peer groups, I brought the six girls together as participants in the study. Using an interview-guide approach (Spradley, 1980), I introduced different topics about their school and community asking my participants to discuss together these issues of literacy and the culture as they
related to the students, school, and community. The discussions centered around the participants’ perspectives of and reactions to the educational philosophy of the school, the administrative style of leadership, individual teacher philosophies on literacy in the classroom, and their social discourse community at the school. I also introduced through brief discussions the topics that were to follow in the individual interviews. These topics covered peer and school relationships, family, race, gender, voice or self, and literacies. I found that certain participants were more outgoing during the interviews while others were more reserved. Aimee Lynn and Kayla tended to dominate the discussions. Kendall and Aaliyah seemed particularly interested in having my feedback. Elle was most outspoken when discussing gender issues, and Bailey’s pregnancy seemed to interest her the most. These interviews took place in the courtyard while other students could walk past or watch through the windows of the classrooms. This source of data was initially analyzed for recurring themes as I began to construct community positions and detect tensions in-between these positions.

**Individual interviews.** In addition to the group interviews, I also held a second kind of interview with my student participants, the individual interviews. These six individual interviews, an extension of the first interview, were 45 minutes to an hour in length to total three hours and 45 minutes to five hours for each participant. In these interviews, too, I used an interview-guide approach, asking open-ended questions which introduced specific topics—peer and school relationships, family, class positions, racial positions, gender positions, voice and
self, and understanding of literacies—to the students and allowed them to continue the conversations with stories and examples which they found important. In these, I spent shared time talking with each participant individually exploring issues, such as race, gender, social class, and religion, which connected to positions within the community. Sample interview guides used in the individual interviews can be found in Appendix A. These interviews were conducted during English, religion, and campus ministries classes so that the pressure of missing the same class repeatedly was eliminated. This rotation of times was at the suggestion of the principal. The students’ levels of participation varied daily depending on the class which was being missed, the subject or assignment that day, and their mood in general.

For issues of peer and school, I asked the participant to tell me about her experience at Catholic High: How would you describe relationships between students? Has being at Catholic changed the way you think about yourself or the world? For issues on family and community, I asked the participant to tell me about her community: What are the different social classes or groupings of people here in New Roads? Do your friends belong to the same social class as you do? Will you tell me about your family? For issues of race, I asked the participant to tell me about racial groups: To what racial group do you belong? Why do you say that? What are the different racial groups here in New Roads? Will you tell me about some of the people in the same/different racial groups whom you admire? For issues of gender, I asked about her life as a woman: What does being a woman
mean to you? What do you see as your role as a woman during the turn of the century? How important are your friendships with other women? What do you see yourself doing 5-7 years from now? In issues about voice and self, I asked for each participant to tell me about her experience: What experiences stand out in your life? How would you describe yourself? Is the way you see yourself now different from the way you saw yourself in the past? What has led to this change? In issues about relationships, I focused on various kinds of relationships: Which relationships are important to you? Will you tell me about an important teacher in your life? Who is your favorite television character and are you like that character? Finally, in issues on literacy practices, I asked about the uses of literacy: How do you use reading and writing inside and outside of class? The questions sought as many angles and voices from the participants as possible by using interpretive, ideal position, devil’s advocate, hypothetical, and negative situation questions. I concentrated on my participant’s provision of contextual examples. Topics which were explored during the interviews were family, peers, school, community, and the existence of media, race, class, gender, religion, self, and voice within these areas. I drew heavily from Carol Gilligan and her colleagues (Gilligan, Lyons, & Hanmer, 1989) in the area of gender during their interviewing of the girls of Emma Willard School. Their treatment and development of the issues of silence, voice, and identity exist and are articulated in different ways within the varying positions that I have identified for my participants.
In some of the interviewing, I enlisted the help of a colleague. Donna Porche-Frilot, an education specialist and doctoral candidate at Louisiana State University, was able to discuss with Aaliyah, racially positioned as a creole, the issues of race with a shared knowledge. Because of the perceived regional sensitivity by the creole culture, Aaliyah was able to talk more openly with Ms Porche-Frilot, who also racially positions herself as a creole.

In the interviews, some of the participants were generally more outgoing and loquacious, such as Kayla, Aimee Lynn, Aaliyah, and Kendall. Other participants needed further probing within the interviews, such as Elle and Bailey. Aaliyah and Kendall were most informative in secluded settings, while Kayla and Aimee Lynn were informative in the courtyard overlooked by the classroom windows. Elle and Bailey seemed ambivalent towards the setting. Each participant had different interests which tended to parallel her social positions evidenced in her writing. For instance, Aaliyah was most energetic when talking about her family and community and racial issues; Kendall enjoyed talking about her literacy experiences, especially reading and writing; and Elle was not interested in either of these two topics. Overall, the topics of most interest to the participants were the issues of self, family, and peer/school relations.

Text-based interviews. I concluded the text-based interviews, which specifically discussed the students’ writings, following an initial analysis of the writing with a final trip to the school in February, 1999. Within discussions about their writings, I came to understand how each participant chose the topics of her
papers as well as the importance she placed on each type of writing. I was also able to ask clarifying questions that had developed concerning different pieces.

Text-based interviews, which lasted 45 minutes to an hour each, helped me engage the participants in discussion about their own writing in order to determine the articulation of the tensions between subject positions. Following the lead of Spivey and Mathison (1997), I conducted an initial search for recurring themes and pattern within the written papers of the participants; then I constructed individually exclusive interview guides for each participant. Appendix B illustrates these guides. The text-based interviews focused on the topics chosen by the participants for their English papers and journals. I discovered themes which coincided and conflicted with different parts of the community as the students created their own positions. The students were asked to expand upon their written work and to explain the significance of the context. The majority of the interviews focused on the participants’ explication of their papers and the significance which they placed upon different topics. They were asked to think about the process they followed in considering their topics, themes, and motifs which run throughout each paper. How were the papers the same and different? Through the interview process, I sought their metacognitive insight into the conception, maturation, transformation, and possibly the rejection of varying notions developed within the writing. Significant situations or events in the lives of the participants were explored, especially as they were relevant to the writings. They were asked if they ever found themselves writing to a particular audience. Also during these interviews, the participants were
asked to view my positions and verify positions which belonged to them, such as creole or white.

For instance, Kayla seemed open and interested in hearing what I had analyzed from her writings when I spoke with her in her text-based interview. I began by doing a “walk” through her work and thanked her for sharing these pieces with me as I asked her to tell me about each one. I specifically asked her to tell me how she chose the topics, what experiences might have led to her using that topic, how her writings were similar to and different from each other, who her audience was, how much of herself was reflected in the writing, and towards the end of the interview, how she would describe her writing to others. I then showed her my positions and subpositions asking her which of these she saw in herself or in her writings as well as tensions between these positions. Finally, I asked her to describe to me her conception of the process of identity. After I gave a stationary essence, a continuum, and an impressionist painting as examples, Kayla, like most of the other participants, seemed drawn mostly towards the “impressionist painting” metaphor.

Faculty interviews. In addition to the interviews with my participants, I also conducted six interviews with the faculty and administrators of the school, each lasting from 30 to 60 minutes. These faculty/administrator interviews focused on the context of the school so that I could better understand the cultural beliefs and educational philosophies of the school and community. I used these in writing the previous context chapter as I introduced the school and its social environment. The interview guide, included in Appendix C, asked about the individual’s personal
philosophy of education (and its relation to the school’s philosophy and the philosophy of other faculty) and also about his or her perception of the role of the school in the community. Were the social groupings of teachers similar? What were the similar beliefs or positions held by these teachers? The first two of these interviews were with the principal of the school and the senior English teacher. Additionally, I conducted at least four more interviews to gain a better understanding of the school and community from the perspective of two faculty members who live in the community and two faculty who commute from Baton Rouge.

The faculty interviews were conducted with significant members of the school and community. One expert was the students’ English teacher who has been teaching senior English at Catholic of Pointe Coupée for fifteen years. She served as both an influential part of the study and a knowledgeable member of the community. Her marriage into an old and respected family of the area had made her privy to the cultural beliefs and practices. Her thirty-minute interview focused mainly on her educational beliefs, classroom practices, assignment constraints, and cultural knowledge. She also explained her understanding of the educational philosophy and leadership of the school during the time she had worked there, emphasizing changes that have occurred. In addition, she also was asked about her understanding of the cultural practices and beliefs of the community as an inside member.
The next interviewee, whose role within the study as well as knowledge as a member of the community was substantial, was the principal who has worked for at least the last seven years in administration at Catholic and previously at the former public school, Poydras High School. Born and raised in the area, she represented an expert on and leader in the community not only in the capacity of principal but also as a member of the city council. As well as holding a principal’s perspective of education, she was also the mother of two children who attended the school both prior to her employment and she continued the children’s enrollment after she took the position. Her older son was in the junior high when she came to Catholic; he was graduated with the class of 1999 and then attended Louisiana State University. Her younger son was in the upper elementary, which was under the leadership of a different principal, but he would be moving to the junior high in the next year.

Finally, faculty who both lived in the community and those who commuted were targeted to provide a more complete picture of the cultural beliefs, practices, and values of the community. Interviews with faculty members took place during the course of the semester as teachers’ schedules permitted time. The community faculty were able to discuss educational philosophies of the school and community from an insider’s perspective. By this first-hand explanation, I developed a better understanding of the value systems and educational beliefs of these people of New Roads. However, due to the great diversity of and tensions within subject positions, I was careful to diversify my four interviewees. Catholic High, being a small community, pulls a vast resource of teachers from Baton Rouge, Louisiana. At
given times during the year, as many as eight or ten of the twenty faculty in the
junior and senior high commute from Baton Rouge. This faculty, while still holding
an insider’s perspective, allowed a more distanced perspective of the educational
beliefs of the school and community. They offered a perspective which seemed to
have some cultural differences, and, from them, I gained an opportunity to find the
inconsistencies and biases which community members may not notice.

Written Documents from Students

The major personal documents I collected were the participants’ writing
(mostly for their English class), which consisted for each participant of ten formal
English papers assigned by the teacher, an informal journal which was kept in
partial requirement for the English class, and other informal writings which the
participant volunteered to share with me. Tables 4-9 provide lists. The formal
English papers were turned in to the English teacher at the end of the nine-weeks
period. On the basis of no predetermined criteria, the teacher chose one essay per
packet to grade; the other papers earned points for having been completed.
Although the English teacher warned the students that no time in class would be
given to work on the packet, she included as many as ten half-days per nine-week
period during which the students were to “practice” writing; these writings often
ended up as the essays after students completed and typed them at home. I was
present for three of these days. The English teacher required two writing packets,
which covered most of the traditional writing forms presented in English language
arts. The English teacher presented direct instruction on each writing form in the
same sequence that she listed the papers on the assignment guidelines. The first packet included a personal narrative, a process paper, a description/observation, a literary analysis, and a fable. The second packet included an argument, another literary analysis, a problem-solution paper, an informative essay, and a short story. Although the teacher used different labels for the argument and the problem-solution paper, these two were very similar in form. Students wrote about a problem and then presented a case for a particular solution to the problem. Each paper extended from a half-page (approximately 150-200 words) to four pages in length (600-800 words). For each packet, the students wrote five essays in the assigned forms during a nine-week period, which were turned in to be graded. While some papers were written with respect to the current readings and topics from the English textbook (*Elements of Literature: Sixth Course* published by Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1993) and selected novels, the majority of the papers came from the writers’ experiential knowledge.

The informal journal supplied an additional type of writing, which brought additional insight into the participants’ personal lives. Journal topics came from writing starters chosen by the teacher to explore personal beliefs and applicable situations at school. The journal entries ranged from half-page to full-page entries (approximately 100-200 words) based on such probes as “if you were in charge of the school. . . ,” “if your house was on fire, what would you try to save?”, “what was the best/worst movie you’ve ever seen?” and “how is being a senior unlike any of the other high school years?” Each day the students wrote one journal entry.
Writing samples which were collected from previous years included an autobiography from the participants’ junior year and any other papers volunteered by the participant. The autobiography was assigned by the junior English teacher, and allowed more personal input from the students. The students were given possible chapter topics to include in their autobiography, but ultimately the choice was theirs to make. Each autobiography relied heavily upon visual aids, which ranged from photographs to current events clipped from magazines, to illustrate their writing. Some of the poems and meditations from Aaliyah also came from previous years. Additionally, I recognized a couple of writing assignments which some of the participants submitted in their writing packets which were written and graded by previous English teachers. These are marked in the following individual writing submissions.

Close attention was paid to allowances and constraints made by the teacher within each particular assignment. All writing samples were photocopied as they were submitted to the teacher every quarter—or every week, in the case of the journal.

informative essay, “The Civil Right’s Movement”; and a short story, “Brendan and Tyler.” “Friendship and Betrayal” was written her sophomore year. Aaliyah also included 34 journal entries and a extensive collection of 20 poems and 14 meditations. All of these writings written by Aaliyah are recorded in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Submitted</th>
<th>Document type</th>
<th>Number of words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Invisible Wedding</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>personal narrative</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Jiffy’ Cornbread/Human Soul</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>process paper</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Deck</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>descriptive paper</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship and Betrayal</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>literary analysis</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dragon and the Caterpillar</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>Fable</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is that Sound?</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Epic “Beowulf”</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>literary analysis</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death Tolls</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>problem-solution</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Right’s Movement</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>informative paper</td>
<td>455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenden and Tyler</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>short story</td>
<td>507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>journal entries (17)</td>
<td>2873 (169 average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2/2/99</td>
<td>journal entries (17)</td>
<td>2873 (169 average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4/16/98</td>
<td>autobiography</td>
<td>2273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>personal “poems” (20)</td>
<td>(124 average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>Personal “meditations”</td>
<td>(14)2366 (169 average)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AimeeLynn. Papers in Aimee Lynn’s first writer’s packet, as shown in Table 5, were a personal narrative “My Wreck”; a process paper, “Cooking a Frozen Pizza”; a descriptive paper, “Coffee Call”; a literary analysis, “Sobel”; and
a fable, “Assumptions can be Dangerous.” Her second packet included an argument, “Abortion Is Killing!”; a literary analysis, “Good Vs. Evil”; a problem-solution paper, “Telephone Crisis”; an informative paper, “Test Time”; and a short story, “Trapped.” Her journal entries numbered 34 along with the autobiography she wrote in her junior year. Aimee Lynn also volunteered 36 poems which she kept in a notebook; most were hand-written yet a few were typed. A few of the poems were drafted and later typed.

Table 5
Aimee Lynn’s Written Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Document type</th>
<th>Number of words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My Wreck</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>personal narrative</td>
<td>629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking a Frozen Pizza</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>process paper</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee Call</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sobel</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>literary analysis</td>
<td>578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions Can Be Dangerous</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>Fable</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion Is Killing!</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Vs. Evil</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>literary analysis</td>
<td>629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone Crisis</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>problem-solution</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test Time</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>informative paper</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trapped</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>short story</td>
<td>1105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>journal (17)</td>
<td>2887 (175 average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>journal (17)</td>
<td>2887 (175 average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4/16/98</td>
<td>autobiography</td>
<td>785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>personal “poem” (36)</td>
<td>4752 (132 average)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Bailey. Bailey included in her first packet, as shown in Table 6, a personal narrative, “My First Whipping”; a process paper, “Putting on a Dance Review”; a

Of the papers submitted for the writers packet, one was “Lennie” which was written her sophomore year.

Table 6
Bailey’s Written Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Document type</th>
<th>Number of words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My First Whipping</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>personal narrative</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putting on a Dance Review</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>process paper</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Car</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>descriptive paper</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lennie</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>literary analysis</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monkey Jealousies</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>Fable</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drunk Driving</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holden Caulfield</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>literary analysis</td>
<td>555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Violence</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>problem-solution</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scoliosis</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>informative paper</td>
<td>521</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Black Cat</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>short story</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>journal (17)</td>
<td>2686 (158 average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>journal (17)</td>
<td>2686 (158 average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4/16/98</td>
<td>Autobiography</td>
<td>6395</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

was written her sophomore year. As Table 7 shows, along with these papers, Elle also wrote 34 journal entrees and volunteered her junior year autobiography.

Table 7
Elle’s Written Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Document type</th>
<th>Number of words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Transformation</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>Personal narrative</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Age Old Pound Cake</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>Process paper</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal Clear</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>descriptive paper</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult Choices</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>literary analysis</td>
<td>1116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True to One’s Self</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>Fable</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Novel’s Irony</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>literary analysis</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>problem-solution</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False River</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>informative paper</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Day on the River</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>Short story</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>journal (17)</td>
<td>3213 (189 average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>journal (17)</td>
<td>3212 (189 average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4/16/98</td>
<td>autobiography</td>
<td>2416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

included 34 journal entries, an autobiography written during her junior year, four scholarship letters and award write-ups and one personal letter. Table 8 gives a list.

Table 8
Kavla’s Written Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Document type</th>
<th>Number of words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lending a Helpful Ear</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>personal narrative</td>
<td>556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayonnaise No More</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>process paper</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday Night Fever</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>Descriptive paper</td>
<td>820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Character Analysis/Lady/Winter</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>literary analysis</td>
<td>735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love Birds</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>Fable</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing God</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Versus Evil</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>literary analysis</td>
<td>489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tragic Fun in the Sun</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>problem-solution</td>
<td>644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Threatening Disease</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>informative paper</td>
<td>446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mardi Gras Madness</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>short story</td>
<td>583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>journal (17)</td>
<td>2431 (143 average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>journal (17)</td>
<td>2431 (143 average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4/16/98</td>
<td>Autobiography</td>
<td>7045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>personal “scholar essay”</td>
<td>(4)1759 (439 average)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

autobiography, her freshman year family history report, and seven short stories/four poems written for literary contests. Table 9 contains Kendall’s writings.

Table 9
Kendall’s Written Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Document type</th>
<th>Number of words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Skittles Contest</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>personal narrative</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty Crocker/Chocolate Cookies</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>process paper</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbol of the States</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>descriptive paper</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irony of Madonna</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>Literary analysis</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshua/Strawberry Seedlings</td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>Fable</td>
<td>782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wrong Child-Gun Theory</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>argument</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beowulf</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>Literary analysis</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Problem with a Messy House</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>problem-solution</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Suffrage</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>informative paper</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guitar Man Death</td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>short story</td>
<td>629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9/30/99</td>
<td>Journal (17)</td>
<td>2312 (136 average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12/2/99</td>
<td>Journal (17)</td>
<td>2312 (136 average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4/16/98</td>
<td>autobiography</td>
<td>1146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsightly Wrapped Package</td>
<td>2/95</td>
<td>personal “short story”</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Santa</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>personal “short story”</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandmother’s Grandfather</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>personal “short story”</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diary of a Broken Heart</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>personal “short story”</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Forgotten Death</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>personal “short story”</td>
<td>622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>personal “poems” (4)</td>
<td>476 (119 average)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Organization Processes for Data Collection

My system of organization follows that of Edward Halpern (1983) developed for his dissertation at Indiana University. I organized three different
types of notebooks: community notebooks, participant notebooks, and synthesis notebooks. I assigned contextualizing of the community notebooks that organized my raw data according to historical or current communities. My participant notebooks were comprised of five different areas for each of my participants. These individual participant notebooks focused three main organizations, or types, of information: (1) raw data, (2) data reduction and analysis, and (3) data reconstruction and synthesis. A final synthesis notebook reconstructed the information about the context of the study and the cross-case analysis. All data and analyses were organized under four different headings: (1) data reduction and analyses, (2) data reconstruction and synthesis, (3) reflections, and (4) instrument and process development.

Community Notebooks

The Community Notebooks were also organized according to the raw data. These data were collected into multiple notebooks and organized by date, subject and/or theme relevant to the history or modern community. Raw data reduction and analysis, the data reconstruction and synthesis, and reflections were later transferred to the Synthesis Notebook.

Participant Notebooks

For each participant, I organized data in three notebooks. The first notebook, Raw Data, was a collection of the data that were subdivided into writing samples, individual interviews, and text-based interview transcripts. The writing samples were divided according to the genre, style, and year of the writing. These
positions included (1) first quarter writers packet, (2) second quarter writers packet, (3) semester journal, (4) autobiography, and (5) personal writing voluntarily shared. The individual interviews covered the areas of (1) school and peers, (2) family and community, (3) race and gender, (4) voice, self, and relationships, and (5) literacy attitudes. The text-based interview focused on my questions and conclusions of the writings. These data are in their original form.

The next notebook, Data Reduction and Analysis, contained the writing samples, as they had been analyzed for genre, motifs and themes, and style, and the interview transcripts, as they had been analyzed for general subject positions. Using Gilligan’s (1989) different voice analysis for the interviews and Spivey and Mathison’s (1997) theme analysis for the writing samples, I read through each work searching for and noting recurring themes, repetition of ideas, and use of unusual grammar, mechanics or style in writing. I then highlighted specific quotations in multiple-colored highlighters using a color coding for organization.

The third notebook, Data Reconstruction and Synthesis, contained the detailed subject positions observed from the interviews and the detailed positions of the writing samples, highlighting tensions and coping techniques within the positions. This final section also contained notes by Emma Schorzman as she debriefed my own work.

Synthesis Notebook

My synthesis notebook contained the same sections as described above with the addition of an area for instrument and process development. The sections
worked in a similar fashion to that of the individual notebooks, only with more focus on synthesis for cross-case analysis. Data reduction and analysis contained the same breakdown of data as used for individual participant notebooks while including relevant musings from my reflections in the car. It also included a copy of the synthesis from each individual participant’s notebook. The data reconstruction and synthesis directed results from the main areas analyzed in the previous section, focusing on conclusive conformities and difference. The reflections section contained my expectations, intentions, and motivations as they adapted during the analysis of the study. Descriptions and accounts of proxy interviewer, Donna Porche-Frilot, and peer debriefers, Lane Gouchier and Emma Schorzman, were documented as well as difficulties and problems that developed.

The section, reflections, included my transcribed accounts from the drive to and from school that judged how the study was proceeding and adapted to its changing needs. This section contained my expectations, intentions, and motivations as they adapted during the course of the study. Finally, the section entitled Instrument and Process Development contained the prospectus, timetables, adjusted schedules, questionnaires, observation formats, and interview schedules.

Data Analysis Process

My analysis, while interconnected, is concentrated upon three distinct areas: (1) my observation of the context, (2) the students’ perceptions of their own positions, and (3) evidence of positioning I might see in students’ writings. I first sought to contextualize myself and my participants within the place of New Roads,
Catholic High School, and the A.P. English class. I then began to position my participants within their communities, and used the interviews to uncover their perceptions. I finally sought to identify various community discourses or social affiliations within the writings of my participants as they were related to and interconnected with the participants’ subject positions within place. I created my own situated interpretation of the students’ contextual “reality” by giving each participant her own section and also conducted a cross-case analysis.

**Preliminary Coding**

Following Spradley’s (1980) approach, I began constant comparisons and pattern coding with a holistic approach as I sought to identify the data relevant to my research question (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I focused on the interviews, observations, and the participants’ writing samples. Preliminary analyses began immediately as I entered the field, and interpretation took place throughout the process. Grant-Davie (1992) has pointed out that researchers initially decide from endless possible data what is of interest to the study, and that was my concern early on as I entered the field.

**Writing Context**

My first step was to build an understanding of the context of the current place of Pointe Coupee and the place of Catholic High. I used ethnographic observation in looking for cultural practices, beliefs, and values (Spradley, 1980). I sought salient patterns in my observations of what I perceived the community positions to be; place, gender, race, social class and religion.
Positions in “Place”

My field notes and protocols of faculty, group, and individual interviews provided the means for applying and developing my five-part coding scheme (place, gender, race, social class, and religion), which I had abstracted from discussions in the prior literature on identity and writing and from various histories of Pointe Coupee. I had begun with conventional positions, often treated dichotomously in much of the prior literature: place (local, global), gender (male, female), race (African American, while, creole), social class (working, privileged), and religion (Catholic, non-Catholic). I sought to work within these five positions but wanted to find the particular facets of each that were manifested in the community of New Roads. I realized that none of the five positions was discrete from the others and that items would be double-coded, or triple-coded, or more. For example, the positions of race and class have often been combined in research contrasting the discourse of African American (presumably working class) students with that of white “mainstream” students (e.g., Cleary & Linn, 1995; Redd, 1995).

As I read through my field notes and my typed transcripts of the interviews, I looked for instances—particulars—of each of the five factors. For place, I began to see instances of local, which is the term I used for acceptance within a community, and of global, which is the term I used for an individual’s perception that other locales were part of her world. The latter included America, regional, the South, Louisiana, other states, Pointe Coupee, west of the Mississippi, outside of New Roads, other towns along the river, plantation/farm houses, the Island, local-
New Roads, the “front” of New Roads, “back of town,” Creole-Victorian neighborhood, the river, and camps.

For gender, I noted attitudes toward gender. Thus, a particular item became coded as female for biological gender, or sex, and as traditional stereotyped or non-traditional, such as feminist (Belenky et al., 1986; Butler, 1999; Chodorow, 1978; Roen, Peguesse, & Abordonado, 1995). An example would be Kayla’s attempts to reconcile herself with the effects of her parents’ separation by seeking a more feminist position which suggested a movement away from the traditional environment she had experienced. She also tended to cloak some of the gender attitudes in different situations or contexts.

Race resulted in a number of distinctions besides white, African American, and creole, the three I had initially set. French ancestry, which appeared in both the white and the creole groupings, had different heritage, particularly among the white: the French who had come directly to Louisiana from the European continent and the French known as cajuns who had come by way of Nova Scotia. Although Caucasians of French and Spanish backgrounds are sometimes called creoles, it was creoles de couleur that I noted for the most part—a classification that includes African American heritage, often by way of Haiti, and/or Native American, as well as French. For Aaliyah, creole represented her affiliations with the French heritage, and she also claimed Native American heritage, but not African American.

In reading my notes and the interviews, I found, as I had expected, that my race position frequently overlapped with the class position. I found such frequent
overlapping of class and race that the positions were often difficult to distinguish. For instance, privileged class was most often tied to whiteness. However, creoles could have higher social rank, both economically and with ancestral ownership of land than several of the white social groups. The current status was not always the case for many families that had experienced segregation and deprivation of voting rights. One person with whom I spoke who was not a participant in the study made the complexity clearer to me. As a creole from New Roads, she shared memories of her exclusion from entering public places as a child when running errands with her grandmother. She also told me about two terms faux blanc and passer blanc, both referring to being able to “pass for” white.

My coding of religion also became more complex as I noted Catholic and Catholic mix and made distinctions among various Protestant groups. The Catholic/non-Catholic distinction was also complicated by race, since in Pointe Coupee most Catholics are white or creole.

In addition to those subject positions, I also noted distinctions within the kinds of writing the students produced. School writing included writer’s packet, journals, essays, and autobiographies, whereas non-school writing included mediations, prayers, poems and letters.

I remained in the field for a prolonged engagement so as to be able to detect and take account of distortions within my observations. Having been a former English teacher of these students, I hoped to minimize what Lincoln and Guba (1986) refer to as the personal distortion of the presence of an investigator in the
classroom. I had already built a rapport with the students and seemed not to draw attention after my first or second appearance. While I sought to understand the realities of my participants as they were situated within their community, I realized that I belonged to many different, often larger, communities where I was free to situate their ways of knowing in contrast to other ways of knowing. Inscriptive writing came from my own interpretation of the realities of my participants’ worlds. I do not assume to know their reality as they do, but it was my distance that helped me to connect my understanding of their reality to other realities of the world. Just as the faculty who did not live in New Roads could see the biases and constraints upon the community that insider faculty, who live the life day-in and day-out, did not necessarily notice, as researcher I could look at the smaller world from larger worlds outside.

As constant comparison began, I tried to position each of my participants within her contextual positions that I had developed and was still developing. I read through each interview coding for themes and motifs as they appeared and positioned my participants within the varying positions: African American, creole, white, traditional woman, feminist woman, Catholic, Baptist, elite heritage social class, upper-middle class, working class, creole class, “poor,” New Roads city limits, other cities or areas of Pointe Coupee, parents’ work place and location. Positions dealing with family heritage, years having attended the school, and location of home in proximity to New Roads emerged from the interview data. Some of the tensions which developed early within these areas were the blurring of
the lines between black and white racial heritage with the creole culture, the pulling of traditional daughters of traditional women by a feminist/liberated media, and the mixing of social class between old money gained through family inheritance and the new oil money from the 1980s. After determining the tensions within the young women’s subject positions, I determined how each one negotiated an understanding of self through the assimilation, resistance, and accommodation—the manifestation, or “articulation,” (Bhabha, 1994) of the subject positions.

The Participants’ Writing

In analyzing the students’ writing, my intent was to identify each participant’s varying positions within her community. Spivey and Mathison (1997) used a form of pattern coding in which they identified themes, genres, conventions, and repeated citations. For my study, I began pattern coding using the positions I perceived, and I continued to test and revise as I perused the writings over the period of the semester.

In analyzing the students’ writing, I coded for style and for content separately with different coding sheets for the two, even though I realized that this style/content dichotomy was an arbitrary distinction and that some items would be double coded. I read papers and journal entries numerous times, noting elements that seemed to be associated with the subject positions that had developed. For each piece of writing, I excerpted all relevant elements, put them on my coding sheets, and checked all positions and subpositions that seemed to apply.
Coding for style. Items coded for style were tied to the particularities of the language that the student used in talking about a topic. Stylistic features associated with place fell within the two subpositions of local and global. Local showed a strong dichotomizing of pronouns used to distinguish the “us,” insiders, from the “they,” outsiders. Pronouns were specifically treated as either second person plural or third person plural depending on the individual’s perceived closeness to the subject of discussion. Likewise, another stylistic feature I observed was how the writer approached different subjects of discussion. If the writer felt inclusive or close to the discussion, more first person pronouns and informal language were used. She would include more of an authoritative tone in her writing.

Regional positions were interspersed occasionally with the American position, which was the “default.” The English-creoled language, a holdover from the French-creole language used by many of the Pointe Coupeans, is marked by features of direct translation from their original French-creole to English. For example, present perfect progressive tense, which was more commonly used in French-creole than in English, was often used. An illustration comes from in Aaliyah’s presentation of her group research project on the bubonic plague, in which she wrote, “I have been having the plague for weeks,” and “I have been knowing that ever since we were in high school.” Another unusual feature is the term “make” before an action verb; “to make the groceries.” This can be compared to modern French’s “tiene” which precedes many action verbs. West of the Mississippi, I similarly identified “cajun” stylistics but with dropped verb helpers—
like past perfect with dropped verb helpers: “the children (have) been eating.”

Standard American English was the language students used in their writing, and a variant of it (Southern in pronunciation and pace, casual in register) could be heard in local language.

Linguistic style in the place of New Roads was seen most commonly along geographic racial lines. For example, communities “back of town” used black vernacular English with considerably more slang dialect, while along “the drag” and in the Creole-Victorian neighborhoods more standard English was used. Other neighborhoods varied in their use of dialect and slang. French-creole to English verbatim translations were evident and commonly accepted as “proper” language.

For stylistic features associated with gender, I considered features signaling the assumption (or rather, lack of assumption) of authority and personal connectives. In terms of authority issues, I followed the work of other researchers and looked for masking of commands or assertions, implication of one’s own ignorance, transfer of the initiative to the addressee, expression of interest in the addressee, and seeking agreement (cf. Goody, 1978; Keenan et. al., 1978). Following Rubin and Greene (1992, 1995) I also attended to “egocentric formulae” (“I guess,” “I think”), exclamation marks, and hedges, particular auxiliaries of possibility (e.g., could, might) and politeness features. In terms of personal connectives, (cf. Gilligan, 1982; Keroes, 1990), I examined signaling of personal involvement and social connectives by plural first person pronouns by explicit references to self (i.e., singular first person pronouns I, me, my, we, us, our).
With respect to stylistic features associated with race and social class, I noted the use of French-creole dialect, slang, and/or black English vernacular, which was studied by Horowitz (1995) and Linn (1995) as opposed to standard edited English. In African American and some creole individuals, I found some evidence of black English vernacular’s lack of agreement between subject and verb, copula deletion, and absence of the /z/ possessive morpheme. However, because these were formal papers, I did not expect to find overtly identifiable non-standard English.

Finally, features associated with religion could be seen as Catholic. I found that a Catholic style was often represented by Latin phrases and terms along with some of the rhetoric and grammar common of this dead language. Because French was derived from Latin, the style common in both Latin and French created a bond between the Church and culture. I perceived that the Catholics who mainly worshipped from home brought elements from their own church to school, while the Catholics who mainly worshipped through school tended to use more quotations presented at school functions, religious classes, or at St. Mary’s school mass on Fridays. One example is the catch-phrase “playing God” which appeared in all participants’ writing and I traced back to a visiting priest’s homily.

