Beyond note cards: Rethinking the freshman research paper

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Beyond note cards: Rethinking the freshman research paper

Abstract
Ever since its introduction as an assignment in composition textbooks in the 1920s, the freshman research paper has confounded students and discouraged their instructors. Yet the research paper remains a largely static fixture in most first-year writing courses. What accounts for assignment’s persistence, despite the long history of complaint? What are the aims of the freshman research paper, and how well do students understand its purpose? Why do they struggle with the genre? How might it be reconceived?

Using extensive interviews with students and a close examination of student papers, I argue here that the conventional freshman research paper is no longer a defensible assignment because it fails to build on the writing that came before it in the composition class, it grows out of now discredited theories about knowledge, and it misleads students about the nature of academic inquiry. The research paper is essentially a genre captive to its history.

Drawing on an archival collection of composition textbooks, I trace the relatively static treatment of the research paper assignment in rhetorics and handbooks since 1900. Despite the disillusionment it engenders, the traditional research paper has persisted because nineteenth century assumptions about the aims and methods of academic research have rarely been critically examined. These mostly positivist assumptions include the need for researchers to be “objective,” do “original” investigations, and see language as merely a vehicle for transmitting—rather than constructing—some preexisting truth. The freshman research paper has also long been considered the untouchable centerpiece of composition’s service obligation to other disciplines.

By encouraging the researched essay, composition and literary studies can make its own claims on the research assignment, and still make it a useful introduction to academic inquiry. Inspired by Montaigne and supported by feminist theory, the research essay overturns postivist assumptions about research and writing, and engages students in an often personal engagement with knowledge-making. It is an approach that is much more likely to challenge them to confront their roles as knowers than traditional research paper pedagogies, while highlighting the habits of mind that are central to academic inquiry in any discipline.

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Education, Language and Literature, Language, Rhetoric and Composition
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BEYOND NOTE CARDS: RETHINKING THE FRESHMAN RESEARCH PAPER

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Date July 14, 1995
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ABSTRACT

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by

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University of New Hampshire, September, 1995

Ever since its introduction as an assignment in composition textbooks in the 1920s, the freshman research paper has confounded students and discouraged their instructors. Yet the research paper remains a largely static fixture in most first-year writing courses. What accounts for assignment's persistence, despite the long history of complaint? What are the aims of the freshman research paper, and how well do students understand its purpose? Why do they struggle with the genre? How might it be reconceived?

Using extensive interviews with students and a close examination of student papers, I argue here that the conventional freshman research paper is no longer a defensible assignment because it fails to build on the writing that came before it in the composition class, it grows out of now discredited theories about knowledge, and it misleads students about the nature of academic inquiry. The research paper is essentially a genre captive to its history.

Drawing on an archival collection of composition textbooks, I trace the relatively static treatment of the
research paper assignment in rhetorics and handbooks since 1900. Despite the disillusionment it engenders, the traditional research paper has persisted because nineteenth century assumptions about the aims and methods of academic research have rarely been critically examined. These mostly positivist assumptions include the need for researchers to be "objective," do "original" investigations, and see language as merely a vehicle for transmitting--rather than constructing--some preexisting truth. The freshman research paper has also long been considered the untouchable centerpiece of composition's service obligation to other disciplines.

By encouraging the researched essay, composition and literary studies can make its own claims on the research assignment, and still make it a useful introduction to academic inquiry. Inspired by Montaigne and supported by feminist theory, the research essay overturns positivist assumptions about research and writing, and engages students in an often personal engagement with knowledge-making. It is an approach that is much more likely to challenge them to confront their roles as knowers than traditional research paper pedagogies, while highlighting the habits of mind that are central to academic inquiry in any discipline.
INTRODUCTION

HUCK, TOM, AND THE PLEADERS FOR EUTHANASIA

In the early chapters of Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Huck is enlisted by Tom Sawyer to join his gang, a band to which all the boys pledge loyalty, taking a blood oath and swearing to secrecy. "What's the line of business of this Gang?" asks one of the boys. "Nothing only robbery and murder," Tom said.

"But who are we going to rob? houses--or cattle--or--"
"Stuff! stealing cattle and such things ain't robbery, it's burglary," says Tom Sawyer. "We ain't burglars. That ain't no sort of style. We are highwaymen. We stop stages and carriages on the road, with masks on, and kill the people and take their watches and money."
"Must we always kill the people?"
"Oh, certainly, It's best. Some authorities think different, but mostly it's considered best to kill them. Except some that you bring to the cave here and keep them till they're ransomed."
"Ransomed? What's that?"
"I don't know. But that's what they do. I've seen it in books; and so of course that's what we've got to do."
"But how can we do it if we don't know what it is?"
"Why blame it all, we've got to do it. Don't I tell you it's in the books? Do you want to go to doing different from what's in the books, and get things all muddled up?"

(32)

Armed with "lathe and broomsticks" (34), the Tom Sawyer Gang never does ransom anyone, much less murder them, and the closest the band comes to accosting a carriage is overturning a turnip cart. The scheme is typically Sawyarian--all style and no substance--but Huck persists in playing along, at least for a while. He and the other boys
yield willingly to Tom's authority, an authority derived in large part from his ability to recite the narrative elements of Romantic novels he doesn't really understand. But Tom's power comes from a particular kind of literacy. The "regular way" to do something, according to Tom Sawyer, is not based on information gleaned from direct experience, or on testing textual claims against observed reality. Things must simply go by the book--an often awkward, and frequently silly, imitation of someone else's story of what is or what should be. Tom is never an author of his own experience. Instead, he is authored.

This doesn't make much sense to Huck--which in Tom's view makes his friend a "perfect sap-head" (36)--but he submits to Tom's schemes until it becomes clear to Huck that he has nothing to learn from them. For at the heart of Huck's compliance, as Michael Bell argues, is curiosity (55).

"I wanted to see the camels and elephants," says Huck, who reluctantly agrees to join Tom and the gang in an ambush on a "parcel of Spanish merchants and rich A-rabs" who were supposedly camping nearby. When it turns out to be a Sunday school picnic, Tom claims that Huck simply can't see the "A-rabs" and their elephants because magic turned them into an "infant Sunday school." Huck finally quits the gang in disgust--"we hadn't killed any people, but only pretended" (34). But he never loses the curiosity that drives him
through his world, attending to particulars of sunrise on
the river, exploring a dangerous steamboat wreck, or
studying the melancholy poetry and morose crayon drawings of
Emmeline Grangerford. Huck's adventures, unlike Tom's, are
never mediated by other texts, nor does he share Tom's
concern for convention. Huck is always willing to entertain
authoritative claims—that he would get whatever he asked
for through prayer, that the movement of chickens means
rain, or that there really were two hundred elephants and
six hundred camels as Tom claimed—but he always viewed them
as testable claims, revised or rejected based on his own
direct experience. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
reports the results of his research.

For many years, as a teacher of college composition, I
have been guilty of turning Hucks into Toms. I remember the
moment I first realized this. In the summer of 1984, I was
teaching a section of Freshman English to a group of mostly
enthusiastic students at the University of New Hampshire.
Things were progressing nicely, I thought; a number of
students were writing compelling and sometimes insightful
essays, including a young woman named Jayne, who wrote a
piece titled "The Sterile Cage" which I photocopied for the
entire class. I still do. The essay was moving account of
Jayne's struggle with a bone disorder, and the time she
spent as a child in a hospital, suspended in a stainless
steel frame that kept her immobile. The writing was moving
her--and her readers--towards a fresh understanding of that part of her life, and at times the prose shimmered.

Unfortunately (or so I thought at the time), the course was also moving, away from essays and towards the required research paper assignment. I shared with my colleagues the widespread dread and dissatisfaction with this assignment, and the sense that it was a necessary evil. I disliked how cold the classroom became when the subject of the research paper came up--the sometimes surly silences and sighs--and quickly longed to return to teaching the essay, something for which my students developed some genuine enthusiasm. But I also shared the vague belief that the assignment had "practical" value, that I was teaching students valuable things about using the library, avoiding plagiarism, and modeling academic writing. I was also certain that at least in this class I had prepared some students to write with more confidence and authority, and that it would carry over into the extended, source-based writing they were about to tackle. Jayne would write a good research paper, I thought, because she's such a good writer.

She chose a topic in childhood development--something I see now was directly related to her exploration in "The Sterile Cage"--and though she said the research was going well, I could tell it was loveless labor for her. When I came across Jayne's paper finally in the stack of drafts one evening I eagerly began to read it. It was bad. Though she
obviously researched the subject vigorously, demonstrating an impressive bibliography, Jayne's paper was unfocused, her analysis lifeless, the prose wooden. The voice she had found in her essays was missing, as was her usual talent for getting to the heart of a topic. I distinctly remember the conference we had in my office a week later because it was so unpleasant.

What did she think of the paper? I asked. "Not much."
Did she find it unfocused? "Sort of."
Did the paper sound lifeless to her? "Yes."
Jayne glared across the desk at me.
"What do you want from me?" she said. "This is a research paper, goddammit. It's supposed to be this way."

Something is wrong with an assignment, I reflected later, that turns a good writer into a bad one. A few weeks before Jayne had been writing with purpose and authority and even grace. I sensed that she had permanently altered her relationship to language, and that at least in her essay writing she had struggled successfully for the ownership of words in the Bakhtinian sense. Jayne had clearly lost that struggle in her research paper, creating an alien discourse which we both recognized belonged entirely to someone else. Her paper was an empty, lifeless, and ritualistic performance, mimicking what she believed were the conventions of the research paper genre. I picked up Jayne's draft expecting Huckleberry Finn but got Tom Sawyer
instead, and I wondered what had gone wrong.

Unfortunately, it took the failure of one of my better writing students with the research paper to stun me into a reexamination of the assignment, despite witnessing similar struggles by less gifted writers through the years. With few exceptions the research papers I received from most students in Freshman English were disappointing. I think I had grown accustomed to disappointment, an attitude that has hovered over this assignment ever since it made its first appearance as a recognized genre in college composition texts in the 1930s and 1940s. In fact, the research paper—or "source theme," "investigatory paper," "library paper," or "term paper," as it has been variously described through the years—has generated a legacy of complaint among composition instructors and their students that is probably unmatched by any other single writing assignment. "Among the most ardent pleaders for euthanasia," wrote W.L.T. Fleischaeur in a 1941 *College English* article, "is the instructor of freshman composition in those colleges where the teaching of the investigatory paper is required" (75). Another writer in the same journal thirteen years later called the typical research paper assignment the "one-great-chore which exhausts freshman and instructor more surely than it exhausts the library's resources on the volcanoes of Hawaii or Swedish holiday cookery" (Eldredge 228). Everett W. Gibbs, in an acerbic 1960 article in *College Composition
and Communication titled "Freshman Research Papers—Once More," called them "a mockery of intellectual activity" (82). And Janet Kotler, giving a more contemporary, but familiar negative spin on the research paper in Freshman English News began a 1989 article this way:

Let's talk about the research paper—granted, a dispiriting proposal. But although it bores everybody damn near to death, a great many college courses, certainly every composition class have A RESEARCH PAPER (business communications texts, depressingly, often call it THE LONG REPORT) embedded in them like a stone. And we all hate it. (33)

Writing instructors, however, would be hard-pressed to work up the venom many students summon when reflecting on their experiences writing research papers. "It involved going to the library after school for about two hours, reading things by other people and then making note cards," said Pat, reflecting on her high school papers. "Next came an outline, then a final draft, each year for four years... The teachers would always be angry at me because, and I quote, I 'thought too much while writing the paper.' What did a teacher mean by thinking too much?" Another student added, "The definition of research is tiresome studies on a subject that a person does not like."

Sometimes, apparently, student dislike of the research paper even deepens into psychological trauma. Robert Esch, in an amusing—and disturbing—1975 article in College Composition and Communication gives an account of a student who approached him a few days before the deadline for the
final draft of the research paper. "Mr. Esch, I had a dream about you last night," she said. She then described a dream in which Esch pushes a button for a trap door through which the student fell into a basement room where he had trapped other university students, all of whom were working on research papers surrounded by "stacks of 3x5 and 5x7 note cards..and all types of colored binders for themes" (43).

"All of those people were trying to write the perfect research paper. Some of them I recognized. Others had been down there in that room for over 20 years, and no one had heard from them.

"And do you know what you did when they finally turned in a paper that you found acceptable?"

"God knows, what?"

"You stood them up against the wall and shot them" (43).

Though they rarely report dream disturbances, student complaints about the research paper are widespread. They are also not a new phenomenon. When two researchers in 1931 surveyed the students and teachers at Kansas State Teachers College about their attitudes towards the college "term paper," 67% of the students agreed that the benefit of the assignment did not exceed the time and energy it required (Brown and Baldwin 311). Fifty-three percent supported the abolition of all term papers altogether (312). Ten years later, a survey of Queens College faculty and students on the term paper assignment reported student dissatisfaction with papers on assigned topics, "which destroyed enthusiasm for the work," and the fact that papers seldom seem to be "written as the instructors intend them to be" (Rivlin 317).
Students also "condemned the ridiculous attempt at being original when they knew so little about the subject that they were not entitled to an original opinion" (318). To be sure, there are some students who have had positive experiences with research papers. Some cite the usefulness of learning "library procedures," while others recall papers from which they learned a great deal, but when prompted to talk about it these students almost invariably point out the ways in which the assignment strayed from what they viewed as the traditional research paper.

So widespread, apparently, is the "research paper blues" among college students that in the last twenty years an industry has grown in sales of pre-written research reports. Research Assistance, the largest of these retailers, claims that it offers more than 20,000 research reports, each written by "talented writers" who are "expert in their various areas of expertise." In an interesting bit of self-justification, Dr. Cynthia Stone, "Research Director" of Research Associates, writes prospective clients that "solid research ability is one of the most important ingredients of success in college today." Sadly, she notes, "one of the major reasons that otherwise excellent students do poorly in research and writing aspects of their courses is that they are just not well prepared by their high school experience." Why, Dr. Stone asks, should these "otherwise excellent students" be penalized for the faulty pedagogy of
their high school teachers and "receive lower grades than they're entitled to?" No reason whatsoever, as long as Research Associates is around. For $7.50 a page, the company will send a photocopy of a term paper on one of the 20,000 topics listed in its annual catalog, or it will custom write a paper on short notice. The range of rates for a custom undergraduate paper is $20-25 per page, while graduate students pay twice that. It's not hard to see which are some of the more popular topics for undergraduate researchers. For example, the catalog lists eleven papers on steroid use by athletes, and eleven on Melville's *Moby Dick*. The abortion topic features more than forty papers. Just pick a side of the debate and there's a paper for you:


Or,

7572-Anti-Abortion Position Paper. Technical philosophical analysis, including argument for fetal life; history; medical; legal; religious; psychological aspects; rape & incest, mother and fetus rights. (11 footnotes, 7 bibliographic citations, 15 pages).

At $112.50 (figured at the $7.50/page rate), the anti-abortion position may be too costly for most students, but at any price, the purchase of papers on the open market reflects not only the desperation of students to avoid this kind of writing, but also the implicit assumption that the research paper is a form that has a tenuous relation to authorship. In a twist that would likely fascinate
Foucault, the retail market in term papers suggests that it is a genre in which the signs of authorship are essentially effaced. Anyone with $112.50 can author paper #7572 because in the current conception of the typical term paper the author is basically absent.

The Assignment That Won't Go Away

Seen against this long legacy of instructor complaints and student angst, the research paper assignment in Freshman composition is obviously a tenacious survivor. It has been a fixture in the first year composition course for at least fifty years, as two national surveys, twenty-four years apart, confirm. Both reported virtually the same finding about the percentage of universities that require the Freshman research paper: in 1958, the assignment was required by 83% of the surveyed universities (Manning 75), and in 1982 the figure was 84% (Ford and Perry 827).\textsuperscript{2} The latter study surveyed 397 colleges and universities in every region of the country, and concluded that it "revealed clear trends, past and future, toward increased research paper instruction" (827).