**Coding of content.** My coding for content was conducted in much the same way except that my attention was on thematic material. I read each student’s writing, text by text, looking for themes that would connect the individual to particular positions. I sought what Huckin (1992) called “plausible interpretations”
and relied upon Nelson’s (2001, 1998; Spivey, 1997) work in coding for content. I separately coded the participants’ texts multiple times reading respectively for themes of place, gender, race, social class, and religion. After identifying units of positions, which varied in length from a mechanical punctuation to a paragraph, I categorized each position’s units separately so as not to upset the overlapping. Many items were coded for both content and style, as well as multiple positions. Coding multiple positions avoids what Grant-Davie (1992) suggests many researchers falsely presume: that people do only one thing at a time—that each unit of data represents only one kind of position. Because the content area is so vast, here I have attempted to limit the examples to only the most prominent ones.

The contexts of the students’ text was often tied to place. Through the writing, students would invoke many different “worlds.” For example, students would sometimes write of their travels to other states, or would base their writings on “worlds” experienced through reading. Regional positions included the South—with references to live oaks and magnolias, small-town and rural life, racial segregation, or social facades; Louisiana—with references to crawfish, mardi gras, Community coffee, New Orleans jazz, jambalya or etoufee; and Pointe Coupee—with references to sugar cane, False River, plantations, bayous, and New Roads’s segregated mardi gras “krewes” and parades. In New Roads, “back of town” content might be centered by the railroad tracks, and the drag and Creole-Victorian neighborhoods’ content might be centered on the waterfront. Outside of New Roads, were references to plantation-farm life (“big house,” slave, quarters or bull
shows), smaller towns (St. Ann’s), and the island (Chenal, or the chenal). Finally on the river, contents might overlap between camps (summer, vacation, get-away, hunting), recreation (boating, fishing), or life (meditations, serenity, relaxation). Sometimes writers would speak of regional traditions without giving explanation to the reader—thus implying that the reader was an insider and was already familiar with the tradition. The outsider positions, however, might not mention a specific tradition when the essay topic would seem to suggest that the writer needed to mention that tradition.

Identification of gender content was a more complex process. Much that might be associated with gender overlapped with racial and class positions, yet many traditional stereotypes still existed even within the overlapping areas. Traditional stereotyped gender positions were much more apparent in the writing than I had thought. In the classroom discourse, traditionally stereotyped male content included recreation such as hunting, fishing, and football; positions of authority and power in church, state and family; and, even, decision-making situations in current events, town meetings, and civil or church responsibilities. Traditionally stereotyped female content related to different areas of recreation, such as the river, the garden, and the home, as well as positions of support such as cheerleading, Stingerettes dance team, and church choir. It also emphasized interpersonal connection. Especially issues of love were seen within the poetry. Yet I also found incidents where the traditional stereotyped position was overtly pushed aside to showcase a non-traditional, sometimes feminist, position.
Content relevant to race and content relevant to social class often overlapped and combined to the point where only the situation could determine the positioning. For race, specific types of soul food were examples of African American content, but depending on the context could also be examples of social affiliations. Place, for example, became an indication of social class and race especially when references were made to summer camps on False River and ownership of family farmlands outside of the town. These places may be representative of identity positions of Caucasian creoles or creoles de couleur.

Religion had many paradoxical positions which came clear within the content. Content related to a young woman’s Catholicism included such material as charity for the less fortunate; social obligations to the priest and sisters; and rituals like day of reconciliation (also known as confession), holy days of obligation, and mass. Current issues focused on charity, abortion, right to life, and other phrases which instructed a Catholic on how to live. The religious positions were gendered and social-classed as well as positioned by race and place. Protestants also showed gendered, social classed, placed, and raced positionings. This was clearly seen in the racial division between Baptist and Methodist church orders in New Roads, where there were “white” churches and “black” churches. Content reflective of Protestant positions were intermixed with these other positions.

Examination of coding sheets. After studying all the writings for all students, I began my summary sheets to see (1) what the predominant positions and shifts were, (2) where any blurring and blending across positions occurred, and (3)
what patterns seemed most important and interesting. I also examined my style sheets against my content sheets.

Predominant positions and shifts were easily identified by the number of occurrences of each unit within a particular position. For example, Kayla was coded as having many examples of gendered positions while only one vague example of race. I was then able to categorize the different positions of these positions as well as the trends and movements of positions according to academic discourses. I studied my coding sheets to see what were the predominant positions, and I also noted shifts within particular works by focusing on individual paragraphs.

Blurring and blending occurred as each of the texts were coded separately for each position. After the coding, I read all material again to see where the positions blurred and blended. I noticed distinct overlaps within seemingly different areas. For example, on my sheets I indicated the same coded units that Kayla used to position herself in gender often fell into religion indicating an association for Kayla in her identity as a religious woman.

Analysis of the Text-Based Interviews

As explained previously, the text-based interviews were used to get students’ responses to particular conclusions I was drawing from my analyses. I summarized commentary from typed protocols of these interviews and added this material to my coding sheets at relevant points. For example, for Kayla, one theme from the essay, "A Listening Ear," was the issue of insider and outsider. I asked her
about the boy whom she counseled in the essay. I had interpreted him correctly as an outsider. The comment she provided was “yeah, (he is) an outsider. He’s just real quiet and he’s the kind of person—he has a negative attitude. He has low self-esteem. And, he doesn’t think—like he brain washes himself to think that people aren’t going to like him or that he’s not included. Just a lot of trauma that’s kind of like just really messed him up mentally.” When I mentioned how she became much more analytical and took possession of her ability as a leader at this point of her essay, she responded, “I never thought about that. I don’t necessarily intend to do that. . . .kind of like using myself as an instrument for something for him to maybe model off of.”

Trustworthiness

The criteria for trustworthiness of qualitative research must undergo revisions if they are to apply to the contextualized type of research that I have undertaken. Lincoln and Guba (1985) have reconceptualized trustworthiness focusing on the problems of generalization, isomorphism (a single, tangible reality or truth), replicability, and objectivity. I, too, have attempted to deduce trustworthiness in each of these areas as I have encountered them in my study. I have engaged, also, peer debriefing as well as an audit to confirm the transferability of my research. As Lather (1991) put it, “Lack of concern from data credibility within. . . research. . . will only decrease the legitimacy of the knowledge generated therein; our theory-building will suffer from a failure to protect our work from our own passions and limitations” (pp. 68-69).
Naturalistic Inquiry for Contextualized Research

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), *credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmibility* are the key concepts in attempts to reposition traditional research into a more contextualized and situated research. Since *credibility* counters internal validity which assumes an isomorphic view, I attempted to gain credibility by using specific activities designed to promote the efficacy of my study without implying a single, omnipotent truth gained from this work. The first three activities which I used are a prolonged period of engagement, evidence of persistent observation, and triangulation of sources, methods, investigators. The period of the study lasted a school semester (four months) which, along with my past experience working in the school, gave me insights for detecting and accounting for distortions which I might have encountered either from my presence or other unintended distortions. While my prolonged engagement in the field and observing in the classroom allowed for the scope of my study, the persistent observation allowed for my depth. By using pattern coding from the onset and Spradley’s (1980) observation analysis, I was able to focus on issues of interest within the community, school, and classroom as well as in the participants’ writings. Finally, I concluded with the use of triangulation of sources, methods, and investigators, by including six participants from which to follow the process of constructing identity and three methods of gathering data (personal documents, interviews, and observation).
These following activities also increased *credibility* which worked specifically to provide an external check on my inquiry process and to redefine, check, and test my preliminary findings. Peer debriefing was used in identifying the historical and contextual communities as well as my analysis of the participants’ writings. Professor Lane Gouthier of University of Houston is from the Pointe Coupee area and has taught at Catholic High where the study took place. I met Gouthier after moving to Texas upon the completion of my data collection and nearing the end of my analysis, and his peer debriefing began as I wrote my results. I was able to use his experience in qualitative research, as well as his sensitivity to the place of New Roads, to insure that my own bias was at least acknowledged. I worked with him closely in the forming of the context chapter exploring the people and the place of New Roads. I relied also upon a second peer debriefer, Professor Emma Schorzman, a colleague from Louisiana State University now working at The University of Houston, whose background is in literacy education.

Because *transferability* replaces empirical studies’ notion of external validity which implies generalizations from the study, I have emphasized, through the use of case studies, the uniqueness of each participant as she constructed her identity. I wanted my research to contribute to the field’s knowledge of female identity construction within writing, and I seek *transferability* pending individual judgment from other researchers.

Since in qualitative research, the criterion of *dependability* replaces that of reliability (which implies that the study is predictable, to determine if the same
results would be found following replication), I wished to prove dependability of my study by applying my findings to a data base of knowledge. My transferability began to redirect these assumptions by emphasizing that my cases are each unique and different, but because I do not believe that my cases are predictable as reliability implies, I have emphasized dependability first by evidence of my credibility and second with the help of my inquiry audit, conducted by Emma Schorzman. Lincoln and Guba (1985) claimed that “since there can be no validity without reliability (and thus no credibility without dependability), a demonstration of the former is sufficient to establish the latter” (p. 316). With this I, also, have found that Guba’s claim (without dependability, credibility would not exist) to be true. The activities and techniques under the credibility section confers my study’s dependability.

Finally, I found that confirmability replaces objectivity with subjectivity which is a major part of my analysis of the data especially with my use of tacit knowledge. Confirmability was best proved by my audit inquiry, which I also used for dependability, and my triangulation design, which I used for credibility. The audit trail was a forced system of organization. It placed accountability on my part as a researcher. I brought in my auditor, during parts of my project and especially at the end, to determine the existence and trustworthiness of an audit trail. Since confirmability, dependability, and to an extent credibility are all evaluated based on the audit, I employed the help of my auditor throughout the study but with particular emphasis at the end to determine the trustworthiness of my audit trail.
Ethics

Being aware that I, like my participants, have cultural affiliations and may have placed some of my own social beliefs and possibly even biases within my research, I have attempted to recognize these natural subjectivities. Because of my place in Pointe Coupee, as a former teacher and friend, I have carefully considered the impact of my research. Because of the great trust that has been given to me by my participants and fellow faculty, I have carefully considered each person’s contribution to the study and considered how this knowledge would affect other members of the community. There is much that does not need to be shared, but there is other information vital to the understanding of the “place” and people of Pointe Coupee which must be cloaked so that the integrity of those involved in the research is preserved. Many names have been changed within the current histories and social analysis. The faculty comments were interpreted as the many voices which collectively make of the social community of the school, and no teacher was highlighted in respect to his or her personal opinions of the school community, either positive or negative. My attention when selecting material from school principals and English teacher was on curricular and demographic natures, the overall attitude of the participants, and the atmosphere of the school. Because New Roads is a small-town, I worked hard to ensure that the integrity of the people was protected, and one means I used was having Professor Gouchier, who was born in New Roads, read for bias and ethics. I hope that the communities of Catholic High, New Roads, Pointe Coupee are all pleased to have allow me into their lives.
Conclusion

I conclude by pointing to Proweller (1998), who in her acknowledgments said,

To the junior girls of Best Academy who took this risk, I owe my deepest gratitude for their space, their time, and their stories. . . . I am indebted to the school administration, faculty, and staff for opening their minds and their hearts. (p. ix)

I, too, now turn to my participants to acknowledge and spotlight each of them and to show how within their writing they have diligently worked to position themselves within their relative worlds, both locally and globally. I trust in the sturdiness and security of my methodological scaffolding. By weaving together and erecting a strong contextualized theoretical base, I have found an interesting and capable methodology from which to pursue my inquiry. I hold confidence in the theoretical and practical implications of my methodology so that I now turn my attention to focus upon the positions of my participants.
CHAPTER 5
GENDERED POSITIONING: THE MULTIFACETED CHARACTER OF KAYLA’S, AIMEE LYNN’S, AND BAILEY’S WRITING

For their senior English class, the six young women in my study—Aaliyah, Aimee Lynn, Bailey, Elle, Kayla, and Kendall—produced a number of pieces of writings which I collected from them, and they also gave me some of their writing from the previous year. These writings were of various types, contrasting in form, length, content, and register—much more variable than in previous studies of identity in writing, which were conducted mainly with college students producing academic discourse (e.g. Ivancic, 1998; Spivey & Mathison, 1997; Sternglass, 1997). Along with academic writing, these girls produced what many people would call “creative” writing (fables, short stories) and “personal” writing (poems, meditations, journal entries). These kinds of writing represent varying discourse practices, and it was within these practices that the young women positioned themselves (or were positioned).

Different facets of their complex identities were presented by the various texts. Before discussing each girl individually, let me mention some noticeable features in the whole body of work for all six writers. As to gender, I saw stylistic features associated with writing of young “females,” such as the frequent use of exclamation points (noted in the research literature), particularly in the journal entries, and I found a number of topics tying these young women with others of their gender and age, such as their concern with relationships (particularly with young men), their physical appearance, and their interest in gender-associated
activities (e.g., cheerleading, dance team, and softball). Finally, I noted much that was Catholic in their writing—forms, such as meditations and prayers, as well as topics, such as religious ceremonies and issues important to Catholics, particularly right to life and abortion (which were themes in the writing of several of the students).

As to place, I noted a number of ties to place, which were, in some cases, stylistic, including particular phrasings, such as the verb form “I have been having,” which is part of the regional dialect, and were also, in numerous other instances, content, such as references to the place names of False River, Bonne Fete, Livonia, Maringouin, and Oxbow. In general, it seemed to me that the racial identity and class identity suggested by most of the writing would be what educators (e.g. Heath 1982,1986) call “mainstream,” although there were a few ties to ethnic identity (particularly French or creole). Ethnic identity, as I will discuss later, is closely tied to place. Formal writing was, for the most part, standard English in style, and I saw only one instance of something that would be stereotypically African American vernacular English—not were there many references in any of the writing to anything stereotypically African American. Some journal entries included casual forms (slang), but these would be associated with the age of the writers and also, to some extent, gender and would be considered “mainstream.”

In analyzing my case studies, I discerned patterns—shown visually in Appendix D through Appendix I—concerning the individuals’ identity positions.
My analysis revealed that, for three of the writers, the prominent tension was within the identity position of gender: one kind of gendered position within another. Because of these patterns, I have organized the cases into two chapters; the first emphasizing tensions within gendered positions and the second emphasizing other tensions. This chapter presents three participants, each of whom has gendered positions that are in tension with one another—Kayla, Aimee Lynn, and Bailey.

Kayla: Striving for Excellence

Kayla, a highly motivated and energetic young woman, wrote: “I strive to be a positive role model to all” in her essay for Executive Women International Scholarship Program in the fall of 1999. At Catholic High, she was captain of the cheerleading squad, a member of the Homecoming Court, president of the student council, and co- valedictorian of her senior class. In my fieldnotes from observing Kayla within her English classroom setting on August 15, I wrote the following description:

Sitting in the front row, Kayla is actively involved in an across-the-room discussion on the topic of abortion with another participant, Aimee Lynn, and another student, Rob. While all are against abortion, the debate seems to center around who should be responsible for an unplanned pregnancy. Kayla is pushing abstinence as the solution. Rob scoffs at that idea.

Kayla is dressed wearing the same stylish thin-fitted tan khakis that many of the other girls wear contrasted with large chunky combat-style shoes. The sleeves of her pressed white button-down reaches over a thin silver watch, which matches small ornate earrings and a silver necklace. She is also wearing her class ring and a red F.R.O.G. (Fully Rely on God) band on her wrist, the theme chosen by Campus Ministry. Kayla's hair is short in a stylish bob, brown with blonde highlights, and she has a slightly sun-kissed nose and small distinct facial features with thin eyebrows. She wears a light layer of carefully applied make-up.
Mrs. Katie [the teacher], after giving her students time to finish their discussion and to write on the prompt, allows a short discussion before she moves onto her concentration of British literature. It never seems to matter what the topic of discussion might be; if the class is involved, so is Kayla.

Accomplished and comfortably “in place” at Catholic High was the way Kayla appeared to me during my study. Kayla often filled roles of leadership, in the academic setting as well as the school’s religious activities. Socially, she was well connected to friends and acquaintances from school and led an active, varied life in extra-curricular activities spanning from softball games to cheerleading and the Stingerettes dance team’s practices and performances, to Beta Club and Student Council meetings to the 4-H Club, and even to attendance at cow shows. Each activity was connected to the New Roads traditions. Her activities centered on her school life at Catholic and the traditions of Pointe Coupee.

Kayla's home, where she lived with her parents and her three younger sisters, was a plantation just outside of the neighboring town of Maringouin, where both of her parents were reared. At one time, she considered the 25 miles that separated her home from New Roads to be a curse because most of her friends lived in the latter. Additionally, many of the social events and all of the sporting events took place in New Roads. Once she received her driver's license, however, she began to view her home in a new light. No longer dependent upon her mother or father to drive her, Kayla found her Maringouin home a place of refuge, “a way to escape the normal small talk and distractions of New Roads.”

Her sense of responsibility, as the oldest of four daughters, seemed to be influenced by a time when her parents were briefly separated. For a year, her
parents had been divorced, and her mother had become engaged to another man. Additionally, her mother had returned to college and was studying to become a registered nurse. Though her parents are now remarried, Kayla still described these times as difficult. She admired her mother’s strength and determination in pursuing a career, and she helped as necessary by transporting her younger sisters to and from school as well as to their extra-curricular activities. She also believed her sisters to be a “test of her leadership” and a reflection upon her own identity.

Kayla apparently placed great importance on the religious context of her life. She jokingly called herself a “metholic” because her father was brought up as a Methodist and her mother’s family was Catholic. Although she was baptized as a baby in the Methodist church and occasionally attended a Methodist church with her family, she was “thankful” to attend a Catholic church and to have been baptized at the time of her First Communion in the Catholic Church. In her interview, she said, “Being a true Catholic enables me to better relate to my religion classes at school.” While she emphasized the importance of her Catholic ties, she also echoed her Methodist background. She was quick to point out that her parents were married three times, once in a Methodist church, once in a Catholic church, and once with a justice of the peace. These events seemed to represent an important part in her life, in her family, and in her religion. She told me: “I was put on this earth to fulfill a calling, whatever it may be, and I will do so to the best of my ability.”
This young woman gave me her two writing packets, her senior year journal, an autobiography from her junior year, and several scholarship essays that were part of an application packet. Papers in her first writer's packet, compiled during the first nine weeks of the school semester, included a personal narrative “Lending a Helpful Ear” (556 words); a process paper, “Mayonnaise No More” (252 words); a descriptive paper, “Friday Night Fever” (820 words); a literary analysis, “A Character Analysis of Lady de Winter” (735 words); and a fable, “Love Birds” (417 words). In the packet she created for the second nine-weeks period was a literary analysis, “Good versus Evil” (489 words); an informative essay, “A Life Threatening Disease” (446 words); a short story, “Mardi Gras Madness” (583 words); an argument paper, “Playing God” (415 words); and a problem-solution paper, “Tragic Fun in the Sun” (644 words). “A Character Analysis of Lady de Winter” was written her freshman year, but she was encouraged to use these polished pieces as if she were creating a portfolio. She included 34 entries (averaging 143 words) in her senior journal, 35 chapters in her junior year autobiography (totaling 7045 words), and a scholarship collection for the Executive Women Scholarship, which included two scholarship essays (averaging 439 words), two individual paragraphs on goals, a resume, and a copy of her transcript through her junior year in addition to three letters of recommendation written by others.

As an author, Kayla seemed to assume various positions relative to gender, place, religion, and class. Of particular interest to me were the positions associated
with gender, especially as she developed roles of leadership in some of her pieces. With respect to place, she was positioned regionally as well as locally through the towns with which she associated herself, with Catholic High School, and with False River. Her religious position as a Catholic came through in her journals and in two of her formal papers, which connected with some of the journal topics. Social class and race were reflected in her style of speaking and writing in the standard English used by well-educated, middle-class students in the mainstream (Heath, 1982; Kayhaney & Lui, 2001; Wills & Mehan, 2001). Finally, many of her writings appeared to show her academic position as she replicated essays in the format she had been taught by her teacher. As her guidance counselor wrote of her in a recommendation letter, which Kayla had volunteered to me: “It is difficult to sum up a teenager like Kayla in a few words because she is a multifaceted individual who excels in so many areas.” In what follows, I begin with a discussion of gender, then move to religion, to place, and to class and race. I conclude the case with a description of her academic positioning.

Kayla as a Young Woman

The various gendered positions that I detected in Kayla's writing—leader, daughter and sister, and girlfriend—seemed to conflict at times. Most often she presented herself as a strong woman—a leader in various contexts—but she also presented an extremely vulnerable self in love relationships. Similar to Lekso's (1988) Catholic students who shifted among rituals or beliefs as bases for their actions, Kayla made shifts in her gendered identity for her writings. As Gilligan et.
al.’s (1989) interviewees adopted different roles depending on the interviewer, so Kayla presented different personae depending on the genre and audience of her writing.

**Kayla as a leader.** The gendered leader position was apparent in several of the pieces she wrote when applying for an Executive Women Scholarship, including the essay referred to at the beginning of this description, and also in some of her senior-year journal entries. In an application for this scholarship, in which she was to write a paragraph about her goals, she presented a strong professional appearance with the intentions of entering a male-dominated career as a doctor. She wrote: “The most important goal to set is the one which will determine the outcome of one's life. . . . I enjoy helping people and strive to work for the good of others. I am strongly considering becoming either an orthodontist or an anesthesiologist.” She made it clear in an interview with me that she would choose a career that would allow her financial independence.

Similarly in this same essay, she wrote about her experience when she was an elected delegate to Louisiana Girls State—an organization for the advancement of women in professional careers that is funded by the state of Louisiana. At the Girls State meeting, she had filled the position of president of a fictitious school board—a leadership role with female peers she had only recently met. In an interview, she gave me this account:

As the School Board President of Bogafalya Parish, I was determined to work with my fellow School Board members to complete our project of building and organizing our new school to the best of our abilities. Louisiana Girls State was an experience like no other. . . I quickly learned
that these are great responsibilities and processes in which leaders must work together for the good of their fellow citizens.

Not only did she portray herself as a leader among many young women from Louisiana, but she also placed this experience into a more global and historical perspective including all young women in society. She continued by writing:

The many guest speakers, especially women, inspired me to assume my role as a young woman. Over the years, times have changed, as well as the role of women in society. Women are gaining more and more responsibility each new generation. As member of the class of 2000, I will take advantage of my opportunity to spread my wings to gain independence from society and grow as a young woman.

She also appeared to develop this leadership position in some of her journal entries which were characterized sometimes by the exclamation points and underlined words that young women use in informal writing (Rubin & Greene, 1992, 1995). For example in one leadership-oriented journal entry (which did not include these features), Kayla described her understanding of a hero in terms of someone who showed leadership abilities and was successful in life. She wrote:

My definition of a hero is someone who comes out on top. This can be in either a physical sense or a psychological sense. On the psychological level, a hero is someone who is at inner peace with himself. A hero comes out on top in each decision that he makes. In reality, we all are our own heroes. I do have role models. These are not people that I actually want to be like; these are people whose footsteps I wish to follow in. My role models are independent people who are determined to be successful.

I was most interested that these “role models” had a direct connection with her gendered position as a leader, which appeared in her scholarship essays and other journals.
The leadership theme also ran through her journal writing about her role as cheerleader, a role that traditionally goes to young women in contrast with the role of athlete for young men. Kayla, a cheerleader, was an athlete, and she emphasized the leader aspect of “cheerleader.” In one journal entry, she focused on experience as a senior athlete, describing both cheerleaders and Stingerettes as athletes. Here, too, she emphasized accomplishments:

Tonight is senior night for fall athletes, which include football players, volleyball players, cheerleaders, and Stingerettes. . . . Each senior athlete will proceed down the field as the announcer tells which sports we have played and how many years we have played them throughout our high school years. He will also tell who had had the most influence on our lives and why.

She continued with her subject of cheerleading in sequential entries. One was entitled “Cheerleading.” She wrote that cheerleading was “exciting” but that it required “a lot of work” and concluded by saying that she thought that cheerleaders did not get “the appreciation and respect” they deserved. “People do not realize how much we work in order to be successful.”

By presenting traditionally female activities in a nontraditional manner, Kayla positioned herself as a strong leader with a work ethic. In describing the role of Homecoming Court, of which she was a member, she spoke of the kinds of qualifications someone should have to be elected to the court. Instead of simply popularity, she emphasized the “accomplishments” that she thought should be factored into the students’ choices of a queen. She wrote: “The members of the Homecoming Court should be those that are involved in school through extra-curricular activities. Homecoming Court elections should not be a popularity
contest.” While Kayla was elected to the court, she was not happy about the underclassmen who were also chosen because they had not made the sort of contribution to the school that Kayla considered to be criteria for the honor.

Kayla as the daughter and sister. At home as well as at school, Kayla filled a leadership role. In her writing, she emphasized her responsibility as the oldest sister and a daughter whose role it was to help her mother as much as possible. She appeared to present her own strength within her family as the oldest of four daughters. I also noticed that in an essay written for Executive Women Scholarship, she presented a strong professional appearance, giving much credit to her own mother, now a registered nurse, for what she sacrificed to reach her own career goals. Kayla wrote:

My mother has had the most impact in my life and serves as a role model for me to follow in succeeding in life. Throughout my career as a student, my mother has continuously encouraged me to strive for excellence in each and every aspect of life, especially in my studies and sports. It is her guidance and faith in me that has enabled me to achieve success in my life....She has influenced me to set high goals for myself by helping me to realize the various opportunities that are available to me in life.

The strengths she attributed to her mother were thus associated with her own strengths.

Kayla’s position as a leader in her family was reflected also in one of the letters of recommendation she gave me. Her senior year science teacher wrote:

During the time I’ve known Kayla, I have come to respect and admire her. On a personal level, I have witnessed Kayla exhibit strength for her sisters and her mother a year ago when her family was in crisis....During this time Kayla was still able to work, keep up her grades, and participate in community service activities and be a leader to all.
This same point was made in a recommendation letter from her part-time employer: “Kayla has three younger sisters that she served as a role model and mentor for as well.” She also mentioned for herself in her Scholarship Essay that she sought “to be a role model to all.” She went on to say, “I feel that my hard work in school sets a good example for my sisters, and in turn, encourages them to work hard.” The family crisis seemed to have been one of the factors which influenced her position as a woman and a leader.

Kayla as a girlfriend. Interestingly, it was in her fictional writing rather than in her journals that Kayla wrote about her love relationships. Here she presented a different kind of positioning with respect to gender. Instead of her leadership and achievements, the emphasis here was on her role of a relatively passive girlfriend. In her two pieces of fiction—the short story and the fable—Kayla focused on the role of a young woman as girlfriend.

“Mardi Gras Madness,” a short story based on her own life, told of her own experience meeting and dating one of her boyfriends. The plot focused on the pursuit of the girl, Elizabeth, by an older boy, Edward, who eventually won over her affection through his diligent pursuit, even though Elizabeth’s father and friends disapproved of the relationship because of their age difference (the young man was graduated from high school). For a while, they were the “happiest couple in the Pointe Coupee,” but things changed. Edward began neglecting her as he spent time partying. The couple separated after Edward confessed an infidelity, and Elizabeth, rather than leaving him, “begged for attention, but he continuously neglected her
feelings and failed to appreciate what they shared together.” Kayla's gendered position in the story shifted from her role as a girl receiving attention from a boy to a neglected girlfriend placing her fate into the hands of God.

The gendered position of girlfriend also dominated a fable titled “Love Birds,” as Kayla characterized the lovebirds in stereotypical male and female roles. The male character, Petey, left the female bird, Dolly, to go hunting, giving her “a peck on the cheek” as he went looking for worms. When he returned, Petey found his girlfriend talking with another male bird and became jealous, yelling at her in “an intimidating voice.” Dolly flew off crying and, ironically, was shot by a human hunter. While Kayla focused the paper on conventional interactions between the male character and the female character, she also seemed to emphasize the male stereotyped characters in her paper. She ended her fable this way:

Tweety [the bird friend] caught Dolly as she was falling to the ground and carried her to her tree. When Petey saw that his love was dead, he lost control. He cried out, ‘It is all my fault!’ Petey instantly regretted hurting Dolly's feelings over something so childish.

Kayla as a Catholic

Kayla was positioned as a Catholic in several of her senior journal entries and formal papers which dealt with the place of prayer in her daily life and also with controversial Church issues. Her Catholic position appeared to be important to her concept of identity especially as she displayed her involvement in activities such as involvement in discussion in her religion class, participation in Youth Ministry, and attendance at church retreats. All three of Kayla's letters of recommendation, which she gave me to read, mentioned her Catholicism. For
example, the school guidance counselor said, “Her [Kayla's] high moral standards and Christian ideals are evidenced by the depth of her character and by the warmth and kindness she displays toward everyone each day.”

In several journal entries, Kayla focused on her religious identity position by talking about beliefs and understanding of what religion meant for her, personally. She specifically was bringing a form of prayer into her daily life via her writings. One particularly interesting journal entry was a “letter” she wrote to Charles, an athlete and fellow classmate who was in the hospital after losing a leg muscle to gangrene. The prompt read: “Write a reflection, meditation, or prayer to give Charles support and encouragement.” While each participant wrote this assigned entry, Kayla's response was different in that she began to rationalize why God would allow this to happen. She wrote: “Why do bad things happen to good people? I think this is done only to make people stronger and to make them realize that they are not in control—God is.” Eleven other entries dealt with religion in a similar way.

Other positions of religion appeared as Catholic issues. “Playing God” was stressed in seven of her journal entries, and she appeared to use these two specific entries to create one of her formal papers, an argument entitled “Playing God.” The first entry's prompt read: “Considering the advances in science and technology, what responsibilities do scientists have to society in regard to the development of technology and research? How far is too far?” She responded: “I often view science as an act of playing God. Today's technology has gone entirely too far. What is the
world if it is not built according to God's creation?” Kayla used her term “playing
God,” as well as the belief of God’s perfect creations, when she moved into her
essay on euthanasia. Many of the lines and ideals repeated in these seven entries are
also within her argumentative essay.

Pulling from the ideas she developed in these two journal entries, Kayla was
able to form her argumentative piece, “Playing God.” In the essay, Kayla argued
that it is morally wrong to commit euthanasia. She began with the case and views
of a young woman named Amy who lived with muscular dystrophy since the age of
eight. Kayla wrote: “When asked about physician-assisted suicide, Amy admits that
she often thinks that she has suffered long enough and would be better off dead.
[But] this is why she and her husband are against suicide; it makes dying too easy.”
Kayla went on to explain that “according to the church, assisted suicide is morally
wrong. Only God has the right.” She ended by writing: “Life is truly a gift from
God that should be respected. . . . Assisted suicide is the act of playing God.” These
Catholic ideals, about which she wrote in her journal entries, were again
represented within this more “formal” paper affiliating her identity with being a
Catholic.

Kayla in Place

Place for Kayla, which included regional traditions, became a setting for her
fables, such as “Love Birds.” The setting for that story was Birdieville, which
features Kayla as in New Roads: “known for gossip and rumors.” Regional place
also appeared as a backdrop in non-fiction pieces such as her short story about
“Mardi Gras Madness” in Louisiana, her descriptive essay, “Friday Night Fever,” about a football game in New Roads, and even an argument, “Tragic Fun in the Sun,” which addressed boating in False River. The categories “we” and “they” appeared to shift some as she moved to different pieces of writing. Kayla lived in Maringuoin, not New Roads; so in a sense, the people of New Roads were not her people. She wrote in her junior-year autobiography that she enjoyed the refuge of being able to retreat away from New Roads to Maringuoin. Yet she also saw herself as a part of Catholic High. “Friday Night Fever,” being set at Catholic High football games in New Roads, she mentioned walking through the gates as community Park and being bombarded by green and white, the school colors, and feeling honored to be “able to represent Catholic High of Pointe Coupee as a Hornet cheerleader.” Yet, in some of her writing, she was a part of the New Roads community. For instance, in her argument “Tragic Fun in the Sun,” she wrote the latter:

False River has remarkably become a well known lake to Baton Rouge residents. However, it is painfully apparent that two tragic boating accidents have occurred on our beautiful lake. . . . They [people who go on the river on weekends] have their mind set that they always have control of the river, but the problem is that the majority of these people are not experienced enough to operate their own water crafts.

However, her personal writings, like her journals, where one would expect to find more positions of place, tended to concentrate more on other positions, such as gender and religion.
Kayla in Her Social Class

Kayla, like many of her peers, was brought up in a middle-class, white family, the local version of where standard English was spoken, and this background was reflected in the language she used for her writing. She strove to succeed in accordance with the values of her parents' social class, as seen in her scholarship awards and academic activities, and pushed herself academically in order to have a professional career. She did, in two of her journal entries, express some concern about the class distinctions in her state and elsewhere. One was a letter to Governor Mike Foster, to whom she pointed out: “There is an imbalance within our state between the wealthy and the poor.” The other entry was a “Three Wishes” entry, in which she elaborated this idea:

I wish that people can be seen as individuals and accepted for who they are rather than be seen as black or white, rich or poor, American or foreign, and so on. This would bring peace and happiness to the world.

Kayla as a Student

Kayla appeared to be an academic achiever who knew how and when to build her academic reputation and when to conserve her energy. Whether writing in her journal or constructing a formal literary criticism, Kayla appeared to have assessed how much detail and structure was needed for a particular task (J. Nelson, 1990).

Kayla as journal keeper. The senior English teacher often deviated from the usual pedagogical practice associated with journal writing in which students explore personal and social issues in an introspective way. Instead, she, at times,
used to provide students with experience in the construction of a miniature model essay. During the first half of the year, Kayla produced entries that were short, polished essays, and which appeared to be carefully and thoughtfully structured to follow the journal prompts. She followed the teacher’s expected guidelines to essay writing, as taught in the Advanced Placement (AP) Institute, by formatting the journal entries showing assertion, the evidence to support that assertion, and finally some sort of commentary upon the topic. These journal entries were similar to what Applebee (1984) has termed “analytic essays,” papers in which the student makes a particular claim and then supports it with evidence. For example, in response to the prompt, “If you were in charge of the school, what would you change?,” she wrote the following journal entry:

If I were in charge of this school, I would see to it that enough money would be made to install air conditioning in our gymnasium. [her assertion] When events, such as “Meet the Players Night” and “The Academic Banquet,” are held in the gym, people are not able to experience the full effect of the event because they are absolutely miserable. [her evidence] People dread entering our gym because the heat is unbearable. [her commentary]

Near the end of the fall semester, Kayla seemed to break her consciously-academic writing. Four of the last five journal entries deviated from the prompt. She started one this way: “I seem to not be able to think of a short story to write at the moment, which is our journal topic for today, so I will write about something else.” Another began with “I am not interested in writing about today’s journal entry, so I will write about a sticky situation that I am in.” One can speculate about reasons for this change in her journal writing. Perhaps it was because she already
had established that she could write the miniature essays. Or perhaps, she had learned, as the year progressed, that the teacher rarely read the entries for content. She mentioned in her text-based interview that it was commonly known that the teacher checked the journal entries for completion only.

**Kayla as literary analyst.** Written four years apart, her two literary analyses in her writer's packet—“A Character Analysis of Lady de Winter” and “Beowulf”—were similar in style yet different in the extent of elaboration. The “Lady de Winter” piece, which was written her freshman year but which the teacher encouraged her to include, had actually a far more involved analysis than the piece she wrote as a senior on *Beowulf*, which was included in the class’s literature anthology (Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1997). She appeared to know when to put forth the energy and when to conserve. The senior English teacher graded only one of the five essays per packet, and the choice appeared to be somewhat random. These essays were full-blown versions of the conventional genre that is typical of the secondary classroom in America. They followed Applebee's (1984) characterization of an “analytical essay,” mentioned above.

The “Lady de Winter” piece based on *The Three Musketeers* (Dumas, 1844/1991) followed the typical five-paragraph format: (1) an introduction presenting major claim and three points (de Winter as a Cardinalist, her unpredictability, and her charm/beauty) that would be developed, (2) three paragraphs, each elaborating and providing evidence for one of the points, and (3) a conclusion that restated the thesis and summarized the three main points. Here I
Lady de Winter is recognized as a Cardinalist from the moment she is introduced to the story. Milady [Lady de Winter] is the woman who steals two of the Queen's twelve diamond tags from the Duke of Buckingham at the King's ball at Windsor. This is one of the first actions that she takes on as a duty commanded by His Eminence. Milady's devotion to the Cardinal is noticed for a second time as she makes it clear to Kitty that she despises d'Artagnan. She angrily quotes, “He nearly made me lose my position with His Eminence.” She is referring to when d'Artagnan does not take the initiative to kill her brother-in-law when he is given this perfect opportunity. Finally Lady de Winter's connections with the Cardinal are seen when d'Artagnan forces Milady to confess to aiding the Cardinal in kidnapping d'Artagnan's true love. It is clear and permissible to state that Lady de Winter is loyal to Duc de Richelieu [The Cardinal].

In this writing, she was following several “rules of three.” Not only was she using the three point form (and thus three-body paragraph) required for the typical five paragraph theme, but she was also using “rules of three” developing each of the three paragraphs. In her text interview, she said, “[The teacher] had us always write three specific examples and three quotes from the book and then describe the quotes.”

Her senior year, she wrote an analysis of the themes of good and evil through setting, character, and the actions of the characters from Beowulf. For this piece, she was no longer striving for excellence, and, since she realized the odds were against the teacher’s reading and grading this particular essay, she was willing to conserve her energy on this piece while still meeting all of the teacher's requirements for a literary analysis. She had each of the five components: introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. But she slowed down on the
extensiveness of the examples, decreasing their number from three per assertion to one per assertion. “In this essay,” she said, “I didn't do that [use three examples, three quotations, and three explanations of the quotations]. It's because this essay I modeled just directly off of some very brief notes. It was a part of the writer's packet, and I was trying to hurry and get through.”

Summary of Kayla's Position

The “intangible interstices,” as Bhabha (1994) termed them, emerged within her position of gender and between her varying identities associated with being a woman. It seemed to me that the most interesting tension was that between her position as strong, independent leader and her position as a vulnerable woman in love. Kayla wrote from several different gendered positions—as a young female leader, as a cheerleader, as a sister and daughter, and as a girlfriend—though positions seemed to vary in accordance with different types of writing. Kayla, as times, attempted to keep these positions separate from each other, the context of the situation about which she was writing. Like Lesko's (1988) participants who had choices about Catholic and non-religious rituals in school, Kayla had two choices about gendered positions. Sometimes she was the young female, a leader. She appeared to have liberated herself, within her journal especially, to write more in terms of herself as a leader, not as a girlfriend who was led, or possibly neglected, by her boyfriend, as she wrote in her creative pieces. She sought the changing role of women as leaders in society, in the context of her family setting, as well as her school society. This more assertive position also appeared when she focused on
traditional female gendered roles, such as cheerleading, with much more emphasis on the cheerleaders' role as a leader. She, likewise, showed leadership in her family during her parents' separation as well as in the academic setting. Contrastingly, Kayla seemed to be almost victimized when she became a teenaged girlfriend in the dramatic (or melodramatic) situations she created for her stories. She often portrayed herself as neglected within these pieces, often seeking acceptance of the situation.

Through her journals and her “formal” writings, Kayla presented herself as a Catholic with ties to the school and Church, and presented herself as a long time resident of Louisiana by introducing regional elements of Louisiana's culture, including Mardi Gras, a French Creole tradition. While Kayla appeared at home in the place of New Roads, she lived in the neighboring town of Maringouin and used these familiar towns as settings for her creative writing pieces and was aware that she tended to separate herself from the gossip of New Roads by living in Maringouin. Socially and academically, Kayla positioned herself as an upper-middle class, white student who spoke and wrote in standard English. As her journals and essays reflected, she was highly successful as a student and often knew when to make and when to conserve her academic efforts. She remained on the honor roll during her entire high school experience.

Aimee Lynn: Seeking Distinction from Others

Aimee Lynn described herself as different from others. In one interview taken October 13th, she expressed her distinction from her Catholic High peers in a
criticism: “They think they know so much. And I can tell you, you can put half of them at Central [High] and they wouldn't survive a week. They don't know. They just don't know.” From my fieldnotes from October 3 in which I focused on Aimee Lynn, I wrote this description:

Aimee Lynn always seems alert and eager, very busy yet often distracted by the social discussion around her. As quickly as she leaves her academics to comment on another student discussion, she again returns to her task at hand. She is usually listening in class, talking with others, passing one-line comments or notes to Kayla, sitting next to her in the front row, or other students around her. She never seems to show any hesitation in, or fear of, speaking her mind!

Aimee Lynn is wearing her Catholic High School t-shirt, neatly tucked in to her tan khakis. She is immaculately dressed and sitting sideways in her seat facing the side of the room, twisting her upper body forward to write. She has thin fingers and wrists, but no rings. Always alert, she has a distinctive face with thick, attractive eyebrows. Her tanned skin, typical of this area, makes me think of the French heritage.

As she often does, Aimee Lynn is still sitting sideways in her desk, fiddling with her jewelry, a bracelet-styled watch. Her dark hair is pulled back into a thick pony tail, highlighting the tiny ear lobes without earrings. She has the front bang area slicked back today. Around her neck is a leather necklace with small silver beads and aqua stone which moves down to a small, ornate cross.

She is busy writing at first, but now she is taking notes from another class's textbook. I guess she is either finished with her essay or will finish at home. She seems to enjoy the writing, but she never looks overly intent or interested, either. Her attention is again momentarily distracted, but she easily picks back up. She doesn't spend much time rereading what she has written.

Aimee Lynn, a vivacious and resolute young white woman, seemed to view herself as “different from”—more mature or experienced than—the other students at Catholic High. She had spent her early education in the racially-mixed public school, Pointe Coupee Central, which she considered to be “rough” and a site of confrontations among students from different backgrounds. When she transferred
to Catholic High School as an eighth grader, she was surprised at what she considered to be naiveté on the part of the students and also at a lack of racial diversity. Because of her public school experiences and her interaction with other students of varying social classes and races, she felt that she had experienced “real” life. She was self-confident and outspoken in her speech and in her writing. Aimee Lynn appeared to thrive in her identity as “different”—or “oppositional,” to use a term used before by Schultz (1999).

Though she viewed herself as oppositional, Aimee Lynn was actually involved not only in her academic classes at Catholic High School, but also in extra-curricular activities, through which she easily made friends. Nevertheless, she continued to work to confirm this position of “difference” she had developed for herself in this new environment. As she moved through the years of high school at Catholic High, she participated increasingly in many of the school activities which she had at first appeared to oppose, such as cheerleading and student council. Her fast-paced school life remained energetic and involved. For example, during the football season, she was busy with cheerleading practice until 4:30, and also attended all the football games on Friday nights. During the week, according to one of her junior year autobiography chapters, she worked on her homework from 5:00 until 10:00 each school day, and, after that, she would shower, sometimes eat supper, and pray before going to bed in order to rise again at 5:30 the next day. She maintain a 3.9 grade point average.
Aimee Lynn's parents were both born and reared in Pointe Coupee Parish, but outside of New Roads. Her parents, who met at Morganza High School, were married when her mother was eighteen and her father twenty. Aimee Lynn was quick to tell me that her mother was a 4.0 student in high school and college and was currently a human resource administrator in Baton Rouge. Her father also worked in Baton Rouge as the manager of a large car dealership. Thus, both parents worked outside the parish—which was a different family situation from that experienced by most of the other students at Catholic High. She had two siblings: a brother, who was several years older, and a sister who was entering middle school at False River Academy. Like Aimee Lynn, the brother had attended Pointe Coupee Central. Her brother and his fiancé were currently living at her parents' home while attending Baton Rouge Community College.

Aimee Lynn, who grew up as a Catholic, attended the Immaculate Conception Church in Lakeland. She considered herself “basically a religious person,” believing that if she trusted in God, everything else would fall into place. She kept a close relationship with her confirmation priest, Father Matt. She explained it this way: “I believe that the church is like an open door and Father Matt is the guiding light.”

In school, she held great faith in mentor/protégée relationships and cultured strong relationships with her teachers and coaches with whom she hoped to keep in contact after graduation. In the classroom, she was always ardently involved in class
discussions, incorporating much of her Catholic experience into speeches and debates on current topics or controversial issues. She planned to attend Louisiana State University upon graduation, although she mentioned that at one time she might like to attend a college around the New York area. She was interested in studying medicine or law in order to continue her education, eventually becoming either a pediatrician or a lawyer.

The writing that Aimee Lynn gave me consisted of two writing packets, her journal from her senior English class, and her junior year autobiography, as well as personal poems, which she voluntarily submitted. Papers in her first writing packet were a descriptive paper, “Coffee Call” (765 words); a literary analysis, “Sobel” (578 words); a process paper, “Cooking a Frozen Pizza” (374 words); a fable, “Assumptions Can Be Dangerous” (375 words); and a personal narrative “My Wreck” (629 words). Her second packet included an argument, “Abortion Is Killing!” (340 words); a short story, “Trapped” (1105 words); a problem-solution paper, “Telephone Crisis” (357 words); a literary analysis, “Good Vs. Evil” (629 words); an informative paper, “Test Time” (309 words). She wrote 33 journal entries (averaging 175 words) and she also gave me her autobiography, titled “Piecing it All Together” (7859 words), which she wrote in her junior year. In addition, she also volunteered 36 poems (averaging 132 words), mostly handwritten, which she kept in a notebook.

She was the only participant who appeared actively to seek sites of contestation between her identity positions within her writing, though ultimately
her actions tended to support more of a collaboration than she would probably want to admit. In what follows, I begin with a discussion of gender, then move to place, and to religion. I conclude the case with a description of her academic position.

Aimee Lynn as a Young Woman

Aimee Lynn articulated, within her writing, several positions as a young woman which appeared to be in opposition sometimes to each other and sometimes to other young women at Catholic High. She showed positions as a teenaged girl, as a daughter, as a lover, and as a woman assuming authority. Although she appeared to show positions in opposition, she often contradicted herself within various pieces. She seemed to want to seek distinction through opposition, yet also sought contention or affiliation in many other ways.

Aimee Lynn as a teenaged girl. She tended to rebel against gendered stereotypes in subtle ways. Yet most of her position as a teenaged girl seemed to be contesting her role as a teenager and not being seen as an adult. She still maintained her focus on being different. Nevertheless, she still wrote on typical teenaged-girl topics in her journal and her autobiography, such as clothing accessories, school uniforms, shoes, food, school dances, and cheerleading.

Unlike the other participants, who always used titles when referring to teachers or school officials, Aimee Lynn tended to call them by nicknames or first names without the titles. For example, she mentioned “Mac” for Mr. Mackenzie and “Mike Jones” for Mr. Jones. The only teacher mentioned with a title was Mr. Bordeaux whom she referred to as “Mr. B.”
Aimee Lynn as a daughter. Her portrayal of her parents was somewhat conflicting in two of her pieces, “My Wreck,” a personal narrative, and “Assumptions Can Be Dangerous,” a fable. “My Wreck” focused on her issues as a teenaged girl—issue of autonomy and knowledge. She and her friend, Bradley, were returning from a date across the river in Baton Rouge; he was driving, and she was asleep, lying with her head on the seat. She awoke to find herself wandering outside of the car and Bradley bleeding profusely from a head concussion. After they were found and rescued, the sheriff told her and her friend to thank their parents for teaching them to wear a seatbelt; it had saved their lives. She concluded: “It's funny how the stupid things that your parents tell you hold bearing later in life” and “This time my parents were right.” This knowledge which her parents held was legitimized through her own first-hand experience. The portrayal of parents was quite different in her fable, “Assumptions Can Be Dangerous.” The parents were depicted as people who had lessons to learn. They were not firm enough with their son when they told him not to let anyone in the house, and they suffered negative consequences. The moral of this fable—assumptions can be dangerous—was for the parents.

Aimee Lynn in love. Aimee Lynn explored a woman's role in the courtship of love in several of her pieces. It is interesting to look at her literary analyses and then consider her personal writing. In “Sobel,” she focused on Sobel's wait for the woman he loved to grow up—“for the girl to become a woman”—and the father's role at holding “their love” at bay. Aimee Lynn moved from portraying Sobel's
interest in a beautiful, maturing young girl to a secret love relationship between two consenting adults, though of different age. There was, I learned, some parallel with Aimee Lynn's life, since she too fell in love with an older man.

Early in her senior year, Aimee Lynn wrote in her journal about significant love relationships of her own. When viewed chronologically in concert with her poetry, the journal entries show how she moved from one long-distanced relationship with a young man in college into a new, initially forbidden relationship—a teacher at the school, whom she married after graduation. Both of these relationships distinguished her from the other girls at Catholic High, since very few dated young men who were not attending the school. In four journal entries, Aimee Lynn discussed her boyfriend from college, but she kept her expressions of love for the young teacher in her private poetry. These expressions of love for the college boy and for the young teacher were dated chronologically, moving from the dating of the college boy to the break up to falling “in love” with the teacher. In response to a later prompt: “Write about something you have done that you now regret. What makes you regret it now?” She wrote:

One thing that I regret was dating my boyfriend Jeffrey for [the last] three years. We started dating at the end of my eighth grade year. Recently, we broke up, and even though I was sad, I was happy, too.

These early journal entries ended her discussion of love, possibly since she was unable to disclose her potential relationship with a male teacher at that school, especially to one of his colleagues (her English teacher).

Most of Aimee Lynn's poetry, however, focused more on the abstract notion
of love and then detailed the prospective relationship that she imagined to follow. Romantic notions of the infinity, a true love, and twin souls appeared as she described a kind of tacit communication between herself and her addressee. She wrote: “But trust in me,/ My love is true;/ It will forever be,/ After all we've been through,” she wrote: and “Following blind ambition,/ We often fight,/ But love's hold on us,/ Always makes things right.” In another poem she said, “Time has no end,/ Nor beginning,/ Rejoiced and reborn,/ Love is this day.” She used this fictive world as an escape, which supports Romantic ideals, as in “a place where tranquility reigns” and “often I sit back and watch the days go by secluded from the world.” The Romantic concept of love seemed to reflect how she imagined “true” love to be.

The poem, “Love Hurts,” one of her longer poems, focused on the opposition to her potential relationship with the teacher. Dedicating this poem for a “special friend,” she wrote:

When I saw you standing there, I knew that we'd make a perfect pair. My feelings grew more each day, a little crazy to feel that way. To the point, on that day, I realized what I had to say. We soon arranged for us to meet. The first kiss was so very sweet. From then on, I definitely knew that all I wanted was only you. Was it possible for us to be with such an enormous boundary? Then one day you let me know, and I finally let my feelings show. You asked if I loved you, and you told me you loved me. It pains me not to be with you. I love you so much, if you only knew. Before I met you, I had never loved. Now I thank God and the stars above. I promise you my love is true. It will forever be after all we'll go through.
Aimee Lynn's need for distinction from others was fulfilled in her romantic writings as each of these relationships distinguished her in some way from others at the school.

She seemed in one of her pieces to be an astute observer of love when people are in more conventional relationships. Her second longest paper, a descriptive essay, titled “Coffee Call” (765 words), was based on observations of people interacting in this coffee house, where she focused on several couples, in particular an older one and a younger one. The loving older couple was looking for the past in each other's eyes, and the young couple was having flirtatious fun. Here, there was none of the dramatic tension or anguish. Instead, there was one couple looking for the past in a loved one’s eyes and the others “playfully” running outside after tossing powdered sugar on each other.

**Aimee Lynn as a woman assuming authority.** In some of her writings, Aimee Lynn explored the roles which women played in society, especially how they were treated by other people. She distinguished herself in this argument from other women in society as she sought to critique her social world. Viewing herself as a strong woman, she attempted to grasp how some woman find themselves in vulnerable positions. In “Abortion Is Killing!,” Aimee Lynn wrote an argument which was adamantly against abortion and which showed friction between her view of herself as a strong female and her view of these other women as victims of themselves or society. She argued that “two reasons why abortion is wrong are because it is a woman's responsibility and because we [society] tend to try to ‘play
God.” Her first paragraph centered on a woman who had an unwanted pregnancy. She wrote:

When a woman gets pregnant it is her fault and her responsibility. The baby did not make itself, and the mother should not be able to end its life. If she did not want the baby, she should have been more careful. It is her decision and she must accept her fault.

The man who helped to conceive the baby was never mentioned in her essay. In arguing against abortion, Aimee Lynn claimed that women have rights but that “some” women should have to forfeit their rights. She created a vivid picture of some women as incompetent by profiling a pregnant woman as weak and irresponsible. Although she viewed herself as a woman, she did not fit into the distinctions she provided here. She wrote in terms of when “a woman” commits this wrong. She continued by using “we” to mean “society,” such as, “if we allow abortion,” and “it [abortion] should not be tolerated by us.” Aimee Lynn seemed to be arguing for choice at one point, saying the “woman's choice not the man's” and “it is her decision,” but not really, since she portrayed the woman as not always able to make the correct decision.

Possibly the most telling gendered position about herself, or other women in society, was the sense of vulnerability portrayed in the longest piece she included in her writer's packet, a short story of 1105 words, titled “Trapped!” In the story, a young woman was kidnapped, blindfolded, thrown into a car trunk, held captive in an isolated cabin in the woods, and eventually killed. This story is told as if all was happening from the perspective of the woman. Aimee Lynn never explicitly stated in the story that the protagonist was female, but she told me in an interview that she
attempted to show the protagonist as a woman in these two ways: the protagonist did not try to stand up against her male assailants, and she saw fleeing as the only means of freeing herself. Every plan the kidnapped person devised involved flight as a means of freedom, and even at the moment of her death, the young woman did not attempt to fight her oppressors but merely accepted her fate. Aimee Lynn was quick to show that though the protagonist's body was weak, her mind remained extremely active. The mind was powerful and tried to gain a sense of control and freedom. However in the end, “reality” set in: The girl went from saying “I won't accept it, I can't accept that I'm going to die,” to her final lines, “Now I close my eyes and finally accept the inevitable.”

In her structured journal entries, Aimee Lynn had lessons for women who were in vulnerable positions. For example, in one entry she wrote:

If one day, a woman stumbles into an abusive relationship, she will never get out without confidence. But if she has pride and is confident that she will survive, she will conquer her fears. That woman will be able to free herself with the confidence she knew she had.

Interestingly, these portrayals of women as victims contested strongly with her own view of herself.

**Aimee Lynn in Place**

Place was another way that Aimee Lynn sought to be different. In interviews, she focused upon different places, yet this was not present in her writing. Also mentioned earlier under gender, Aimee Lynn wrote the descriptive essay “Coffee Call,” a coffee shop which is located in Baton Rouge. She described Baton Rouge as a place to which she might someday belong. In “Coffee Call,” her
introduction focused on the place of Coffee Call; “the set-up of the building, the clientele, and the feeling it stirs within people.” She also recognized herself as part of the atmosphere of the place. She regionally mentioned Baton Rouge as the place where she hoped to live. In her autobiography, she discussed attending Louisiana State University, like her parents, and eventually working there, as they did. She had developed plans as to where and with whom she would live in Baton Rouge while attending Louisiana State University. Finally, “My Wreck,” her personal narrative, focused on a date on the way back from Bonne Fete in Baton Rouge.

Aimee Lynn also mentioned other local places in which she felt comfortable. She mentioned, within her autobiography and journals, such places outside of New Roads and Pointe Coupee Parish as Livonia, Mamou, and Prairieville.

Aimee Lynn as Catholic

Although Aimee Lynn often sought distinction from others at Catholic High, she was tied to this place and these people. Through being a Catholic herself, she had strong connections to Catholic High School, and several different pieces focused on her identity position as a Catholic. Like Kayla, she was against abortion, in accordance with the stance of the Catholic Church, but she also tended to write thoughtfully about other topics of Catholic interest, even more so than many of the other participants. She addressed the topics of prayer in school settings, cloning, and capital punishment. However, while Kayla seemed to be
relying upon God's will, Aimee Lynn seemed more interested in understanding God's will, as she wrote upon controversial topics.

“Abortion Is Killing!,” mentioned earlier under Aimee Lynn's gendered identity, incorporated not only her gendered position but also her affiliated Catholic identity. Her choice of subject (abortion) was a popular topic, as four participants wrote formal essays on this topic. The second paragraph of Aimee Lynn's argument provided a recitation of the beliefs of her school and the Catholic religion:

Another reason that abortion is wrong is because we are “playing God.” God created us all and gave us dignity. In the Bible, it says that no one has the right to kill anyone else. One of the Ten Commandments is “Thou shalt not kill.” Only God should be able to take a life because he gave us all life.

Her criticism was not only against abortion but against a society that legalized it. She wrote: “Society is becoming more distorted about the fact that abortion is wrong.” Aimee Lynn placed herself strongly in the position of Catholic and thus in the place of Catholic High School.

When it came to some entries in her journal, she was adamantly Catholic. In response to the teacher's prompt to write letters to Governor Foster, Aimee Lynn wrote to Governor Foster addressing the issue of abortion. In this text, she spoke out against the legalization of abortion and her perceived religious and moral ramifications if this law was not changed. In another example, she responded to the prompt: “What role, if any, does prayer have (or should have) in such public forums as school, government, and sports activities?” by writing: “I attend a private school because (partly) I feel the need to pray.” She elaborated, “Praying helps students to focus and rely on God to make not only decisions that involve school
but it influences them to make wise decisions elsewhere in other situations.” In her entry addressed to Charles, the football player who was hurt, she wrote: “God would never put you through something you can't handle.” She also went on to write prayers: “I want them [Catholic's football players] to play hard and give all they've got and let God do the rest.” These prayers were a form of expression within her journal entries which also expressed her position as a Catholic.

**Aimee Lynn as Student**

As a student, Aimee Lynn was active and engaged. A straight “A” student who challenged herself with higher academic classes, she often found herself involved in competitive interplay with other highly motivated students. She participated in formal and non-formal discussions. A skilled debater, Aimee Lynn was actively involved in academic discourse as well as outside discussions, even as she dealt with issues in her journal. Several of my fieldnote entries seemed to demonstrate her vocal involvement with the class. One entry on October 27 read:

> Mark stops by Aimee Lynn's desk as he arrives late to class. He bends down to chide her on her journal format, telling her how to do it “properly.” After an exasperated look back at him, Aimee Lynn pointedly ignores his interruption and continues to write in her journal.

Though sometimes targeted by peers in order to manipulate her into agitation, she remained a strong debater in the classroom setting and easily juggled simultaneously between the tasks of vocal discourse within the classroom and written discourse within her journal entry.
Aimee Lynn as a writer of essays. Aimee Lynn's essays were formatted like Kayla's. “Good vs. Evil” based on Beowulf was an “analytical essay,” in which she supported her assertion with evidence (cf. Applebee, 1984). She wrote her introduction to present the thesis and her three main points. Then she followed with her body paragraph giving evidence to support her main points, and she ended with a conclusion which restated the thesis and the points. Consider, for example, the following sentences from her introduction from her “Good Vs. Evil” essay:

In the epic “Beowulf,” the dominating conflict is good versus evil. Throughout the story, many instances arise where the conflict between good versus evil is evident. This can be found in character, action, and setting. The author uses these elements to create the overall theme that good overcomes evil.

After presenting the three body paragraphs—on characters, their actions, the setting—she had her conclusion which summarized the piece and then repeated, in different words, the three main points. She wrote:

The unknown author of “Beowulf” uses a main conflict of good versus evil through the poem. The theme is developed through the uses of character, action, and setting. These elements are used to create the theme that good overcomes evil. “Beowulf” is a perfect example of how this conflict and theme are intertwined.

Through this essay and the “Sobel” essay, Aimee Lynn too showed that she had mastered this school genre.

Aimee Lynn in journal dialogue. Aimee Lynn's journal entries, much like Kayla's, fell into two more general formats, structured and free-written. Her structured entries were the miniature essays, mentioned earlier, in that she
employed academically accepted structures—introduction, body, and conclusions and support of her assertions with proof or evidence.

However, her free written entries had more formal dialogic tone than those of other participants, using imperative sentences addressed to some known audience, whereas the others stayed with declarative sentences addressed to a more distant and abstract audience. While Kayla tended to present a sentence or two rationalizing her change in topic, usually as an emotional outlet, Aimee Lynn did not ask for permission when she opted to ignore the prompted assignment. She merely wrote “Free Write” or “Free Topic” at the top of her paper. She was much more casual than Kayla in using common slang, even curse words, in her writing. She appeared to be dialoguing with herself at times and to the class as other times.

Summary of Aimee Lynn's Positions

For Aimee Lynn, the most noticeable tension in her writings was that between her position as an unconventional person different from others and her position as someone who followed conventions. Aimee Lynn's gendered positions were manifested in what appeared to be issues about which she was personally concerned, and her concerns stretched from teenaged autonomy to love relationships, to women's roles within society. While she addressed, like Kayla, typical issues of a teenaged girl, such as school dances, clothes, and boys, Aimee Lynn often presented a “different” view of herself within these traditional roles. She also struggled towards autonomy from her parents in some of her writings—to be viewed not as a teenaged girl but as a young woman. None of the other
participants openly pushed the issue of autonomy or questioned parental knowledge as she did. Aimee Lynn observed women in their love relationships, read about love relationships, and described her own love relationships in abstract poetic, even Romantic terms. She also explored the possible positions a woman could hold within society and even the constraints and prejudices, those which she perceived, towards a woman by society.

As Aimee Lynn discussed her own love relationships, a traditional view of love developed within her writings, especially this notion of “true” love and the connecting of two souls. However, she maintained the focus on distinction from others either by engaging in a long-distance relationship with a young man in college or by a form of forbidden love. She tended to focus mainly on her feelings of her experience as expressed through poetry, while Kayla gave more background information and specific causal details including the meeting, courtship, and the eventual break-up.

Aimee Lynn's other identity positions were articulated through positioning of self in place, religion, and academics. She introduced a dichotomized world of “us” and “them” in which she was positioned as “different,” yet the same. Like Schultz's (1999) participants, there was an “oppositional identity” in some writings, for instance her gendered position in her argument piece and some of her poetry while she also created a connected identity in other genres of writing like the Catholic position in her argument and many of her journal entries. Within her understanding of place, Aimee Lynn did not adhere as strongly to Casey's (1993)
“interpersonal here” but seemed displaced in Pointe Coupee, creating a more temporal or transient understanding of place as she found herself “in place” in Baton Rouge, New Roads, Catholic High, and most neighboring towns. She even appeared to be in place on her many vacations. Aimee Lynn believed in the value of the outside world, especially when she held a personal connection to those experiences. Baton Rouge entered into her place, as seen in her descriptive paper, “Coffee Call,” possibly because her parents worked in the city. She moved her interests beyond the boundaries of New Roads seeking something else out there. Another position, religion, was a means of aligning herself with the school and parish while still maintaining her oppositional position to others through argumentation. She argued adamantly in support of Catholic views as supported by the school. Her academic position held the same strong argumentative nature, especially as she interacted with other students in the class. Even her journal entries tended to move away from the expected form as she “rebelled” against her teacher’s choice of topics.

**Bailey: Taking Care of “School, Hannah, and Other Things”**

As Bailey admitted in one of her senior year journal entries, “I really don't know much about what is going on in the world, so I'm going to talk about what is going on in my life.” Bailey’s senior year was full of change. After spending most of her time positioned as a daughter, teenager, student, dancer, or girlfriend, Bailey suddenly added mother to her gendered identity positions.
I described Bailey based on fieldnotes taken on August 25, prior to the birth of her daughter, Hannah. The description follows:

There was Bailey, sitting frontward, full-bellied, in a petite student desk where I was sure she could not fit. She still wears her school uniform. She has the jumper in the plaid blue and green. The jumpers don't have a fitted waist and look more like little girl dresses hitting just above the knee. Bailey has modified the dress to accommodate her full-term belly. She is a pretty girl with long blondish hair, no highlights, and is no longer wearing make-up. She wears her white socks up to her knee and running shoes.

Another student and mother of a one-year-old daughter, Kathy, pushed her desk back to meet Bailey where the discussion centers on Bailey's ensuing due date and the latest meeting with the doctor. Other girls, who filter into the class, stand or sit in nearby desks to listen with endless interest to the stories of how Bailey had slept the night before, whether the baby was kicking much that day, or how uncomfortable Bailey had become now that the baby had dropped. Then the shrill tone of the bell releases Bailey from the students’ attention as they slowly move towards their permanent seats, though many have already moved to sit nearer to her. Bailey opens her journal notebook and turns her own attention to the journal prompt written on the overhead.

Bailey, an above-average student and an expectant and then actual mother during my study, had spent her elementary days at LaBarre Elementary School, a public school, before transferring to Catholic High School at the beginning of her middle school years. Upon entering Catholic High, she expected to have a difficult transition. She believed that the students who attended this parochial school would not accept her into their groups since she had attended a public school. To her surprise, the first day of class she found many interested and friendly peers who made her transition much easier than she had anticipated. She was a Catholic, and she and her family did attend St. Mary's Catholic Church, which was the affiliate church for the Catholic High School. She was reared in a small neighborhood across from False River on the border of New Roads. As a child, she became
involved in dance, which became an important part of her life. She found her niche on the Stingerettes dance team, using experience in dance as a connector to her new school.