Of course there have been moves to abolish it, particularly at the secondary level, where the assignment has quietly coexisted with the college research paper since it was recognized as a genre of student writing. In a 1965 article, "Let's Get Rid of Research Papers," Thomas Taylor complained that the English department has been saddled with
"the responsibility for giving instruction in a skill which has no value in the high-school course of study and which may actually stifle the very creative expression of ideas those departments are supposed to facilitate" (126). He concludes that the research paper should be turned over to the social studies teacher, while English teachers "must begin to re-emphasize the personal essay as a medium of truly creative expression" (127). (I will later argue that Taylor is half right). In a letter published in English Journal in 1958, a college composition instructor expressed "dismay" that the research paper was being taught in high schools, arguing the their libraries are inadequate and that "students in high schools lack the judgment to discriminate between worthwhile and worthless material; usually all is grain to their mill" (Boggs 86). That letter produced a flurry of equally dismayed respondents who defended the assignment in high school. One writer reported that high school students felt "handicapped" without research paper instruction when they got to college. Her survey of English assignments at sixty public high schools revealed that "they showed almost unanimous agreement" on one thing: assigning a research paper during the junior and senior years (Burton 291).

At the college level a similar debate has periodically erupted, but opponents of the required research paper have been, by and large, voices in the wilderness. In a session
titled, "The Research Paper in the Freshman Course: A Reappraisal", the 1958 Conference on College Composition and Communication eventually endorsed the assignment while openly acknowledging that there was significant initial dissent:

Despite the array of testimony against the source paper presented at the beginning of the sessions, the consensus of workshop members plainly favored its traditional place in Freshman English. And although the problem of how to teach it well remains difficult and perplexing, the large majority concluded the discussion in the spirit of Clough's "Say Not the Struggle Nought Availeth." ("Panel" 178-9)

As Ford and Perry's 1982 national survey on research paper instruction reveals, the prevailing trend was to make the requirement more widespread, not less. And while they reported that 15% of the departments surveyed were discussing either increasing or decreasing instruction in research writing, "no institution surveyed had eliminated a research paper requirement during the past five years and only two now have plans to do away with it" (827). Though there have been no similar national surveys since 1982, there is little reason to doubt that the research paper remains firmly ensconced, as it always has been, in the first or second semester of Freshman English.

Begging the Theory Questions

What accounts for the durability of an assignment that has instructors pleading for euthanasia and students clipping ads in the back of Rolling Stone with 1-800 numbers
for term paper retailers? What is the nature of student
difficulties with source-based writing, and why have our
pedagogies failed to produce satisfactory papers? Why do we
teach the research paper in the first place? What are its
aims? Is there any evidence that this assignment can do
what we hope it will do?

Remarkably, composition scholars over the years have
largely begged—or ignored—those questions. In a
bibliography of over 200 articles on teaching the research
document published between 1923 and 1980, its compilers note
that while the vast majority explore various approaches to
teaching it, "few are theoretical in nature or based on
research, and almost none cites even one other work on the
subject." The authors add, "There are no real experts on
all aspects of the research paper" (Ford, Rees, and Ward
1984). My own survey the literature since 1980 suggests the
dearth of theory on the assignment is a condition that has
changed only slightly. While there are now a handful of
theorists who are writing about the research paper (Brent;
Larson; Schwegler and Shamon; Nelson), most published
articles on the topic (when they appear, which isn't often)
offer ideas about pedagogy. In Reading as Rhetorical
Invention, Douglas Brent observes that there is nothing
especially faulty with the mass of articles on research
document pedagogy, but that composition theory has simply
lagged behind.
Composition teachers...do not have an encompassing definition of what it really means to compose discourse based on other people's texts. What does it really mean to search, not just through one's own storehouse of knowledge and values, but through other writers' storehouses, in search of the answer to a question? What does it mean to interpret large numbers of often-conflicting texts, evaluate the opinions expressed, and create from an amalgam of one's own and other people's beliefs a new answer, a new piece of knowledge that is not just a patchwork of sources but an original system of beliefs that could not have existed without the believer's having considered other texts? (103)

It is the purpose of this study to both theorize about the aims of research paper instruction and student difficulties with source-based writing as well as propose a pedagogy that grows out of that exploration. It begins with a look at the historical origins of the research paper in undergraduate education, and especially how the research paper genre began to make its appearance in composition textbooks. The second chapter examines student epistemologies, and how conventional research paper instruction sends them often conflicting messages about their role as knowers and the nature of knowledge. In Chapter III, I propose an alternative to the formal paper--the researched essay--which I argue is a far better introduction to research because it is more epistemologically sound, and more likely to encourage the habits of mind at the heart of academic inquiry. Finally, the last chapter examines the practical challenges of teaching a research essay in freshman English.
A close examination of college writing texts—the focus of the next chapter—is revealing, not only because they influenced how students represented the task of writing a term paper, but also, as Robert Connors has pointed out, composition theory and instruction were "overwhelmingly shaped" by textbooks ("Textbooks" 178). How was the purpose of the research paper explained by these textbook authors? What was the relationship between this assignment and the other modes of student writing encouraged by college rhetorics?

If composition textbooks and the historical commitment to what Laurence Veysey calls the "research ideal" in American universities and colleges both contributed to conventional research paper instruction, then how have students and instructors internalized its aims? When my student Jayne, exasperated by my comments about her research paper in my office ten years ago, exclaimed, "This is a research paper, dammit. It's supposed to be this way!", what she was really saying was that her paper was a performance that in her mind was already scripted. What is that script? What assumptions do students make about what it means to write a research paper, to read a source for it, to express an "opinion?" At the heart of these questions is one that seems central to much current debate in composition, and that I'll take up in Chapter II: what does it mean to be a knower, and what is one's relationship to
the known? Ever since Kenneth Burke gave us the conversation-filled parlor as the metaphor for participation in knowledge making, writing teachers have been debating the best ways to enable students to "put in their oar." That the freshman research paper has largely been ignored in this debate amazes me. It is the one traditional assignment that most attempts to mimic academic discourse by exposing students to some other voices in the parlor. Most of us, when we assign the research paper, also expect students to speak up, to add their own voices to the hum of disciplinary conversation. One way of evaluating a particular pedagogy, then, is to ask whether it succeeds or fails in at least helping students believe that they can participate in the Burkean conversation.

Drawing on student papers, interviews, case studies, and survey data I will argue conventional research paper instruction has largely failed to move students towards the belief that they can be active knowers, or conscious participants in the making of knowledge, and that even when we encourage students to "think independently" or "express their own opinion" in less formal papers, they often do not understand what we mean. That we can "move" students at all towards more academic writing, particularly in a one or even two semester Freshman English course, is an assumption open to challenge. Almost fifteen years ago, Janet Emig (citing Howard Gruber) warned against "magical thinking," or the
belief that teachers can take responsibility for their students' developments as writers. She wrote,

Teachers of writing, for many reasons, have come to believe that children's learning to write is the direct outcome of their explicit teaching. Perhaps, because of massive public pressure, they have been forced to become the most magical thinkers of all. But what if, as evidence from many disciplines now suggests, writing is developmentally a natural process? What if "it is just as natural...to write books and to read them as it is natural to die or to be born?" (136)

For Emig, then, our challenge as writing teachers is to create the conditions that make this "natural" development of student writers possible, and to avoid the positivist belief that through our instruction we lead students to improvement. Though in later chapters I will offer some methods of instruction that I believe will help bring the freshman research paper back from the dead, much of this study will focus on the ways that the research paper has come to assume such an unnatural place in the composition course, that it has, in fact, disrupted the natural development of many student writers. Janet Emig argues that learning takes place in "an enabling environment," or one that is "safe, structured, unobtrusive, and literate," in which the teacher's role is as a "fellow practitioner" (139). Many contemporary composition courses, including my own, attempt to model these qualities, that is until the last third of the course when students take up the research paper assignment. Suddenly the course takes on a different tone, the instructor's role shifts, and much of what the
students learned about writing in the first ten weeks of the class seems irrelevant.

Part of the problem, as Richard Larson points out in a much-cited essay, is that the Freshman research paper is really a "non-form of writing." As Larson observes, it has evolved as a genre that is perceived to be separate from all the other writing that takes place in the composition course. In part, as this study will attempt to demonstrate, the Freshman research paper's status as a separate genre is a result of its history. It is an assignment that has been dragged along into the modern writing process class as a vestige of now discredited views of writing, and as a legacy of the service obligation to other departments with which Freshman composition has long been burdened. But the research paper as an "unnatural" feature of Freshman English also has to do with the view that research is not a natural activity for any writer. I am often amazed, for example, at how rarely students view research as a revision strategy for a personal essay. Though my students often quickly see that writing is a means for exploring answers to meaningful questions, they have to be persuaded that reading or interviews are also natural places to look for material. As Larson notes in his 1982 essay, "[r]esearch can inform virtually any writing or speaking if the author wishes it to do so."

There is nothing of substance or content that differentiates one paper that draws on data from
outside the author's own self from another such paper—nothing that can enable one to say that this paper is a "research paper" and that paper is not...If almost any paper is potentially a paper incorporating the fruits of research, the term "research paper" has virtually no value as an identification of a kind of substance in a paper. Conceptually, the generic term "research paper" is for practical purposes meaningless. (813)

What accounts for the widespread belief among our students that essays using "fact" as a source of information aren't essays? Why isn't research a natural source of information for all kinds of writing that goes on in the composition course? Is it the fault of a dominant composition pedagogy that, as Robert Connors observed, has moved from the "outward-directed investigation" of classical rhetoric to the inward-looking personal writing assignment ("Personal Writing" 167)? Or have we been so careful to preserve the sanctity of The Research Paper, with our concerns about "objectivity," originality, the serious nature of scholarship, and the following of conventions, that writing instructors have failed to see the assignment as a key bridge between the personal and the academic?

Ever since Jayne alerted me to my own failures with the research paper, I have revived it as the pivotal writing assignment in my Freshman English course. That has involved, among others things, demoting it as a separate genre and reintegrating it more naturally into the Freshman writing course. In later chapters I'll explore how this reconception of the so-called research paper genre demands
that we confront a whole series of assumptions--many of them inherited uncritically--about what it means to be an academic researcher, including what Patricia Sullivan calls the "myth of the independent scholar," along with notions of originality and objectivity.

But most important to my own rethinking of the research paper was the revelation that I had fenced off research in the academy from the research I had conducted as a professional writer for some years. I had failed to recognize what Huck knew instinctively: that while some of the conventions differ, all research is ultimately motivated by the same thing--curiosity.

It was an easy thing to forget. In Common Ground, Kurt Spellmeyer invokes the preindustrial commons as a metaphor for what was once the ideal of a "public language," and the university as a space where students and teachers might strive to speak it as a means of discovering differences--and commonalities--through open dialogue. It is this "public dimension" of academic life, one that is inclusive rather than exclusive, that invites a merging of the professional and the private, and encourages an "ethic of mutual understanding," that Spellmeyer argues has been lost by the fragmentation of the academy into separate disciplines with their own modes of thinking and talking. Freshman English is peculiarly positioned in all of this. As a required course that assembles a wide range of students
with a variety of disciplinary interests (or none yet at all), first year composition seems an ideal site to encourage the kind of dialogue Spellmeyer fears is lost. Instead it is often a site of initiation in which the job of the writing teacher is to acquaint students with an academic landscape that is defined by differences rather than commonalities. "The history of writing instruction in America, or at least of writing instruction as we now practice it," writes Spellmeyer, "begins with an enclosure of our common linguistic ground--with the division of that ground into private parcels, each carefully fenced to exclude all trespassers" (7). Not only has the commons been fenced off, but in order to enter a private parcel students are urged to shed their own ways of seeing and speaking so that they may see and speak like "us." Despite the promise that this will allow students to participate more fully in the Burkean conversation, Spellmeyer fears that it will have the opposite effect--it will silence them:

Through an encounter with the ways of seeing and acting that our language sustains, student-writers have the opportunity to enlarge their familiar worlds, and to appropriate our knowledge for their specific purposes. I believe, however, that conventional writing instruction more often produces the very opposite result: instead of opening the public dimension to our students, we set one language sharply at odds with the other--the correct against the incorrect, the high against the low. Obliged to choose, student-writers automatically lose both. Unable to be heard in the words they can claim as theirs, they learn to speak a language which remains the property of others. (Common Ground 6-7)
It is not too surprising, then, that along with my students I could so easily see the more public discourse of my own research writing as a creative writer separate from the discourse of academic research. Nor is it hard to see why I would dichotomize—along with my students—the work of an academic researcher and the research of a writer. One seems to be putting up fences, and the other is trying to tear them down.

I will argue in this study that the current move among some discourse theorists (or "New Formalists" as Spellmeyer describes them) to introduce students to the divided common by initiating them in the ways of disciplinary practices may have a result opposite from the one intended: it will undermine students' sense of agency rather than empower them, it will encourage submission rather than resistance, and it will promote a passive stance towards knowledge-making rather than an active one. More specifically, I will make the case that Freshman English—and the research assignment in particular—are key sites where students can experience a more democratic relationship to what Bakhtin calls "authoritative discourse," but only if they develop a faith in their own agency by seeing private experience and knowledge as a source of power and feel a sense of ownership over their own words.

While many students quickly see personal experience as a source of material for essays, and through personal
writing many also experience as writers--often for the first
time-a sense of authority over their subjects, when it comes
to the research paper students seem to disappear again. If
subjectivity is celebrated in the personal essay it is
perceived as a fatal flaw in the research paper. Critics of
expressivist pedagogy like David Bartholomae appear to argue
that this is the way it should be. In "Inventing the
University," he suggests that students earn the right to
speak up in the parlor after they have practiced speaking
and thinking like us. In essence, students must surrender
their subjectivity--or at least the belief that they are in
control of their own discourse until they see how they are
situated in the discourse of Others. He writes that "[i]t
is difficult to imagine, however, how writers can have a
purpose before they are located in a discourse, since it is
the discourse with its projects and agendas that determines
what writers can and will do" ("Inventing" 139). In a more
recent article, Bartholomae reiterates his contention that
we must not conceal from our students "the power politics of
discursive practice" ("Writing" 64) by creating the fiction
that they are "free to express their own thoughts and
ideas."

Thinking of writing as academic writing makes us
think of the page as crowded with others--or it says that this is what we learn in school, that
our writing is not our own, nor are the stories we
tell when we tell the stories of our lives--they
belong to TV, to Books, to Culture and
History. (63-4)
Though he never mentions the Freshman research paper, Bartholomae seems to eloquently summarize exactly the lesson students have internalized through their experience with the assignment: that their writing is not their own. The result of this lesson is the stale, dishonest, lifeless writing that inspires writing teachers to pine for euthanasia. Mike Rose, Mina Shaughnessy, and others consider these failed experiments in trying out academic writing are "a stage in linguistic growth." I see these failures reinforcing earlier experiences students have with research writing that undermines their belief in their ability to speak at all. I have tried to stake out two opposing positions that I think are important to this study. Both address this question: How do students learn more complex language and intellectual practices? One answer, provided by the discourse theorists, is that we encourage students, no matter how awkward it might seem, to imitate academic writing. The opposing answer, and the one I will attempt to develop at length here, is that students become academic writers by at first not yielding to authoritative discourse. And they do this by preserving a sense of self, a belief—even if it is a temporary fiction—that their writing is their own.