She lived in Maringuoin with her father, who was from that town and was a graduate of Catholic High School, and her mother, who was from New Orleans. Her parents, who had met on a blind date while at Louisiana State University, dropped out of the university at the age of 19 and married in Pointe Coupee Parish. After Bailey was born, her mother found that she was unable to have any more children. As Bailey explained, “She wanted more children, but was thankful that she was able to have me.” Bailey had mixed feelings about being an only child when she was younger, but said that she later enjoyed the privacy of being an only child as well as the attention from her parents. Bailey’s life, however, went through a change after (as she put it) a “big shock.” She and her boyfriend, Josh, found out on February 3, that they were going to be parents. While her own parents adjusted slowly to the idea that their only child was pregnant, Bailey, apprehensive at first, soon embraced her new role as mother. On September 10, she gave birth to a daughter. Bailey continued to maintain a close relationship with the baby’s father and kept a positive attitude in raising her daughter. “No matter what happens, this baby will be loved unconditionally by many people—parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts, and uncles.”

She considered herself to be an active participant in school activities; she valued her friends, and she found Catholic High a comfortable setting for learning.
Yet in her journals and her interviews, she also mentioned the gossip about her personal life that accompanied the small-town environment of Catholic High School and the town of New Roads. She looked forward to college, where she could escape what she considered to be “fake” people who talked behind her back. She hoped to attend Louisiana State University, like her parents, and planned to become a pediatrician or nurse working with children. She planned, also, to keep in close contact with her friends and family in New Roads. She and Josh remained close with each other and were both committed parents to their daughter, Hannah.

Bailey gave me her writings for her senior English class, which consisted of two writer packets, and a number of journal entries. She also provided her autobiography, written in her junior year. In her first packet, Bailey included a descriptive paper, “My Car” (354 words); a fable, “Monkey Jealousies” (450 words); a literary analysis, “Lennie” (453 words); a process paper, “Putting on a Dance Review” (450 words); and a personal narrative, “My First Whipping” (510 words). In her second packet, she included an argument, “Drunk Driving” (395 words); a literary analysis, “Holden Caulfield” (555 words); an informative paper, “Scoliosis” (521 words); a short story, “The Black Cat” (350 words); and a problem-solution “School Violence” (379 words). In addition, Bailey included 34 senior journal entries (averaging 158 words) and an autobiography (6395 words) written her junior year. Of the papers submitted for the writers’ packet, “Lennie” was written her sophomore year.
As the writer of these texts, Bailey assumed various positions which were sometimes in contestation with others and at other times collaborative. These pieces show the unique positioning which Bailey creates and also shows how she is positioned by society. I begin with gender, her most apparent position, and then move to positions of place, religion, and academics.

Bailey as Young Woman

Bailey filled many gendered roles in her world as a young woman—a daughter, a teenaged girl, a dancer, a girlfriend, a mother—all of which were an integral part of her authored identity. Some roles connected, but others seemed to be in conflict. She was positioned as daughter and as a teenaged girl; yet these positions also created tensions as she moved into her role as a mother. While Kayla and Aimee Lynn held similar positions such as teenaged girl, daughter, and girlfriend, Bailey's focus differed because of her experience as a mother. She also held a position as a dancer.

Bailey as daughter. Bailey's identity as a daughter emerged in many of her writings where she focused on memories of childhood as she moved into motherhood. Unlike Aimee Lynn, who actively fought for autonomy, Bailey appeared content in her position within the family. The daughter of parents filling conservatively-gendered roles at home, she spoke of looking to her father for support and guidance in decision-making matters, while she portrayed her mother as the “keeper” of such maintained conservative domestic domains as schoolwork, social activities, and discipline. One experience, which she included in her
autobiography and wrote about again in her personal narrative, illustrated these divisions. She described an experience when she was punished for riding her “big wheel” after church and ruining her “church” clothes. She attempted to gain support from her father before braving her mother. When her father refused to intervene, she went inside the house to her mother, who was waiting behind the door with the fly-swatter. The conservative roles that Bailey had her parents play in these written memoirs were significant in her construction of herself as daughter and even eventually herself as a mother. In her text-based interview, she said, “Dad is always the one I go to first. Even when I got pregnant, I went to my dad first just because. . . I am ‘Daddy's little girl.’” Her personal narrative ended with this insight: that “my first whipping taught me a valuable lesson. It taught me to obey my parents.” In her text-based interview, she mentioned that this story had become part of the family story-telling repertoire and was often told at gatherings. To some extent, through this story and its “lesson,” she also seemed to be addressing an aspect of her own identity as a mother.

In “My Car,” a descriptive piece, Bailey again demonstrated not only the importance of her father in her life, but also the knowledge and authority she attributed to her parents. In this piece, she wrote about the car her father purchased for her, in part as she explained in an interview, as a result of her giving birth to a child: “It was kind of weird because I was supposed to get a car after I graduated; then when I had the baby, they [my parents] had to get me a car.” In the essay, she explained that she consulted her father, whose knowledge and opinion were greatly
valued and then accepted and applied his experience in her inspection of the car: “My dad took me to the car dealership and showed me the car he was thinking about purchasing.” Her father’s role pointed out the features that she overlooked—full back seat that folded down and led into the trunk, manual windows, automatic, and cruise control.

When she jumped into the car, she noticed features for herself—every detail from its “warm tan and cloth seats” to its “smooth, gray steering wheel.” During the test drive, she described the emotions which overcame her—“freedom,” “control,” “worry-free,” and “superior.” After acknowledging her own maturity in inspecting the car for safety instruments, like air bags, she had satisfied her father and could then feel the excitement of driving her own car. The car gave her freedom and control. She wrote:

Driving this car made me feel superior and in control of the road. I pushed the horn and heard a loud beeping noise that made my heart pound from excitement. I immediately turned the cruise control on and stretched my legs. My body felt completely relaxed. I still remember the way my car made me feel the first time I drove it. It is a feeling that will stay with me forever.

Like the “My First Whipping” narrative, this essay drew from her gendered identity as a daughter—obeying authority and applying her parents’ lessons. While her father encouraged her towards making decisions on her own, she still turned to him for approval.

Bailey’s position as daughter again surfaced in her argument, “Drunk Driving.” Bailey began by introducing a problem—people who drive under the influence of alcohol. She then presented solutions—ways to prevent being killed by
an intoxicated driver. Each paragraph discussed one solution, including “never enter a vehicle with someone who has been drinking,” “wear a seat belt,” and “avoid traveling after midnight.” She constructed a clear-cut solution to the problem in the conclusion; “wearing seat belts,” “not driving after midnight,” and, “designate a driver.”

**Bailey as teenaged girl.** Similarly to Kayla and Aimee Lynn, Bailey focused on many of the typical interests of a teenaged girl. Bailey seemed to be positioned quite often as a teenaged girl in her junior autobiography and her senior journals. “The autobiography was . . . really fun to write because [I] just get to tell about all the crazy things that has happened to [me]. And, we got to pick our own chapters. So, it's not like we were pressured,” she explained in her text-based interview. In her autobiography, she gave examples of beautiful women, fattening foods, and exciting clothes for the chapters in which she shared her “likes” and “dislikes.” Many of her pictures focused on her along with a group of friends posing in their Stingerettes outfits with text that showed her concern for inter-squad rivalries. For example, underneath the picture of her squad, she had written: “She was a very good [squad] captain, but for some reason our squad would always fight with her. Everyone tried to rule the squad instead of letting her do her job.” Cheerleading pictures also followed with the girls posed in pyramid formations making silly faces and holding two fingers, or rabbit ears, up behind each other's heads. She also devoted one chapter to a showcase of different school dances she attended—what she wore and with whom she attended each one. This topic, which somewhat
reflected the content of Finders's (1996b) participants' teen magazines, also appeared in many of the other participants' autobiographies.

In her journal, Bailey used some features of writing associated with female teenagers (e.g., Rubin & Green, 1992, 1995) and addressed a number of topics that seemed to be typical concerns of adolescents. Bailey, like her classmates, used exclamation marks, heart symbols, and underlined words for emphasis in her journal entries. The content also showed her position as a teenaged girl. For instance, in one entry, after telling her first wish (not to “die of a heat stroke”) and before her third wish (“a wonderful, stress-free weekend”), she said, “My second wish is that whenever I get home today, after fourth hour, that my mom will have me a good lunch because I am starving.” She continued: “Leaving early is also good because I don’t have to eat school lunch everyday. I can go home and pick my lunch. . . . I would ban nachos and cheese from our lunchroom. Nachos are a snack, not a meal!” Food was a topic that ran through her writing; and another topic she often mentioned was also typical of teenagers: being “phony.” She referred numerous times to her distaste for “those people” whom she considered “fake,” or “phonies.” She indirectly defined phonies as teenagers who identity-switch, to take on different personalities in different situations (cf. Horowitz, 1995). For example, she said, “The most important quality that any one can have is the quality of just being yourself. I, for one, do not have a problem being myself around others. I have begun to be myself and express myself better and more openly.” She seemed not to consider that she too switched from being a mother to being a daughter to being
teenager girl depending on the context of her situation, or writing. These tensions were thus manifested among her multiple and various gendered positions.

Her fable “Monkey Jealousies,” presented some social challenges faced by teenaged girls. This fable was set in a small jungle-town where Chimp, Chunk, and Chewy, three monkeys who were best friends, would “hang-out” at their favorite café, The Vine Valley. One day a beautiful new monkey named Sassy walked into the café. Chimp, Chunk, and Chewy became jealous and began to laugh and gossip about her until the entire café joined in. Sassy left in tears. Feeling instant remorse, the three monkeys went to her home and apologized for their rude behavior, especially because she was new in town. After Sassy accepted their apology, the four monkeys became best friends. In this piece, Bailey stereotyped female-gendered jealousies and emphasized appropriate mode of female dress. She created the stereotypical relationship among girls as a new outsider attempted to join. When a “new face appeared,” the monkeys responded by saying, “She can't just barge into our territory.” They went on to make fun of the new monkey by criticizing her dress, make-up, hair, and accessories: “Would you look at her? . . . Who does she think she is with her fancy clothes and rich jewelry?” Even the name that Bailey chose for the new monkey, “Sassy,” held a negative, female connotation. As she focused on the construction of a gendered monkey, she was also able to portray more of her understanding of a teenaged girl in her writings.

Finally, in “Holden Caulfield,” one of her two literary analyses, Bailey focused on behaviors of Holden, the teenager who was the central character of
*Catcher in the Rye*, by J. D. Salinger (1951/1991). As she explained, his behavior of trying to act older was a result of his loneliness and need for parental attention. In this analysis, Bailey's focus on Holden's youth took on a cautionary tone as she explained his problem as “trying to act older than his real age.” She made the following points: “Holden always tries to act older than his real age,” “Holden has a negative attitude,” and “he attempts to buy alcohol and cigarettes.” In her text-based interview, she said of Holden, “He's just a teenager trying to grow up too fast.”

**Bailey as a dancer.** Bailey's position as a dancer emerged strongly in two specific writings, which tended to show her affiliations. First, dancing showed her affiliation to Catholic High School as she became a Stingerette. But it additionally affiliated her somewhat with Baton Rouge, where she was a dance student, a dance teacher's assistant, and she also prepared dance reviews at the Centroplex for her students. In writing about dance, she was in a position of authority; she had the authority that comes with knowledge and experience.

Bailey's extra-curricular activities focused to a large extent around her interest in dance. She had been involved with dance for 13 years, and she had attended four different dance schools, mostly in Baton Rouge. At the time of this study, she assisted her own dance teacher with the training of the younger girls from September to May, and she organized the recitals and the dance review at the end of the dance season. Bailey had been a cheerleader for one year when she was in the ninth grade, but she hated cheering as well as cheerleading camp. Always on
the bottom of the cheering formations, such as pyramids, Bailey felt that her body was being taken for granted instead of accented, as it was in dance. “It wasn’t the fact that they (the girls on her shoulders) were heavy, but it was so hot and they left big red marks all over my shoulders,” she explained in her text-based interview. “I guess I learned my lesson because in tenth grade I didn’t try out again!” Instead, she put her dance experience to use at school by joining the Stingerettes Dance Team.

Bailey’s junior year autobiography showed aspects of her position as a dancer as well as mentioning again that she disliked cheerleading. She decorated her autobiography cover with stickers portraying happy, little ballerina girls, each with flowing hair, a pink and white dress, or tutu, posed in a dance position, and sometimes with fairy or angel wings. Butterflies and musical notes surrounded these ballerinas. Bailey also focused on her dancing and Stingerettes activities within her chapters. Her chapter on dance showed her at various ages in different costumes and poses. She said, “My major hobby is dancing. I love to dance, and I’ve been in dancing class for about thirteen years.” She continued on to discuss each of her dance instructors and analyze her organization and skill as an instructor. Her chapter on Stingerettes showed pictures of her and her friends in posed formations. She mentioned: “I love to perform at half time, and I enjoy hearing everyone clap after our performance.” The Cheerleading chapter said, “J.V. [Junior Varsity] Cheerleading was a miserable time in my life, and I like to think that nothing like that will ever happen to me again.”
In her procedural paper, “Putting on a Dance Review,” Bailey wrote with authority from her personal, lived experience in dance. She described in great detail how to organize a dance review. She began with the following:

Dancing is my favorite activity. I have been taking dance for thirteen years, and each year I perform in a dance review. Putting on a dance review takes a lot of hard work and preparation. There are many things that have to be done if a dance review is going to be successful.

She continued her explanation for a page and a half (much longer than her other texts) of how properly to produce a dance recital. This length and detail was not typical of her writing or of the other process papers that I received from the other participants. “I've been dancing for 13 years... and this is my last year. It [the paper] could have been six pages long... if I had gone into detail,” she mentioned later in the text-based interview. She used details such as “most dance reviews are held at places like the Riverside Centroplex or the Louisiana State University Union,” “a tap, ballet, and jazz dance should be taught to each class performing,” and “the lighting of the stage will be set at the rehearsal, and each song will have a different lighting to fit the performance.” With her connection to dance and the sense of pride and authority she felt in this situation, she wrote with a sense of authority and attention to detail. I noticed, however, that she kept her attention on procedural matters and did not include personal anecdotal elements from her own experience. She wrote consistently in third person as required in the guidelines, and did not shift to first person.

**Bailey as a girlfriend.** As a girlfriend to Josh, Bailey often mentioned in her junior autobiography and senior journal her emotional and close relationship with
her boyfriend, who was her daughter's father. Her writings revealed her place in the lives of her boyfriend and his family and their place in her life. Kayla seemed to be positioned almost as a traditional girlfriend whose interactions with the boy were centered on their feelings for and responses to each other. Bailey, however, seemed to be positioning herself within her boyfriend's life in a permanent manner, even eventually as a wife.

Bailey's identity position as a girlfriend was apparent both her junior and senior years in her autobiography chapters and journal entries as she discussed daily events which involved her boyfriend, Josh, and his family. In an autobiography chapter devoted to becoming a parent, she wrote in terms of “me and Josh” as a couple. She wrote for example: “At first we didn't want to tell my parents,” and “we know that things are going to be very hard for us, but me and Josh are going to be the best parents we possibly can.” Her final chapters were devoted to her boyfriend’s little brother and sister from his father's second marriage. “Since I have no brothers and sisters, Rachel and Joey will be the only true aunt and uncle of our baby,” she wrote. She treated these children as her nephew and niece, mentioning that their baby would grow up together with these two children. In one journal entry she wrote: “Saturday night we decided to go by Mr. John Bousche's victory party. We felt like we had to go because he is Josh's daddy's boss.”

In another journal entry she wrote:

Friday, my grandparents came down from Layfette [Lafayette] to see the baby. They spent the night and left Saturday afternoon. Friday night I ate at
Josh's dad's house. Saturday, I went to Josh's mom's with Hannah. We had a lot of fun, and we spent the night. . . . The next day, me and Josh made an evening hunt and killed nothing. I went home and ate gumbo and then went to bed.

“The Black Cat,” her short story, was based on a dream Josh shared with her.

During the text-based interview, Bailey explained:

My boyfriend—he claims this happened to him when he was a little kid. And that was the funny thing when we first started dating. He told the story to me and my family, and we just thought it was so funny. But he's so serious about it. Even today, he will claim it happened.

The story was about a seven year-old boy named George who, after being told by his mother to clean up his room, threw his toys under his bed before going to sleep. That night he was awakened by a tug on his leg, and a strange cat wearing small, round glasses appeared. Assuming he was asleep and dreaming, George again closed his eyes. Suddenly to the little boy's terror, his toys came flying out from under the bed. Frozen in fear and unable to call out to his mother, George hid his head under the pillow. The next morning when his mother woke him, the toys were still scattered over the floor. In this dream written into a fable, she demonstrated her relationship with Josh as a girlfriend, and seemed to make his experience a part of their shared experiences.

**Bailey as mother.** Bailey first began writing from a mother's position in her autobiography from her junior year as she prepared herself for parenthood. She then continued this position in her senior journal entries sometimes directly addressing the teacher, who also had young children.
In her early journal entries, there was a new identity for Bailey to explore, an expectant mother and then an actual mother. These entries were often short, structured essays in response to a specific prompt. Bailey sometimes alluded to such pregnancy-related situations as being warm in the room or being hungry or physically uncomfortable during the last month of her pregnancy. For example, one prompt asked, “If I were in charge of this school, I would change. . .” to which she replied, “I would build a bigger bathroom,” “I would make sure everyone had turbo air conditioning systems,” and “I would then ban nachos and cheese from the lunchroom.” The perspective seemed to shift somewhat within her journal entries after the baby was born.

After her return to school, her point of view was more that of a parent. For instance, when prompted, “Knowing that there are tests available to let you know if you are genetically predisposed to developing such diseases as cancer, would you take the test? Why or why not? If you took the test, what would the knowledge do for you?” Bailey responded that “it [knowledge from genetic coding] could also help my children know what [diseases] they would be facing later on in life.” Another prompt read: “Do you believe that parents, organizations, or government agencies should censor some materials from students under 18 years of age?” She responded: “I wouldn't want my daughter to see certain magazines or movies, until I had prepared her for what she was going to see.” A final example gave the prompt: “Do you think prayer had a big effect in school and other public forums?” She responded: “Whenever my daughter starts school, I want her to have prayer.”
None of the other participants included any discussion of possible effects on their future children.

Toward the end of the semester, entries in her journal suggested a certain familiarity with her audience and took a conversational tone. She seemed to take on more personal freedom of choice and authority when she wrote these entries. In two of these, she actually addressed the teacher directly, which is not usually done in a writing journal unless a dialogue journal is explicitly created. She began to discuss more openly her pregnancy, childbirth experience, and new role as mother. She described in one journal entry the birth of Hannah. She wrote:

On September 10, 1999, I went into labor. Labor began at 2:00 a.m. My contractions were about 45 minutes apart. Over the next few hours, they began to increase in speed. By 11:30, they were 4 and 5 minutes apart. . . . I had my little baby girl at 4:19 p.m. Her name is Hannah Maria. She weighed 7 lbs, 2 oz. and was 19 3/4 inches long. We left the hospital the next afternoon around 5:00 p.m. Having Hannah was painful but well worth it!

For another journal entry, she was prompted, “My pet peeves are. . . “ She responded with “my pet peeves are when I'm at my house changing my daughter's diaper and the telephone rings. I can't just stop what I'm doing because then she'll get poop everywhere.” Bailey's familiar tone became increasingly more apparent in her these entries as the year progressed and she became more comfortable with her role as mother.

She even seemed, at times, to disregard the prompt as Kayla and Aimee Lynn had done. She, however, tended to excuse herself. For instance, on one occasions, she and the other students were asked to write a short story. She wrote:
“I really can't concentrate on it so I'm going to tell you what happened yesterday. Yesterday, Hannah had her two month doctor's appointment.” She continued to describe her new role as a mother, especially as it contrasted and conflicted with her role as a student and teenager. On another occasion, she was prompted: “What is something that is going on in the world that you think deserves publicity?” She wrote:

I really don't know too much about what is going on in the world, so I'm going to talk about what is going on in my life. . . . I have to stop [doing my homework] several times to tend to Hannah. After that, I still have to eat, bathe, and prepare myself and Hannah for bed. Lately she has been sleeping pretty well, but some nights she decides to keep me up all night. These nights are pretty rough, but I try not to let them get the best of me.

Later in the year, she was prompted to write about a guest speaker from Angola Prison. Her entry, however, read:

Another thing that happened this week is that Hannah started laughing a lot. She is so cute whenever she laughs at me. All you can see is her cute little gums. She even makes noises when she laughs. Last night, I took her in the bathroom with me while I was taking a bath. She was sitting in a little bouncy seat. I put my white face cream on my face, and then I looked at her. All of a sudden, she began to laugh and smile. It was the cutest thing I've ever seen. You can tell that she focuses very clearly. She knows who I am, I can tell by her expressions, and that makes me feel great.

This was often seen when she would share aspects of her day, which usually involved caring for her child in the mornings and evenings, herself, attending high school during the day, and attending technical school in the evenings. These daily events seemed to prompt her intense reflections.
Bailey in Place

Place was identified in several ways as Bailey positioned herself which her writings in the place of small-town New Roads and in the place of public school and Catholic High School. Louisiana also appeared in some of her writings. For the most part, Bailey seemed to understand these places as “regional and interpersonal” as described by Casey (1993). Both Kayla and Aimee Lynn, also experienced the “regional here,” yet in different ways. Aimee Lynn especially tended to experience the friction between positions in place as they are also reflected through her other identity positions. Bailey appeared more content as a member of New Roads.

Bailey in place in New Roads. In her text-based interview, Bailey explained that her fable, “Monkey Jealousies,” was based on situations that were very much a part of her life, and the fable was her interpretation of how her small town reacted to new-comers. As discussed earlier with respect to her gendered identity as a teenaged girl, “Monkey Jealousies” is about Sassy, a monkey, who moved into a small jungle-town. Chunk, Chimp, and Chewy, three monkeys who are best friends, were jealous and apprehensive of Sassy, and they made fun of her. In the end, the four monkeys ended up best friends.

In this fable, Bailey's positions of place and gender became apparent as she set her story in a parallel small-town environment with all the routine and insider knowledge of details within the story as there seemed to be in New Roads. She focused on routine: “Everyday they had the same routine” and “They encountered the same monkeys.” She emphasized this familiarity and insider knowledge. For
example, the characters knew other characters' names and knew places in the town: “They saw Clyde, a local police cow, and decided to ask him if he knew where Sassy lived. ‘She lives on Banana Split Lane next to Mrs. Rosey,’ he tells them.” Bailey, to some extent, also assumed that her audience would tie the place and routine in the story to places and routines in New Roads when she said, for instance, “They always hung out at their favorite café” and “They were against new-comers to their hangout.” In text interviews, Bailey explained that she was referring to a specific pizza parlor frequented by her friends and other students of Catholic High School. Bailey wrote: “Her makeup was running and her nose was red from crying. ‘How could you do that to me,’ said Sassy. ‘I’m new in town, and you don't even know me.’” She mentioned in her text-based interview that she included these features because “you see a lot of people getting picked on. When I was pregnant. . . I knew there was talk.” At the end of her fable, Bailey provided the moral, “Never judge a book by its cover,” yet her story also incorporated other issues of gendered jealousy and cruelty towards others associated with living in a small community.

Bailey in place in school (public or parochial). Place was relevant in many of the chapters from her autobiography dealing with such places as her school, her neighborhood, her family's camp on the False River. A camp on False River represents personal and social freedoms to the people who went there, not to mention the relationships and family unity fostered there and the quality of time spent there at those sites. She showed, and wrote about, many pictures, which
included the town and the schools (both public and private) as well as her family at the camp. Bailey found place in public and parochial school.

“School Violence,” a problem solution paper, was approached by first explaining the problem of violence in the schools and then giving possible solutions for the schools to take action against this violence. After an introduction, her first body paragraph gave a summary of the types of violence that were happening in the schools, both locally and globally. The next paragraph focused on one particular solution, enforcement of the Zero Tolerance Policy, which requires principals to file criminal charges and expel students involved in six or more offenses. The final body paragraph offered another solution, an electronic security system or metal detector. An issue of place came through because of what was not mentioned in her paper. In her first body paragraph, she dichotomized school violence according to place, “here” and “there.” She mentioned that “here” at least four acts of violence had occurred. “Since 1994, there have been at least four acts of violence in schools in Pointe Coupee Parish that have made the news,” she wrote. What she did not mention was that she and her classmates had witnessed the aftermath of an attempt by a few boys in her class to place a drug into a pregnant teacher's drink at Catholic High School. A similar incident happened at a neighboring public school as well. In her text-based interview, she mentioned that she had created this as a speech the previous year. In the speech, she had many more relevant details describing local examples of school violence: “It was funny. I went to the library in Livonia and I found all this stuff about Pointe Coupee. . . [I
wrote about events that were happening] far away because I did a lot of soul searching. I just wrote about Columbine [in my paper] because I was just scared.” Bailey eliminated many details, which were a strong part of her speech.

**Bailey as Catholic**

Bailey, like four of the other participants, was born to both a Catholic mother and father. She devoted two chapters in her autobiography to religion; one was for religion in general and the other for her First Communion. She discussed each of the religious ceremonies in which she had participated: baptisms, First Communion, and the anticipation of confirmation. She wrote: “On April 23, 1999, I am going to make confirmation. I have been preparing for this day for about six months now. I attended home sessions, retreats, and an interview with Father Michael at St. Mary's.” She also wrote: “Confirmation is very important to me because it makes me an adult member of the church. This is the time when I get to decide for myself whether or not I want to be part of the Catholic Church community.” She included pictures of her First Communion, one of her with the priest and one of her with her parents. Holidays often centered around religious meaning.

Religious identity came through in many of her journal entries, especially when she received assigned topics related to the issues discussed in their religion classes. Some of these topics were prayer in school, genetic cloning, “playing God,” the death penalty, and moral values she expressed such as lying, cheating, and acting “phony.” To one prompt, “Considering the advances in science and
technology, what responsibilities do scientists have to society in regard to the
development of technology and research. How far is too far,” she responded:

Scientists need to be aware of what they are doing. . . . The advances in
childbirth are ridiculous. Today people can decide the sex, hair color, eye
color, and many other things for their children. I don't think God intended
for mankind to be in control of these things. Humans, in my opinion, are
trying to play God. They are trying to take control of things that should only
be controlled by the Man upstairs. . . . Humans need to sit back and let God
handle such things as these.

Another prompt allowed her to discuss prayer in schools and other public forums.
She wrote: “I feel better when I start the day off with a prayer, and I think everyone
should be exposed to the idea of prayer.” She then, in the same entry, switched to a
related topic, capital punishment. She said, “[In religion class], we had a discussion
about capital punishment. I don't think we have the right to kill people, but they
should be punished. You should do to others, what you would have them do to
you.”

Bailey as Student

Bailey was an above-average student without academic problems who was
active in classroom discussions and tended to make A's and B's in her schoolwork.

In my fieldnotes on August 25, I observed Bailey as she wrote a piece for the
teacher that would be used to assess her writing skills. The following description is
based on these notes:

Bailey is now writing intently. She rereads as she writes. Mrs. Katie [the
teacher] continues to organize papers at her desk. Bailey does not seem to
be aware of the class anymore. She tends to have a pained look on her face
as if this is a difficult task, writing. However, I see more rustling and
movement now; Bailey continues to work. A few students have started to
put their heads on the desk. Others are entertaining themselves, looking at
other work in notebooks or rereading their essays. In the hallways, the noise begins to grow. It is getting close to the end of class. Many of the students, but especially Bailey, seem to take this writing diagnosis seriously. She seems to show high level of maturity, patience, and perseverance in her writing today.

She attended school throughout her pregnancy and was present in school up until the day she went into labor. She was out of school for only six weeks after the birth, but she kept up with her school assignments during that time of adjustment. For her English class, she produced the various kinds of school writing that were assigned throughout the year, and she tended most often to follow conventions associated with the forms.

Her two literary essays, like those of the other participants, for instance, were quite conventional in terms of what is typically written in secondary English classes in American schools. They were “analytic essays,” discussed earlier—papers in which the student makes a particular claim and then supports it with evidence. Her first essay, dealing with Lennie from *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937/1986), supported a claim that “Lennie's characteristics [dangerous and innocent] helped to drive the action, and they made the book more interesting.” She also focused her supporting examples in the paper on his dependent behavior and obsession for “soft things.” Here is how she began that essay:

In the book *Of Mice and Men*, by John Steinbeck, Lennie is one of the main characters. Lennie helps to drive the action, and he is portrayed by many different characteristics. Lennie is a man of tremendous size and strength he has the mind of a young child, and an obsession for soft things. These things make Lennie a very interesting character.
Bailey had learned to point out three elements in the introduction, and then she would have a paragraph on each. In this case, the elements were (1) his size and strength, (2) his childlike mind, and (3) his obsession for soft things. She would have an essay, then, with five paragraphs—an introduction paragraph, three body paragraphs (based on the three elements she introduced), and a concluding paragraph. In her essay dealing with Holden, the main character from J.D. Salinger's (1951/1991) *Catcher in the Rye*, Bailey's thesis was that Holden, who drives the action, has three major characteristics. She began her paper just as she began "Lennie":

In the book *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger (1951/1991), Holden Caulfield is one of the main characters. Holden drives the action, and he is portrayed by many different characteristics. Holden is a teenager who tries to act like an adult, is longing for attention, and has a negative attitude towards many things throughout the book. These personality traits make Holden an exciting character to follow.

While these main points about personality traits are supported with examples from the story, she never related these particular characteristics to Holden’s being an exciting character. Rather she seemed to prove that Holden was a sad, lonely teenager, whom she seemed to dislike.

Bailey’s journal entries, as mentioned earlier, could be divided into prompted response, which were short, formal writing responses, and prompt-deviated journals. For the latter, she was the one who gave herself permission to deviate from the prompt. These prompted journal entries were of the structured type discussed earlier for Kayla and Aimee Lynn on such topics as writing assignments which focused on opinion writing such as, “If you could change
anything in the school” and “If you had three things to pull from a fire.” The prompt-deviated entries, for which she gave herself permission to deviate from the assigned topic, were written in a conversational style. For example, she wrote in one entry: “Today we are supposed to write a short story, but I can't concentrate on it so I'm going to tell you what happened yesterday.” She seemed to use this writing to reflect on the different roles she found herself playing, such as Catholic high school student, computer class student in the evenings, mother of Hannah, girlfriend to Josh, almost “daughter-in-law” style to Josh's parents, and daughter to her parents. In one entry, she wrote:

Last night was pretty stressful for me. I have a whole lot of things to do; school, Hannah, computer class, and other things. It seems that everyone has something for me to do, and it really gets stressful sometimes. I really want to be strong and not let it take over but sometimes it's hard.

It was difficult when she just wanted to be Bailey the teenaged girl.

Summary of Bailey's Positions

Tensions developed within Bailey's writings in several areas, mainly those that were gender-oriented as she attempted to balance her various roles as a woman. Bailey was living and writing in the border areas created for her gendered identities as a mother, daughter, teenaged girl, and girlfriend converged. Because of her pregnancy—and becoming a mother as well as her parents’ child, Bailey's gendered position of “daddy's little girl” and her new role as a mother often appeared separated in her writings. I was interested that Bailey did not mention her
pregnancy or birth of her baby in any of her formal papers, including then in only her senior year journal entries and her junior year autobiography. In her interview, she also mentioned that a friend who also was a teenaged mother had commented that it was “weird” that Bailey had to ask permission from her mother to take her own daughter trick-or-treating.

Bailey seemed to miss the normal routine of just being a teenaged girl. Because of her responsibility of taking care of her baby before and after school, she lost the time that she would have had to spend with her friends or to go to dance class. She also had chosen to take on computer training in case she was not able to attend college immediately as she had hoped. She would be preparing herself for a career. These journal entries appeared to show frustration with her not being able to “just have fun.” Again, her formal papers reflected her role as a teenager.

Similar to her gendered position, Bailey had other positions which came into conflict with each other. Instead of choosing between the possible identity positions, she tended to reflect different positions through different genres of her writings. Other positions—place, Catholic, and academic—also contained some border areas where she struggled to balance different facets of her identity. For example, her positions of place contained both a “here” and “there.” In her argument, “here” and “there” were distinctly separated with “here” representing what Casey (1993) termed as a “regional or interpersonal here” (p. 53-54). The school violence she discussed in her paper took place “there,” but not “here.” Even in her fable “here” was much of her own reality where she could discuss the small-
town tendency to not accept newcomers. Her journal entries disregarded “there,” especially since, as I quoted Bailey in her introduction, she “did not know what was happening in the world.” Instead, she chose to discuss her “here.” As far as her religious position goes, she wrote about current Church issues in her journals when asked. Otherwise, her Catholic religion was a backdrop to her position of place.

Finally as a student, Bailey's journal entries were the most telling as she would give herself permission to deviate from the prompt and move into one of her gendered positions. While Kayla and Aimee Lynn also deviated from the teacher's prompts, Kayla tended to rationalize why she was deviating, Aimee Lynn just did it, while Bailey asked and gave herself permission. At times she actually addressed the teacher directly.

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described three young women mainly in terms of tensions among gendered identity positions as they were revealed at different times in different genres, both academic and non-academic. In this conclusion to the chapter, I first review each young woman's gendered tensions and consider how they are reflective of the literature. Then, I show how the various genres in which the participants have written relate to their identity positions and the tensions there. Finally, I review how these young women are positioned as students in school genres.

Kayla's tensions tended be similar to the cultural phenomenon of strong independent women who tend to lose themselves in a relationship with a man.
Pipher (1994) demonstrated this in her cases of young women who tended to lose themselves, like Ophelia, as they became adolescent women. Aimee Lynn's tensions appeared to relate to the adolescent struggle to be different from others and to be the same as others—concurrently. In this way she was similar to Schultz's (1999) young women who, in their writings showed what she called “oppositional” and “connected” positions. Bailey's tensions appeared to be the contrasting positions she fulfilled as a teenaged mother, a daughter, a girlfriend, a dancer, and a school girl. Like a young mother in Rice’s (2002) study in South Carolina, Bailey also had a strong familial and communal support system.

The various genres in which Kayla, Aimee Lynn, and Bailey wrote also related to their various positions as young women. For Kayla, her scholarship essays and autobiography tended to position her as a leader, yet her creative stories positioned her as a vulnerable girlfriend. Aimee Lynn appeared to be positioned with the most autonomy in her poetry, her fable, and her personal narrative. She appeared more connected to others, however, in her journal and arguments; Bailey appeared to be positioned as an adult and as a mother in the autobiography and journals, yet within her formal papers she remained in an adolescent position. She had the most authoritative point when she wrote her procedural paper on dance.

As students writing in the secondary school genres, the young women had mastered the literary analyses that were expected of them by their teacher. Through miniature essays assigned in their journal and the formal papers they submitted in their writing packets, it appeared that they understood the basic elements of the
genre as well as how to elaborate to make a text a more detailed paper if necessary. However, they often deviated from what the teacher expected for their journals in order to write in a form and about a topic in which they felt less constrained.

Within their autobiographies and Aimee Lynn's poetry, they appeared to have the freedom allowing more positions of their identities to appear. Yet, more interestingly, it was with the formal genres that the three participants were able to present varying subject positions, including some than one might not expect. They merely approached the subjects more indirectly. For example, Aimee Lynn brought out the subject of love in “Sobel.” Bailey’s process paper was written with great authority, though with a procedural or even explanatory tone. Even the fictional writing showed positions within the students’ identities. The fictional stories and fables often held experiences from the students’ lives.
Like Bailey, Kayla and Aimee Lynn, the next three participants also showed
gendered style and content within their writings. However, for them, the
predominant tensions I noted in my analyses were not within the gendered position
but between the gendered and other positions. The position of gender often
converged with another positions, and it was in the interstices that interesting
aspects of the writers' identities emerged (cf. Bhabha, 1994).

Aaliyah: Seeking Inner Beauty and Peace

In one meditation, which tended to reflect her quest for inner beauty and
peace, Aaliyah wrote: “I’m afraid to be in love for fear of being hurt. I’m afraid to
be left behind for fear of getting lost. I’m afraid to show how I feel for fear of being
jeered.” This became a common theme for the light-skinned young creole woman
who was a participant in my study. In the journal where I kept my observation
notes, I used the notes on August 3 to write the following description of Aaliyah in
her English class:

Aaliyah’s light-mocha creole complexion and dark hair stand out in this
classroom of lighter-skinned students, yet she also seems comfortably at
home. She is wearing the traditional uniform, preferring the tan shorts with
her white button-down shirt. She wears little jewelry, except the thin gold
cross around her neck which is hidden as it falls into the opening of her
buttoned shirt.

Aailyah spent her elementary, middle school, and high school days
attending Catholic School. Along with roughly 2% of the Catholic School
population, she considered herself to belong to the group of creoles who had lived for generations in the Pointe Coupee area. She found many white friends at Catholic Elementary and High School, yet she also maintained separate African American and creole friendships outside of school through church and community affairs.

Aailyah was born the third and youngest child to “older parents.” Her sister and brother both lived away from her parents’ home and had begun families of their own. She was the only sibling still living at home. Aaliyah lived within a strong community and family structure which involved both school and church acquaintances. She credited a love of music to her father who was the lead singer of a creole zydeco band called the “Bench-Bar Boogie Band” that often played in Baton Rouge. Her identity as a singer, validated through her church solos and her membership in church choir, began to become important in her school life when she undertook the singing of the National Anthem at the high school football games.

She and her parents lived on Pennsylvania Avenue, which was a location of prestige, even though the street was divided by the railroad tracks, a color divider in New Roads, on the “back” side of town. This area is considered to be mostly populated by non-whites. Her family also co-owned a plantation farm on the outside of the city limits as well as a camp on False River. While her family had not totally assimilated into the white culture, they were not totally in the African American culture either. Aailyah, like other members of her family, often switched
identities between the white culture and the African American culture depending on the context of the situation, similar to Horowitz’s (1995) African American students. Because her family had been in the Pointe Coupee area for over five generations, she would also, in many situations, stand apart as creole, which would mark not only her ties to, but also her uniqueness from, either race. Although in her interviews with me she emphasized her Native American and German blood-lines over her African American, her writing also affirmed African American heritage. Interestingly, she chose the name Aaliyah after the late popular rock singer of African American descent. The name is African and means “Princess.” While her family never had slaves, she cited other creole families who did. In her text-based interview, Aaliyah said:

I don’t know. . . that word [creole] just kind of describes me. We really can’t fit into one category like African American because if I actually went back—I cannot find African in me. Loretta’s [a creole friend] family actually owned slaves. I’m just saying that you can’t force somebody into African American or even white just because they have dark [or light] skin.

After graduation, she hoped to attend college either at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge or Xavier University in New Orleans. She planned to major in biomedical engineering in hopes of becoming a research engineer at Pennington Research Center (in Baton Rouge) or in pre-med in hopes of becoming a pediatrician. She envisioned herself married with two children and living in Baton Rouge.

The writings which Aaliyah submitted were similar to those of the other participants, as far as the specific types of writing required for their writing packets,
yet she also voluntarily submitted a number of poems and a meditation journal. These poems and meditations showed identity positions tied to religious as well as gendered identity. The ten formal pieces which were required in her writing packet were ordered according to the submission date. In her first packet, Aaliyah included a fable, “The Dragon and the Caterpillar” (423 words); a process paper, “‘Jiffy’ Cornbread for the Human Soul” (183 words); a descriptive paper, “The Deck” (337 words); a personal narrative, “The Invisible Wedding” (262 words); and a literary analysis, “Friendship and Betrayal” (328 words). These pieces were mostly religious, gendered, and place-related. Her next packet, however, showed even more religious connections and included one paper whose content focused on race. In the second packet, she included an informative essay, “The Civil Rights Movement” (455 words); a short story, “Brenden and Tyler” (507 words); a literary analysis, “The Epic ‘Beowulf’” (299 words); an argument, “What is That Sound?” (390 words); and a problem-solution paper, “Death Tolls” (312 words). Like the other students, she also included a senior journal (averaging 169 words). She voluntarily submitted an autobiography (2273 words) written her junior year, 20 personal poems written during the last two years (only a few were dated), and 14 meditations written her senior year.

The identity positions suggested by her writings were strongest within the areas of religion and gender, yet there were also positions of place connected with race. Thus, in the sections that follow, I begin with gender and religion and then move, more briefly, to place and race.
Aaliyah as a Young Woman

As a young woman, Aaliyah assumed several different gendered positions in her writing for school and also her writing from home: a teenaged girl, a sister, and a friend.

**Aaliyah as a teenaged girl.** As a teenaged girl, Aaliyah focused some parts of her poetry and some entries in her journal on exploring her feelings, especially towards relationships with boys. While Kayla, Aimee Lynn, and Bailey tended each to focus on, and work through, a specific love relationship, Aaliyah attempted to use her various relationships with others, both friends and love interests, to define herself as a young woman. Through her poetry, she seemed to be seeking some kind of inner peace.

Aaliyah’s poetry included explorations of her feelings and relationships towards others—a pattern noted in research conducted by Ackermann (1993) who studied young women's writings. Her most common theme was unrequited love. For poems on this theme she followed a rhyming format with a conversational rhythm, as shown in this poem titled "Rain" which she began this way:

> Can’t you see me standing here?  
> Can’t you feel my pain?  
> I wanted you to know  
> It was me in the rain.

and ended this way:

> But one thing I know  
> The rain has hidden my pain.  
> I want you to know  
> It was I in the rain.
I noted several recurring stylistic features in her poetry. First, refrains such as “you will never know I loved you,” “I saw you, and you didn’t see me,” “I want to say I love you so,” and “I’ve never had that feeling” were frequent. Second, each piece used first-person pronouns and also used second-person pronouns to address someone directly. And third, she wrote introductions and conclusions that were quite similar to each other but had significant differences as in the first poem and in this one:

I saw you, you didn’t see me.
You looked kind of funny,
Your glasses say on your nose
Your cheek sort of rose
But I knew you were the one. . .
I loved you then
I still do now
But you didn’t see me
And I wonder how.

Aaliyah used her poetry, according to her autobiography, as a way to release “anger, frustration, and heartache.” She hoped that one day she might be able to publish her poetry in order to encourage other girls to write. In her text-based interview, she also talked about the kind of advice that teen magazines give girls:

They say to go tell him how you feel. You know you’re not actually going to tell these people. You don’t want them to look at you like you’re crazy so you keep it to yourself. Mandy and I decided we were going to start writing it down in our journals.

It was interesting that the magazines—“teen ‘zines” as the girls in Finders’s (1997) research called them—were playing a role in the literacy and life of girls in Pointe Coupee, Louisiana, as they had for the younger girls in the Midwest United States.
In her English journal, both gender and age seemed relevant to her call for self-acceptance—a theme that also emerged in Pipher's (1994) study of adolescent girls. Aaliyah wished to be a “better person by loving [herself] and accepting everything about [herself].” It seemed, from what she wrote that she was not very confident in the way that she looked. For instance, she wrote in one entry: “Chances are they [other girls] are prettier and could take my place.” She also said that she regretted “not being able to let myself be seen as a regular girly girl.” Throughout her autobiography, as in her poetry and meditations, positions of gender were reflected through her issues of strength and empathy in the form of friendship and betrayal.

**Aaliyah as a sister.** In the previous chapter, family had played a major role in each of the participants' identity, and it did for Aaliyah, too. She seemed to use her writing to work through some difficulties in her relationships. While Kayla had acted as the oldest daughter by accepting responsibility for the younger children, Aaliyah's role as the youngest child was much different. She developed her relationship with her sister, Marie, who was sixteen years older than she, but the sibling relationship on which she focused mainly in her writing was that with her brother, Antoine, who was eight years older. The relationship with Marie, who had been like another mother to her, seemed to be a nurturing one. As a baby, Marie dressed her in little outfits posing her for photographs. At the time of the study, Marie had two daughters of her own, the younger of whom Aaliyah considered to be like herself in that she was “outspoken, tough, and never [went] to bed on time.”
With her brother Antoine, she had a close but a more volatile relationship which she revealed in her junior year autobiography and a personal narrative, “The Invisible Wedding,” written her senior year. She described him as her best friend but also as someone she could never trust because of his practical jokes. He eloped during her junior year in high school, and the family found out two months later when his wife “let it slip.” Aaliyah was hurt by this revelation, most likely because of her close relationship with Antoine. She thought that she should have been the first person in the family whom he told.

In “Invisible Wedding,” Aaliyah created positions of gender showing her love and belief in her brother, and she described the strength of the bond between her brother and herself. She wrote about this brother, who was "quiet" and "kept to himself," However, this brother whom she trusted so completely deceived her, and that deception caused her much grief, which she seemed to try to express—or work through—in her writing. The disappointment, she said, was to the family—when “we all found out” the deception. In her final paragraph, she returned to a focus on herself by using “behind my back” to describe her feelings about how the marriage took place. She wrote: “I could not believe that Antoine let a big event like this take place behind my back.” “The wedding that we were all anxiously awaiting never took place” because the ceremony filled with friends and family did not occur.

Aaliyah as a friend. While other participants' teenaged identity positions focused on school dances, boyfriends, and clothes, Aaliyah moved towards the belief of "true" friendship girl to girl and boy to girl. While she remembered her
elementary years at Catholic as some of the best years, she believed that she did not have many friends there. Much of her writing was focused on the theme of friendship and betrayal, which was also a prominent topic for the young women studied by Pipher (1994). Aaliyah's responses might be called “connected” or “empathetic responses”—to borrow terms from Gilligan’s (1982), who traced such themes in women's responses to moral dilemmas (cf. Keroes, 1990).

On occasions she argued against the significance of gender as well as race in friendship, talking about her "true" friends, who were both boys and girls and both black and white. Nevertheless, she did use gender as well as race as distinctions in writing about her social life. For instance, she said the boys tried to show off in front of her, but “I show them who wears the pants in the friendship and keep them in line.” She tended to create categories: black friends, white friends; “friends older than me” and “younger outgoing friends”; “friends I tell anything to” (which suggested the category of friends in whom she would not confide).

In “The Dragon and the Caterpillar,” Aaliyah focused on friendship and betrayal. One character, the good-looking male dragon, was described at first as different from others, particularly the giraffe, because he was able to be a "true friend" (and the giraffe was not). This did not last, though, because the dragon betrayed the caterpillar, with whom he had had a special friendship. However, he was forgiven by the caterpillar, who returned to him after undergoing a change from a caterpillar into a beautiful—and female—butterfly. Thus, the return was
metaphorically coupled with the change into a “graceful” butterfly, “black with bright blue, red and yellow dots.” Aaliyah wrote:

The dragon and the giraffe, shocked, ran over and began to marvel at her beauty. The butterfly paid them no attention, and she simply fluttered her wings and batted her eyelashes, and said, "One can not judge a book by its cover," and flew away.

Without the inner-beauty, or moral influence, of the caterpillar, the dragon could not hold onto his own beliefs about their friendship. Aaliyah wrote: “He [the dragon after the Caterpillar left] began to laugh and ridicule others, especially the caterpillar, like the giraffe.” She concluded by writing: “His [the dragon’s] best friend, since birth, had truly needed him and he was not there for her, . . .The butterfly forgave the dragon and the giraffe.”

The other story, “Brenden and Tyler,” repeated connecting through empathy and “true friendship” themes. In this story, Aaliyah had a young man, Tyler, filling a role that is often filled in fictitious as well as other forms of pop culture by a female—that of an unattractive overweight person. Tyler was friends with Brenden, the class valedictorian and school quarterback. When Tyler suspected that Brenden would be leaving town for an out-of-state college, he committed suicide, not bearing to be alone. Brenden then reprimanded the society for not accepting Tyler or being sensitive towards him. Tyler, it seems, was overweight because of a medical condition, and society was wrong for being insensitive to overweight people in general.

She created a similar focus in a literary analysis on Steinbeck’s (1993) Of Mice and Men. Instead of taking the more commonly taught theme that George
saved Lennie from the betrayal of society, she attempted to prove that George betrayed Lennie. She claimed in her introduction that her theme was that “the world does not heed to the need of relationship between people which leads to betrayal.” She wrote, respectively, in her third paragraph and then in the conclusion, “George convinces Lennie to run and he takes the old gun, that was used to kill the lame dog, and shoots Lennie with it, destroying the dream and betraying Lennie’s trust,” and “When Lennie was being hunted, George stood by him and helped him escape but he knew that they would find him, so he betrayed his friend and killed him.” Did Aaliyah’s own experience with feelings of betrayal led her to fixate her attention on the relationship between George and Lennie?

Aaliyah as a Catholic

Aaliyah’s religious position as a Catholic was apparent in a number of different genres: her meditations, some of her poems, one essay, and her journal entries. From my analyses, it seemed to me that, for Aaliyah, the major tension was between her gendered position and her position as a Catholic. Issues would be raised by her position as a young woman, such as issues with her appearance and her relationships, and she attempted to understand them or solve them when she was positioned as a Catholic. Her Catholic position connected her contextually to her race as a creole since creoles in Louisiana are traditionally Catholic and also to her place, a school established for Catholics. For discussing her position as a Catholic, I begin with the meditations.
Unlike any of the other participants, Aaliyah constructed a meditation journal her senior year. The idea of creating this journal was partially drawn from a conversation with a friend. Aaliyah’s meditations were a combination of diary writings and religious pieces such as prayers. Each entry began in the style of "special intentions" prayer by focusing on thankfulness and self-improvement, where she listed three things for which she was thankful and three things that she wished to change about herself or her life. Some of the recurring things for which she was thankful were her life, her health, “[her] strong sense of values and morals,” time with family, and God. Some of the recurring things that she wished to change about herself included being able to forgive others, being more confident, loving herself, and eating less/exercising more. After this, she moved into a diary format of the day’s events, creating a text that ended much like a devotional with a metered prayer in the format as her love poetry. In one she wrote:

I’m afraid to be in love
For fear of being hurt
I’m afraid to be left behind
For fear of getting lost
I’m afraid to show how I feel
For fear of being jeered
Mostly, I’m afraid to hurt my God
For fear of not having (eternal life) his tears.

Aaliyah's religious poetry usually began in the form of a meditation but changed in format to fit the gendered poetry. She became very personal in these writings, and her most common topic was coping with the death of her cousin, who was killed by a drunk driver, and the injustice she felt against the man who killed her. Her religious teachings told her to forgive this man; the Catholic's "right to
life" agenda told her that he was one of God's creatures and a part of humanity. However, her feelings raged against this forgiveness, wondering why God would allow this man to live and an innocent girl to die. She wrote meditations, such as "The Princess," which turned into poetry as a means of understanding the ways in which God works: “When the princess was driving home/There in her car all alone./God took her gentle hand/And now her picture is on my night stand.” She wrote another poem which she called “A Dream” which also dealt with the death of her cousin, a person who had "such style and such grace.” She spoke of the driver of the other car, who "walks around like it is nothing."

Some of these poems were directly addressed to that man who had caused the accident that resulted in their death. For instance, in “Him,” she wrote:

He awoke in a jail cell and he sat and wondered
Why?
Little had he known he had taken two precious lives.
He wasn’t hurt or anything, but why should he complain?
Rumor has it that he often thinks of suicide, not once has he tried.
But there is one who thinks it would help if only she had died.
Whenever I’m alone, I sit and begin to cry
For if only he had taken me;
Their lives would have been spared.
Our lives are here for Christ
And He’s the only reason I’m spared.

While Aaliyah’s religious position on this experience was apparent in many of her meditations and poems, she also assumed a religious position in the argumentative piece titled “Abortion.” However, her approach to this argument stood out from the other participants, since in her introduction, she took the point of view of the unborn child. She argued for right-to-life by adopting this unborn
baby's perspective: “What is that sound? It is coming closer. I feel so scared, Mommy. Help me. Do not let them take my life.” She continued:

I have ten fingers and toes, and I am to be a girl. My breath is getting shorter, and my heart can not beat any longer. It is over, Mommy; what is done is done. You ended my life today; the one you had just begun.

Through this approach, she sought what rhetoricians call *pathos* (e.g., Nelson & Kinneavy, 2003). She also used connective phrases, such as “we, as human beings,” as well as religious terms, such as “human dignity and worth.” She wrote: “Abortion takes away this right [to life]. It prevents the baby from becoming fully human. All humans, regardless of status, have human dignity and worth. Human dignity and worth is important to all, and abortion destroys this dignity and worth.”

While many of the participants assumed the Church’s stance on the issue of abortion, Aaliyah was the only one to create this empathy using the unborn child’s point-of-view.

Her journal tended to incorporate her religious identity with other aspects of her life, especially in lines like these: “Confidence has a lot to do with accomplishment. I am confident when I sing [in church], and when I sing that is how I express what I really feel.” Aaliyah also overlapped religion and place through her family and friends. “My last wish is that myself, and my family and friends may see the face of God on Judgment Day and live with Him forever.”

Religion and age positions were overlapped by such comments as how she would change the school by beginning with a prayer followed by movie time, and she would first save from a burning house her Bible, her meditation journal, and her
poetry about her friends. In journal entry number eight, she wrote a special prayer to a sick classmate. Some of her journal entries also focused on her cousin’s death.

Aaliyah assumed the position of Catholic in her autobiography, written her junior year, where she referred to religious practices and sacraments as well as religious relics. She explained that she was Catholic and stated that one of her most memorable experiences was her first communion when she was in second grade. She wrote: “My whole family was there, and I took pictures with them and the bishop. It was an experience I will never forget.” She also mentioned having received many religious awards from school on Awards Night. She felt some tension in being perceived by her friends as too religious. She said that her friends would laugh at the idea of her being so religious; she “really (was) religious. . . sometimes.” She also wrote about singing in the St. Mary’s choir at church, her love of music stemming from watching her father sing in his zydeco band.

**Aaliyah in Place**

Like the writers described in the previous chapter, Aaliyah drew heavily upon the regional places of the South, Louisiana, Pointe Coupee, New Roads, and False River for her narrative and descriptive writings. Louisiana culture had also been a focus for Kayla and Bailey, and, to some extent, Aimee Lynn. Aaliyah’s focus fell directly on the places and traditions which held important connections to her family, such as her plantation farm outside of New Roads and her camp on False River. Though the river was mentioned by others, only one other participant, Elle, whose case follows, focused as strongly on a camp as a place of refuge.
The plantation was owned jointly by her family and some friends, the Manses, and this plantation setting was a significant part of her place position as it was reflected in her junior year autobiography. This joint ownership was also significant since the Manses, as well, considered themselves racially to be creole. These positions of place came through as important in several other of her writings as well as in her autobiography, where she devoted a chapter to the plantation farm mentioned above where she and her family enjoy riding four-wheelers and picking blackberries and pecans. She wrote for one autobiography entry:

My dad and his best friend, James Manse, have a farm. We love to go on the farm to ride four-wheelers. We also like to pick blackberries and pecans and eat Snackwell’s cookies, which now officially called “farm cookies.”

A camp on False River represented personal and social freedoms to the people who went there, not to mention the relationships and family unity fostered there and the quality time spent there at those sites. Aaliyah's favorite place was the family's camp, which she described in an essay titled “The Deck.” Through sensory and verbal images of everyday life, she built a tone of peace and set a mood of personal security on the river. She wrote:

It is 7:00 a.m. Saturday morning. I am sitting on the deck, which overlooks the beautiful False River, drinking coffee. Sitting here reminds me just how much I love nature, the birds, the bees, the smell of roses, and fresh cut grass. The deck is the back porch of the Manse’s house, my dad’s best friend, and although I do not get to go there very often, the deck is my favorite place to visit. I could sit for hours and still not get enough.

In setting this tone of peace, she also mentioned the intermingling sounds of lawn mowers and laughing children while “the smell of eggs, bacon, and biscuits escapes from the house.”
Though the camp mentioned in this essay belonged to her father’s friend, she felt comfortable and at home in this place. Tying race and place together, both the plantation and the camp on False River represented the ownership of land, often connected historically with the upper-class French creoles (white) and the creoles de couleur, as has been simplified to creoles.

Place comes through even in her simple procedural essay, “‘Jiffy’ Cornbread for the Human Soul.” Aaliyah built upon her place within the Southern region by choosing to write about this Southern food. With the coupling of food and emotional security (Ramsey, 1995), also a theme within native Pointe Coupee writer Ernest Gaines’s (1993) novel about racial relations in the False River area, A Lesson Before Dying, Aaliyah chose to teach the process for making cornbread in her essay. Four of the other participants had written procedural essays about the preparations of food, yet only Aaliyah and Elle held strong personal connections to the topic of food preparation in their procedural papers. Aaliyah implied the versatility and purpose of cooking cornbread. In her essay Aaliyah began: “Stressed out about what kind of bread to make for supper? Try cornbread. Cornbread is quick and easy to make.” She concluded the essay with this:

Cornbread can be eaten as a side item for a meal or as a dessert. Cornbread can also be put into a bowl along with milk and sweetener to be eaten as cereal. Cornbread is easy to make and does not take much time. So, enjoy this simple, tasteful pastry treat.

Connecting to the Southern region by her choice of food, Aaliyah was also somewhat connected to her place in Pointe Coupee and possibly even her racial position as a creole because of the “spiritual,” or expressive, tradition in the area of
specific food preparation which has been traced in some novels and articles of the people and culture (cf. Ramsey, 1995).

Aaliyah as Creole

Aaliyah’s family had strong familial ties, which helped to define her identity in terms of place and indirectly in terms of race. She was the only participant who held any recognizable racial position within her writing other than that of the white mainstream. While she only once explicitly mentioned race in the autobiography, she seemed to feel her positions as a creole was evident through her photographs and family and friends.

As a creole, Aaliyah held a unique social position within the New Roads society, yet her writing did not overtly address this racial position. The little bits of information which were within her writing came in the form of place. As mentioned earlier, in “The Deck” and in her autobiography, her family, along with another creole family owned a camp on False River as well as a plantation. The places and types of land which her family owned, historically, placed them within a specific social class, landowner. Another important ownership which dealt with place was the location of her home. As mentioned in her autobiography, she lived “back of the track” (a racial divide which signified a non-white community), yet her home was on Pennsylvania Avenue—a prestigious street on either side of the tracks. This placed her family historically in a higher class than the African Americans who were former slaves yet in a lower class than the French creoles.
Finally, her Catholic ties also indicated her creole heritage. Interestingly, within her autobiography, she mentioned that she did not attend the African American Catholic Church that many people of her community, and even some family members, attended, but preferred St. Mary’s, which was historically a white Catholic Church and associated directly with Catholic High School.

Even though she de-emphasized African American background in her interviews, she did address content which focused on African American leaders in her writing. Aaliyah's informative paper “Civil Rights Movement” gave discussion of Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King together with their impact: “these two people’s actions are still alive in American society today.” Aaliyah’s focus began on the individual experience and actions of Parks and King, which she undergirded by showing how Jesse Jackson was positively influenced by their experiences. “Today the actions of these people are still being honored, and February had been declared ‘Black History Month,’” Aaliyah concluded in her essay:

These pioneers along with many others have drastically changed the way blacks have been treated. . . . The movement put forth by blacks, known as the Civil Rights Movement, has drastically affected the lives of blacks today. Pioneers like Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Junior, and Jesse Jackson have been an aide to what has liberated many blacks of today.

While her connection to African American or Native American race was not prominent in the majority of her writings, she still emphasized, more so in her interviews, a heritage that was different from that of the white students in her school.
Aaliyah as a Student

As a student, Aaliyah appeared more reserved in classroom discussion than within small groups of people she knew well. From my fieldnotes from October 13, I wrote the following description:

The groups seem to be breaking along the free-time discussion lines in class. Aaliyah works with Miranda, Ryan, and Ryan. The groups work excitedly as they talk about different ideas for the project. I watch them from my seat for a while. Aaliyah and her group want to do something on the witch trials. They are planning a skit. They are focused on the things from the trials that "proved" if a person was a witch or not. They keep focusing on their knowledge of the Salem witch trials.

As a writer, Aaliyah showed mastery of several formats of writing including the analytic essay and the argument. She had clearly mastered the academic format required for her literary analyses. Both “Beowulf,” written her senior year and "Friendship and Betrayal,” written her sophomore year on the Steinbeck (1993) novel Of Mice and Men, were similar in length (328 and 299 words, respectively) and structure, incorporating the traditional introduction, three paragraphs presented and supporting a point, and a conclusion. In the latter, she addressed, in a formal and detached way, an issue that concerned her in other writings (her fiction, meditations, and poems)—betrayal.

Her stance in her argument paper, "Death Tolls," seemed less detached. In her plea to put an end to drunk driving, she wrote about the fatal accident involving her aunt and cousin, who as mentioned earlier, were killed by a drunk driver. She wrote:

The problem with driving and driving is always on the minds of lawmakers and the only way to prevent the problem is to quit giving the offenders the
opportunities to commit the offense. . . . Drinking and driving affects everyone, whether a victim or an offender. It is time to put a stop to this crime.

She was able to argue logically her case, appealing to what rhetoricians would call *logos*—reasoning—while maintaining her personal connection to the topic.

Her other argument, “What’s That Sound?” presented her case against abortion, as mentioned earlier. In that piece, as I pointed out, she opened from the point of view of the unborn child. She wrote:

> What is that sound? It is coming closer. I feel so scared, Mommy, help me. Do not let them take my life. . . . It is over mommy; what is done is done. You ended my life today; the one you had just begun.

In this piece, she moved directly into her expository styled writing after employing appeals to *pathos*: “Every day thousands of babies are aborted.” Aaliyah’s ability to mix patterns or genres of writing to create the effect needed for her argument was demonstrated in these two essays.

**Summary of Aaliyah's Positions**

Aaliyah attempted to display inner beauty and harmony which she sought in her life. Positions of religion and gender were often in contestation with each other as she tried to turn her focus towards the concept of inner beauty. She combined her gendered position with her Catholic guidance, endorsing empathy by constructing themes about “true” friendship and “inner beauty” in her writings. Her writings tended to deal with social relationships, particularly ethical aspects of these relationships. Aaliyah also initiated a move from lived experience to social understanding through her motif of empathy within her literary analysis on *Of Mice*
and Men (Steinbeck, 1993) and her discussion of abortion. Gendered and religious style, or form, to some degree, was seen in her meditations. For example, she constructed a specific format which was an accommodation of religious devotional prayers from church, “special intention: prayers used at school, a gendered diary, and gendered love poetry.

Aaliyah’s position as a Catholic was strong in several pieces of her writing, especially in her more personal writings, such as her creative stories, autobiography, journal, poetry, and meditations, but also in her argumentative pieces. Creative stories especially emphasized moral issues associated with friendship—tying religion to gender through themes of empathy and caring about others. Her poetry and meditations also showed an overlapping between religious principles and gendered connections. As a young woman, Aaliyah moved through several gendered positions in her writing: her place as a teenaged girl, a sister, and a friend emerged strongly. Many of these positions appeared in what could be considered personal writings such as her autobiography and her poetry. Aaliyah positioned herself as a creole, in the place of the South, Louisiana, and False River.

Aaliyah held possibly the most interesting racial situation of all the participants, and her positions as a creole also affected her other positions, especially gender, but also place and religion. While many contestations appeared in her life between the borders of each position, she sought to unite them in a way which gave her, as she perceived, uniqueness yet also differentiated her from others. Other positions which were in tension were place and race. Yet, her racial
status is validated in Louisiana, specifically Pointe Coupee, because of the large population of creole cultures. Although she was different—a non-white attending a predominantly white school—she still held a position as an insider and in “place”—a Catholic attending a parochial school and a creole receiving top education, a tradition I discussed earlier when reviewing Pointe Coupee’s history. Aaliyah’s experiences, which were situated in many contexts as an outsider, seemed to have encouraged her religious belief in herself.

At times, she aligned herself with African American cultures—by expressing interest in attending a historically African American college, by describing the perfect date with a man of African American descent, by assuming the pseudonym of an African American singer; at other times she aligned herself with the white culture—by disavowing African heritage, by attending a predominantly white church, St. Mary’s, instead of the predominantly African American church attended by her family and cousins, by attending a predominantly white school. Place, for Aaliyah, was a clearly-structured organization of social and cultural classifications which she advocated to support her own social and racial position as a creole. Aaliyah’s family and racial beliefs, as well as her lived experiences, had allowed her to position herself as well as have been positioned within her perceived social class as a creole.

Elle: Reconciling Conflicting Selves

Elle maintained her position as an upper-middle class young white woman whose family held prominent status in New Roads; however, her writing tended to
focus on moving away from material possessions. She wrote in her essay “Sleep,” a
problem-solution paper: “People think that money and status in society are the
keys to happiness. They are not. . . . Spending time with family. . . is the foundation
of our lives.”