This is a debate that is being played out a great deal these days in composition journals and at conferences, but very few of the discussions take up the Freshman research
paper as a natural site for examining how students struggle with academic writing. As the most common genre of student writing—and one that has historically purported to model academic discourse—it seems a likely place to look. Much of this study will focus on student research papers. I’m particularly interested in looking at some of the textual features of papers written by student writers who seem to be struggling with their own authority. It will become apparent that even when students are encouraged to construct as sense of themselves as active knowers, as writers who own their words, they still often have difficulty with agency. In part, extended writing using sources imposes intellectual demands on inexperienced writers that makes it easy for them to lose themselves in another's discourse. We'll examine some of these demands. In addition, our own assumptions about the epistemological development of our students need to be reexamined: what do we assume about their sense of themselves knowers, and what are our expectations about the ways the Freshman research paper will change that sense? For example, when we ask students to "think independently" in their research papers, or to "express their own opinions," do they know what we mean? Do we?

More broadly speaking, what are reasonable aims for the Freshman research paper? As Schwegler and Shamo point out in their investigation of divergent views on the purpose of the assignment, many of these are directly contradictory.
This study will confirm some of their findings, including the observation that students by and large view the task as collecting and rearranging information, while instructors hope to encourage independent thought and interpretation. Is there a better way of articulating what we want students to do when they write a research paper? Can we redefine the aims of the assignment so that it's more meaningful to students, more likely to ultimately inspire more sophisticated intellectual practices? Is there some way to produce more Hucks and fewer Toms? In the next chapter I'll trace the historical rise of the "source theme," and try to show how the assignment is captive to its own history. Any redefinition of its aims will require in some cases a rejection of inherited assumptions about what we're trying to do when we teach the Freshman research paper.

The most significant argument I'll make here concerning the aims of instruction is that we see the Freshman research paper as less an introduction to the conventions and methods of academic writing and more as an opportunity to introduce students to the genuine spirit of inquiry. In the simplest terms, all inquiry is motivated by curiosity, a longing to know that will sustain the researcher through the inevitable conflicts, contradictions, and frustrations that are part of the search. It is the ability, in John Dewey's terms, "to protract that state of doubt which is the stimulus to thorough inquiry" (16) that marks the thoughtful researcher,
and it is exactly that ability that students have been robbed of through traditional research instruction. Though even the earliest composition texts encourage students to choose a topic for research that interests them, the traditional emphasis on "objectivity," originality, formal conventions, argument, and the need to write a thesis-driven text all mitigate against Dewey's protracted state of doubt. Students rightly infer that "getting it right" is far more important than getting confused.

Ultimately, what drives the conventional Freshman research paper is not the writer's curiosity, but the compulsion to imitate (or parody?) a conception of formal academic writing, and a key part of that conception is surrendering a sense of themselves as authors of their own work. "I feel as though when I'm writing a research paper and I'm researching it and writing, and it's three o'clock in the morning and it's due in five hours...you're really not thinking of yourself as a writer," Kate Carter, a college senior told me as she reflected on her experience writing term papers. "You think of yourself more as a researcher." Though she didn't elaborate on it, Kate's distinction between being a "writer" and being a "researcher" imply two different ways of being in the world—a writer creates, while a researcher collects?—each occupying separate domains. This separation of the act of writing and researching, and the role of the writer and
researcher, is the result of a failed term paper pedagogy that extends beyond the Freshman English course. But I will argue that the first-year writing course ought to be the place where students get practice being writers who ask questions that research can help answer. I propose that we expose the artificial distinctions between writer and researcher, writing and researching that conventional pedagogy reinforces. The researched essay, not the research paper, is much more likely to erase these distinctions.

In addition, we must teach an approach to research writing which places it in the domain most important to the writer and her general reader--it must have, as the pragmatist William James put it, "some positive connexion with this actual world of finite human lives" (17). When a sense of authorship is effaced it is easy for students to conclude that the research paper has nothing to do with their lives. Worse, they may come to believe that research writing has nothing to do with life; instead students view it as a form of writing incubated in the insular and sterile region of school concerned with "fact," having little to do with their hopes, fears, longings, sorrows, and joys. In the pedagogy proposed in the third and fourth chapters, I will contend that the best way to introduce students to the spirit of inquiry and the genuine nature of research is to encourage them to explore questions that arise from their lived experience and to test whatever ideas they discover
against the pragmatist's central question as posed by James:

Grant an idea or belief to be true...what concrete
difference will its being true make in anyone's
actual life? How will the truth be realized?
What experiences will be different from those
which would obtain if the belief were false?
What, in short, is the truth's cash-value in
experiential terms. (97)

Though James give these questions a philosophical spin, they
are really the questions any good writer might ask himself
when considering material: how does this subject matter to
me, and how can I help my readers see that it matters to
them?

Nearly ten years ago I began work on a nonfiction book
on the American lobster. The Lobster Almanac was an
exploration of the animal's natural history, cultural and
economic status in New England, and culinary qualities. The
book was published in 1988, several years after I had Jayne
in my summer section of Freshman English. It was that
project that finally convinced me that I had failed Jayne
and the many students who came before her in my writing
classes. I had failed to teach them that research is not
the soul-killing exercise many of them imagined it to be,
and that "fact" need not deaden prose. I had failed to help
them to see that research and research-based writing can be
a pleasure; it is work, too, of course, but frequently
filled with moments when through the reading, the writing,
and the talking an unexpected door opens on the subject and
the light suddenly pours in. Though it may make me, in
Tom's words, a "perfect sap-head," I believe that this promise of pleasure is what we must teach most of all in a renewed research paper pedagogy.

"Beyond Note Cards: Rethinking the Research Paper" will not offer as the most instructive models of research writing for the first year student the published scholarship of the academic, whose pleasures and passions for her subject are often masked by the carefully choreographed dance of discourse. Instead, I will propose that the work of essayists like John McPhee, Diane Ackerman, and Barry Lopez are the best introductions to the spirit of inquiry that drives all research, and that facts, in the hands of a good writer, can also inspire the pleasures of personal discovery.

Some years before Mark Twain wrote Huckleberry Finn, he learned the Mississippi River as a riverboat captain. It was, he wrote in Life on the Mississippi, a mixed blessing to come to know the river this way. While he had "mastered the language of the water" (qtd. in Sanders, "Speaking" 218), recognizing the distinctive swirls of a snag and the subtle color of the shallows, he admits that he also "lost something which could never be restored to me while I lived": the river's beauty, its grace, and its poetry. As Scott Sanders observes, Twain was not quite right about that. Several years later, the author finds in Huck a way to "fuse an adult's rational knowledge and a child's fresh
emotion in his vision of the river" ("Speaking" 218).

In our rush to initiate students in "our" discourses, and "our" habits of mind through the formal research paper, it may seem that they have much to gain: they will acquire more complex language, and more sophisticated critical skills that will help them succeed in school. I believe, however, that they have much more to lose. In our rush to make them riverboat captains they will learn to disengage themselves knowledge and the act of inquiry, from the ways of knowing we want to encourage. They can learn what Twain demonstrates in Huckleberry Finn: learning the language of the river need not mean sacrificing a fresh, and personal vision of it. In short, we can teach our students to be both Hucks and riverboat captains. But only if we don't make an immediate ascent to the pilot house a condition of the journey.
CHAPTER NOTES

1. Research Associates also offers dissertation proposals, literature reviews, research designs, and statistical computation and analysis for the hard-pressed graduate student. Material from Research Associates that I mention here is drawn from their most recent catalog (No. 24) and the accompanying direct mail letter.

2. In her 1958 study, Ambrose Manning broke down her results by region as well. She found that the required research paper was a particular popular assignment in the West (90.9% require it) and the Southeast (90%), and least popular in the Northeast (55%), a region she speculated was "leading the way in eliminating the research project in Freshman English." It was not a prophetic comment, obviously.

3. One notable exception to this is Douglas Brent's recent book, Reading as Rhetorical Invention. Though it is an important and thoughtful work, Brent's text focuses largely on a rhetoric of reading, and its implications for research paper pedagogy. This study will look more closely at the difficulties student writers have as knowers, and the ways that conventional research paper instruction often compounds their difficulties.
CHAPTER I

A CAPTIVE GENRE: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE "SOURCE THEME"

Two things occurred recently that I later realized were telling commentaries on the current state of academic research and how it is perceived by non-academics. While I was attending a panel at the 1994 MLA convention, a member of the audience rose during a question and answer session clutching a sheaf of papers, photocopies of a Los Angeles Times article that appeared the day before. The article condemned the obtuse language and imponderable paper topics that dominated a convention of professional English teachers. He was indignant at the anti-intellectual slant of the piece, but also worried that the profession seems so misunderstood. Kurt Spellmeyer, a panel member and a composition theorist, pointed out that perhaps we are misunderstood because we have become unwilling to make ourselves understood. Perhaps, he said, what we do seems to have no visible relation to people's lives.

The next month I had a phone conversation with my mother. "Did you see the Sixty Minutes piece last night on academia?" she said. I hadn't. But in the ensuing weeks I heard about it from several students, a real estate agent, a dental hygienist, and several colleagues, one of them an adjunct faculty member with six years in my department. I bumped into her at a bookstore the other day, and taking her
cue from the Sixty Minutes piece she said, "Can you believe that the library spends millions of dollars buying academic journals that nobody reads just so professors can publish their indecipherable articles in them so they can get tenure?" The implication was, among other things, that the money might be better spent paying adjunct faculty more to teach composition. I nodded sympathetically but walked away feeling ambivalent. I read many of those journals, I thought, and not all of them are indecipherable, and what does Leslie Stahl really know about academic life anyway? But the two incidents--my experience at the MLA and my colleague's comments--also reinforced a sense that something is profoundly amiss with academic scholarship and its relevance to non-specialists, even to those who exist within the academy and teach academic writers.

The problem, argues history professor Patricia Nelson Limerick, is a system of graduate education that "enforces a standard of dull writing." She writes that professors "demand dreariness because they think dreariness is in the students' best interests" (23). To illustrate her point, Limerick invokes an amusing anecdote about trying to get buzzards to fly on cue during the production of "Hud," a film starring Paul Newman. During the buzzard scene, the birds must all roost ominously in a tree until Newman fires a shot, and then take flight simultaneously. Buzzards being buzzards, not actors, they wouldn't stay in the tree, so the
technicians concluded that they could wire the birds' feet to the branches and release them all at once when the gun is fired. Unfortunately, the buzzards, denied flight, all decided that the only alternative was not to sit quietly waiting for their cue, but fall forward and hang upside down flapping in frustration. Upside down buzzards present physiological problems apparently. They all passed out after a few moments of frantic wing beats.

This was obviously not what the movie makers had in mind. Nor were the birds too keen on it. After being repeatedly revived and set back on their branches, the birds stopped falling forward, but when their wires were released they wouldn't budge. As Limerick put it on behalf of the buzzards, "We tried that before. It did not work. We are not going to try it again" (23). She writes,

> How does this parable apply? In any and all disciplines, you go to graduate school to have your feet wired to the branch. There is nothing inherently wrong with that: scholars should have some common ground, share some background assumptions, hold some similar habits of mind. This gives you, quite literally, your footing. And yet, in the process of getting your feet wired, you have some awkward moments, and the intellectual equivalent of pitching forward and hanging upside down...One or two rounds of that humiliation, and the world begins to seem like a very treacherous place. Under those circumstances, it does indeed seem to be the choice of wisdom to sit quietly on the branch, to sit without even the thought of flying, since even the thought might be enough to tilt the balance and set off another round of flapping, fainting, and embarrassment. (23)

Even when scholars emerge from graduate school and they
are free to fly, Limerick argues, they never leave the
branch, and in turn when they teach their graduate students
academic conventions what they instill is a fear of flying,
a reluctance to depart from the "dreary" writing that they
have come to believe is "an academic survival skill." What
she indicts is not simply the "awful writing style" (24) of
the academic writer, but the ways in which those linguistic
conventions, invoked as a means of protecting the writer
from criticism, shut out a more general readership from the
work of the academy.

Limerick's essay itself may be a demonstration of some
of the pitfalls of an academic writer going public,
particularly on the subject of scholarly research. Her
sweeping characterization of academic discourse as "dreary"
and wholly inaccessible is an appealing condemnation to
those inclined to agree, but as David Bartholomae pointed
out recently, "academic writing is a single thing only in
convenient arguments" ("Writing" 62). But there is
evidence, including the growing resistance of state
legislatures to adequately fund public universities, that
scholarship is increasingly perceived as remote, irrelevant,
and even frivolous by the public. It now falls to the
university public relations department to somehow translate
the specialized scholarship of the modern university into
terms that nonspecialists can understand. Limerick, and
composition theorists like Spellmeyer, contend that we
shouldn't leave it entirely to the public relations office to articulate the significance of academic research. It is not only possible, but desirable, that academic writers embrace a more public dimension in their work. Limerick argues that

(t)he redemption of the university, especially in terms of the public's appraisal of the value of research and publication, requires all writers who have something they want to publish to ask themselves the question: Does this have to be a closed communication, shutting out all but specialists willing to fight their way through the thickets of jargon? Or can this be an open communication, engaging specialists with new information and new thinking, but also offering an invitation to nonspecialists to learn from this study, to grasp its importance and, by extension, to find concrete reasons to see value in the work of the university? (23-24)

The great difficulty academic researchers have taking Limerick's advice, negotiating successfully between two seemingly different languages--the public and the specialized--is exactly the difficulty student writers face in Freshman English when they tackle the research paper. Who am I writing for, they wonder? How much should I assume they know? How formal should it be, and how technical should I get? To what extent must I follow academic rules to demonstrate I'm entitled to membership even at the risk of losing my sense of self? Should I sit quietly on the branch, or should I fly?

What I want to suggest in this chapter is that the struggles of academic writers--both experienced and inexperienced--with negotiating the specialized discourses
of disciplines and the public discourses of a democratic culture have their origins in the transformation of the American university in the last century. In particular, the "ideal of research," inspired largely by the example of German scholarship in the late nineteenth century and later embraced by academics in the U.S., has been largely responsible for turning students into buzzards and the Freshman research paper into the carrion upon which they first feed. As Kurt Spellmeyer points out, Freshman English occupied a unique position as the American academy became increasingly fragmented into separate disciplines and departments.

Freshman English...owed its very existence to the growth of specialization--to the assumption that "writing" occupied a specific place along the modern disciplinary spectrum, comfortably positioned, one might suppose, somewhere between business administration and psychology. But while teachers of writing continued to believe that their "art" was indeed universal, the pace of change made it harder and harder for them to deny what everyone else saw clearly: just as each discipline had its own mode of practice, each had its own mode of discourse as well. In this lay their professional dilemma, for once language no longer reaffirmed the existence of a "world" greater than the differences named--once language seemed only to offer further evidence of a total fragmentation--freshman English abruptly became a discipline devoted to nothing in particular, a field without a subject, a methodology without a method." (Common Ground 17)

If Spellmeyer is right when he contends that many of the competing composition pedagogies that have emerged in the last thirty years all attempt to address this loss of belief in the universality of language to unite knowledge
rather than divide it, then the research paper--perhaps more than any form of writing in the first year course--becomes a site of conflict. It is, after all, the form that is most associated with specialized writing and knowledge. It is also the genre that emerged as an explicit model of academic writing that students are urged to imitate. Finally, if writing teachers came to suspect that they occupy a "field without a subject"--that somehow when the commons got divided up among the disciplines they didn't get any turf--then one solution is to devote oneself to serving those who do. The obligation Freshman English instructors feel to provide a service to other disciplines is one important factor that explains the persistence of the Freshman research paper despite the dread it inspires.

To understand the often conflicting (and often unstated) aims of the research paper, and the ways in which it has been isolated as a separate form of writing, one must see it as an historical relic. It has been shaped by several forces: the emergence of the research ideal in American universities, the shifting relationship of the first year writing course to the increasingly specialized academic community that surrounds it, and the discrediting of a rhetoric of public discourse for an essentially arhetorical view of writing in which the language that serves fact is viewed as transparent and objective.