I wrote the following description of Elle from my field notes from October
4:

She has no expression, just writing. Elle occasionally yawns, appearing not
to be directly interested in the writing; however, she usually becomes lively
and outspoken when involved in a class discussion or when the
conversation becomes heated. Elle is much more casual in her dress than
other participants like Kayla and Aimee Lynn. She is wearing the school
plaid shorts and a green CHSPC sweatshirt with causal white running shoes
and Umbra ankle socks pulled up high. She does not have much jewelry,
but does wear one silver earring high up on her ear. She has light skin and
long, rich, chestnut colored hair, neatly trimmed. She normally prefers it
worn in a ponytail, but today it is down. Her clean-scrubbed appearance,
using make-up, emphasizes her most distinct facial features, her nose,
slightly upturned and her natural eyebrows.

Additionally, Elle had a number of family ties to Catholic High. Her father,
who was born and grew up in New Roads, graduated from Catholic in the early
1970s, and her mother spent 18 years teaching at the high school while Elle
attended the elementary and middle school. Her siblings also attended the Catholic
school until recently when her younger sister followed their mother to a new job at
a public school, where she had taken a position. Her grandfather, who was the
original founder the local electric company, provided numerous scholarships to
Catholic High.

Elle seemed to be positioned in the center of the place of New Roads
because of her grandfather’s and father’s prominent business accomplishments and
her mother’s social and educational connections. Her father, after attending Catholic High School, went to Louisiana State University and then worked for a national corporation located in the area until he went into business for himself. Elle’s mother, who grew up in Louisiana, attended an Episcopalian preparatory school and then Louisiana State University. Elle seemed proud that her mother graduated in three years with two bachelor degrees and later earned a master’s degree as well. Her mother, who reared four children, had taught for 25 years. Elle explained that her mother “was born and raised Episcopalian,” but when she moved to New Roads with Elle’s father and “started teaching at Catholic [High] she chose to become Catholic.”

Elle’s extended family, especially her grandparents, played an important role in her life. She spent much cherished time after school working in their gardens and, with her grandmother, sewing, cooking or doing needlepoint. This paternal grandmother, especially, became a source of inspiration for Elle. Her grandfather’s success was also an inspiration through his business success, especially as one electric plant expanded into three plants and still employs a large number of the townspeople. Additionally, in her interviews, she mentioned her godparent as an influence in her life. Aunt Patti, who also worked at the school, was her godmother and confirmation sponsor as well as her aunt. Elle explained: “Visiting her is more beneficial than class—that’s why I use class time to visit!”

In her interviews, Elle mentioned that growing up in south Louisiana had influenced the family’s religion and interest. She said, “We [she and her two sisters
and her brother] are all Catholics and enjoy water sports.” One family tradition, which incorporated several identity positions such as place and religion, was to give a crawfish boil for family and friends on Good Friday at their camp on False River. She said, “What makes south Louisiana south Louisiana is plantations, crawfish and beer, and seafood.”

Elle was often perceived by her peers as “popular” at Catholic High, being involved, in addition to her academics, in both athletics as well as social organizations. She, however, seemed almost unaware of any division between a “popular” clique and a “not-so-popular” clique. She was on the softball and basketball team and often thought of herself as an athletic girl. She was upset when she was injured and in need of knee surgery and unable to participate in sports her senior year, since she always enjoyed playing sports. This was one of the reasons she was recommended for the study, a distraction from her injury. Elle was likewise involved in student government as well as youth ministries, through which she worked to plan and organize retreats for the younger grades. At the time of the study, Elle planned to attend Louisiana State University after high school. She was currently interested in the medical field, especially orthopedics.

Like the other participants, Elle submitted two writing packets and her journal entries, both from her senior year. She also volunteered her junior-year autobiography. Elle contributed in her first packet a process paper, “The Age Old Pound Cake” (360 words); a personal narrative, “A Transformation” (630 words); a descriptive paper, “Crystal Clear” (252 words); a literary analysis, “Difficult
Choices” (1116 words); and a fable, “True to One’s Self” (396 words). In her second set of papers, Elle included an argument, “Abortion” (468 words); a literary analysis, “A Novel’s Irony” (216 words); a problem-solution paper, “Sleep” (396 words); an informative paper, “False River” (198 words); and a short story, “A Day on the River” (252 words). “Difficult Choices” was written her sophomore year. Elle wrote 34 journal entrees (averaging 189 words) and volunteered her junior-year autobiography (2416 words). She did not volunteer any other writings and, of the six participants, she had the smallest selection of work.

In my analyses, the position of gender (by itself) appeared less for Elle than in the writings of the other participants; however, her position as a daughter in a Southern family came through strongly in place positions particularly on False River and in New Roads. The place of False River seemed to be a major source from which she drew in her writing. Her Catholic position at home and school was evident, which showed her relationship with God and focused on current Church issues. Her position in place overlapped with her gendered position, especially in regards to family, but also related to her as a Catholic.

Elle as a Young Woman

Like all of the other participants, Elle’s gendered experience was reflected in her writing. The actual roles she filled included a daughter and granddaughter, a female athlete, and a friend.

Elle as a daughter and granddaughter. Elle tended to speak of her family mainly in terms of activities they shared and of her parents’ involvement in her life.
Her father coached her softball team, and her mother helped her with her studies. More importantly she had a strong familial network which mainly consisted of her grandparents, but also included her sisters and a brother who were very much a part of her life. Her grandmother’s role in her life was extremely important to Elle because of the amount of time they shared together. Elle attributed many of her hobbies and much of her attitude towards the importance of family to her grandmother. Elle showed pictures of the times spent with her grandmother sewing, baking, boiling crawfish, and playing the piano.

Her grandfather, who founded Cajun Electric, held an authoritative position within the company and the community, since he employed many of the community members. This appeared to have placed her family in a socially prominent position. Yet this also produced tension between her position as member of a white middle-class family and her religious beliefs against materialistic values. In one writing, “Sleep,” a problem-solution essay, she argued the importance of family. She discussed how people have become too materialistic and have turned away from family. She wrote:

People should spend more time with their families and be thankful for all the blessing that God has granted. . . . He wants us to live happy lives. People think that money and status in society are the keys to happiness. They are not. . . . Spending time with family has become less and less important. However, this is the foundation of our lives. These are the people who support us through difficult times, encourage us when we are faced with obstacles, and celebrate with us in times of joy.

In her process paper, “The Age Old Pound Cake,” Elle shared the process of making a pound cake as taught to her by her grandmother. Elle, like Aaliyah, had chosen her topic of baking what she thought was a regionally Southern food, “good
for all occasions,” and “a favorite among many.” This made for a secure topic rooted within the traditions of her family and even, possibly, place. She appeared to be fond of this piece because, she mentioned in her text-based interview, of the time shared with her grandmother while they were baking. “When we first started, I was barely walking, and I was baking with her. We always made pound cakes,” Elle said. “It [the paper] is not just like instructions on how to do it, it has a background to it.” She concluded by telling her reader that “a favorite among many, the pound cake has stood the test of time.” Elle’s position as a granddaughter was apparent in this expository piece. Additionally, she included in her junior autobiography pictures of her grandmother and her both baking in the kitchen and eating crawfish outside. She wrote, “Grandma taught me how to bake and sew. I do not sew anymore, but I do still go to Grandma and Buber’s house to cook with her.”

In her autobiography, she had one page which showed her playing the piano at several different ages along with an award from one recital. She mentioned, in the interview, that it was a tradition for women in her family as well as generally in the South to play the piano. Another award she emphasized was her 4-H Beef Cookery Award.

Elle as a female athlete. Like the girls in the preceding chapter—Kayla whose athletic prowess covered cheerleading and softball; Aimee Lynn, who was a cheerleader and Stingerette; and Bailey who was athletic in dance both in and out of school—Elle was positioned as an athlete. Being healthy and fit, Elle seemed to fill the role of today’s sporty young woman as seen in magazines and portrayed through commercials like Nike’s “Just Do It!” and “Anything You Can Do, I Can
Do Better!” (both of which she mentioned in her interview). However, she was soon to force herself to redefine her identity as a woman athlete after sustaining a knee injury which kept her from competing in her senior season of basketball and softball.

Elle began her “Transformation” paper with a description of the activity at school that led to her injury and ended with an attempt to understand the reasons behind the events which caused this change in her routine. She described her desire to play basketball and her feeling of exclusion after being told that she was unable to play physically anymore, especially when this happened only a week before the first game of the year.

This knee injury and surgery changed not only her extracurricular schedule but also showed her religious outlook on life. “Naively, I imagined that events would unfold according to my expectations,” she said. “I was wrong; it took a serious knee injury, surgery, and its aftermath, and a coming to terms of my circumstances to teach me this.” Evidence of her school position are apparent in the setting of the story and as she argued with the coach to allow her to continue to practice. She wrote, “I pleaded with Coach to let me practice. . . . Not being able to participate while the team prepared for our first game which was a week away, was agonizing. . . . My world of basketball quickly transformed into a world of rehabilitation.” As she continued on in the essay, she began to add a sense of acceptance taught in her religion class. She wrote, “I had to adapt both physically and emotionally. . . . The emotional fall-out left me with intermittent feelings of
despair and discouragement.” In the final paragraph, she said,

Before my knee injury I had great expectations. Now I have something better—a sense of peaceful acceptance. This acceptance should help me face reality in the future with a trusting equanimity. Futures are always unexpected territories where anything can happen. A new appreciation of life’s unpredictable course of events will guide me through both the ups and downs of our human existence.

**Elle as a friend.** Elle’s position as friend became most apparent in her fable, “True to One’s Self” and in her journal entries. While she was involved in athletics and had strong loyalties to her team, it was Kendall, in the next section, with whom she held the strongest bond as a friend. Her autobiography also mentioned, mostly through pictures, that she not only held friendships with her teammates, but also with Kendall. Many pictures showed her posed with her basketball team, and one entry relayed the story of her injury which caused her knee surgery, hence losing that membership and affiliation with the team. She also had several sections which displayed her friendship with Kendall. Several pictures, from various parts of her autobiography, showed the two girls posed arm-in-arm. In the section titled “Friends,” she wrote:

Friends support you through tough times and share your good times. It is important to have someone you can trust. Kendall and I have been best friends since 8th grade. I hope we will have the opportunity to be friends throughout the rest of our lives.

One photograph showed Kendall and another friend holding a lop-sided cake with Elle’s initials written in frosting bearing a number of mix-matched candles. The caption read: “I guess it’s the thought that counts!” Other photographs showed Elle and Kendall sitting at their desks in school (caption: “Eager to learn?”), Elle and
Kendall dressed-up to go out for the evening (no caption), and a group of six friends, including Elle and Kendall with other boys and girls, all holding drinks (caption: “Kick’n Back).

“True to One’s Self” was a fable about Elle and Kendall, who were portrayed in the story, respectively, as a zebra and an elephant. These two animals had no family or community. “They decided to be content with each other’s company,” Elle wrote. As the fable progressed, they came upon a community, but were shunned because they were such an “unorthodox pair.” How could society accept them? “The village had never seen two different species paired up. This combination amazed and shocked everyone.” When they were exiled, the zebra and the elephant founded their own community to honor all animals and their differences; “established their own community and became a sanctuary for animals’ society’s misfits.” The moral of the fable echoed Shakespeare, “To thine own self be true,” but Elle saw this quotation as religious, not literary, since it was often quoted in her religion class at school. In Elle’s text-based interview, she confessed: “My mom helped me a lot with this paper. I’m not really a . . . creative writer. And, I don’t like it, so she helped me mostly with the whole thing.”

Elle and Social Class

Like Kayla, Elle’s family held a prominent social position and had many material belongings and much property. Elle mentioned concerns she felt towards people's need for material things. She seemed to want to rectify her social class to be more inclusive of everyone. In three of her papers, Elle critiqued the effect of
social divisions. Issues of class and social injustices were seldom mentioned by the other participants with the only exception being Elle’s friend, Kendall, who is discussed next. In one specific comment in “False River,” the argument paper,” Elle brought forth her awareness of social class and division when she said, “False River welcomes people of all backgrounds and ages.” However she failed to mention that there was only one public boat ramp. While the river welcomed all people, it would seem that only those who could afford a camp or a boat viewed the river in this way. Similarly in her essay on “Abortion,” social class was incorporated as she mentioned that “a person’s . . . income. . . [is] irrelevant when it comes to the importance of that person’s life. We sometimes forget this in our materialistic society. People equate status with a person’s significance.” Finally, in the problem-solution essay, “Sleep,” which was mentioned earlier, she also included social class by commenting against being “so materialistic.” She wrote:

In today’s fast-paced world, many people do not get an efficient amount of sleep. We get caught up in our materialistic competitive society, and forget the most important things in life. People should spend more time with their families and be thankful for all the blessings God has granted. When we learn to appreciate life, we realize that the problems that seemed so big are actually quite small.

All of these comments come together to display Elle’s tensions between her social identity and her religious identity.

**Elle as a Catholic**

Attending Catholic High School had influenced each of the participants in sometimes different ways; nevertheless, each wrote on Catholic beliefs and issues in her journal even without the teacher’s prompt, and each developed a moral code
of conduct which was reflected in her paper, journal, and poetry. Elle, like Kayla, Aimee Lynn, Bailey, and Aaliyah, turned to God in times of need. She seemed to focus in her journal entries on major themes and issues related to the Catholic position: (1) her relationship with the Catholic Church, (2) her search for peace through a relationship with a higher being, and (3) her advocacy for religious positions. Each of these areas infringed upon her non-materialistic values which were sometimes in conflict with her family social position.

Elle and the Catholic Church. In her autobiography, Elle’s religious position came through in several of her chapters. “I was born and raised Catholic and it is a part of my life,” she wrote. Her chapters and pictures included St. Mary’s Church, her baptism, and her first communion. The priest was included in these pictures along with his name in the subtitles showing the personal rapport he held with the family. The autobiography was not only a place for her to display her identity but also a means of working to highlight those aspects of her life which she considered important in understanding who she was.

Elle was a Catholic, but she did not see active participation in Mass critical to her beliefs. She wrote in one journal entry:

Today Father Jeff Bahyi came to talk to us about Right to Life month. I was really excited because I was the one who set up the convocation. The reason I asked Father Jeff to speak with us is because everyone seems to enjoy listening to him. . . . In fact Saturday afternoon, Father Jeff said mass at St. Mary’s. Usually I skip mass, but this time I went with my mom. . . . I feel that I do not have to go to mass every week to please God. I enjoy going to the Adoration Chapel instead. I also enjoy taking time at my house (in my room) to talk to God. I tried to talk to my mom about this but she did not seem to understand. So she does not know that I skip church. However, I am not the only one. I usually have friends who come ride around with me.
They feel kind of the same way as I do. Their parents do not know they skip either. But when I go to Mass, I really get something out of it. It just gets to be so habitual when I go every Sunday, and I feel like the things I do are more out of habit than really mean it.

**Elle as seeker.** Peace was a major theme in Elle’s life especially as developed in “Crystal Clear,” her descriptive essay and “Sleep,” her problem-solution essay. Elle appeared to overlap her position of place with her religious position as a basis for her understanding of “God’s Truth” in her essay, “Crystal Clear,” mentioned earlier. In describing False River, Elle wrote in a relaxed almost devotional style and initiated her writing with a quotation from another author that explored the concept of home and peace. The lake, or possibly her camp located on the lake, had a soothing effect on Elle. She seemed be positioned almost reverently in a search for God’s “Truth” and peace in her life. In an text-based interview, she said that False River was a “source” for her life. “Sleep,” Elle’s problem-solution paper, also mentioned earlier, explained that sleep and relaxation would not only solve personal problems, especially those dealing with stress, but would also bring her closer to God. She held that “life is a blessing from God.” She continued on to connect her everyday life to her religious position in the materialistic world around her. Her argument was that if we get enough sleep and stay healthy—especially “since God created humans in His own image,” then “we can live our lives to the best of our abilities.”

Elle’s sports injury in “Transformations,” also discussed earlier, made her reaffirm the Catholic outlook and acknowledge that events are often outside of her control. She mentioned later that she won the school level Young Authors’ Contest.
with this piece. “This is the first year I’ve ever won anything,” she said in the text-based interview. Similarly, the injury of her classmate, Charles, the football player made her begin to think that some things happen for a reason that only God can know. Through a journal entry, when she wrote to Charles in the hospital, she included—from memory—a prayer given to her by her mother on the day of her confirmation. She enclosed the words of the poem with her own words. I have placed the original prayer in italics. She wrote:

My mom gave me a framed picture of a beautiful prayer for my confirmation. When I heard about the accident, I immediately thought of it for you. I prayed for you today and know God must have heard me because I felt His answer. I didn’t pray for wealth or fame—I know you won’t mind. Instead I asked for Him to grant you health and blessing and friends to share the way. I asked that He be with you over your journey. I know He heard my prayer, and I know He will grant you the strength to make it though this obstacle. Please know everyone is praying and thinking about you. I know you will get through this, and I will help you along the way. Remember everything happens for a reason, and you are a strong person. There is nothing that I can possibly think of that you would not make it through.

This piece, which presented much of her thought process before she got to the concluding poem, seemed to me to be an example of Britton’s (1980) “shaping at the point of utterance.” She was working through her beliefs about why “bad things happen to good people” as she wrote the poem.

Elle as religious advocate. Unlike her experience with religion at Mass, Elle’s experience with religion through school was much more involved and presented opportunity for social interaction. The active involvement of controversial topics debated in religion class and the planning, organization, and implementing retreats for under-class members often connected her religious
position to her school environment. She argued, for instance, that seniors need God to help them make difficult decisions. She argued for prayer in school. Her response to “What role, if any, does prayer have in such public forums as school government, and sports activities?” was as follows:

There could be a universal prayer that the majority of the population agreed, and it could be used in public events without retaliation. Even if it was not universal (because that would be close to but not impossible to do), we, as United States of America, as a nation, could have a national prayer. . . . In my opinion, prayer should be part of everything we do.

In her argumentation piece, she also argued against abortion. She stated that “[Abortion] gives humans the power of God [and that abortion is merely] a political movement that assumes a God-given power, . . . only God can decide, . . . [and] God did not put mankind on earth to judge others.” In her first paragraph, she echoed the words of Robert Frost where she said, “A child is proof that God wants the world to continue.” However, when I asked her about the allusion, she was unaware of the source but thought she had heard it somewhere.

Elle in Place

Elle’s writings held a strong connection to the places of Louisiana, False River, Catholic High, and her family home. I discuss her position in place first at False River and then in New Roads and Louisiana.

Elle at False River. For family and friends, recreation, and leisure, Elle introduced her most significant place in her writings, False River. Three of the ten formal pieces she wrote were either set on False River, or it was the focus of her writing. As seen in the history of the area, False River had a central role in the life
of the New Roads and Point Coupee people. In the past, many Pointe Coupee entrepreneurs used the river as a major resource for business, transportation, and even entertainment. False River is still important in the town of New Roads, not merely because of its physical proximity, paralleling Main Street (or River Road), but also because of the revenue brought in through tourism. False River still provides a social and recreational place for local townspeople, that is, those people who can afford lake property and camps along its banks.

Elle mentioned False River in her short story, “A Day on the River.” In this story, two siblings, Lynn and David, took the family boat after being explicitly told by their father not to. The siblings spent the day cruising around the lake visiting with friends. However, on the way home, they found that they needed to refuel the boat, and so they stopped at a dock near Satterfield’s Restaurant, where local businessmen often met. They ended up damaging the boat. Because the story included details particular to the people and places of the town, I asked her if the story was true. She responded that the story was fictional; however, after some thought, she began to make a connection between some of her life experiences and different bits and pieces of her story. Each of these details connected Elle to her place on the river and possibly to her family’s social position in New Roads as owners of lake property.

Elle also constructed an expository piece, “False River,” which she was able to connect to her identity position of place. She described, in this informative essay, the False River, and the activities that take place on the lake. She began:
False River is a recreational site in New Roads that attracts many tourists. During the summer months, people come from all over Louisiana to participate in recreational sports on this lake. False River brings family and friends together. It provides a place for people to come and have fun in a clean environment.

She continued by mentioning the different activities that take place on the river: water-skiing, tubing, boating, barbecuing, and fishing.

Elle identified False River as a place for friends and family but also identified False River as a place just for herself. While Aimee Lynn was discovering a new place, Coffee Call, in Baton Rouge and Kayla held onto her “escape” in Maringouin, Elle devoted much of her writing to her interpersonal understanding of the place of False River. A certain sense of reverence appeared at times in her writings of the ox-bow lake. Elle saw False River as a special place where she took time to reflect upon herself and her life. One other participant, Aaliyah, shared Elle’s introspective side in her writing.

In one essay, a description called “Crystal Clear,” Elle presented False River as a place of solitude and reflection:

The lake has a natural tranquilizing effect [sic] on people. False River can be used as a place to escape the everyday anxieties that life brings. It is a place to lose one’s self and to contemplate the world at large. Most importantly, it offers a haven in a hyperactive world.

She used the place as escape and considered it a place to “lose oneself” and “contemplate the world.” Elle mentioned in her interview that she often did her homework at the river and “that’s where I think a lot.” “Being there just helps me,” she said. As many of the Pointe Coupeeans of the past saw the river as a powerful resource in their lives, so did Elle.
Elle in New Roads. Besides the False River, Elle also brought into her writing settings in Louisiana, including her family home in New Roads. Elle, likewise, identified her place in Louisiana and at Catholic High School. The place of Louisiana was evident with a focus on traditions like Mardi Gras and crawfish boils—especially those including her family plantation and home. Photographs showed people she knew taking part of the cultural life, like crawfish boils, both at Catholic High School and at her family home. In her writing, she specifically highlighted artifacts and regional events which placed her at home within Louisiana, and most of her photographs showed people in places in Louisiana, often engaged in cultural activities.

In her journal, too, pictures became a topic. In response to the prompt, “If your house was on fire and you could only save one armload of possessions, what would you save?” She said she would save the pictures.

These pictures will lift me up and remind me of happier times in my life. I can remember how much fun I had and the special time I spent with people. I could cherish these pictures. I could also be able to show them to my kids. I believe nothing else in my house would be as sentimental or valuable to me as those pictures. I would always have something to look forward too, more good times to come ahead and look back on. Hopefully, I would be able to save the majority of the picture.

In another entry, she showed her awareness of local issues in a letter to Louisiana’s Governor Foster, which she included in the journal. Elle said, “I think people would respect Louisiana as a whole a little more if we terminated gambling.” Louisiana was prominent in Elle’s writing which showed comfort in the place and with the people of Louisiana and also aware of local issues.
Elle as a Student

As a student, Elle was active and energetic. In my fieldnotes from October 13, I wrote:

The groups work excitedly as they talk about different ideas for the project. I watch them from my seat for a while until I move next to Kendall and Elle’s group. They were busily researching from one of the books and seemed very excited and wanted to talk about the ideas that they had. They were interested in some of the nursery rhymes. Mrs. Katie had said that London Bridge was about the bubonic plague. While Kendall was writing down what the textbook said, Elle was flipping through another book and stopping to point out pictures of interest.

As a student, Elle always completed her assignments, easily mastering the techniques required of her; however, she did not seem to possess the enthusiasm for writing which many of the other participants had. She worked, especially in her journals, to merely complete the required length and technique.

The essay. Elle wrote two literary essays, which contrasted in certain ways. They both followed the format of the school genre—introduction, body, and conclusion—yet one essay held a four-sentence body while the other contained a five-paragraph body.

First in “A Novel’s Irony,” a brief essay (only 216 words) written her senior year based on Salinger’s (1951/1991) *Catcher in the Rye*, Elle began in a typical formulaic style with a three-sentence introduction paragraph, a four-sentence body, and a conclusion that ended the essay by repeating the introduction in four sentences. Her introduction read:

In J. D. Salinger’s novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*, it is ironic that the quality Holden criticizes in others is one that he himself possesses. Holden always has a negative attitude towards the people that he encounters. He thinks
almost everyone he knows or meets is very phony. However, Holden himself gets caught up in his own lies while talking to people.

Her conclusion read:

Holden thinks that nearly everyone he knows had a fake personality. He is so distracted judging others that he does not see the same quality in himself. He thinks he is somehow different from the rest of the world. Holden provides himself a phony by all the lies he tells.

“This was my last one. I remember writing it,” she said of “A Novel’s Irony.” “It was like three o’clock in the morning. She [the teacher] just picked it up and started to grade it. You know she just does this random. I got a 75%. I was happy.”

In “Difficult Choices,” a much longer piece (1116 words) based on Steinbeck’s (1937/1993) Of Mice and Men, however, Elle used more elaborated writing, analyzing literary devices such as characterization, symbols, denouement, and theme.

Here is an excerpt that demonstrates her ability to analyze literature using specific literary devices. For example, this is different from the shorter literary analysis, as she went into great detail for each of the main points in her thesis, connecting each back to the literary device of foreshadowing as it supported a portion of the plot. She wrote in this introduction her thesis statement:

In Steinbeck’s novel Of Mice and Men, George and Lennie’s dream of one day having their own land, and Lennie himself who seems to be “accident prone,” play a significant role in foreshadowing the denouement of the novel.

In her text-based interview, Elle told me that this paper was written her sophomore year. “I made a 75% on the paper [that sophomore year]. I thought it was [good] until I turned it in.” Elle admitted that she had put extra effort into this particular
paper because she was concerned with raising her grade; however, she lost most of her points because she was absent from school and the teacher considered the paper late.

**Resistance.** Elle's resistance to writing was apparent in her journal entries. Elle mentioned in her text-based interview:

> They [the journal entries] don't really have much meaning. Most of the time I'm writing during her [the teacher’s] lecture. Most of the time I'm just writing to fill space. She picks up journals and flips through them and makes sure we write to the end. So I'm not writing for content really.

Although she began her entries modeling the academic styled “mini” three paragraph essay (introduction, body, conclusion), as the semester continued she abandoned her structure, focusing instead on filling up the page with words. For example, “I really dislike writing essays so I am not going to do this journal entry. That is one benefit of not having the teacher read our journals.” She referred to much of her writing in her journals as “silly nonsense.” She wrote several other journal entries in a similar manner, “Finally, two lines left and I am just writing nonsense to fill up the pages. What am I going to fill these last lines with? Probably lots of words.” She wrote, “I hope I can finish this before the bell rings. I am really tired of writing” and:

> It never takes anyone else as long as me to finish his or her journals. I never stop to think about what to write. I just constantly write, but it still takes time. I mean look at what I am writing now, for example, anything that pops into my head.

While much of her writing focused on the activity of writing, she did not at first tend to add references to the classroom discussions or other activities into her entries. However, as the semester further progressed, she began to add interaction
with other students and the teacher. She had examples which described the classroom activities and what she was otherwise doing, “Miss Katie is beginning a lecture on a test we have tomorrow. [Apparently stops writing to listen to lecture. ] I’m back. It is Wednesday—hump day!”

She did realize, however, that for some journal entries, topics were important enough to write on and that the teacher might read them. Elle wrote: “Although a journal topic such as this one, she [the teacher] would probably want people to write about. But my pen just ran out of ink. How convenient running out of ink at half-way. It almost seems I planned that!” Towards the end of the semester, she became more outspoken in her dislike of writing journal entries. Though Elle remained focused, in a succession of journal entries, on the topics given by the teacher—“things I hate,” “pet peeves,” and “admirable qualities”—she added negative comments, such as “I really hate just the common things that everyone hates. Nothing new. Of course, like I write on every journal entry, I hate writing to the last line of this page.” She did not seem to care whether what she wrote was discernible to the teacher or anyone else for that matter. She wrote to finish the project. An example is the following: “My pet peeves are very similar to my ‘things I hate’ in my prior journal entry. . . . [Miss Katie] would never understand my entry!”

Summary of Elle's Positions

Tensions which appeared in Elle’s writing focus on her identity as one self which was a Southern woman in an upper-middle class family and another self
which was a Catholic self who believed in social equality and did not value materialistic wealth. Place, particularly the place of False River, helped provide a means of reconciling the others. She related these same positions as she developed her written identity as a religious person in New Roads and at False River.

Tensions between material and spiritual wealth seemed to appear often in conflict in Elle’s writings. Though she was from an upper-middle class family, she despised the emphasis that society places on material objects. Many of her essays as well as journal writings showed her resistance to society’s materialistic emphasis. Two examples which developed this position well were her argument, “Sleep,” and her personal narrative, “Transformation.” Several journal entries also revealed this tension.

Through her various positions—as daughter and granddaughter, as a Catholic, as a child of New Roads—she was able to maintain her place in New Roads without necessarily attending every mass at St. Mary’s, as seen in her journals. She developed, in her description, “Crystal Clear,” a kind of “Truth,” which to her was “God's Truth,” since she found at the River to the closeness she felt with God at the Adoration Chapel. Her personal narrative, "Transformation," was an example of how she reconciled her religious beliefs with her place at Catholic High as an injured athlete.

Kendall: Pondering Social Justice and Family

“I saw before me a filthy child, poorly dressed. . . . Then, in a tender, angelic voice, the child inquired, 'Did you like my gift? You looked sad and
alone," began Kendall in one of her creative writings, “Unsightly Wrapped Package.” Kendall, a tall, quiet brunette, had found writing be a way to explore her own feelings. Fictional stories were an outlet for Kendall, she told me—a way to purge her emotions and move forward in the world. She came from a family of avid readers and writers, and she was known at Catholic High as a winner of writing contests.

The following description of Kendall is based on my fieldnotes of October 14:

Kendall sits on the center of a row of desks slightly to the left side of the class. Elle sits directly next to her. Kendall has deliberately pushed her desk further back leaving a gap between her desk and the seat in front of her so that she can line up better with Elle. She is a tall, slender girl with dark curly hair pulled to a pony tail, today. She has a long thin oval face accented by small silver earrings, a prominently elegant nose, expressive eyes, and light make-up. Kendall is wearing stylish tan pants and a gray CHSPC athletic sweat shirt over her shirt.

Kendall had attended Catholic Elementary and Middle Schools before she entered Catholic High School. Like Kayla, Aaliyah, and Elle, Kendall received her entire education—from elementary through high school—at Catholic School.

She graduated co-valedictorian along with another participant, Kayla, who was discussed in the previous chapter. She enjoyed her academic reputation as a 4.0 student and had been on several Literary Rally teams, including World Geography (2nd place in the district competition), French I (1st place in district) and French II (1st place in district). As well, she also received numerous academic awards in subjects, including Social Studies, Reading, English I, and French I. Her freshman year, she had made it to the state level of the Young Author’s Competition and was
selected at other levels (school, parish, region) during the rest of high school. As far as her interest in sports, she was a manager for the football and basketball team. Unlike many of the other participants who were cheerleaders and on the dance team, Kendall found that being a manager gave her a position which required a different type of responsibility. Kendall’s extra-curricular activities included working part-time as a hostess in Satterfield’s, a local restaurant on the False River, in addition to her school-related activities, such as student government and Beta club. She planned to attend Louisiana State University and study either English or Child and Family Studies in order to become either a secondary or college instructor in English/literature or a social worker. Her best friend was Elle, whom she sat next to in English class; the two young women had begun their friendship in the eighth grade.

Kendall’s family lived in Morganza, where her mother was a parish manager in the Office of Family Support and where her father, who held many of the top certificates in his field, worked with computer networking. Morganza was Kendall’s mother’s hometown. Kendall’s father, who was from Colorado, had grown up in a small mining-town turned ghost-town in Gillman, Colorado, and attended Holy Cross Abbey in the larger, neighboring town of Canyon City. Kendall’s parents met when they were students at the University of Southwest Louisiana. Kendall had older one sister, Kathryn, who at the time of the study was attending her parents’ alma mater, which is now called the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Brittany, her younger sister, was a freshman during Kendall’s senior
year at Catholic High. While both sisters were influential in her life, the older sister, Kathryn, often served as a mentor and a friend.

Kendall had strong ties with relatives both in Louisiana and in Colorado, all of whom she visited often. She proudly claimed three sets of grandparents, “yet my parents aren’t divorced.” When her father was at the University of Southwestern Louisiana, his mother, an English teacher, died; and her death was soon followed by the death of his father, a soldier and geologist. Being the oldest son, Kendall’s father left school to support and pay for his younger brothers’ college educations. Kendall never knew her paternal grandparents, though she carried her father’s memories of them. Back in Gillman, Colorado, her father’s close family friends, Beatrice and John Webber (or Grandma Bea and Grandpa John), helped him accept his parents’ deaths and since have been surrogate grandparents for Kendall and her sisters. Her maternal grandparents lived “just down the road” in Morganza along with her aunts, uncles, and cousins on her mother’s side. Kendall spoke in her interview about her maternal grandmother: “Maw-Maw likes to cook and do crafts, and Paw-Paw loves to hunt, fish, and garden.” Kendall stressed that both parents and all of her three sets of grandparents were avid readers.