Because of its history, the freshman research paper has
always had an uneasy relationship with those charged to teach it. English teachers are torn between their obligation to school students in research practices for other departments and their own commitments to writing as an aesthetic or expressive act. They often do not sense, given their implicit understanding of the genre, that there isn't necessarily a conflict between the research paper and the personal essay. The inherited legacy of the research ideal does not prepare them to see that there can be a "literature of fact," research writing that is both, in James Britton's terms, "expressive" and "transactional." Finally, both the epistemological assumptions of the research ideal, and the research paper pedagogies that have grown from them, have made it difficult for English teachers to fit the assignment into the writing process class. As a result, the research paper in both Freshman English and the high school writing class often seems like a lingering dinosaur that somehow survived the near extinction of current-traditional rhetoric.

This chapter will offer some historical reasons why, in Richard Larson's words, the "so-called 'research paper' has no conceptual or substantive identity" (813) and why our traditional approaches to teaching it in the English department are "not defensible" (812). I will first examine a cluster of beliefs and assumptions about the assignment shared by students in my Freshman writing program, and then
trace the origins of those beliefs to both textbook treatments of the Freshman research paper, and to the changes in the American university beginning in the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth. I end this chapter with a call for reconceiving the assignment based in part on a rejection of some of our inherited notions of the research ideal. But I also argue that history offers us a way to see a reconceived Freshman research paper as part of a rhetorical tradition that S. Micheal Halloran argues should be revived: a rhetoric that contributes to a public discourse, not a specialized one. The research paper can be an assignment that actively encourages students to consider the public dimension of their investigations, one that is "in essence a rhetoric of citizenship" (Halloran 108). If the history of research paper instruction tells the story of how to wire the buzzard's feet, the rhetorical tradition may also remind us of a way to set them free.

I.

What do our students believe they are being asked to do when given a research paper assignment? What assumptions do they make about how they should approach it and how do they represent the teacher's expectations of the task? Are these student assumptions at odds with our own sense of why we teach the research paper? I have long sensed that at the heart of the widespread complaints about the Freshman research paper among instructors is a feeling of
disappointment, the belief that students somehow failed to meet their expectations of a meaningful inquiry and the compelling paper that arises from it. Students often recognize this disappointment, and like my own former student Jayne, respond to it with frustration: "It's a research paper, dammit, it's supposed to be this way." What seems obvious in this cycle of disappointment and frustration is a disparity between student assumptions about the assignment--its aims, and its methods--and our own. When we assign a research paper, do students understand its purpose in the same way we do?

I don't think so. While an exploration of the purposes and methods of the freshman research paper have consumed remarkably little ink in composition journals, one 1982 article by Robert Schwegler and Linda Shamoon addresses the subject directly. Based on interviews with instructors and students, the authors conclude that the two groups have "substantially different attitudes toward the research process and the aim, forms, and audience of the research paper" (818). Schwegler and Shamoon conclude that,

Students view the research paper as a close-ended, informative, skills-oriented exercise written for an expert audience by novices pretending to be experts...Academics, on the other hand, view the research paper as open-ended and interpretive, written for an audience of fellow inquirers who have specific expectations of logic, structure and style. Academic research papers reflect this view by being narrowly focused, aware of the scholarly audience, and frequently tentative in advancing a conclusion. (820)
In an effort to update and expand the Shamoon and Schwegler study, I surveyed students in our freshman writing program to examine the cluster of beliefs and assumptions that guide students when they are assigned a research paper. I gave a similar survey to a small group of their instructors. The results of the survey will also be explored in the next chapter, but the first two sections—how students represent themselves as writers of research papers and how they represent the assignment—shed light on some of the sources of teacher disappointment and student frustration with research writing. The data suggest that students and their instructors do not share much common ground.

What struck me first about the instructors' responses to questions about the assignment's purpose and their expectations was the positive language most used. When the teachers were asked to "list briefly your three most important aims in assigning" a Freshman research paper, two respondents expressed their hope that students would find research "fun or exciting," or that they would learn "the joy of investigating topic of interest." Another hoped the assignment would "help students to wonder--remind them that wanting to know why is good, noble, important." A fourth hoped students would see that "the knowledge we gain from research can be used as a creative tool," and that the resulting paper "thoughtful, engaging, and if possible,"
fun." And a fifth respondent emphasized "the satisfaction of finding out they knew more than they think they knew." Only one instructor—the teacher who ranked the assignment the lowest of the nine respondents in terms of its importance in his course—described the research paper in negative terms, and even that was somewhat mixed. When asked what he expects students to do when assigned a research paper, the instructor wrote that they will be "either pissed or elated; they either hate to do the work or love RP's because they can 'crank them out without a problem.'"

What accounts for the positive cast these instructors placed on the freshman research paper? In part it reflects the somewhat unique nature of the UNH freshman writing program, with its strong expressivist ideology and the tendency among its practitioners to share the belief that writing is an act of self-discovery. It might also represent a belief widely shared among those within the academy that inquiry and research is a valued and valuable activity, not only an essential part of academic life but personally gratifying, too. Whatever the reason for the attitude among these instructors, it stands in contrast to the views of many students towards the assignment. Of the 196 students responding to the open-ended question, "When you're given an assignment to write a research paper, what do you assume you're being asked to do?", very few used the
positive language expressed by their instructors. Most students simply described the task. (For example, the most common description was that the assignment involves exclusively library work, an assumption I think we need to challenge). But when another survey question prompted students to characterize the research paper by using an analogy, it was often negative: "Kinda like being a vacuum, "Like an encyclopedia that keeps going on and on," "A blind man walking down the street without his cane--he'll stumble along and maybe he'll find something."

Even more revealing is the disparity between instructor and student assumptions about the nature of the assignment, which is illustrated by Table 1.1.

Table 1.1
Comparison of Student and Instructor Responses to Survey, Part II
(a.) Can't use "I"; (b.) Information should come mostly from books; (c.) Use own experiences and observations as evidence; (d.) Have to know my thesis before start; (e.) Supposed to use own opinions; (f.) Summarizing what's known about the topic is most important; (g.) Have to try to say something original; (h.) Need to follow a formal structure; (i.) The instructor probably knows more about the topic; (j.) Can write in own writing voice; (k.) Writing exclusively for the instructor; (l.) Supposed to make an argument; (m.) Paper won't be revised substantially; (n.) Form matters more than content; (o.) Okay to say things the instructor might disagree with; (p.) Have to be objective

This graph shows the percentage of students and instructors who checked one or more of a series of sixteen items (also see Table 1.2, page 48) that reflected their assumptions about the assignment. Though the small sample size of teachers exaggerates the results somewhat, what is apparent immediately is that half of the items which were checked by 20% or more of the students in the study were ignored completely by their instructors. Of these, several assumptions were shared by 50% or more of the students surveyed, including the belief that the first person isn't allowed in the research paper (57%), that it must "follow a formal structure" (69%), that books are the primary source of information (52%), and they "have to be objective" (60%). In fact, the only area of substantial agreement between students and instructors is the view that "it's okay to say things the instructor might not agree with." Another striking disparity between the two groups centers on whether students are "supposed to use their own opinions" in a research paper. While all nine instructors indicated
students should use their opinions, just over 20%, or only a fifth of the students surveyed shared that view.

The survey, which was conducted before the instructors were very far into teaching the research paper, largely reflects the attitudes many students bring with them to college. Presumably all of the instructors surveyed would expect at least some of these views would change by the end of the semester. But as the next chapter will show, these attitudes appear to persist among students who have written two or more term papers in other college classes during their freshman year. While composition instructors may be committed to challenging the beliefs their students hold about the research paper, teachers in other disciplines don't seem to influence those beliefs much at all, at least in the Freshman year.

To get a fuller picture of student assumptions about the research assignment, Table 1.2 reports the percentage of students checking each of the sixteen items in Part II of the survey.

The results will be mostly unsurprising to Freshman English instructors. Aside from the beliefs that researchers must be "objective," write papers that follow a formal structure, avoid the first person, and use mostly books as sources, sixty percent of the respondents believe that they must begin the research process with a thesis. Just over forty percent agreed that they have to "say
something original" in their papers and construct an argument. All of these are assumptions that might naturally grow from conventional research paper instruction. Some are beliefs that many instructors might endorse, even if those in this study don't.

### Table 1.2

Results of Part II of Survey

"When you're given an assignment to write a research paper, which of the following do you generally assume about it?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>% Checked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a.) I can't use &quot;I&quot;</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b.) My information should come mostly from books</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c.) I can use my own experiences and observations as evidence</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d.) I have to know my thesis before I start</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.) I'm supposed to use my own opinions</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f.) Summarizing what's known about the topic is most important</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(g.) I have to try to say something original</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(h.) I need to follow a formal structure</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i.) The instructor probably knows more than I do about the topic</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(j.) I can write in my own writing voice</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(k.) I'm writing exclusively for the instructor</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(l.) I'm supposed to make an argument</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(m.) The paper won't be revised substantially</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n.) Form matters more than content</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(o.) It's okay to say things the instructor might disagree with</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(p.) I have to be objective</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In later chapters I will argue that many of these attitudes undermine students' understanding of the genuine nature of inquiry, alienate them the process, and often
frustrate our aim of encouraging students to become active knowers. But first, what is conventional research paper instruction and where might these persistent assumptions about the research paper genre originate?

II.

"During the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries," writes Robert Connors, "composition theory and pedagogy were overwhelmingly shaped by one great force: textbooks" ("Textbooks" 178). Though its historical roots may be in rhetoric, composition's "practical pedagogy" owes its greatest debt, says Connors, to the proliferation of textbooks, particularly in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first thirty or forty years of the twentieth. As a young field (many date its genuine beginning to the early 1960s) composition for many years lacked "the usual disciplinary balance between journals and textbooks" (190), and the result is that the textbook, particularly in the hands of the inexperienced or disinterested writing teacher, became both a source of knowledge and a means of knowledge-making. That this was especially the case during the period that the freshman research paper first made its appearance (often in the guise of another name) highlights the crucial significance of the composition text as a parent of the assignment. How the genre is now conceived by students and teachers alike cannot be divorced from its evolution on the pages of books like
Slater's 1922 edition of *Freshman Rhetoric* or Baker and Haller's 1929 edition of *Writing: A First Book for College Students*.

David Russell, in *Writing in the Academic Disciplines: 1870-1990*, observes that the "[t]erm paper has rarely been studied and even more rarely studied as a genre worthy of historical analysis" (78). Though his text offers the most extended analysis to date of the origins of the research paper, Russell devotes only several paragraphs to its treatment in composition textbooks. As part of this study, I examined roughly seventy composition textbooks, most published since 1900. Earlier texts, including the three that dominated the market in the latter part of the nineteenth century—A.S. Hill's *Principles of Rhetoric* (1878), John Genung's *Practical Elements of Rhetoric* (1886), and Barrett Wendell's *English Composition* (1891)—all lack any references to writing with sources, much less mentioning the "source theme" or "term paper" as a genre of student writing.

One reason for the absence of source-based writing instruction in texts before 1900 may be the still limited nature of university library collections at the end of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. Excepting Harvard, by 1875 no American colleges had anything approaching a "university library," and annual acquisitions at most schools numbered only in the hundreds (Danton 31).
Harvard's collection, the nation's first major college library and the largest, numbered only 84,200 volumes in 1850. Fifty years later the collection was over a half million, but by 1920--the period when methods of library research began to appear in composition textbooks--the Harvard library had four times that number of books in its collection (Danton 20, 87, 91). In 1930-31 alone, Harvard's Widener Library acquired over 193,000 volumes (Wilson 130). No other state or private university, with the exception of Yale, even approached half the number of books in Harvard's collection until 1940. Not coincidentally, the forties was the decade when the Freshman research paper increasingly received its own chapter in a growing number of writing texts.

Despite the inadequacy of university libraries, early composition teachers and rhetoricians promoted wide reading as a source of information for freshman themes, and familiarity with methods of library research as a fundamental skill. The first and most influential of these voices was Charles Sears Baldwin, who wrote in 1906 that "from the beginning a student should learn that his use of the library will be a very practical measure of his culture" ("Freshman English" 486). For Baldwin, an authority on classical rhetoric, Freshman English should not only train the student in rhetorical methods of presentation, but also the means of investigation, so that "he brings his studies
in closer relation to himself."

This idea naturally leads to the library. For freshman composition may involve reading, not only in study of models, but also practice in compilation. Minds accustomed to accept and repeat generalizations at second hand may be taught, not only to reflect, but also, within feasible limits, to investigate. How to find facts, how to compare inferences, and finally how to bring reading to bear,--in all this, freshman composition may be of practical service to any other course, and of liberal service to the student himself. That compilation is commonly regarded as a mechanical process of paste-pot and shears, when experience proves it to be, not only open to originality, but in many cases positively conducive to originality, is a reminder to freshman English. (College Manual 489; my emphasis)

Several notions that will later have profound implications for research paper instruction surface here: that library skills are a "practical service" freshman composition can provide the rest of the university, and that students can conduct original investigations using library sources. Baldwin later expands these in his popular 1906 textbook, A College Manual of Rhetoric, the earliest textbook I've found that deals at length with writing essays based on research.

Baldwin's text, typical of the many freshman writing texts that followed in the next 20 years, described the researched essay not as a separate genre but a form of exposition. The College Manual divides rhetoric into "logical composition," which includes persuasion and exposition and has its theory in ancient rhetoric, and "literary composition," which includes narration and
description and its foundation in ancient poetics. (This division may later influence the inability of writing teachers to see anything aesthetic about fact-based writing). Under exposition, Baldwin identifies two types: essays based on personal experience and those based on reading. Here again he emphasizes the ideal of "originality of compilation" in researched expository essays, noting that while it "deals commonly with material already known" the "result may be original...whenever a writer gives to facts, however often they may have been presented, his own grouping and interpretation" (39).

This kind of writing of writing is at once directly educative in college and directly useful outside. Originality of discovery, as in science, originality of creation, as in art, are for most men equally impossible; but originality of compilation, the power to read facts, to analyze, to collate, combine them, to give them promptly such direction as shall unfold their significance, is a mastery hardly to be shirked by any educated man. To energize knowledge is the office of persuasion; but to realize knowledge comes first, and this is the office of exposition. (39-40)

Later in this chapter I'll explore how the research ideal in the modern American university gave the notion of originality a particular weight and cast, but notice how Baldwin struggles with his own conception of how it applies to the student research essay. While denying "most men" the "originality of discovery" or the "originality of creation," he celebrates the more available talent of "originality of compilation." But what does that mean? Assembling, analyzing, and arranging others' facts to "unfold their
significance" does not sound too different from what Baldwin described as the "paste pot and shears" method he condemns elsewhere. It is possible of course that it is not only the "grouping," but the writer's own "interpretation" of the facts that is original, but as with so many of the texts I examined, the sample research essay Baldwin includes in his book seems to subvert many of his claims about originality. The Appendix of The College Manual of Rhetoric includes "an example of simple research" (264)--a student's notes and his or her resulting essay on the Roman infantry. The essay is the familiar encyclopedic summary of facts with no explicit evidence of the writer's interpretation save the very last line of the essay: "No wonder the Roman legion was an effective fighting machine" (269).

Baldwin's struggle to establish a principle of originality that would apply to the research essay is one that we will see repeated again and again in later texts; it remains a vexing problem for contemporary writing teachers and students. In many other ways The College Manual of Rhetoric establishes a precedent for textbook treatment of research-based writing. Baldwin's text appears to be the first to feature extended discussion of note taking methods--including the earliest reference to the ubiquitous note cards ("small slips or cards")--and the first to offer an extensive list of topics for research (49). For example, the Appendix includes ten pages of suggested topics,
arranged in categories ranging from "reports and other essays based on personal observation and current reading, especially of newspapers" to suggested topics for "essays based supported by elementary research" to appropriate topics for "longer essays for advanced students" (253-263). Among the topics for long investigative essays were these: the holy grail, "some American literary traditions," Oxford, romantic music, and the American whaleman.