She submitted two writing packets during her senior year along with her journal entries. She also gave me from previous years an autobiography and several short stories and poems. Kendall’s first packet contained a literary analysis, “Irony of Madonna” (238 words); a fable, “Joshua and the Strawberry Seedlings” (782 words); a descriptive paper, “Symbol of the States” (221 words); a personal
narrative, “The Skittles Contest” (510 words); and a process paper, “Betty Crocker Chocolate Chip Cookies” (238 words). For the second packet, she included a literary analysis, “Beowulf” (276 words); a short story, “Guitar Man Death” (629 words); an argument, “The Wrong Child-Gun Theory” (391 words); a problem-solution paper, “The Problem with a Messy House” (238 words); an informative paper, “Women’s Suffrage” (442 words); and 34 journal entries (averaging 136 words). Like the others, she also gave me her junior year autobiography (1146 words). In addition she shared with me seven short stories (averaging 380 words) and four poems (119 averaged words) mostly written for literary contests.

In Kendall’s writing, I discerned multiple positions which often appeared interwoven in her writing. As a young woman, Kendall developed positions of herself as someone who came from a long line of readers and writers. This gendered position was related to another prominent position: that of a person seeking to understand societal inequities. Place was manifested through her perception of herself as a Louisianian with ties to Colorado and as an American with ties to a smaller community. Her position as a Catholic also came through in a few pieces of her writing. Similarly, her academic and literary positions were identity components manifested in her writings. As a student, Kendall had mastered school genres and focused her energies mostly on her short stories.

Kendall as a Young Woman

As a young woman, Kendall wrote from the position of daughter of readers and writers, the position of a teenaged girl, and the position of advocate of women.
This gendered position closely related to another major position in her writing, that of a philosopher concerned with class relations and distinctions between the have's and have-not's. Although the distinction between the position of gender and position of philosopher seemed somewhat arbitrary, I begin with the former.

**Kendall as a daughter of readers and writers.** Kendall showed a unique gendered position associated with literacy. She connected several sources, quotations, and literary techniques back to her mother and other women in her family—linking herself to them in tradition as well as lineage. Only one other participant, Elle, showed a link between literacy and family, when she spoke of her mother helping her to provide a moral to her fable and editing some of her papers.

In her autobiography, Kendall focused heavily upon her sisters, mother, grandmother, and aunts, especially in describing the trading of books that occurred on a regular basis. In her interview, she said that her maternal side of the family—mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and great-great-grandmother, and aunts—loved to read, and that she, like them (and her father), was an avid reader. She mentioned that her heroes were her best girlfriends, sister, mother, and an English teacher whom she considered to be a model for her own career. In her text-based interview, she said, “My mom, her sisters, and my grandma [a former teacher named Ophelia]—they all trade out novels. They go through them.” She told me that one day her mother asked her if she wanted to read one of hers: “I didn't think I was going to like it, but I did!” She chose Kendall as her pseudonym because it was the name of the heroine in the romance novel her mother had given her. She also
mentioned in her autobiography that “her bedside table was never without a book, “she loved to read, “and that a “mess and disarray were a sign of a creative mind.”

In one journal entry, Kendall mentioned her father as a writer. The prompt read: “If your house was on fire and you could have one armload of possessions, what would you save?” She responded: “I would save the poem my dad wrote for me on my sixteenth birthday. I cry every time I read it.”

Several pieces of her writing also held literary quotations, which could be traced intertextually back to family. For example, in her literary analysis, she used a poem she found in a book at home. All of the other participants, with the exception of Aimee Lynn, who wrote about Sobel in “The First Seven Years,” used school material. In her interview, Kendall said that she found Service’s (1936) “Irony of Madonna,” the poem which she used in this literary analysis, The Best Loved Poems of the American People. “I found this one interesting.” Because the people thought the painting in the poem was "so immaculate and pure,” but the model for the painting was a prostitute. Also in “Joshua and the Strawberry Seedlings,” her fable, she incorporated style which she found from her reading experiences at home, switching at one point into an Agatha Christi mystery tone. She ended that tale with a literary quotation attributed to Shakespeare, “What a wicked web we weave when first we practice to deceive.” According to her interview, she said that her mother helped her with the moral. Even her Young Author’s entry story “Unsightly Wrapped Package” held the lines “therein lie the difference” reminiscent of Hamlet’s “To be or not to be” soliloquy—“therein lies the rub.”
Kendall as a teenaged girl. Various pieces Kendall wrote dealt with matters typically addressed by adolescent girls, such as social life and life in her family. Kendall’s teenaged position showed in her autobiography as she discussed female-oriented subjects like school dances, dolls, and spend-the-night parties. She wrote about her rabbit collection: “‘Depend on the rabbit’s foot if you will, but remember it didn’t work for the rabbit!’—R. E. Shay.” Her activities centered on being a sports manager for football and basketball, and pictures of her in uniform along with coaches and football players were included. She also included newspaper clippings victories for the team. Examples of Kendall as a teenaged girl are numerous in entries in her journal, where she wrote of her wishes (which included becoming a beautiful model and traveling to Europe), special events at school (homecoming, mix-match day, couple's day, and other special days), her anticipation for holidays, and even a "spoof" criticism of her friend, Elle.

And three formal pieces had themes that seemed tied to adolescent life. In “The Problem with a Messy House,” Kendall presented a familiar problem: that as soon as the house is cleaned, it gets dirty again. Her solution was to get all members of the family to clean up after themselves. She focused her process paper, “Betty Crocker's Chocolate Chip Cookies,” on how to make cookies for a bake sale. Finally, in “The Skittles Contest,” her descriptive essay, she wrote about a competition she had with her friend to see who could get the most skittles in her mouth.
Her creative writing dealt with more serious subjects. A poem “Ode to a Friend” was written about her sisterly love with her best friend. She called her friend a sister and family and vowed a willingness to give her life for her friend should death attempt to take her. She mentioned though that “unlike our sisters, we never disputed.” “She is the thing that means most to me/And from the sight of each other we will never flee,” she wrote. In her short story “Diary of a Broken Heart,” she talked about the feeling of isolation and pain when she did not fit in. She mentioned situations where she felt uncomfortable around her friends and isolated because they would not understand her feelings or means of expression. She wrote:

Her friends often laugh at her. She cannot tell them her true feelings, she feels uncomfortable around them. They do not understand her or the way she expresses herself. She can’t tell them her pains because they think these feelings are stupid and unnecessary. One particular line stood out: “They [friends] never felt the anguish of seeing someone you liked kissing someone else or asking their sister to homecoming.”

Kendall as an advocate of women. For her position as advocate of women, my attention goes to two quite different pieces: an expository essay on “Women's Suffrage” and a literary essay on “Irony of Madonna.” In both, Kendall presented her belief that women who have not been valued by society, should receive rights and respect.

“Women’s Suffrage” was Kendall’s expository piece in which she presented her account of women's receiving the right to vote. “The end is achieved with the law,” she quoted in her introductory paragraph, and in her conclusion she
restated this: “Finally, when both major political parties were committed to women's suffrage, a third attempt to pass an amendment allowing women the right to vote succeeded.”

As mentioned earlier, in her literary analysis Kendall explored the poem by Service (1936) that presented the irony of an artist's using a prostitute as a model to paint an image of the Madonna. Both the poem and Kendall's analysis were titled “Irony of Madonna.” Kendall wrote:

It is extremely ironic that a woman of uncleanness should portray the figure of a woman of purity. The author is telling us that [women] should not be judged by appearance only, because looks are capable of deception. For example, Service begins his poem by saying that he painted a woman of ill repute; however, he did not paint her to look as such.

She pondered the irony of an artist using a prostitute as a prop in the painting of an ecclesiastic masterpiece. “The painting now hangs in a church as a portrait of the Mother of God and is not recognized as the portrait of a prostitute. . . . By transforming a woman of the streets into the Mother of God, he [the poem’s author] is able to speak this valuable truth.” As a woman, Kendall’s position of social justice was revealed here as gendered, but it also overlapped on another position as a Catholic.

**Kendall as Critic of Social Inequities**

The second position I address here is closely related to the first, since Kendall, the young woman, who came from a literary heritage and aspired to have a career in "letters," shifted into it for much of substantive writing. She wrote about social issues—mainly in creative genres but with a critical message. Here is where I
saw the major tension in her writing. Much of Kendall’s writing focused on social inequities. While the other participants, in particular Kayla, Aimee Lynn, and Elle, mentioned social class to some extent, Kendall developed short stories and essays around this position. Elle, who spoke of the need to turn away from materialistic desires, was the only participant who came close to Kendall’s level of interest in divisions of social class and included it in her writings.

Kendall submitted the cautionary tale, “Guitar Man Death,” as a short story in her second writing packet but had actually produced it for the Young Author’s competition in 1996. She won Council Level just below State Level. The protagonist was a homeless man who played his guitar on the sidewalk of a prosperous and brisk city. The guitar man, who was blind, listened each day for the footsteps of a particular young woman whom he had come to love. Kendall wrote:

He sensed her beauty, a beauty he had never experienced on this sidewalk.
Her gracefulness captured his heart. . . . He strummed her beauty on his strings. The song being played on his guitar was the most exquisite melody ever written by a man in love. Everyone on the streets stopped hypnotized.

When he finally approached her with his hidden love to tell her that she was the inspiration for his song, she backed away, repulsed by his poverty and blindness: “Ugh, what is wrong with your eyes, . . . and what is that smell?” Broken-hearted, he ran into the traffic and was hit and killed by a bus.

Kendall also seemed to show a secondary theme dealing with social class where she used her homeless protagonist to remind the “successful, business people
in their suits” of their unfulfilled dreams that did not relate to financial or corporate success. Kendall said of her protagonist that he was “non-judgmental” and had “a sixth sense a knowing.” Her guitar man was a kind face who knew everything but saw nothing, yet still “reminded them [the passerbyers] of the dreams they shared in their childhood. . . . they resented him, they hated him.” She had the society resent and ultimately judge the guitar man while at the same time being “mesmerized” by his music and financial freedom.

Two other short stories from former years held the themes of interaction between social classes—“Salvation Santa” (1997) and “A Forgotten Death” (1997). The first piece, “Salvation Santa,” focused on a man of unknown social class, who fought against the cold weather and insensitive remarks of other people, and sought to raise money to help people in need. The bitter cold of the winter weather and society juxtaposed against the protagonist’s “crimson nose and cheeks” as he attempted to inspire people’s hearts towards charitable acts. As he rang his Salvation Army bell, he was met with callous responses like “in your dreams, loverboy.” Kendall wrote:

He refuses to lose hope. He straightens his back and stands with pride and determination. He will ring his bell louder, and his smile will grow wider. The twinkle in his eye will shine brighter, and his voice will bounce off crowded buildings and reach the ears of the passersby.

She wrote that “[underprivileged] people need him more than ever this year, and he won’t let them down.” Also, in “A Forgotten Death” (1997), another homeless dying man was forgotten by his estranged daughter because of the daughter’s shame that her father was a homeless person. The untold stories of
“heroism” and “personal and united victories” died silently along with the man. She wrote: “His pieces of the future will always live without the truth because they [the man’s daughter and family] wished not to risk the pain that might have lasted for maybe hours or weeks in exchange for the joy and admiration that would have existed for eternity.”

A similar theme was presented in "The Unsightly Wrapped Package," another story for a Young Author competition. This story was written from the point of view of a wealthy, yet lonely older woman who received an anonymous present wrapped in a dirty paper bag. Kendall began her story this way: “I received a strange gift. I found no card. The tiny, crudely wrapped package puzzled me. Who would send a present to a despicable old hag?” Inside the bag was a fresh, red rose with a drop of dew that glistened like a diamond, “like the diamonds I’d [the older woman] become so accustomed to.” She continued:

As I went to my compacted steel door and unfastened numerous locks, I saw before me a filthy child, poorly dressed. . . . Then, in a tender, angelic voice, the child inquired, “Did you like my gift? You looked sad and alone. I wanted to cheer you up.” The “despicable, old hag” smiled for the first time in years. Kendall orchestrated a social harmony between these financially diverse people within her fictional society.

Kendall in Place

Unlike many of her co-participants, Kendall did not connect strongly to the physical place of New Roads in her writings, though I was able to uncover some “place” elements, such as cultural ties to Louisiana and family ties to Colorado.
For Louisiana, Kendall’s autobiography revealed places of significance to her. She wrote an entire chapter on her “village” of Morganza. Next to a picture of the Morganza Elementary School she wrote:

I live in the village of Morganza, Louisiana. It is named after a man (Morgan) who once owned a sugar cane plantation where the village is located. Morganza has its own school, one grocery store, a lumber company, churches of different denominations, and a few gas stations. My grandfather, mother and I have lived here all our lives.

A chapter on “Family Traditions,” presented as culturally Louisianian, included pictures and descriptions of strawberry picking (which resurfaced in her fable, “Joshua and the Strawberry Seedlings”) and crawfish boils. She included two photographs, one of her younger sister, Brittany, and one of herself wearing “overall” shorts as the two participated in her family’s annual strawberry planting. Two pages later, she displayed three pictures of her father and several uncles boiling and then picking crawfish, along with the traditional potatoes that had been boiled along with the crawfish and with beer.

The strawberry theme reappeared in her fable, “Joshua and the Strawberry Seedlings.” The protagonist was Joshua, a fox who lost the trust of a community in his attempt to gain recognition. Just before the Annual Strawberry Festival, Joshua stole the strawberry seedlings so that he might be deemed the community’s hero who recovers them. The townspeople realized, however, that it was he who stole the seedlings in the first place. Strong elements of exclusion and the seeking of recognition by a community came through in this piece. Beginning with a fairy tale tone, Kendall wrote about small community, even idyllic, scenery. Kendall created a sense of togetherness and strong village ties. “The entire village was preparing for
its annual strawberry festival,” “all the townspeople,” “soon everyone split up into
groups,” “the village cheered because the plants had been found,” and “The people
met again to discuss. . . .” For Kendall and the townspeople, it was togetherness
which allowed individuals to gain recognition; “It took a long time before Joshua
could be trusted again by the villagers, but he learns a very important lesson. And
together, they enjoyed the Strawberry Festival.”

Another place which appeared in her autobiography was her father’s home
in Colorado, where her adopted grandparents still live. She mentioned this in the
chapters on her father, her grandparents, and on family vacations.

Kendall’s essay, “Symbol of the States,” focused on the unity of our nation.
She used patriotic terms such as “civil pride” in order to project a sense of uniting
under her symbolic flag. She claimed that the flag was “completely original” and
“unlike any other [nation’s flag]” because was it was a “symbol of pride” for the
American people as a family. In her interview, she said, “I was in the computer
room, and they had the flag hanging on the wall. It is such a big symbol. When you
think of the U. S., you think of the flag. Instead of saying it is red, white, and blue,
I went ahead and put what it stood for, too.”

Kendall as a Catholic

In her journal, Kendall tackled modern issues that are posed by the church.
For instance, with respect to the issue of cloning, she argued in support of the
church and against cloning, asking in a rhetorical question: “Do we as humans have
the right to take nature’s secrets and nature’s magic and play God according to
what one group of people or the majority believes correct or fair or okay?” Yet she did ponder reasons that cloning might be acceptable in the eyes of man. She was drawn towards classmates' idea of using cloning to save endangered species.

In another journal entry, directed to Charles (the hurt football player), she wrote:

Dear Lord,
Please watch over Charles and his family. Protect him from further illness and give him strength to overcome this. Help him to keep up with his class work. Grant him a pleasant disposition and hope for the future. Help him to feel your presence and Bless him with Your gift. Grant him understanding and confidence. Watch over him as he continues to grow. Please give him Your guidance and direction. Give him the love he so desperately deserves.

Amen

Kendall as a Student

As a student, Kendall was attentive during class and took special pride in her academic success, especially her writing achievements. In contrast to Elle, who disliked writing, Kendall seemed to take a genuine interest in writing. Of her writings, she said in her text interview, “I think I have enough varying sentence structure and vocabulary to make an intelligent sounding paper.” This was certainly true of her literary analyses.

Her mastery of the literary analysis was apparent in her two pieces, “Beowulf” and “Irony of Madonna.” Each of these pieces followed the assertion and support format modeled by the other participants and expected by the teacher. “Beowulf” was the typical three-paragraph essay. Her introduction presented the thesis that Beowulf possessed traditional heroic qualities. The body asserted and supported proving those three qualities three main points—strength, bravery, and
honor. The conclusion restated the thesis. This paper was only 276 words long, but followed the format exactly. Her second piece, “Ironic of Madonna,” was even shorter at 238 words in length, yet she still maintained the expected format. The introduction gave the thesis—“Service [the author] uses literary devices to warn a reader against judging people by their appearance.” The body supported this thesis with one example—the author painted a prostitute to look like the Madonna. Her conclusion “teaches us that one should not judge others by their appearance.”

In her text-based interview she explained that her major attention in journal writing was on the teacher's length requirements: “from first to last line, from margin to margin.” She went on to say that, for her, the journal grade was "easy because you don’t have to put any thought into it.” Kendall’s journal entries showed strong examples of her academic and literacy positions especially as she critiqued her own school and education. For example, in one entry when she was prompted, “If I were in charge of the school, I would. . . ,” her response read: "I would try to have more certified teachers. . . . I would try to strengthen the subject material of the classes. I would try to get new computers with WINDOWS.” She went on to speak about the need for respect of students as well as teachers.

When I asked her about her creative pieces, she said, “A lot of the stuff that I write is usually depressing. I guess it stems from when I would keep a journal. When I would get angry, I would write.” She was speaking of a journal she had kept for herself which differed in purpose and audience from the journal she kept for the teacher. She later had this to say about the critical and often sad tone of her
I think it naturally comes through when I start to write. A lot of it stems from personal stuff. Like when you think you have something and then you don’t. Or you think you are about to be recognized but then you are not. Just that initial feeling.

In her essay, “Diary of a Broken Heart” (1996) Kendall expressed some thoughts on how she started to write short stories. The "she" is not identified in this piece:

Finally, one day she learned how to ease her misery. Every time she was angry or sad, she wrote about it in her journal. A journal of horror stories, she called it. . . . Then teachers started assigning writing exercises. She was excellent; she had had plenty of practice in the past. There was only one problem, and she never realized it. A friend asked why her stories, poems, and essays were so depressing. She said she didn’t know. This question sparked a fire of interest in her mind; why did she write such sad things? One day she accidentally stumbled upon the answer. The only time she ever wrote was when she was sad or upset so whenever she did write, happy or sorrowful, depression came naturally.

She seemed to place great value on the autobiography she wrote her junior year. In her text-based interview, Kendall said, “I wanted it to be something that I could keep.” She focused on the constructing of a memory: “If you don’t remember the picture, you can remember the words.” Kendall’s autobiography pointed to her many identity positions, showing connections and memories among gender, religion, and place. These positions especially merged in connection with family and friends. She focused on family traditions, which held religious meaning as well as meaning of place and gender.

**Summary of Kendall's Positions**

Kendall's identity positions associated with gender and social class converged as she wrote about issues of social equity through motifs and themes of social injustice. Assumed the critical perspective, associated with the literary
tradition, and applied it to what she considered to be social inequities. She made intertextual references in her writings to other texts that she and family had read.

Kendall seemed to ponder social justice in her writing and tended to focus from an artist’s point of view. She liked to use artists as her protagonists, as well. She seemed to portray her own disillusionment and often hurt because of her idealism. A sense of exclusion appeared in many of her essays in which she attempted to right through the plot. She was extremely empathetic with her characters and unwilling to place direct blame. Instead she pondered the situation and attempted to understand the motivation of the antagonists that she created. She created a strong family unity within most of her work, stressing harmony even to the point of including the community into the ties of family. Kendall’s knowledge of and manipulation of literature and literary devices showed. She used literary elements well focusing on strong juxtapositions, specific word choice, imagery, and syntax. She also tended to use story grammar as a means of blending into the community of writers. She also used elements of plot and scenery well, and showed knowledge of different genre of literature in as she alluded to other pieces.

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the final three young women—Aaliyah, Elle, and Kendall—whose tensions between identity positions focused on the tensions between their gendered position and other positions. These tensions, too, come through in the various genres in different ways, sometimes in conflict with each other. First I will relate the young women's tensions to the prior literature. Then, I will point out how the various genres relate to the young women's identity position. I will then review how they are positioned as students writing in school genres.
Aaliyah's concern with her attractiveness and her concern for inner beauty, which she appeared to understand through her religious positions can also be seen in the work of Pipher (1994) and the young women’s response to her research by Shandler (1999). Aaliyah's approach to dealing with this conflict was through religion. Elle's tensions were between her social status and her religious identity and position on social issues as a non-materialistic person. Similarly to Aaliyah, she too used religion, and sometimes place, to cope with the building tensions. Finally, Kendall's tensions appeared between her identity as female writer from a tradition of literacy and her identity as a critic of social inequalities. She appeared to deal with these tensions through her writings.

Each of the various genres relates to the young women's identity positions in different ways. For example, Aaliyah revealed her vulnerabilities and her inner strength, or inner beauty, within her poetry and meditations. She also used creative stories and one literary analysis to show this position. Her meditations especially allowed her to work through her conflicts and concerns. For Elle her problem-solution essay and her autobiography allowed her to show her status within her Southern family, while some of these same genres, at least the problem-solution essay, allowed her to discuss her concerns against society’s materialistic impulses. Finally Kendall's journal and her creative stories showed her as a well-read young woman as well as a critic of social inequalities.

Again, the school genres appeared to be mastered by the young women. Each of the young women had mastered the literary analysis, even though Elle made a 75% on one due to lateness, and they had also mastered the miniature essays which were assigned in the journals. One young woman appeared to resist journal writing more so than the other two. Elle spent many lines discussing how
she hated the length requirement made by the teacher. While Kendall was not fond of the journal either, she nevertheless completed her assignments. Aaliyah appeared to greatly enjoy journal writing, especially journals she kept for herself. Again, their autobiographies appeared to show many positions of identity but mainly focused on gender and place. Other formal papers—expository, procedural, arguments—which were meant to be restricted to genre and academic audiences, allowed for other positions to appear, such as Aaliyah's racial position and Kendall's advocation of women.
CHAPTER 7
TEXT, IDENTITY, AND GENRE OF WRITING

From my study, what conclusion can one draw about writing and identity? In the previous chapters, I discussed the writing identities of the six young women in terms of the positions reflected in their writing for their English class and the tensions among those positions. In Chapter Five, my focus was on the three students whose major tensions in their writing seemed to result from a conflict between two gendered positions that they assumed as women. In Chapter Six, my focus was on three students whose major tension in their writing seemed to result from a conflict between a gendered and another position, such as that associated with religion or family relationship.

Were these young women positioned by social forces or did they position themselves? To what extent were they active agents? To what extent were they constrained by their own “placement” in society and geography? This, of course, is an issue that has been debated for centuries. Today, many theorists writing about identity (e.g., Bhabha, 1994a, 1994b; Foucault, 1972; Gergen, 1991, 1994) have focused on large societal patterns and have emphasized the external forces that have a determining effect on identity. Others (e.g., Markus & Nurius, 1986) have attended more to individual differences and have described choices that individuals make in constructing identities. The latter group includes people working within composition theory (e.g., Ivanic, 1998; Spivey & Mathison, 1997; Sternglass, 1997) who have tended to look at individuals and to describe choices that those individuals make as they produce communications in social contexts. As Nelson (2001a) has pointed out, theorists view identity construction through different lenses: seeing the macro or the micro, seeing social determinism or individual
agency. In my presentation of theses cases, I have done some shifting from one lens to another—emphasizing social influences but also attending to individual agency.

Throughout my description of the cases, I referred to the various types of writing—genres the students produced—and I began pointing to a relationship between positioning and genre. In this chapter, I conclude my report by pursuing this issue of genre, as I discuss my study and conclusions that can be drawn from it. Specific genres seemed to place constraints placed on the writer within her social world; however, there was room for agency. I saw students positioned within genres as well as positioning themselves within genres, even blurring and shifting the genres to suit their purposes.

The students wrote various types of texts portraying different facets of their complex identities and the relations among them. In this concluding chapter, I first discuss the role of genre in writing instruction. I then reiterate some of my findings by showing how the participants wrote within the constraints of specific genres, how they might have modified the genres, and how their identity positions were brought into tensions. I finally place my study into the literature of the writing field by aligning and contrasting it with the prior research discussed in Chapter Two and by discussing the potential contributions to understandings of writing and identity.

Genre and Writing Instruction

Genre is a contested terrain in the field of composition studies, and the role of genre in writing instruction is a much debated topic. The French noun genre, which has been in the English language since 1816, is related to the Latin term genus, the taxonomical category used in biology to describe similar species of animals. Numerous scholars, including Quinn (1999), have noted the parallel between genre classifications
and biological classifications. The history of genre theory dates back to Aristotle, who spoke of *poetic kinds* and established, in his *Poetics*, a system of classification, focused on the difference between poetic truth and historical truth and divided various writing according to the narrator’s role. Throughout literary history, various types of writing have been defined, such as the essay, which was labeled by Montaigne (1580/1999) in the sixteenth century.

A major figure in genre theory was Northrup Frye (1957/2000), who built on the works of Aristotle and other classicists. In his *Anatomy of Criticism*, he modernized and re-taxonimized genres in such detail that one critic was reminded of “the lexicographers and dialectologists of the nineteenth century who scoured villages in search of rare of precious words” (Macey, 2000, p. 148). Frye differentiated genres according to their rhythms (e.g., continuity for prose, decorum for drama, association for lyric) and delineated specific forms, such as types of poetry, literary prose, encyclopedic forms, and non-literary prose. As he explained, “the purpose of criticism by genres is not so much to classify as it is to clarify . . . traditions and affinities” (p. 247).

The literary genres studied by Frye and other literary scholars often serve as means of organizing works in literature anthologies and are familiar to readers of literature. These include poetry, drama, fiction (novel, short story), and non-fiction (essay, biography, and autobiography). In addition to the literary genres, there are numerous other genres of writing. These include diverse types of writing, such as the editorial, the review (e.g., book review, film review), the research report, the how-to-book, and the case study, to mention only a few. Much attention in recent years has gone to differentiation of genres across the various academic disciplines.
The rather static categories have come under critique during the past three decades. In *A Theory of Discourse*, James Kinneavy (1971) turned the focus away from taxonomical classification of genres to what is termed “modes of discourse.” As he suggested, the modes of discourse, such as classification, narration, and description, are interrelated, since they often combine in producing a text. He said, “Discourse, or what I call genre, is the study of “situational uses of the potential of the language” (p. 22). Other contemporary rhetoricians, such as Miller (1984), have argued that a text has the pattern it does because of the rhetorical practice with which it is associated. For instance, people propose solutions in response to problems; they give explanations of how to do something in response to questions; they report information to others who have some need of the information. Genres are seen as dynamic and socially rehearsed—as typified responses to recurring kinds of social practices (cf. Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995). Social practices change, and, thus, the text patterns associated with them change. For instance, Bazerman (1987) provided a report of the psychological-report genre, showing how the form changed as the values and practices of psychologists became more like those of scientists than those of philosophers. Bakhtin’s (1981, 1986) influence has been important in the redefining of genre, as he claimed that all genres derive from social interaction.

Some critics have also pointed out that genres are not discrete and that they tend to blur and blend. For instance, Derrida (1981), noting similarities between gender and genre, portrayed genre as a woman, who, in madness, breaks the rigid divisions in the taxonomies.
Many of the traditional views on genre have carried over into school-sanctioned writings—placing student expectations at odds with real world writing. From the formatted school-sanctioned texts, some of my participants created hybrids of these genres. How “determined” then is a person’s writing by the typified form of a genre? How much are writers constrained by genres and by conventional practices? Within the “form,” is there some room for individuals to move—to be idiosyncratic? Yes. Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) argued that it is through individuals making some changes in forms and practices that genres are transformed. When enough others in the community make the same sorts of transformations, the genre itself changes. What is typical thus changes.

The writing produced by the young women in my study fit, for the most part, in the familiar school genre associated with English classes and with academic discourse: the essay, which includes, to name a few, the analytic literary essay, the problem-solution essay (or argument), the process essay, the descriptive essay, and the informative report. These are the forms that accord with what Doyle (1999) has called the “bite-sized” segments of schooling in composition. In school settings, these have become school genres, which tend oftentimes to have a formula (a rigid pattern) and often have little function in the world outside the classroom. They fit within the practices with which they are associated—classroom discourse (cf. Cazden, 1988). For secondary school students, the essay is a major genre (and practice); through it, the student displays knowledge for someone who evaluates it (Heath, 1982, 1995; cf. Evans, 1993).

Their writing also included some literary genres, which in English language arts classes go by the label “creative writing” when they are produced by students. These
included stories and fables for all participants as well as poetry for some of them. These creative writing genres, which receive attention in the elementary-grade curriculum, do not typically receive as much emphasis as do essays in secondary school (Applebee, 1984). Also included were two kinds of writing based on experiences in individuals’ lives: personal narratives, which are a common form in school, and autobiographies, which are less common. One student wrote meditations, which are rather difficult to classify and are not a common form of school discourse.

In addition, students kept journals, but these had few similarities to journals that people keep in the world outside of school. As noted by Shafer (2002), in school settings journals have been transformed into a genre that is different from the out-of-school form. In the outside world, the purpose of the journal is for the writer to express feelings, reflections, and unstructured ideas for himself or herself. In contrast, journals in school settings often have the teacher as the audience, and the purpose is to display knowledge.

The Genres and Identity Positions

From my study, I found that my students learned to be young women, to be Catholics, to be mainstream students, and also to write in the local place of Pointe Coupee and in the global place of the world around them. The forms of writing they were producing were quite similar to those produced by students across the United States, and most had some similarity to forms in schools in other countries. Through genre, one might say then, the students were positioned as members of a global community. In the sections that follow, I consider how these genres related to the positioning of the writers. The motivation for the papers seemed to come mainly from the academic situation, with
the exception of the meditations and the poetry, but the students were able to incorporate various facets of their own lives in genres that do not seem to invite personal connections.

The Essays

The label *essay* comes from the French word *essai*, which means “attempt.” According to Quinn (1999), the essay as a genre “is usually informal in tone and explanatory and tentative in its conclusion. It does not aspire to be the last word on its subject but instead to reflect the private musings of a particular individual” (p. 109). The essay has flourished for years in periodicals for the general public and for specialized audiences, and collections of essays often appear in book form. However, it does not have a prominent place in *belles lettres*. A Bloome (1999) said, “The essay as a genre has had a furtive, if not fugitive, status in twentieth-century American bellestristic writing” (p. 49). In contrast to essays in the “real world,” the essay in school contexts is usually formal in tone and anything but tentative in its conclusion. The student writer is encouraged to have a clear (and authoritative) thesis statement that he or she strongly supports with subpoints, each of which has its own supports.

The school essay has developed a rather rigid form, known as the five-paragraph theme. The writer must introduce the essay with a paragraph laying out the thesis and three component points, must produce three paragraphs, each of which develops one of these points, and must conclude with a summary. In many school settings, this has been a discourse of power (cf. Delpit, 1988; Gee, 1989). Those who can produce it effectively have some power; those who cannot do not have the power. Emig (1971) described the five-paragraph theme as an American form—“so indigenously American that it might be called the fifty-star theme” (p. 97). The essays written by the participants in my study
included the literary analysis, the argument, the informative report, the process paper, and the descriptive paper.

**Literary analyses.** The literary analysis is an “examination of a work of literature; a close study of various elements and the relations between them” (Cuddon, 1998, p. 36). It is the major genre produced by literary critics—and English majors. The literary analyses these students wrote followed a school-sanctioned, formatted style, which Applebee (1984) called the “analytic essay.” They were the five-paragraph theme, often criticized by many college and university professors (Moss, 2002), or its smaller relative, the three-paragraph theme. This is such a major form of writing in English classes across the country and seems to be so focused on its object (the text being analyzed) that one would expect essays written by these students to conform fairly well with essays written by other high school students most anywhere in the United States who are writing about the same literary work.