For the next fifteen years, Baldwin's College Manual was the only major freshman writing text to provide such a full treatment of bibliographic methods and the researched essay. By the 1920s, however, textbook treatments of library research began to proliferate. A typical example is Carson's 1920 Handbook of English Composition, which features a detailed description of how to prepare bibliographic material and use note cards, as well as a list of key references students should consult. Greenough and Hersey's English Composition (1924) opens with a chapter titled "Gathering and Weighing Material." It includes sections on use of the library and suggestions for reading, "weighing authorities," note taking, "being original," and "why you must not copy without acknowledgement." The dangers of plagiarism are mentioned in virtually all the early textbook discussions of the research essay, though a detailed description of methods of citation--footnotes and the like--did not appear in the books I examined until the
1930s. The note card become a permanent resident of the library research chapters in twenties textbooks, and perhaps the earliest specialized text on research skills, Willis and Fuess' *Practical Precis Writing* appeared in 1929. Using mostly passages of verse ranging from easy to difficult, the text elevated summarizing to a new status. "The mere practice of precis writing," the authors proclaim, "trains the mind to seize on what is essential and to disregard what is subordinate or merely decorative in writing. A month's course in the writing of summaries in the classroom will seldom fail to develop a proficiency which will be of immense value" (14).

Though virtually all of the composition texts published in the 1920s feature very similar treatments of research writing--describing it as a form of exposition, detailing library research methods, discussing the need for originality, and emphasizing the practical value of research skills--I did discover one text that was a notable exception. Haller and Baker's *Writing: A First Book for College Students* (1929) is a text that guides students through a semester-long research project on a topic of their choice, culminating in a long investigative theme. Rather than writing a number of shorter essays on "unrelated topics," Haller and Baker suggest that the student "reads widely and thoroughly on a topic about which he is curious, and which he has chosen independently for its own sake"
(iv). While almost every textbook I examined urged students to choose topics for papers that they find interesting, the authors of this text return to the theme again and again: "With almost any bit of writing that is really worthwhile, what starts the writer is curiosity...Curiosity is probably one of the chief reasons why you have come to college...College is, therefore, a kind of curiosity disposal plant. It matters little what you are curious about so long as you are curious" (4-5, 7). While the need to conduct "original" investigations also surfaces in Haller and Palmer's textbook, in a significant break with books that preceded and followed them, the authors suggest that it is experience--not merely a fresh arrangement of material culled from library sources--that will give student research papers originality: "Put your present knowledge to work. Think up some way which you can do some original investigation, make some first-hand observation of the facts of your subject. In other words, go and see for yourself" (93).

Though Writing: A First Book for College Students could be considered simply an anomaly, I think its treatment of the investigative theme is significant for several reasons. First, though its authors briefly mention its method was "inaugurated in principle" (v) by Charles Sears Baldwin in his work at Barnard years before (something my investigation of Baldwin's work does not suggest), the text seems to be
the only one I examined influenced by the progressive education movement that was transforming American schools at the time. In particular, Palmer and Haller's emphasis on research projects which are student initiated, grounded in experience, and which shift the teacher's role task-master to guide are some of the key elements of Dewey-inspired educational theory which coalesced in the creation of the Progressive Education Association in 1919. The organization reached the peak of its influence in the late twenties (Cremin). Writing: A First Book for College Students is also worthy of note because it is ancestor to a research paper pedagogy that finds later expression in Kenneth Macrorie's The I-Search Paper and my own text, The Curious Researcher. The book represents an alternative tradition to conventional research paper instruction that I attempt to theorize and extend in this study.

One way in which this Baker and Haller's text echoes all of the others I examined published during the twenties is the emphasis on a research essay whose audience is a general reader, an obvious implication of a making it a category of exposition, rather than a specialized genre. The rhetorical structure of the assignment begins to change, however, in 1930s composition texts. Increasingly, authors described the research paper as the product of serious scholarship, a distinct genre with a specialized audience whose purpose to extend and build knowledge. The Howard
Baldwin's *Handbook of Modern Writing* (1930), for example, is careful to distinguish between writing "only a few centuries ago" when the task was to collect and arrange quotations from "ancient authors"—a method "comparable to assembling an automobile from parts manufactured by various companies"— and the "radically changed" approach to writing in which the writer "should if possible discover some neglected phase of the subject, some new meaning in the facts, or some novel manner of presentation" (5). Bryan, Nethercot, and De Voto's *Writer's Handbook* (1931), in a separate chapter "Preparation of Papers," mentions the research paper as a "serious, informative article" that should carefully follow "the methods of serious scholars" (216). Increasingly, "term paper" is used in these texts to describe the genre, perhaps reflecting its increasing use in other disciplines. The term paper's chief aim, according to one 1930 survey of faculty, was "to increase the student's knowledge of a *special field*" (Brown and Baldwin 307; my emphasis). As always, the emphasis on originality or independent thought remains, but now it is more couched in the language of the "research ideal"—the responsibility of the researcher to make new knowledge—though the call for originality is often tempered. As Garland and Jones' *Century Collegiate Handbook* (1939) put it, "A term paper...need not (except in advanced or graduate work) be exhaustive or add to human knowledge, it should leave no important phase of the subject
untouched...It is to be a product (1) of your examination and comparison of a number of sources and (2) of your independent thinking on the evidence, the theories, and the issues" (313).

Though several of the early 1940s writing textbooks still categorized the research paper as a form of exposition, even in those the language of the research ideal dominated the discussion of the assignment. Pence's *Craft of Writing* (1944), for example, describes the research paper as "formal exposition," but then describes it as "the kind of writing that scholars produce in all fields of human knowledge" (203). By the late forties, the research paper began to achieve its now familiar status, with its own chapter and separate treatment. Completely divorced from exposition, the research paper genre finally shed its purpose to appeal to a general audience, and began to fulfill its role as a specialized genre intended for an audience of imagined experts. The authors of *American College English* (1949), for example, in a separate chapter on the "Research Essay," explicitly describe the assignment as preparation for serious scholarship.

Every member of a profession sooner or later may be called upon to prepare for publication a statement of his research or his achievements. The students' research reports, term papers, theses, or dissertations, are training in methods of work which will be useful in a professional career...A research essay gathers and interprets a set of facts for the benefit of a specialized group of readers...At its weakest, the student essay should be a new selection of facts which
develop his central idea; at best, it should be the development of a *new idea* from facts already known, or a new interpretation of facts hitherto unknown or not recognized as pertinent to the idea. By presenting an original view of the subject in an individual manner, the research essay can bring new insight to an old problem. (553-4; my emphasis).

The emphasis on originality remains a strong strand in these textbooks, but it now goes far beyond Baldwin's "originality of compilation" to fully embrace the research ideal's emphasis on the contribution of new knowledge and ideas. Though in their commentary some textbook authors in the forties and fifties still tempered their expectations that undergraduates can do serious scholarship, the ideal is celebrated in almost all of them I examined. While Eric Steel in *Readable Writing* (1950) observes that master's students must produce a "de luxe model" research paper, and doctoral students a "super de luxe model" (206), undergraduates can still aspire to "original work fashioned from secondhand material." Skeptical students are then treated to this pep talk.

But everything has been written up, you may remonstrate. Not so! New fields of knowledge are opening up daily. When such a new area becomes the object of curiosity, writers deal with it like sparrows a chunk of bread. Each bird breaks off a beakful and concentrates temporarily on that. Similarly, each writer devotes an article to a tiny aspect of the big subject. When a number of articles have appeared, along comes another investigator who sifts, combines, evaluates, and so produces a book. Your paper will stand a better chance of being original if you select a subject on which that first book has not yet been written. (209)
By the 1950s, the treatment of the research paper assignment in composition rhetorics and handbooks took on all the familiar features we see in textbooks today. In addition to the emphasis on originality, on the need to imitate serious scholarship, and on the practical value of library skills, fifties textbooks featured now-standard apparatus on research methods and conventions, including an extensive discussion of note cards, note taking methods (paraphrase, summary, quotation), lists of key library references, models of citation methods, warnings against plagiarism, and usually a sample research paper. The conventions of the academic paper—how it should be structured and cited, how sources should be evaluated, what constitutes an acceptable thesis and tone—become a primary concern, normally constituting the bulk of the chapter. There are at least several explanations for this, all of which are significant developments in the aims and methods of research paper instruction.

First, the research paper's final break with its historical association with exposition was a major rhetorical shift. No longer were students writing essays based on reading whose primary audience was non-experts like themselves. Maintaining "reader interest" in the topic, always a primary concern for the expository writer, gave way to much more practical concerns. As Hook and Ekstrom put it in their 1953 text Guide to Composition, since the research
paper is primarily intended to "convey information,"

...its style is usually rather impersonal and even formal. Amiable chitchat, extensive use of the pronoun I, and the serene informality which often characterizes other writings are seldom regarded as appropriate...Not that such a paper should be dull--far from it. But its interest should come chiefly from the content, from the wealth of pertinent details and examples. Its major stylistic trait should be clarity. (232)\(^5\)

The research paper, stripped of its connection to other forms of writing and invested with a specialized purpose of conveying information to a narrow audience, has fewer aesthetic or expressive qualities. Language that is a barrier to content is considered inappropriate, losing both its constitutive and aesthetic functions, as well as its visible relation to authorship; instead, "its major stylistic trait should be clarity." If, then, the primary purpose of the research paper is to be a vehicle for transmission of (hopefully) "original" information to specialized readers who are presumably already familiar with the topic, then the method of presentation becomes paramount. Above all, it must be "efficient." Formal conventions--how to structure the paper, where to place the thesis, how properly paraphrase and cite, adopting the appropriate tone--attempt to reproduce efficient means of transmitting information that is familiar to a particular audience. Quite naturally, then, textbooks began to lavish more and more attention on the formal qualities of the research paper, and less and less on the writer's own
particular purposes in exploring the topic or her duty to establish its significance to readers who may be unconvinced of its relevance to their lives. Before long the buzzard's feet were tied.

The textbook emphasis on formal conventions might have another origin as well. While the drumbeat for originality in the research essay persisted since the assignment first appeared in writing texts--and it continues today--the ideal that freshman researchers can actually make an original contribution to knowledge cannot be taken seriously. No instructor really expects her students to be genuine scholars, the enthusiasm of some textbook writers like Eric Steele notwithstanding. That ideal became even more specious in the forties, fifties, and sixties as disciplinary knowledge exploded and more fences went up on the commons. Lacking a way to evaluate their students' success in writing an "original" research paper--and privately believing that they freshmen can't do it anyway--instructors embraced the proper use of conventions as a viable alternative. "Did they do it right?" rather than "what did they say that was original?" became the more convenient means of judging students' mastery of research writing.

Finally, the "service function" of freshman English--and in particular the obligation to teach the term paper for other departments--became a much more explicit purpose of
the assignment by the 1950s, and the emphasis on research "skills"—especially the handling of formal conventions—increased as a goal of instruction. "Actually, you are introduced to research writing in your basic writing course because you will later need detailed instruction in it," wrote the authors of the 1957 text *Writing: A Functional Approach to College Composition*. The freshman English teacher "can more reasonably be expected to supply such instruction than could any of your other instructors. He will see you through the various steps in the writing of a practice paper" (232). These sentiments, though open to question (why is the composition instructor better suited to teaching research skills?), were widely shared by textbook authors, and of course continue to have great currency among current instructors as well. Training in the term paper, and in particular its conventions, became for many faculty outside the English department freshman composition's most obvious and valuable *raison d'etre*, and writing texts quickly responded to their demands.

By the 1960s, treatment of the assignment was fairly uniform among composition texts, but the competitive nature of the textbook market and continuing dissatisfaction with student papers produced a new approach. The "controlled research paper"—one written using sources included in a published topical collection—became increasingly popular in the sixties. Virtually every major textbook publisher
began to produce slim volumes on a variety of single subjects ranging from Salem witchcraft to Robert Frost, each featuring selected articles, reviews, criticism, and primary works. One of these "controlled research texts" would then be used by the entire class as a source material for a research paper. The library became superfluous. For example, Greenburg and Hepburn's Robert Frost: An Introduction (1961) was a controlled research text that featured progressively more difficult materials on the poet, and an extensive appendix listing "Topics for Papers." Short paper topics ask students to compare two critics who are included in the volume. Topics for longer research papers demand that students synthesize and analyze more material in the text (e.g. "Distinguish the different views of the critics on Frost's relationship to society. Make a case from the poems in the pamphlet for one that seems to you most satisfactory") (175).

Richard Larson recalls that when he entered the composition field in the early sixties "controlled research papers" were all the rage. "The student would do the so-called research work except the student wouldn't do any research work since the research had already been done for him," Larson said. "This was a way, I suppose, to keep librarians from being inundated by students working on research papers for different courses...It's all packaged, all you have to do is take the appropriate items out of the
package and assemble them" (Larson). Larson's analogy seems apt. The "controlled research paper" was an attempt to manage the process of research, and therefore help ensure a more uniform product. It allowed writing teachers to not only define the research topic—presumably something they were interested in and knew something about—but also supply students with suitable materials. The product orientation of the controlled research text seems perfectly consistent with current-traditional rhetoric, the dominant pedagogy at the time. But it was bound to fall out of favor with the rise of writing process pedagogies.

A leader of the writing process movement, Ken Macrorie, published Searching Writing (in a later edition The I-Search Paper) in 1980; the text was a radical response to research papers which Macrorie called "bad jokes." With sarcastic punch he wrote that college research papers are "funny because they pretend to be so much and actually are so little" (161). His text (he actually termed it a contextbook) encouraged students to research topics that have immediate relevance to their lives (e.g. buying a camera, exploring a architecture as a profession) and tell the story of their search, or "quest." He strongly emphasized non-library sources, especially interviews, and peer group response. Macrorie's text quickly gained a small, but devoted following, particularly among high school teachers, and it remains the most prominent alternative text
on the research assignment.  

The novelty of the *I-Search Paper*, and Macrorie's public ridicule of the traditional term paper were—and remain—isolated acts of resistance. By and large, the research paper chapter is still a fixture in contemporary rhetorics and handbooks. These chapters mostly look remarkably similar to those in texts published 30 years ago. There are some changes, inspired in part by the emphasis on writing process and developments in composition theory. But these are hardly major reforms. There is an effort, for example, among several of the current texts I examined to expand the notion of research to include investigations outside of the library, like field research, interviews, surveys. The emphasis on research as an often recursive and messy process, not just a series of "steps," appears in several of the books as well. Several also frame the research paper in terms of social theories of writing. Of the books I examined, Charles Bazerman's *The Informed Writer* (1992) does so most explicitly, beginning with the line "Although a writer may work in private, a writer is never alone" (3). A researcher should cite sources, he adds in a later chapter, because "you let the reader know the full extent of the conversation in which you are taking part" (322). A few authors—by no means most—also take pains to suggest that research is not an activity separate from other kinds of writing as well. "...[A]lmost all writing involves
research," writes Douglas Hunt in *The Riverside Guide to Writing*. "Rather than treating 'the research paper' as a separate type of assignment, this chapter will suggest techniques useful for short papers and long 'personal' essays and formal term papers" (418).

While these departures from the conventional treatment of the assignment are worth noting, in many more ways the representation of the research paper in current composition textbooks reveal how the genre remains captive to its history. That is most evident in the continuing emphasis on ambiguous notions of originality, the nearly exclusive emphasis on argument as a mode of thinking, the repudiation of subjectivity, and the primary focus on research conventions. As a rule, contemporary textbooks have very little to say about the aims of academic research, the nature of inquiry, the student's role as knowers, or the importance of pursuing investigations that have personal or social significance. More than anything else, chapters on the research paper reflect the continuing obligation writing instructors feel to indoctrinate students in research skills as a service to other departments; in these texts the freshman research paper is seen as the primary vehicle for initiating students in the professional culture of the academy. The result is that the genre is still presented as unconnected to the other writing that is going on in the course, and the essayistic possibilities of fact-based
writing—the promise that through writing one can explore not just what is known, but what it means to be a knower—are often completely ignored. In short, the research paper remains a genre that is viewed as largely untouchable by English teachers, existing outside of rhetorical and literary traditions. It belongs to someone else, yet we find ourselves stuck with it. Can we reclaim it in some way? Can we make it our own without totally sacrificing our obligations to introduce students to the practices of academic research?

III.

Though it now seems hard to imagine, there was a time when American college students didn't write term papers. It was a time when the well-spoken word was the measure of learning rather than the well-written one. It was time when colleges students and their teachers were generalists rather than specialists, and discourse was polite, civil, and public—a matter of good taste, good rhetorical sense, and good memory. The research paper had no place in the "old college." But it was to assume a central role in the new one.

The transformation of the American university, from the small, homogenous colleges of antebellum period, to the beginnings of the modern university in the late nineteenth century, has been well documented by Veysey, Berlin, Kitzhaber, Russell, Veblen, Graff, and others. The growth
of enrollments after the Civil War, and increased public disenchantment with the irrelevance and impracticality of the traditional "liberal education," with its single curriculum and emphasis on instilling the virtues of Christian values and mental discipline, gave way to the professionalization of the university. From 1865 to 1890, the notion of the American college was reformed to three more "specific conceptions," according to Laurence Veysey: "the aim of practical service,...the goal of abstract research, and...the attempt to diffuse standards of cultivated taste" (12). This transformation also implied a basic change in pedagogy. Because the mission of the "old college" was to train a new cultural elite for leadership in the church, in law and in politics, it emphasized training in oratory. And the belief that "mental discipline" could be achieved through drills and repetition led to particular kinds of oral performances like recitations and rhetoricals (Russell 36).

Several factors changed this, including the discrediting of the psychological theories that compared the mind to a muscle which could be strengthened by the "exercise" of recitation and drill (Kitzhaber 2). Another factor was the waning influence of the clergy in American colleges. But most important, as David Russell points out, was the growing influence of German models of higher education, particularly their emphasis on scholarship which
is text-based rather than oral. Along with this was a fundamental epistemological shift. In the old college students were initiated in received truths, which were to be memorized not questioned. In the modern university, truth was to be discovered through rigorous investigation. The central interest of the traditional college in the indoctrination of the known—the status quo—gave way to a passionate interest in exploring the unknown. American educators seized from the German model a new academic mission: to conduct original investigations which involved "rigorous and precise examination of phenomena, whether natural or historical" (Veysey 127). Contributing to the growth of knowledge in an increasingly specialized field became the aim of the emerging "research ideal," and the means for reporting these discoveries was not the oral rhetorical but the documented "thesis" or "dissertation."

According to Russell,

The new text-based scholarship, along with the new differentiated academic structure, changed the nature of the academic game. Oral performance for a local academic community demanded only a display of learning, but the new text-based standards demanded an original contribution to a disciplinary community in written form: the research paper. The American scholarly journals, which developed in the late nineteenth century as a major forum for faculty discourse, contain a great deal more transcription of oral discourse (discussions, speeches, lectures) than do contemporary journals. But disciplines quickly evolved the text-based apparatus of modern scholarship: discipline-specific conventions of argument, style, documentation, and format. (80)

As more and more faculty embraced the research ideal,
the university, to accommodate this growth in specialized knowledge, became increasingly fragmented into separate department, disciplines, and discourses. No longer were students exposed to a common curriculum, but increasingly it became elective, and as it did, student writing "progressively moved away from the local academic community and into the individual classroom, the domain of specialized disciplinary knowledge" (Russell 80). Before long, faculty began to require graduate students, and later undergraduates, to imitate their own scholarly practices, including conducting original research and writing about it in properly documented term papers.

It's not overstating the situation to say that the transformation of the American university was swift. "How rapidly had the aim of research achieved recognition?" asks Veysey.

Looking back, it is clear enough that in the 1870s research played no important role in American higher education...Around 1880 a definite change occurred. It then began to be believed--whether rightly or not--that most of the "bright young men" were going into science. At just this time Harvard undergraduates began using the college library in significant numbers for research purposes...[B]y 1910 research had almost fully gained the position of dominance it was to keep thereafter. (174-5, 177)

Ten years later, by the twenties, the freshman research paper made its appearance in composition texts reflecting many of the elements of the research ideal.¹¹ Student research papers should be "original," they should contribute
to specialized knowledge, and they should be properly documented. While what constituted an "original contribution" to knowledge might have been clear in the nineteenth century when disciplines were beginning to form, the concept became more and more ambiguous to 20th century undergraduates and their instructors. The result, as David Russell put it, was a widening "intellectual gulf" between students and their instructors--each group instinctively recognizing that original research is an unrealizable ideal--and the "term paper gradually atrophied as a genre of student writing and gained a reputation as a hollow formal exercise" (87-88). Even today, as I've already observed, both writing teachers and students remain captive to a term that has become meaningless.

The essentially scientific conception of research adopted by American devotees of the German example, even for investigations in the humanities, has created further problems for the student writer of modern research papers. According to Patricia Sullivan, "science was the paradigm for all fields of inquiry," and its "epistemological assumptions" demanded "the researcher's detachment from...the ideas or phenomenon that comprised the objects of inquiry. Research was equated with objectivity and detachment..." (15) While arguably these notions of objectivity and detachment may be useful guidelines for a quantitative scientific investigation, few freshman
undertake such projects in their freshman English class. Students are inescapably subjective when they write on the causes of the Viet Nam War or how to battle bulimia. As Ken Marcorie argues (and postmodern theories of subjectivity reinforce), student researchers must be both subjective and objective--they must recognize their biases yet attempt to measure those respectfully against other voices. But the mandate of objectivity and detachment persists, and the result is the widespread belief among students that they must not use "I," they should not express their "opinions," and they must not deploy personal experience in research papers.

The legacy of the research ideal has one other implication for the modern research paper, and it brings us back finally to Patricia Limerick's wired vultures and an academic culture that seems to have no relation to people's lives. If the practices of the "old college" turned students and professors outward toward a larger academic community whose values they shared, then the practices of the modern university signaled a retreat into a more private, insular, and isolated way of being. Sullivan calls this the "myth of the independent scholar," the belief that research is essentially an asocial activity, and the production of knowledge is the act of an individual acting alone. Here's how Veysey put it:

   For the devotee of scientific investigation,
   Germany opened up the vista of a new goal, then
dramatized by a process of initiation. The German laboratory and seminar offered these future American professors a novel mode of life, a private mode that turned them aside from the everyday world of society, politics, morality, and religion, even from the classroom itself, and removed them during most of their waking hours from their fellow men. (133)

As Sullivan notes, this conception denies the reality that most research is collaborative, but it also accounts for the problem raised in the beginning of this chapter. Academic researchers have, by and large, turned away "from their fellow men" and women, and they feel no particular obligation to make the written products of their research accessible. Perhaps ever since it shed its association with exposition early in this century, students essentially shared the belief that the research paper is removed from the "everyday world." Its subject matter, its language, and its presentation is, in their view, "supposed to be" formal, remote, and lifeless.

I believe the freshman research paper can--and should--renew its association with the "everyday world." That involves reexamining the inherited assumptions that has kept the form captive. But it also means that composition stakes its own claim to the genre, and the rhetorical tradition's focus on public discourse represents a way to do that. In Hoyt Hudson's early and influential essay, "The Field of Rhetoric" (1923) he observes that the rhetorician is essentially a generalist, and that "rhetoric draws on other fields with considerable disregard for the airtight
partitions sometimes put up between college departments."

He writes,

Aristotle, in discussing deliberative rhetoric, says that the subjects embraced are finance, war and peace, defence of country, imports and exports, and legislation. Yet the rhetorician does not necessarily become an expert in those fields. He attempts to learn the authorities and sources of information in each, and to develop a method which he can apply to specific problems as they arise. He learns, in any given situation, what questions to ask--and to answer. The peculiar contribution of the rhetorician is the discovery and use, to the common good, of those things which move men to action--intangible, obscure, mystic, even as these thing: may be; yet you and I and our communities find them intertwined with every problem in life. (23)

Hunt offers the possibility of reconceiving the freshman researcher as a rhetorician rather than a scientific investigator, and the research paper as a means of exploring how its topic is "intertwined with every problem in life." A new mandate--the need to discover how knowledge can be used to address "specific problems" that concern the "common good"--might replace the historical imperative that freshman researchers make "original contributions" to specialized knowledge. It is the loss of this rhetorical tradition--one that "gives primary emphasis to communication on public problems" (94)--that S. Michael Halloran mourns in his essay "Rhetoric in American Colleges." He writes that "the revival of rhetoric in the field of English composition has thus far failed to address the need for a revival of public discourse" (94). The freshman research paper, if it were to shed some the
historical constraints imposed on it, seems the perfect vehicle for such a revival. It can do this without sacrificing its usefulness to other departments. Students will still receive training in documentation and methods of research, including library skills. But even more important students will see research as it should be seen: as an activity that need not shut out the non-specialist, and one that can have a relationship to people’s lives, including their own.
CHAPTER NOTES

1. The "Literature of Fact" is the title of a course taught for some time at Princeton University by John McPhee, the nonfiction writer whose work exemplifies literary journalism.

2. The three-page survey (see Appendix, page 222) was administered to students in nine randomly selected sections of our Freshman English course. A total of 196 students were surveyed, which represents 19% of the total population, and a degree of confidence of +/- 6%. Instructors of these nine sections also were surveyed using an instrument nearly identical to the one administered to the students. The return rate on the instructor surveys was 100%, and the nine responses represent 20% of the total population (45) of freshman English instructors for the spring semester, 1995.

3. Though the results in Table 1.2 seem to largely reflect beliefs about the research paper that might arise from conventional instruction, there were some notable exceptions. For example, 55% of the respondents agreed that they could use their own experiences and observations as evidence in their papers, and only 36% agreed that "summarizing what's known about the topic is most important." Both are views that are somewhat at odds with the traditional emphasis on the researcher's detachment from her subject, the use of "authoritative" evidence, and the need to survey and report on current knowledge of a topic.

4. Though my survey results suggest that freshman who have written two or more term papers their first year do not have different assumptions about the assignment than those who are writing their first paper for freshman English, there is one exception: more experienced writers are even more likely to assume their research papers should "say something original."

5. The sample research paper in this text--an essay titled "The Westinghouse Time Capsule," which explains the company's plan to use metallic alloys to build a time capsule that will last 5000 years--is at least stylistically everything its authors encourage, except that it is remarkably dull.

6. I greatly appreciate Macrorie's approach, and recommend it as one of the best ways to teach students that curiosity is the best reason to research something. I find, however, that I-Search papers are not very interesting to read, though they're certainly more interesting than most formal research papers I've encountered.

8. Remarkably few of the popular composition texts highlight the social construction of knowledge, much less collaborative pedagogies, when discussing the aims and methods of the research paper. I remain amazed that more social theorists haven't seized this assignment as an opportunity to introduce students to ideas the construction of knowledge.

9. An analysis of the model student research papers included in current writing texts is quite telling. All the books I examined (even those like the *Riverside Guide* which attempted to recast the assignment) featured sample papers which excluded the first person and any use of the writer's experience or observations as evidence. Topics were never autobiographical, and all relied on argument. None seemed particularly original in any way, nor did the textbook's authors ever make claims about the originality of the student papers. Many of these papers, while competently written and organized and meticulously documented, were particularly uninspiring to read.

10. Veysey argues that American professors may have taken the research mission much more seriously than their German counterparts, especially the American devotion to scientific investigation. Paul Bernard and James Turner observe, in fact, that the American Ph.D. always required much more "substantial research" than in Germany.

11. How quickly did the "research ideal," which was initially emphasized at the graduate level, trickle down to undergraduate education? Russell claims it was more or less immediate, though at first rigorous "course theses" were viewed by some faculty as appropriate only for the most advanced students. Others had a more egalitarian position, arguing that all students, even those in secondary school, should write research papers, sometimes assigning a moral value to such a "personal discipleship in learning" (Russell 86). The elitist and egalitarian views towards undergraduate research created a long-standing "tension," says Russell, which college instructors never overcame: "[T]hey merely developed ways of living with it, ways that marginalized writing instruction" (87).
CHAPTER II

FACING FACTS: KNOWLEDGE, IDENTITY AND THE STUDENT RESEARCHER

Becky Hodgkins, a high school student, was assigned a research paper in her senior English class. In preparation for the assignment, her instructor gave Becky photocopies of several chapters from the MLA Handbook—one on citation methods, another on compiling a bibliography, a third on format, and a fourth chapter which, in fairly typical fashion, described the aims of the assignment. The research paper should "present information and ideas clearly and effectively," intoned the Handbook, yet students should avoid become so "preoccupied" with the mechanics of gathering and documenting information that they "forget to apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired through previous writing experiences" (Gibaldi and Achtert 1). While the research paper may be similar to "other forms of writing," the Handbook continued, "it differs from many of them in relying on sources of information other than the writer's personal knowledge and experience." The emphasis of academic research is not on the arrangement of "other people's thoughts," but the "facts and opinions you draw from your research" (Gibaldi and Achtert 2).

Becky's topic was "Diabetes: Diagnosis, Complications, Treatments and Research," and from my point of view--and
from hers--the resulting paper is a case study of what's wrong with conventional research paper instruction. Despite the MLA Handbook's call to build the paper around the "opinions" the writer "draws" from his or her investigation, Becky has almost no presence in her paper at all, and when she does appear, however tentatively, the move draws criticism from her teacher. After three pages of factual summary on the definition, types, and identification of diabetes, there is finally an isolated attempt at "authorial intrusion":

Most cases of adult-type diabetes can be controlled by a diet that is low in calories. Some adult-type diabetics whose condition cannot be controlled by diet alone use insulin or take oral drugs that reduce the level of sugar in the blood.

Fads come and go. Hemlines of fashionable clothes go up and down from one year to the next. Science and medicine have had their own fads and fashions, and the treatment of diabetes is no exception.

Before Banting and Best isolated insulin...

Becky's analogy between trends in fashion and in medicine moves tentatively towards interpretation--diabetes treatment is trendy like everything else--and towards more original language--note how she begins with a short, emphatic sentence that is a clear break with the prose of the preceding and following paragraphs. It was a move that elicited a single marginal comment by her teacher:

"transition needed." A similar intrusion by Becky in her concluding paragraph--virtually the only other place in the paper where the writer explicitly registers her presence--
formally-worded conclusion" in his marginal note.

In addition, despite the photocopied instructions admonishing students to avoid becoming "preoccupied" with the mechanics of research, nearly all of the instructor's written comments focused on problems with conventions, including improper placement of material on the title page (paper title, author's name, and date were placed two inches too high), inappropriate use of "informal" language (e.g. use of the pronoun "you" to address readers), weak transitions, and improperly titled outline and appendices. The instructor's preoccupation with the technical conventions of research is most evident in a "Mechanical Abstract," a worksheet he gave to his students. In it they are asked to check off when they have completed each part of the paper (title page, rationale, proposal, abstract, outline, text, etc.), as well as quantify and list not only the number and types of sources students consulted, but how many times they are cited in the text. Becky, he claimed, had miscounted. Note cards were to be color-coded by type of source (blue for magazines, green for books, orange for pamphlets, etc.), punched with a single hole in the upper right-hand corner, and bound by a metal ring.