It would seem that in this form of writing there would be few connections to the participants’ own personal lives, times, or places. Literary analyses are based on literature knowledge and academic experience. Of the two literary analyses submitted by the same participant, in three cases, one was unusually well written, including details and elaboration, while the other basically satisfied the guidelines of the assignment. Aaliyah, Elle, and Kayla were three participants whose analyses were strong examples of this division. Based on the discussions I had with each of them, the quality of writing in one of the essays suffered because of the individual’s lack of time and interest in completing the assignments. Many of the introductions and conclusions were formula-written and the bodies held the three main points supported by evidence.
Of the twelve different analyses submitted, five held interesting personal connections to the writer. This showed the young women positioned by the school as they produced the required forms, yet also positioning themselves through their personal connections and ties to experiences and place. Bailey wrote an analysis of *Catcher in the Rye* (Salinger, 1951/1991) that focused on “phonies” and gossip—concerns of hers as she was dealing with gossip about her new status as mother. Aimee Lynn tackled her questions about love in “Sobel,” and Kendall discussed her gendered position on “A Character Analysis of Lady de Winter” from *The Three Musketeers* (Dumas, 1844/1991). In a piece for a previous class, “Friendship and Betrayal” based on Steinbeck’s (1993) *Of Mice and Men*, Aaliyah analyzed what she felt was a betrayal of Lennie by George. This theme of betrayal connected to several of her other pieces and to the issues she had with her brother, Antoine. Kendall addressed issues of gender, religion, and literacy in “Irony of Madonna.” This theme was the irony of an artist’s using a prostitute, who represented a lower social and moral status, to represent the Madonna, the highest moral status. In each case, the participant had found a way to connect her personal knowledge with her academic knowledge while still maintaining the academic genre of the literary analysis.

**Arguments.** The argument has been a major focus of scholarship and pedagogy in the field of rhetoric. Woodson (1979) has defined argument as “a classification or form of discourse having as its function to convince, persuade an audience, or refute a point of view” (p. 4). Writers use various kinds of support to convince their audience. Classical rhetoricians, such as Aristotle, and neoclassical rhetoricians, such as Kinneavy (1971), have discussed three major types of appeals that are used in arguments: the appeal to
logos, or the logic of the subject matter itself; the appeal to pathos, or audience’s emotions; and the appeal to ethos, or the credibility of the author.

In the classroom I observed, two arguments were required by the teacher: one (called the “problem-solution” paper), which proposed a solution to a current problem, and the other (called the “argument”), which presented a controversial situation and required the writer to take a stance or position and support it. Although these pieces were called by separate names, they were, in effect, much the same in form and purpose. In the problem-solution papers the young women tended to address a specific situation which was of personal concern to them, while in the argument they addressed a situation of more general concern.

The problem-solution papers were evenly divided between attempts by the participants to address social community issues and attempts to solve continual disputes at home between the participant and her siblings/parents. The former came close in context to the content of the argument papers—socially positioned by the school. I learned that place-oriented positions were prominent in these papers, especially after I discussed them in the interviews, showing the students positioning themselves. For example, Kayla submitted a solution to the problem of accidents on False River, with which she was familiar from personal experience. And Aaliyah submitted a solution to the problem of alcohol-related accidents basing her argument indirectly on the pain she experienced after her aunt and cousin were killed in a drunk-driving accident. Bailey wrote about violence in high schools; she focused upon national incidents but brought the issue to her local place by mentioning violence in some Pointe Coupee schools. Three papers dealt with domestic situations: Aimee Lynn’s “Telephone Crisis,” Kendall’s
“Problem with a Messy House, and Elle’s “Sleep.” These three problem-solution papers focused more on the interactions and social dynamics of the participant with her family and her gendered position as a daughter in the family. Each of the young women held a direct personal connection to the content of the problem-solution text; however, the arguments were more social and controversial.

Arguments, for many of the girls, were based on moral issues (e.g., abortion, right to life) relevant to Catholicism in which they attempted to convince readers to accept their position. The Catholic Church and school influenced their stance, and thus they were socially positioned. Aaliyah, however, attempted agency in positioning herself by trying to assimilate her gendered position and possibly use knowledge from her academic position in creating the unborn child’s perspective as a lead-in to her argument against abortion. As in many of her other pieces, she held strong empathy with others. Most of the arguments were one-sided and were related to some of the participants’ other pieces, for instance, the prompted journal entries which allowed the young women to question or affirm their beliefs.

The controversial arguments focused mainly on religious and gender issues. In these papers, the writers took a position, pro or con, and attempted to defend their position. In doing so, they portrayed the opposing side to be morally dangerous to humanity. For example, four of the six students chose to write arguments dealing with the issue of the right to life, which had been discussed in class. Three titles—“Abortion Is Killing,” “Abortion,” and “Playing God” clearly specified the nature of the content. Unique from the others was “What’s That Sound?” by Aaliyah, who added a gendered position as she attempted to portray the unborn child’s perspective and used pathos as a
means of persuasion. Of the pieces not written on religious issues were Bailey’s “Drunk Driving” and Kendall’s “The Wrong Child-Gun Theory.” Both of these pieces attempted to refute an accepted problem or theory which they established as misguided without necessarily offering an alternative.

Informative reports. The function of the informative report genre is simply to inform, instruct, or present ideas and truths. Informative writings can take on such forms as definition, classification, and cause/effect (Bain, 1980). Quinn (1999) defined the informative, or expository, report as a “straightforward explanation” of a topic in essay form. The participants differed in their choice of topics, yet each chose to focus on an issue about which she had some personal interest. Kendall wrote about women’s suffrage, showing her gendered positions, and Aaliyah wrote about Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks, showing her racial position as a non-white. Other topics included Bailey’s focus on scoliosis, which had afflicted her cousin, and Kayla’s focus on bulimia, which she considered to be a teenage, though not a gendered, disease.

In these essays, the writers generally refrained from adding any personal information or anecdotes that might have been relevant to their topics. Kendall wrote about women’s suffrage, and offered a resolution to women’s civil rights by merely the legal passing of an amendment. Aaliyah never mentioned any personal experience that she had had with racism, although she wrote about black civil right leaders. Bailey did not mention the experience her cousin in fighting scoliosis. Kayla failed to mention the personal experience of a friend’s fight against bulimia. She typified it only as a teenage disease, but not a women’s disease. Elle did not mention the social stratification which
disallowed certain social groups from enjoying the recreation of False River. The only exposition that did not overtly hide personal experience was Aimee Lynn’s “Test Time.”

Process papers. The genre of process, or procedural, writing is often taught in high school and basic college composition courses as a basis for technical writing. Woodson (1979) defined it as “one of the patterns of thought about a subject that investigates steps or observations or the course of action to be followed in bringing about a particular result” (p. 46). Each of the young women in my study chose to create a “how-to” paper in which she attempted to explain or display a process. The papers, however, did seem to provide the opportunity for writers to assume gendered and place-oriented positions. Of the six students, five wrote on the process of cooking or baking. The teacher had used the example in class of cooking a frozen pizza. Aimee Lynn recorded a recitation of the teacher’s verbal model and titled it “Cooking a Frozen Pizza.” Two of these pieces on food stood out, however, as being more significant to the writer. Elle’s “The Age Old Pound Cake” and Aaliyah’s “‘Jiffy’ Cornbread for the Soul” communicated the significance that the writers placed on the experience of baking these foods and on the social interaction involved. Even Kendall’s “Betty Crocker’s Chocolate Chip Cookies” had a story connecting her back to her after-school job and the people who shared that time with her. Kayla’s “Mayonnaise No More” combined her emphasis on a healthy diet and weight loss with on her place of Louisiana as she substituted Tony Chachere and other Cajun spices for Mayonnaise. Only one essay went into a topic other than food: Bailey’s “Putting on a Dance Review.” In that piece Bailey seemed to put a lot of herself—a self that seemed to be quite distinct from the mother-daughter-girlfriend-student that was most apparent probably to most people. Here she appeared as an
authoritative expert on something other than domestic life or life as a school student. Her knowledge of her topic came from years of life experience as a dancer.

Descriptive papers. In description, the writer presents, usually in detail, the features of something or someone. Description is often used in producing various other genres, such as character and setting descriptions in narratives, biography, and autobiography and situation descriptions in arguments. In school discourse, the descriptive essay appears often as a discrete form in which students are encouraged to generate material by using the senses of sight, sound, touch, and taste.

Description often led my participants to particular aspects of the place in which they felt comfortable and could position themselves. The students were authorities on what they saw and experienced there. Four of the six pieces dealt directly with place. For example, Elle’s “Crystal Clear,” and Aaliyah’s “the Deck” emphasized the peace they gained from visiting camps on False River. “Coffee Call” by Aimee Lynn focused on her fascination with the place of Baton Rouge, while Kayla’s place in “Friday Night Fever” held her position as a member of the New Roads community, although she lived in Morganza. The last two did not focus on place. Kendall’s was the only one situated not locally but nationally; “Symbol of the States” was written for quick completion in the computer class the period before the packet was due. Bailey’s “My Car” showed a blurring of genres as it was more of a personal narrative about purchasing her first car than a description.

The Creative Writing

“Creative writing” is the label used for the literary “imaginative work” (Quinn, 1999, p. 125) forms of narrative, poetry, and drama. The term is often used for types of
writing that contrast with essay writing, particularly expository or informative pieces. Creative writing, while emphasized in the primary grades, is not necessarily a part of most secondary school’s writing curriculum. The literary genres associated with creative writing are often read in English classes, but not often written in these courses. Some schools offer a separate elective course that strictly covers the genre of creative writing. The different types of writing in my study which could be considered creative writing were stories, fables, and poetry.

**Short stories.** Short stories comprise a fictional genre characterized by economy. There are usually only one or a few episodes in the plot and are usually only a few characters, whom the reader often gets to know through action rather than lengthy descriptions. There is considerable variability in what falls under the label “short story,” including a new form of extremely short story of only two or three pages known as “sudden fiction.” Fiction showed the students positioned by the genre of story through literary devices such as plot, characters, and setting, but they also positioned their experience in place, as some published authors do (e.g., Gaines, 1993). Although creative stories were often connected to the place of Pointe Coupee, other elements varied to include important themes in the writers’ lives. Most of these fictional pieces had some kind of autobiographical component, although the characters and the specific situations were not “real.” For example, Bailey’s “Black Cat” was based on her boyfriend’s dream; Elle’s “A Day on the River” was set on False River and included bits and pieces of experiences she remembered, such as running the boat into Satterfield Restaurant’s dock; and Kayla’s “Mardi Gras Madness” was based on her love relationship and was set in Mamou. Creating something different, Aimee Lynn and Kendall seemed to separate
their personal experience from their fiction. Only in her story titled “Trapped” did the author—Aimee Lynn—seem to come up with an experience that was not associated with her own place and her own life. Kendall’s five stories—“Guitar Man’s Death,” “Unsightly Wrapped Package,” “Salvation Santa,” “A Melody of Life,” and “A Forgotten Death”—presented protagonists who were different from her in age, gender, and/or social class, although they did share emotions she was seeking to understand.

Fables. The term *fable* comes from the Latin word *fabula*, which means “story.” A fable is a brief narrative with two major features: animals as characters and a moral, or lesson, at the conclusion. Historically, fables were tales that were told orally by one person to another person; and they had no single author, even though they might be attributed to one, such as Aesop. As young readers, students become familiar with fables, and they may encounter them again and again in the school curriculum. In school students are sometimes asked to produce this form of discourse, emulating the fables they read.

The social constraints for the genre appeared as most of the young women used animals to represent the characters and ended with a moral. The students’ fables pointed to lessons which were well rooted in place and touched upon gendered relationships. The setting for most of these fables had specific similarities to the place of New Roads. Aaliyah’s “Dragon and the Caterpillar,” Bailey’s “Monkey Jealousies,” Elle’s “True to One’s Self,” Kendall’s “Joshua and the Strawberry Seedlings,” and Kayla’s “Love Birds” all were set in a Pointe Coupee town. Each fable was not only set in New Roads but also provided an interpretation of the social experience each writer had in this town. Some participants assumed the identity of the character learning the lesson, but others aligned
themselves with the person teaching the lesson. Aimee Lynn’s fable, which used humans instead of animals, was centered on a conflict between autonomy from and dependency to parents. Her position of knowledge conflicted with her position as an adolescent. She placed much blame on the adults in the story and then placed herself—as adolescent—in the position of knowledge. Gendered positions were also brought into the mix, mostly building on relationships, either friendship or love relations. The other fables showed discomfort and tension in place. For example, each fable addressed the social problems of their place through the actions of the animal characters.

**Poetry.** Poetry and its subtypes, which include such things as lyric, narrative poem, and sonnet, are, for the most part, defined in terms of the expression of feelings as well as the use of pattern, rhythm, and poetic devices. Cuddon (1998) pointed out that the Greek poimea means “something mad, created” (p. 678) and that in poetry “the words lean upon each other, are linked and interlocked in sense and rhythm, and thus elicit from each other’s syllables a kind of tune whose beat and melody varies subtly and which is different from that of prose—the ‘other harmony’” (p. 300).

The poetry genre was a means for three of the students to express thoughts about love and friendship. Some strictly styled their poetry in rhymed and metered formats, which they believed to be the “right” way to present poetry, since that had characterized most of the poetry they experienced during much of their schooling. Of the three participants who submitted poetry, one, Kendall, dealt with family relations; another, Aaliyah, addressed family relations, love relationships, and religious positions; and, the third, Aimee Lynn, wrote about love relations and religious positions.
Poems also took on a very personal quality and confidential tone. Many of them were autobiographical in nature—presenting experiences in a different form than prose. This allowed for the role of “woman in love,” and friend, which are predominant themes of poetry. Occasionally, some of Aimee Lynn and Aaliyah’s poems focused on religious beliefs in the context of a love relationship or friendship. These poems directly addressed God just as they addressed an unrequited lover. For some of the poems, I was unable to determine which person was being addressed and had difficulty coding the identity.

The Journals

Journals are typically forms of personal writing in small books in which people keep records of experiences, thoughts, and feelings. The term journal is related to the Latin word for “daily,” and journals often have daily entries. The audience is typically the self rather than someone else, and the style is informal.

Not only in composition or English classrooms, journals have become increasingly popular as a pedagogical tool in school subjects across disciplines. In school settings, the journal has been transformed from its form out of school and has taken on multiple other forms. Gannet (1992) has pointed out that the academic use of journals range enormously and tend to carry a multitude of names: learning log, day book, dialogue journal, word-processed journal, hyper-texted journal response, think books, notebooks, personal journals, literary logs, classroom diaries, double-entry journals, process journals, and language logs. Some of the activities for which teachers assign journals are “heuristic prewriting, a tool to develop fluency and generate meaning, personalizing and synthesizing knowledge and as an aid memoire” (p. 19). Dialogue journals, as noted, by Staton (1980), create a discourse between the teacher and the
student. This exchange often continues throughout the year and focused on the teacher’s objective of allowing the student to develop reading, writing, and communication skills simultaneously while addressing a real audience. This often motivates students to read at a higher level as the teacher’s responses should be at a slightly higher linguistic level.

The journals that these young women kept encompassed two separate genres showing how boundaries can begin to blur. One was the short formal essays assigned by the teacher, and the other was the deviation from the prompt in which writers discussed in less formal fashion something they considered to be of more importance or more interesting. The short polished pieces allowed the participants to practice miniature lessons of academic-style essays with the three points, evidence, and commentary. While some entries were somewhat reflective, the majority focused on adhering to the three points of an essay as taught by the teacher. The prompted journal entries were smaller replicas of the different genres. Many of the participants used these journal entries to present their positions on particular issues, such as the right-to-life doctrine and the forgiveness doctrine in religion.

The other genre of journal entries was more permissive in nature and was often entitled “free-writes.” Although socially positioned by the school and the teacher to write essay-formatted entries, the students would position themselves in other ways. Five of the six students deviated at several points from the assigned prompt; all six of the participants deviated at least once. These journal entries dealt with the everyday events of the participant’s life and the reflection, or meaning, cast upon these events, as noted by Gannet (1992). Of the four who deviated often, each had her own style to make this shift in writing. For example, Aimee Lynn assumed authority by titling her entry “Free write,”
while Kayla excused herself in the last four of five for reasons such as “not liking to write creative stories” or “having an emotional crisis.” Bailey, on the other hand, tended to address the teacher when giving her reasons for not writing on the assignment. Elle deviated with defiance against the word-or line-number requirements given by the teacher; she simply wrote about hating to write to the bottom of the page. Kendall always began with a response to the prompt, but would change subjects sometimes and move into her personal life. Other times, she too complained about page and line requirements. Some of the journal entries actually addressed the teacher as audience while others addressed an unknown audience complaining that the teacher did not actually read the entries, making the assignment a “waste of time.” Journals allowed female features of writing (e.g., exclamation points) discussed by Rubin and Greene (1995). I saw evidence of more attempts to assimilate different positions. For example, Bailey used the journals to write about her various roles: as a mother, as a daughter, as a student in high school, and as a student in a technical training school.

The Autobiographical Writings

Autobiography comprises many diverse forms, which include memoirs, personal narrative, diaries, and some letters, as well as the form known by itself as autobiography. Reeves (2001) deconstructed the genre when she maintained that “autobiography as a genre, as not-biography, not-novel, not-memoirs, not-history has already been exhaustively explored” leaving the only “definition” available—a multihued and multifaceted abstraction (p. 162). Nevertheless, one can think of the broad category as writing that centers on one’s own life.
Autobiographies. Autobiography, as Barros (1997) contended, is actually a “narrative of transformation,” focusing on the life story of the writer. It is a complex kind of narrative, since, according to Wannar (1994), the writer must review events “through filters made up of unique memories and sensibilities” (p. 103). The autobiography has acquired an educational importance, since Pinar (1974, 1998) began to conceive curriculum in terms of an individual’s life. Using the Latin word currere, the running of the course, Pinar and Grumet (1976) tapped into the idea that an autobiography, whether used to establish curriculum or used as a genre within a curriculum, was an exploration of an individual’s life, which can be connected to school knowledge and intellectual drive in a self-transforming way.

The school-formed autobiography in my study did not take the form of a narrative. Instead, the students appeared to created “scrapbooks” to express their identity. The autobiography was, for these students, based on a collection of topics instead of a single narrative that characterizes most but certainly not all autobiographies. Many of the participants saw the autobiography task as collecting memories or showcasing their identities. The autobiography reflected multiple identity positions. Some chapters showed more than one position, but most of the chapters focused on only one. Sometimes, the autobiographies developed many individual narratives. Each participant’s autobiography was unique depending on how she chose to share her stories. These narratives were developed through writing and through photographs. The amount of writing ranged from 785 words in Aimee Lynn’s autobiography to 6395 words in Bailey’s autobiography. Yet they all revealed a very intimate side of the participant.
**Personal narratives.** Personal narratives are autobiographical writings that differ from full autobiographies in both length and complexity. They typically focus on a single experience in the writer’s life, with the account provided in narrative form, often in chronological order. The narrative might focus on a transformation in the writer that was brought about by that experience. This genre of writing has become quite common in schooling. As Doyle (1999) has pointed out, teachers often believe that students can “get into” writing by recounting an experience in their own lives. Support for this position comes from Moffett (1968), who has emphasized beginning with the self in writing development.

The personal narratives the six young women wrote their senior year often related to a single chapter in the autobiography, which had been written the previous year. Five of the six participants actually chose to use one of their autobiography chapters and to elaborate upon it, as her own narrative episode. The situations differed, of course. For instance, Kendall, chose to share a time of closeness with friends and family, and Aaliyah chose to share a time of betrayal by family. The narratives typically dealt with a time of change and how the individual handled this change.

Some of the papers, because they focused on personal experiences, were in tension with other papers where the writers had presented problems within the same place. For example, “Invisible Wedding” shows the betrayal Aaliyah felt from her brother’s elopement. In all of the other pieces, she set her family up into a position of safety (place at home), and it was her friends who betrayed her. “My Wreck” was the only piece in which Aimee Lynn portrayed an adult as a source of knowledge. In “A Transformation,” Elle recounted her experience in dealing with her injury. Tensions
among place, gender, and—religion were apparent as she attempted to accommodate religion into her place at school as a basketball player and her gendered position as being aggressive about her goals and future.

Kendall’s personal narrative, however, continued her development of family and friends as a safe environment when she wrote about a family trip in which she and her friend had a Skittles-eating contest. Kayla also wrote about a safe haven, a church retreat, in which she listened to and counseled another individual about his problems. Bailey maintained the oral discourse tradition that she had used in her creative story, “The Black Cat.” She recorded a family story, “My First Whipping,” which focused on the first time she “got a whipping” for not obeying her parents.

Meditations

Meditation is a mental process, which sometimes has oral or written language associated with it. Spiritual meditation is practiced in many religions, and, though it is not typical in school settings, it is important in the “Catholic” world. Aaliyah was the only writer who submitted meditations, which seemed to me to be a cross between the form of poetry and religious writings, specifically prayers and “special intentions,” a form of prayer used at Mass. This created a hybrid which blurred the boundaries. The social constraints were at play, yet Aaliyah created a “new” form. She seemed to soothe her emotions by working them out through prayer.

Meditation certainly underscores the position of Catholic, but in Aaliyah’s case it also emphasized gender. The meditations successfully accommodated her religious and gendered positions. For example, her style crossed back and forth from poetry to prayers
and “special intentions” (a specific form of prayer that is used in the English class as well as in church).

**Observation on Genres and Positions**

While the genres worked to position the participant into a socially recurring situation in which specific identity positions were allowed to surface, the students simultaneously positioned themselves. My results can be looked at in two different ways—as “social forces” operating on the young women or as the young women operating as agents, looking to create their own identity and deal with issues in their lives. These are both equally valid ways to view this study. A third way to view the study, however, is to view both agency and social forces operating at the same time—the students were being positioned but also positioning themselves. Writing became a site of struggle. Although many of the pieces allowed the participant to focus on one positions at a time, such as the arguments, the participants often merged positions, especially in the less formal genres, such as the free-write journal entries and the personal narratives. Other genres caused more resistance to specific identities, especially the informative reports. Positions associated with some of the papers were in conflict with positions in other papers.

“Positioned” Within the Research

While the research review in my second chapter focused first on style and content in individual categories of gender, place, race, social class, and religion, I purposefully migrated towards the research which described identity in a more complex way, including fragmented selves, saturated selves, authoring identities, authoring identities, and temporal, contextualized identities.
In my study, I built upon concepts of social identity, place, and genre as they have been represented in these “post” times. I have also broached additions to curriculum and writing theories which touch upon the basic beliefs in pedagogy and epistemology.

**Positions, Identities, and Writing**

I, too, view identity as a dynamic and complex notion, and I have chosen to study this variability using the notion of positions, following Bhabha (1994b) who used the term to describe the resulting tensions, or contestations, *within* and *between* positions of race, gender, generation, institutions, geolocation, and sexual orientation. To the notion of subject positions (cf. Althusser, 1970/1984; Foucault, 1972), Bhabha added the concept of the interstices, the place within and between these positions where the contestation occurs—thus creating new positions. Using the term “identity positions,” I have looked specifically at six young women’s writing in order to distinguish the convergence of positions—place, gender, religion, race, social class, and “school.” Although my focus was social (the formation of the identity positions in a specific time and a specific place), I have looked at the individuals’ identities as they are manifested within their writings. My interest is in the instability or multiplicity of the individual self.

Many theorists have questioned the notion of a stable and singular identity for an individual. Kenneth Gergen’s (1991) concept of the “saturated self” emphasized the influence on an individual’s identity from social forces in a global world, resulting in what seem to be numerous selves. Mary Gergen (1986) referred to influences from others as “social ghosts,” who generate dialogue within the individual. Markus and Nurius (1986) spoke of the “possible future selves.” Stuart Hall (1989,1996) argued
against that a stable identity, pointing to the fragmentation that occurs both globally and locally.

Writing researchers have added to the notion of identity development and change within writing. Nelson (1998, 2000, 2001a, 2001b; Spivey, 1997; Spivey & Mathison, 1997) first contributed the concept of “authoring identities” after she conducted a longitudinal research study on college students’ writing. She marked social ties to the disciplinary community of psychology as the psychology majors adopted its genres and discursive practices and connected their own work to that of others in their field. She has, since then, applied the notion to analyses of disciplinary scholars’ bodies of work. Sternglass (1993, 1997) who looked at students in an open admissions university saw that the students’ particularly complex social experiences were adopted into “new” academic knowledge. Ivanic (1998) found that multiple selves—the autobiographical self, the discoursal self, and the authorial self—came together to create what she called “possibilities for self-hood.”

Contributions of the Study

Students in this study wrote from the self and from their own positions, or places, even when they produced the more formal pieces of writing. They created complex and shifting identities that related to various aspects of their lives, and the pieces that they wrote seemed to be at odds with genre categories that distinguish personal writing from other writings. These young women dealt with the “personal” in some of the genres that many theorists would see as most distant from self.

The young women themselves operated in a complex, multi-layered social context, in which there were forms of these genres they read that were written by
published authors, there were “school genres” in American schooling that differed from the genres that they read, and there were the teacher’s version of the school genres. The students were positioned in a context with social forces (including the teacher and the “tradition”) prescribing forms for the discourse practices. But, even so, the young women also assumed some agency at times and positioned themselves differently as they blurred boundaries between genres or produced texts that varied from the prescribed form. There are three major conclusions to be drawn.

First, as in previous studies of writing and identity (Ivanic, 1998; Spivey & Mathison, 1997; Sternglass, 1997), I found evidence of recurring themes and conflicts in each writer’s body of work, as well as social constraints. The writers were positioned through social forces, thus demonstrating the social aspect of genre. However, this study, which focused on positions, showed differences among writers in the way that positions were assumed. Some of the writers tended to assume a particular position when writing in a particular genre or set of genres and to change when they wrote in another. For example, Kayla appeared to show her gendered position as a strong, independent female leader in her journal entries and most of her non-fiction writings. However, when she wrote her short story and her fable, she was positioned as a vulnerable and neglected girlfriend. Bailey was a mother in her journals, but a daughter and a teenaged girl in her formal papers. Other writers were more variable in positionings for their writings. Aimee Lynn often wrote about wanting to be “different,” as in her fable in which parents were to blame for their child’s murder, yet in her argument against abortion she showed a connection with the beliefs and doctrines of Catholic High.
Second, even though the students were submitting writing for their senior English class, many of the pieces had a history (Prior, 1991)—direct connections with other texts they had written previously. This showed the sameness of many of the genres as well as the difference in how the young women constructed their identity positions in different genres. The personal narratives grew out of autobiography entries, and journal entries sometimes developed into full-blown essays. Some of the writings the students submitted for this class had been produced in a previous year, and in some cases the quality was better for a piece written previously, not because the writers had somehow “regressed” but because more effort had gone into that earlier text. The point I make here is that, even though high school students’ papers may seem to be discrete, they are actually connected to other writings and experiences.

And third, I found writings dealing with future “possibilities” as well as present and past “realities.” Adolescence is a time of transitions, and it is, as Markus and Nurius (1986) found, a time for trying out different selves. These researchers offered the term “possible future selves” for this kind of tentative construction of identities. It seems to me that my study showed the young woman trying out different possible selves through their writing. In their writing for school assignments, formulaic and socially constrained as it sometimes seemed to be, they experienced different possibilities—different possible lives and selves. It was not just in the genres usually considered “personal” or “expressive” that they portrayed these selves. The writers dealt with personal concerns and roles even in formal literary essays and in fiction. Through these genres, they presented characters who were dealing—sometimes successfully and sometimes not—with conflicts that were similar to their own.
Conclusion

As Stake (1978) has argued, a case study is unique in its ability to explain some of the relationships which are inherent in a person’s life. It is not only these unique life experiences but the social experiences as well which I delineated in my study. Fluid and changing identity positions were transforming, and I found that the students were constructing their identities through positions they assumed. Their struggles and their transformations were reflected in their texts. Like Newkirk (1992), I have witnessed transformation in identity and writing. I view my case studies as “transformative narrative.” They portray the multiplicity and flexibility of the identities six young women—Kayla, Aimee Lynn, Bailey, Aaliyah, Elle, and Kendall—assumed in their writing during one school semester at Catholic High.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE: SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Interview Guide -- Sample Questions

- **Peer and School**

Tell me about your experience here at Catholic.
What is your favorite subject? What do you think you are learning in your classes?
How do you feel that what you are learning in your school is relevant in your life?
How might it be relevant in the future?
How would you describe relationships between students?
Has being here changed the way you think about yourself or the world?
Are there things that Catholic doesn’t provide that are important to you?

- **Family and Community**

Tell me about the community that you live in.
What are the different social classes or groups of people here in New Roads?
Do your friends belong to the same social class as you?
Does social class make a difference in your friendship? What ways do you interact with people from different social classes?
What is your family like? What is your relationship with your parents and your siblings?
Is anything going to be different about your life after high school and that of your parents?
What factors influenced your decision to attend Catholic?
Do you have a job? If so what do you do?
Do you have responsibilities at home?
Do you read at home?
Do you write at home?

- **Race**

What racial group do you think you belong in? Why?
Is being ________ important to your family?
Tell me about your family members who you admire for their attitude about their race?
What are the different racial groups of people here in New Roads?
Who are some of the people in a different racial group who you admire in your community?
Do your friends belong to the same racial group as you?
Does race make a difference in your friendship? What ways do you interact with people from different races?

- **Gender**

What does being a woman mean to you?
What do you see as your role as a young woman in the turn of the century?
Does anyone influence what you think the role of a women should be?
How important are your friendships with other women? Are these friendships more important than school? Who do you turn to in school when you have problems?
What kind of relationships with students/ teachers do you have in school?
What do you see yourself doing 5-7 years from now/ What factors influence your decision?
Do you think it is possible to have it all -- career, marriage, family?
Do you think Catholic prepares you to meet your goals? in what ways?
Roles, Voice, and Self

What stands out for you in your life over the past few years?
How would you describe yourself to yourself?
Is the way you see yourself now different from the way you saw yourself in the past? What led to the changes?
What are the roles you play in your life?
Do the roles ever overlap?
What qualities are overlapping?
What qualities are different?

Relationships

Looking back over your life, what relationships have been really important to you? Have you ever had a relationship with someone who has helped you shape the person you have become?
Have you ever had a really important relationship where you were responsible for taking care of another person?
Who are some of the people you model yourself after?
Do you have a favorite t.v. character? Why do you like that character? What traits does that character have that you want to develop? (repeat with other forms of media - i.e. movies, music, magazines, models, news.)
Who are your favorite authors? What do you like about them?
Describe yourself as your ideal writer.
What would you never be like?

Literacy Practices

Describe how you use reading in your classes.
How is reading important to you outside of class?
What kinds of things do you read on your own?
Describe how you use writing in your classes.
How is writing important to you outside of class?
What do you write on your own?
How do you use reading and writing to communicate with friends?
Text-Based Interviews

- These are some pieces that you wrote during the first semester of school. Thanks you for sharing them with me. I’d like you to look over them and tell me what you think of your work.
  - journals
  - writers packets
  - autobiography
  - personal writing

- Do you see similarities (or commonalities)?
  - Which is your favorite? Why?
  - Which is your least favorite? Why?

- How do you think each of your writings are different?

- How would you describe your writing to others?

- Do you ever find that you are writing to please a particular audience?
  - Rank them according to which ones you more personally like.

- What things influence how you are reflected in each writing? (time, place, audience, intentions of audience)

- If someone were to ask you who you are, what would you say?
  - Anything else?
  - How would you describe yourself to others?

- Look at this page. (#1) Which of these areas (subject positions) do you think influences who you are and will become?
  - Rank them in order of importance.

- How would you view these areas (subject positions)?
  - Look at this page. (#2) Which drawing most closely reflects these areas (subject positions) in your life?

- Which of these areas (subject positions) come though in your writings?
  - journals
  - writing packets
  - autobiography
  - personal writing

- How do express these different areas in your writings?
  - Give me an example of how ________(Catholic beliefs) might be seen in your __________ (journals, etc.).

- Do you ever come across problems in how these different parts of your life fit together?
  - Give me an example of how you fit together you beliefs in ________ and ________.
Faculty Interview Guide

Tell me about your philosophy of education

How about the school’s philosophy of education?
How does your idea of education differ from the school?
How does the school differ from you?
How would you like run it if you were free of constraints?

Tell me about the faculty.
How do most of them view education?
Can you group together certain teachers who have similar beliefs? What are the writing principles for those groups?
How do you see things differently?

Tell me about the community
What would they say about the role of the school?
Is it fulfilling their goals?
Do you agree with these goals?
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<th>Girlfriend</th>
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Vita

I began as an English major at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville where I majored especially in British literature with an emphasis in writing. Upon completion of my degree, I decided to pursue a Master’s degree in Secondary Education as Converse College in South Carolina with the intention of becoming a high school English teacher. When I finished and received teaching certification, I spent the next years teaching at various schools in several states: South Carolina, Louisiana, and Texas, low and upper socio-economic status schools, both public and parochial. I covered a span of grades from sixth grade through twelfth grade. Yet after watching my students struggle with adolescent issues, each one particular to their age. I resolved to return to school myself at Louisiana State University where I worked under Nancy Nelson as I sought to better understand the role of writing and genres in the school classroom as well as the outside world, especially as they manifested the struggles and identities of students in unique ways.