This level of compulsiveness about the mechanics of writing the research paper may be extreme, but I don't think it's atypical, particularly in high school instruction. If college instructors quietly despair at fulfilling the
historical injunctions to encourage "originality" and "independent thinking" in student research papers, then many high school teachers must feel positively hopeless about it. A focus on whether students handle conventions correctly, rather than whether they have "original" things to say, is perceived as a much more realistic way to evaluate students' success at research writing. High school English teachers are also bound by their own notions of service—to prepare college-bound students for academic writing—and ever since the term paper became a fixture in undergraduate courses, secondary instructors have dutifully taught their juniors and seniors The College Research Paper.¹ It is normally a very conventional conception of the genre, with all the inherited (and mostly scientific) assumptions about it I mentioned in the last chapter.

Though it would be easy—and part of a long tradition—to blame ill-informed high school teachers for our frustrations with the research writing of college freshman, secondary English instructors are in much the same position as their college counterparts: "stuck" with teaching a specialized writing genre for someone else, and operating under inherited beliefs—mostly uncritically accepted—about what a research paper must be. My own experience working with high school teachers on research paper instruction suggests they also share similar frustrations with the assignment. Unfortunately, there has been essentially no
dialogue between college and high school teachers about how to prepare students for academic research, a situation that prompted one of my former students, after I told her of proposed changes in the ways research is taught in college composition, to say with exasperation, "I think you guys and the high school teachers should get together and talk. I suppose if change happens it happens from the top down, not the bottom up. By the time high school teachers get wind of what's going to happen, you're going to be changing again" (Boncek).

The fact remains, however, that the attitudes towards the research paper students bring to freshman English are profoundly shaped by their first contact with the genre in high school. The data from the survey discussed in the last chapter—as well as my own experience with secondary teachers—both suggest that the dominant research paper pedagogy in high school is conventional, embracing many elements of the "research ideal," including the emphasis on originality, objectivity, and topics removed from the "everyday world." By far, however, the greatest attention is paid to the formalities of research writing: citation, format conventions, and formal structure.

The survey results provide a glimpse at some of the beliefs about the genre students bring with them from high school. It was distributed to nine randomly selected sections of freshman English at the University of New
Hampshire, and administered before the instructors were very far into teaching the research paper (1-2 weeks). Students were instructed to respond to the survey based on their experience outside of their freshman English class. The results, therefore, presumably reflect attitudes largely shaped by the students' high school experience, and to a lesser extent, other college classes during the freshman year that required a term paper.

When students were asked to check items in the survey that reflected their assumptions about the research paper assignment, their responses conform significantly to traditional notions of research. Over half of the freshman surveyed agreed that the first person should not be used in research papers (57%), books are a primary source of information (52%), they need to "follow a formal structure" (69%), one should have a thesis before the research begins (61%), and the researcher must be "objective" (60%). Not all student beliefs seemed consistent with conventional instruction, however. For example, over half (55%) the students surveyed shared the assumption that their experiences and observations are suitable evidence in a research paper, a view that is at odds with most textbook descriptions of the research paper as excluding personal knowledge. In addition, despite the historical emphasis on "originality" as a key quality of academic research, only 43% of the respondents agreed that they had to "say
something original" in their research papers. And only 22% assume that they are supposed to use their own opinions.

What might account for these inconsistencies with the pattern of beliefs one might expect would be associated with traditional approaches? The two attitudes which were embraced by less than a majority of the sample—the need for originality and personal opinion in research papers—seem the natural result of the failure of conventional research paper pedagogy. In both cases, students' experience writing term papers is at odds with its stated aims—they know originality is unachievable, and their "opinions," like those tentatively expressed by Becky in her paper, will receive less weight than the method of their presentation. The view that personal experience and observation are appropriate evidence in a research paper, shared by 55% of the sample, is harder to explain. It may arise from another belief I'll discuss later: that the only available means students have for judging an author's claims is personal knowledge.

But what may be more revealing than the views of students towards the value of their personal experiences is the ways in which they position those experiences against sources' claims in their papers. What kind of authority do they invest in personal knowledge? How do students use it in their writing? Seen more broadly, these questions hint at two larger concerns I'd like to take up in this chapter--
to what extent do student writers of research papers see themselves as subjects of their research, and what kind of roles do they construct for themselves as knowers?

For many students, writing a research paper, particularly after months of writing essays, presents a very practical problem: what happens to the self? After the experiencing the subjectivity of the essay, students are confronted with the historical injunction that in the research paper they should be detached, disinterested, objective. At the same time, they are encouraged to be "original," a term which can be understood to mean a variety of things: an original contribution of ideas, an original presentation of existing material, the creation of new knowledge, or original expression. Several of those meanings are embedded in this fairly typical introduction to the research paper in Bazerman's The Informed Writer: "The research paper is an original essay presenting your ideas in response to information found in library sources. As you gather research material, your ever-increasing knowledge of a topic will allow you to make informed judgements and original interpretations" (269).

Confronted with the demand for "informed judgements" and "original interpretations," and the insistence they do more than simply report collected facts but invest them with their own novel ways of seeing and thinking, students frequently conclude that in this college research paper, at
least, they are "supposed to use their opinions." For example, in a typical response to an open-ended survey question that asked, "when you're given an assignment to write a research paper, what do you assume you're being asked to do?", one respondent wrote, "I'm responsible for writing facts about a particular subject while incorporating opinions of my own."

But for many students, this injunction that student researchers "express their opinions" in their papers seems at odds with the demand for objectivity, which they view as removing evidence of authorship. The perceived ban on use of the first person in research papers is, in the minds of many student writers, one of the guiding principles of "objective" writing. Unable to see how they can register their presence in a term paper without referring to themselves in some way, many freshman writers conclude that their "opinion" isn't really important after all. The practical result of this paradox is often crossed signals between instructors and students, typified by Becky's paper, where writers quickly learn that teachers don't mean what they say.

But students aren't the only ones who are confused. At the heart of their confusion about objectivity and subjectivity in academic research papers is our own mixed message about epistemology. While many writing teachers now claim that a goal of freshman composition is, as David
Bartholomae put it recently, to "make a writer aware of the forces at play in the production of knowledge" ("Writing" 66), much current research paper instruction is still rooted in positivist, arhetorical theories of knowing, which attempt to maintain a separation between the knower and the known and view language as "merely a conduit for transmitting preexisting, preformed truth" (Russell 73). Throw into this mix Romantic notions of the self that are encouraged by the widespread use of personal writing in composition classes and students are really in a muddle when the confront they research assignment.

Complicating matters even more is the students' own varied epistemological perspectives. Some freshman researchers may not be prepared to see their relationship to knowledge in the ways we assume they do, or expect them to. When we ask students to use their own ideas in a research paper, do they have any idea what we mean? Have our pedagogies taken into account their ways of knowing? I don't think so.

The other day I was talking to a student, now a senior, about when she felt competent as a writer of research papers. "I don't know," Jennifer said. "I think it was when I began to look at facts differently. I was always taught you don't question facts, you just summarize them." Embedded in her comment was a shift in the way she saw both knowledge and authority, a development that is variously
described in works by William G. Perry, Mary Belenky et al., Nona Lyons and her colleague Carol Gilligan, Marlene Schommer, and more recently J.H. Newman and his associates at Penn State University. Each of these studies offer different (sometimes competing) schemes for describing the epistemological and intellectual development of college students.

Perry's is, by far, the most complicated (see Table 2.1). It describes students' intellectual growth in four major, overlapping stages--simple dualism, complex dualism, relativism, and commitment in relativism--but then breaks these down into nine "positions," each further detailing the particular epistemologies of students at each position. While I find Perry's scheme quite helpful as a framework for describing students' struggles with knowledge and authority in the research paper, the study has been sharply criticized for, among other things, its gender and class bias. The subjects of his investigation were almost exclusively male students at Harvard and Radcliffe.²

Belenky and her colleagues' Women's Ways of Knowing offers an alternative account of adult intellectual development. The authors observe that their study "focuses on what else women might have to say about the development of their minds and on alternative routes that are sketchy or missing in Perry's version" (9). Like Perry, the Belenky investigation is based on interviews (in this case with 135
Table 2.1
Three Constructs of Student Epistemologies
Perry's "Stages" of Intellectual Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple dualism</th>
<th>Complex dualism</th>
<th>Relativism</th>
<th>Commitment in Relativism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position 1 and 2</td>
<td>Disagreement and uncertainty is legitimate but temporary because Authorities can't &quot;find the answer yet.&quot; Later, &quot;everyone is entitled to their own opinion,&quot; a view set against Authorities' insistence on judging. On belief that we &quot;just have to think the way they want us to.&quot; Relativism may be a special case—in some things there is still &quot;right&quot; or &quot;wrong.&quot; Position 4 is most typical of second semester freshman.</td>
<td>Relativism becomes generally applied method of thought rather than special case. Authority has The answer in some things (physics) but not in others (English). Later, realization that despite relativistic world one must make choices, commitments, take responsibility (for studies, vocation, morality), though there are risks. Reason can help, but it has its limits.</td>
<td>Commitment to commitment. Stronger sense of identity, that acting in an uncertain requires faith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position 3 and 4</td>
<td>Position 5 and 6</td>
<td>Position 7, 8, and 9</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Belenky et. al's Epistemological "Perspectives"

Silence
Women who feel "subject to whims of external authority." Knowledge resides in others. Lacking introspection, "dialogue with the self." Feel both "deaf and dumb."

Received Knowledge
Dualists—see situations as black and white, believe there is single "right" answer. Truth resides in external Authority, to whom they must listen attentively and then regurgitate learned truths. They do not, however, identify with Authority.

Subjective Knowledge
Truth may reside not in external authority but in self; it is personal, private, intuitive. Truth may also be "grounded" in personal experience—their own and others like themselves. Distrust of traditional Authority sometimes becomes distrust of its methods: theory, abstraction, science, logic. Women begin to "hear themselves think," inner voice, but may lack confidence in their public voice.

Procedural Knowledge
Women recognize that they are not being judged on their opinions, but the method of arguing them. Acceptance that perceptions differ, but interest in how they are arrived at. Two manifestations: "separate" knowers use "impartial reason" to argue point they may not be personally committed to. "connected" knowers attempt to understand through empathy. Argument vs conversation.

Constructed Knowledge
Attempt to merge thought and feeling, personal knowledge and external knowledge. The "truth" of an opinion is a function of context. Higher tolerance for ambiguity, complexity, contradiction. Learn to care to know—"passionate knowers...who establish a communion with what they are trying to understand."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absolutism</th>
<th>Relativism</th>
<th>Evaluatism</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essentially dualists who believe “truth can be fully determined.” Because truth exists outside themselves, they are absolved of any responsibility—“things are just the way they are.” The truth can be determined by consulting appropriate authorities or objective perception.</td>
<td>Truth cannot be objectively determined because all &quot;sources of knowledge&quot; are equally valid. Conflict is inescapable because everyone has a different version of the truth, depending on his or her specific circumstance or view. Action is based on what &quot;seemed like a good idea at the time,&quot; because opinions are always changing.</td>
<td>Approximate truth can be determined by using appropriate methods and reason, carefully evaluating evidence and discussion with others. Not all opinions have same validity. Differing perspectives are a function of particular &quot;frameworks&quot; for seeing that can be evaluated and compared. Acceptance of personal responsibility for decisions because their validity can be judged.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
women), but it describes the epistemological categories that resulted as perspectives rather than stages. Its authors are careful to avoid suggesting, as critics charge Perry does, that their subjects' development is linear. The five perspectives that emerged from Belenky et. al's study--silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge (see Table 2.1)--describe women's experience of knowledge and authority as ranging from feeling "voiceless" and at "the whims of external authority," to seeing that they are capable of reproducing and finally constructing knowledge, and are familiar with the methods of "obtaining and communicating" it (15).

Recent work by John Newman and his colleagues further complicates Perry's stage model--and perhaps implicates much other developmental theory--by suggesting that it is too simplistic. They argue that students do not fit neatly into linear, easily categorized "epistemological styles," but rather exhibit ways of knowing that often mix "in varying concentrations," even though they may be inconsistent or even contradictory. Newman offers a much more condensed version of Perry's constructs--absolutism, relativism, and evaluativism--and finds that a student can, for example, be an absolutist and a relativist depending on the topic or the context (Charney, Newman, and Palmquist 7). Schommer, along with Jeng, Johnson, and Anderson agree, arguing that
students' epistemological beliefs are "multi-dimensional," involving clusters of independent beliefs about the nature of learning as well as the nature of knowledge, rather than "one-dimensional" beliefs Perry seems to suggest (Schommer 498; Jehng, Johnson, and Anderson 32).

These are significant criticisms. But I don't think they seriously undermine the value of Perry's work. The claim that student epistemologies are "multi-dimensional" is a sensible one, but the thoroughness of Perry's study, limited as it might be, still makes it enormously useful. However, I find the characterization of Perry's work as linear vulnerable to the same charge leveled at him--it oversimplifies. While he clearly does suggest that many of his students progress intellectually and morally, he describes their development as a wave-like rather than linear, involving both forward movement and regression. Perry observes that his students also, at times, held contradictory epistemological beliefs. Nonetheless, these criticisms of the "stage model" approach of describing students intellectual development suggest that any categorical claims about where as student is "at" must be qualified.

I want to argue here that the research paper is a troubled genre because it is caught in the crossfire between competing epistemolgical assumptions. Conventional research instruction, typified by Becky's high school experience, is
largely rooted in Enlightenment notions of truth, knowledge, and perception. While these notions are largely discredited by contemporary scholarship, the persistence of conventional approaches to the research paper in college composition has contributed to its status an empty exercise. Worse, they reinforce many epistemological assumptions that run directly counter to our current thinking about the nature of knowledge. Freeing the research paper from its tightly tethered attachment to the nineteenth century research ideal will help. But it also must be reconceived to be more consistent with modern theories of knowledge, something I'll explore more fully in the next chapter.

However, how we resurrect the research paper depends on something we've long ignored: the epistemological assumptions of our students. How to best introduce students to research in freshman English depends on starting with where they are. In the rest of this chapter, I'll attempt to identify--relying largely on Belenky and Perry's studies--some of our students' epistemologies and how they may complicate their performance as research writers. In particular, two student writers in our freshman English program, Carrie and Michael, will provide, I think, a rich and revealing look at how ways of knowing guide their thinking about the research paper. I met with each student five times as they worked on the assignment in the last six weeks of classes, and transcribed roughly 3 hours of
interviews with each.

Of course, the epistemologies of our students are not static. Much college instruction, and the research paper assignment in particular, hopes to challenge their beliefs, to move students to more sophisticated notions about the nature of knowledge. We especially hope they will see they can participate in knowledge construction, that "there is room for many voices" (Penrose and Geisler 517), including theirs. I'll argue here that conventional research paper instruction has essentially squandered the opportunity to give students a sense of themselves as knowers. By perpetuating the myth of objectivity and focusing largely on procedural knowledge rather than personal knowledge, traditional pedagogies eliminate the dissonance that challenges our students to reexamine their beliefs. And that dissonance is not about procedure, but identity.

Effective research paper instruction should involve both our students' heads and their hearts. After all, challenges to their basic beliefs about knowledge are not just intellectual exercises for them, but often profoundly emotional, and even uncomfortable. As William Perry put it, epistemological development involves "a revolution in identity" (114) which can call into question what students believe about themselves, and alter their relationships with those structures that sustained their previous beliefs, including their family, their churches or synagogues, and
their former teachers and schools. This makes the freshman research paper anything but the exercise in objectivity and disinterestedness implied by traditional pedagogies. It is deeply subjective. The real subject of a student's research paper, then, may not be the three best treatments for diabetes, but her struggle to forge a new identity for herself as a knower.

I.

Besides learning how to do laundry, open a checking account, and reverse telephone charges, apparently one of the great revelations of the first year of college is that one can not only have an opinion, but it has value. I am always struck by this when I assign the freshman research paper. I explain that this paper may be different from the ones they wrote in high school; rather than reporting what's known about their topics, students are expected to use the ideas of others to explore ideas of their own.

"You mean I can use 'I'?" they say.

"Certainly," I say.

"And I can put my own opinions in?"

"That's the idea."

If Becky's experience with the high school research paper is typical, then my students' reaction to being encouraged to express themselves in research-based writing shouldn't be surprising. "I just think a research paper is strictly facts," said Carrie, a second semester freshman,
strictly facts," said Carrie, a second semester freshman, during one of our interviews about her research project in freshman English. "I think of it as going to the library, going every way, and getting straight facts and just writing it that way. Just describing it, giving total information without getting the writer's two cents or anything into it." Unlike many students, when Carrie is given the license she has no difficulty expressing her "opinion." Despite the warnings against using the first person in high school papers, and her belief that most "formal" research papers assign no cash value to the writer's opinions, Carrie cannot imagine writing a paper where she doesn't register her views. "I'm not a formal person," she observes. "I think even when I write formal my opinion still comes through in my essay."

Abstractions about the nature of knowledge obviously have little power for students like Carrie. For them, an initial struggle with forming an identity for themselves as knowers seems to center on the meaning and value they place on their "opinions." It is a word I heard often in my discussion with students about their research, and it carries heavy freight.

It's hard to imagine that students may claim to have no opinions, regardless of whether they are permitted to express them in term papers. But Perry's study, and especially Mary Belenky and her colleagues' Women's Ways of
Knowing, suggest that students who are "basic dualists," or women whose perspective is "silenced" are both likely to view all sources of knowledge outside the self. For Perry's simple dualist, absolute Truth exists within unquestioned Authority figures. Personal "opinion" is completely subordinated to a faith in the certainty of others in a better position to know. Belenky et. al's silenced women share a similar view towards all-knowing Authority, but for many of these subjects, gender stereotypes reinforce their denial of self-knowledge: "Thinking for themselves violates their conceptions of what is proper for a woman," writes Belenky and her co-authors. "Another woman said, 'I didn't think I had a right to think. That probably goes back to my folks. When my father yelled, everybody automatically jumped. Every woman I ever saw, then, the man barked and the woman jumped. I just thought that women were no good and had to be told everything to do'" (30-31).

While few freshman entering college are "basic dualists," Perry's Position 1, he observes that dualism is a much more common epistemological view in early adolescence, which may in part explain why the "paste pot and shears" method of the high school research report strikes some students as the only sensible--though perhaps boring--way of approaching the assignment. Belenky's observation that perceived gender roles complicate silenced women's epistemological perspectives seems especially relevant for
college instruction. While I have rarely encountered women in freshman English who fit Belenky's description of "silenced"—submissive, socially isolated, feeling both "deaf and dumb," and unable to see past the immediate, limited present—her conclusions suggest women especially may have more difficulty publicly committing to an opinion, and at the very least have a more complicated relationship with male Authority. How might this play out in a research paper?

Among other things, Belenky's work points to the particular difficulty our female students might face developing a sense of themselves as knowers, and as a result, women may find the freshman research paper assignment especially challenging. Women who are silenced would likely find the demand for "originality" and independent thinking incomprehensible. On the other hand, these women would likely welcome the injunction to be "objective," to extract the self from the discourse. Why not turn the discourse over to all-knowing Authorities? Conventional approaches to teaching the research paper might be particularly unproductive for women who already feel "deaf and dumb."

Carrie, like most college students I've encountered, is by no means silenced: "I think adding opinions is easier for me. I think that if I had to write a paper and I couldn't put my opinion in it at all I would have a lot of
trouble...I think my brain works in opinion mode." Nor is she a simple dualist. While she is willing to grant an authority the benefit of the doubt—"you would figure that he's...done a lot more research"—Carrie is quite willing, in many cases, to see her opinion as equally valid.

I think that's why I like to use my opinion in papers because I put my opinion along with what the author feels...even if it's against it. The author says this, but through my own research or whatever, I've found...³

One reason for Carrie's unwillingness to grant authorities the exclusive access to the Truth so characteristic of the dualistic thinker is her belief that "no one's opinion is wrong."

That's one thing that I've always felt really strong about. I don't think anybody's opinion is wrong. When I was growing up in the CCD and stuff...I was killed and smashed for my opinions and I was going to hell for it, and it's one thing I've always been really strong about—that an opinion is an opinion. It's not a fact. It's something that someone feels. No one can tell you that your opinion is wrong. Because who is to say that their opinion is right? I don't think there really is right or wrong. I think you can think someone's opinion is right or wrong, but I don't think it can be definitely right or wrong.

Perry concludes that most second semester college freshmen occupy Position 4 in his scheme. In the Position 3 Perry's students began to recognize a persistent—but they suppose temporary—level of uncertainty, even in some scientific fields, which up until then had seemed immune to it. After exposure to multiple perspectives in their high school and college courses, these students begin to
recognize that there may not be wide agreement among experts. They shift from dualism to what Perry calls "multiplicity." Now what seemed like temporary ambiguity about what is True is seen as a relatively permanent condition of knowledge. These students are on the verge of embracing relativism, a step which Perry characterizes as a "revolutionary restructuring" of their thinking.

One student response to this recognition that Authorities don't always know, according to Perry, is the claim that since all knowledge is uncertain, who can say who is right? As Carrie put it, "no one can tell you your opinion is wrong," including the religious authorities who in her past wouldn't entertain dissent. There is, in this view, an element of active opposition--and in some cases reaction--to authority. Belenky's study offers important insight about the origin of this opposition. Almost half of the 135 women she interviewed were what she called "subjective" knowers; it is a perspective roughly equivalent to Perry's Position 4 in its emphasis on the inherent validity of internal authority over external authority, but this valorization of self-knowledge originates not exclusively from educational experiences, as Perry suggests, but from personal ones. First-hand experiences with "failed male authority," in particular, or some kind of de-valuing of their personal ways of seeing seems crucial to their movement into subjectivism (57). For Carrie it was, in
part, her Catholic upbringing (and perhaps CCD—or catechism class—in particular), that reinforced her subjectivism, but she also alludes more vaguely to other experiences:

"...I've always known that my opinion has always been in papers, and that's because when I was younger I was always told that my opinion was not right, that I shouldn't have an opinion." As Carrie embraces her right to express her opinion, her relationship to authority shifts, too. While discussing the OJ Simpson court case, Carrie assails the tendency people have to grant certain people's opinions "superiority," or the right of certain people to assume their opinions are superior.

There are certain people I think we assume that they're opinion is better than ours without really thinking about it. Obviously, Lance Ito, whatever he says, it's worth a lot more than whatever we would say. I think a lot of people are given that superiority...Why does he get to say? Because he's up there with a robe on?

At the same time, like most students, Carrie is careful to distinguish between "opinion" and "fact." An opinion is not fact, she is careful to point out. Opinions are "just something you feel" while, at least at the beginning of her research project, she viewed a fact as "something definite," particularly in science. According to Carrie, her research paper, which explored whether The Simpson's, an animated television show, had any redeeming social value, was a paper "more based on 'I thinks' than 'I knows,'" more on opinions, than facts. It does not pretend to be authoritative,
particularly in the scientific sense, as Carrie, who is a biology major, understands it.4 What is crucial here is that for Carrie an "opinion" is a tentative statement of belief associated with feeling not with thinking. Consequently, to deny the validity of an opinion, to argue against it, doesn't simply violate her sense of fairness, but strikes her as a personal attack. As Belenky points out, this makes subjectivist women much less interested in persuading someone to share their point of view, something which "can lead to unpleasant battles and threaten to disrupt relationships" (70). As Carrie put it, "I'm not one to argue. I guess that's just the way I've been brought up. It's just, like, you express your opinion. I probably wouldn't sit there and argue with you. I would just know how I feel about it. For me, that's all that matters."

The nearly exclusive emphasis on argument--or as feminist critic Olivia Frey put it, the "adversarial method"--as the mode of discourse in conventional research papers would obviously create problems for female students like Carrie. So would the assertion that, as the MLA Handbook asserts, the research paper should rely "on sources of information other than the writer's personal knowledge and experience" (Gibaldi and Acthert 2), for as Belenky points out, personal experience becomes a central source of knowledge for subjectivist women.5 To invalidate personal knowledge restricts the ability of these students to
"express their opinions" in research papers, since truth is often "grounded" in "first-hand experience" (Belenky 61), and it robs them of a means to evaluate the truth of others' claims.

The belief that the researcher must be authoritative, that she must "come to definite conclusions" about her subject—an assumption that has it roots in the scientific paradigm that dominated the research ideal—further confounds students like Carrie who are much more tentative in their beliefs. They are much more comfortable with "I thinks" than "I knows," the authoritative stance typical of argumentative discourse implies a certainty they simply don't feel. When Carrie shared her research paper draft with a friend who had more formal high school instruction in research papers (Carrie had written very few in high school), the friend urged her to remove the "I thinks" in the paper and replace them with more conclusive statements.

She actually liked (the paper) a lot. It's just that she wasn't sure how I was supposed to do it...Like I had a couple "I thinks" and she's, like, you're not supposed to think you're supposed to know! I'm, like, well it's my opinion! It's an "I think" (paper). I changed to "I came to the conclusion to"...(in) a couple of (places).

Convinced by her reader that she is doing it "wrong," Carrie gives in on the stylistic convention which implies an authoritative claim, but it becomes obvious that this move is done half-heartedly. Carrie does not lack a commitment to her "opinion" here. Quite the contrary, like most
relativists, she defends her opinions vigorously, particularly those she has developed on her own initiative or that grow out of her own experience. She is simply unwilling to imply the universality of her beliefs. Carrie is, however, willing to believe that she hasn't followed the "rules" of the research paper, and dutifully--though with little commitment--obeys the injunction from some unseen authority that in a research paper one should know, not think.

Similarly, Carrie assumes that in formal research papers she must "pretend to be objective," something she admits she is probably incapable of doing. "They want you to write it from the objective point of view. Standing back and just putting down all the facts." "Pretending to be objective," like faking certainty when one wants to leave room for doubt, is another of the masquerades a college researcher must play to do it "right."

Carrie might easily conclude from this, as many students have, that in academic writing one compromises honesty to follow someone else's script, or as one student put it, doing a research paper is "like an atheist going to church on Sunday." For these students, the coercive power of authority to force them to conform to "arbitrary" rules might deepen their unproductive resistance to authority and lead to the alienation that Perry fears will undermine students' willingness to take responsibility for their
opinions. This becomes a particular danger for students like Carrie, who, like many college freshman are committed to relativism or subjectivism. As Perry observes,

Relativism...if left at the level of conformity to Authority's demands can be exploited in gamesmanship: "I guessed it would be good to seem in favor of the book, but I didn't forget to be balanced." Here, then, the capacity to think about thought offers a position of detachment which can be exploited, as the sophists learned to exploit it, to evade responsibility. (108)

The emphasis on procedural knowledge at the expense of personal belief in conventional term paper instruction might also give academic research a mercenary quality: It doesn't matter what you believe just as long as you make a good argument.

Michael, also a second semester freshman at the University of New Hampshire, is keenly aware of the gamesmanship involved in the traditional research paper. He is more experienced with the genre than Carrie: he wrote several high school research papers, and a formal critical paper for his college Shakespeare course last semester. For all of these papers Michael said he adopted a "dry, drab, impersonal,...pretty third person" writing style. While he seems to diminish that approach, unlike Carrie he understands it not as arbitrarily imposed by Authority, but as a rhetorical strategy.

(Research papers) have to look objective. You may be shading the facts, or cutting off the right part of what an author said to make it come out the way you want it to, and say something that isn't necessarily straight out of the book. As
long as everything looks kosher, everybody's happy. Obviously, you're pretty much coloring everything with your opinion anyway...But everything should look like you're being very objective...Theoretically, you could get information to support any opinion you want. It should be possible, and it's a matter of how well you weave that together to make your point more than anything else.

Michael's observation that appearances matter in academic writing is sophisticated, and sensible. However, the appearance of objectivity in academic discourse is usually not a reflection of the writer's lack of commitment to her subject and or her propositions. This is not at all apparent to student researchers like Michael, who interpret objectivity and other conventions as merely stylistic ploys, efforts to "make everything look kosher." For Michael, this deception is reasonable because to reason effectively seems the point of the exercise, a view that, as Belenky put it, involves "a curious disassociation between means and ends" (95). This Machiavellian view of academic discourse in which commitment to beliefs and passion about the subject is secondary to giving a persuasive performance should be no surprise. The majority of our students in freshman English have never experienced personal commitment and passion towards their research topics. Instead they're kept busy color-coding note cards.

While Carrie is emerging from subjectivism, Michael seems to have already emerged. When pressed, Carrie will admit that it might be possible for a researcher to say that
one opinion is more valid than another. "No, I think you can," she told me. "But I don't think I do. I might. I don't know. I never thought about it." Michael, on the other hand, sees "opinion" and "fact" as closely related, not separate terms, which each involve some sort of agreement between people: "An opinion, I would have to say, is something that you have you feel there is a factual basis for. You feel enough people agree with your opinion that it can be an opinion...A fact is universally accepted opinion."

Up until now Michael's experience with research papers, including the paper he wrote for his college Shakespeare course, tells him that his task in expressing his opinions is largely procedural. He must construct a persuasive argument for his opinion (which is normally arrived at before the inquiry begins) and using collected facts and the proper stylistic conventions he must make it sound convincing.

What Michael's experience with writing term papers seems to have reinforced is faith in "pure reason" (Belenky 109) in which any trace of subjectivity appears to be erased. He does not even have to believe in what he is arguing, just as long it's argued "right." It becomes easy, then, to choose the "correct" opinion—it will be the one that most people already agree with. This is an approach to knowing that seems to foreclose doubt, much less dissent, and one that ultimately does little to create new knowledge.
It is also an epistemological perspective that is encouraged by the conventional, thesis-driven research paper.

The focus on defining a thesis statement early in the writing process is standard in most textbook treatments of the assignment. It's also a message that seems to be getting through to students: sixty-one percent of the freshman I surveyed agreed that "I have to know my thesis before I start." One implication of codifying opinion into a thesis statement—a convention that represents another bow to the scientific paradigm of research—is that students like Michael see the procedural task of research largely as lining up the right ducks, rather than entertaining conflicting claims or interpretations. Authorities' "opinions" that conflict with one's thesis are either ignored or suppressed, or simply acknowledged then dismissed. As Michael put it,

...I think it follows...that if you start out with your own opinion about what you're going to write about, even though you might not be consciously saying, "this is what I'm looking for" as you read your sources, you're going to sit there and say, "that has nothing to do with my topic," when you might more accurately say, "that has nothing to do with my point," (or) the opinion I have on my topic, or that (it) runs counter to my topic. I think a lot of times the tendency is to throw (counter-claims) out...I think it makes it easier to think that you're writing your paper right if your opinion is correct.

Up until now, Michael managed to avoid what he terms the "hairy" task of negotiating conflicting claims by finding refuge in following the "rules" of the research
paper: come up with a thesis and then hunt for examples that support it. This hunting and gathering research strategy is our students' default program when faced with almost any writing assignment that involves using sources. But it's hardly what we have in mind. A recent study that compared how two students—one a graduate student and the other a freshman—handled their own authority in a source-based writing assignment noted that the graduate student saw examples gleaned from reading as "generative," while the freshman simply used them as "isolated" support for her opinions.

We found it encouraging that Janet thought to use examples to help her understand her source material, but because she didn't have the goal of responding to these authors she failed to take advantage of this generative practice...Examples helped her move down the ladder of abstraction, but never up, whereas they enabled Roger to run up and down the ladder at will, constructing categories at one moment, testing and illustrating key features the next. (Penrose and Geisler 514)

A pedagogy that turns texts into mines from which examples can be extracted, and students into miners who laboriously pick away at rock to find something usable obviously does not encourage them to see knowledge as constructed. Nor does it create a particularly enticing role for themselves as knowers.

In fact, the research paper genre as we've inherited it has perpetuated a passive role for students as knowers, and it is reenvisioning that role that should be a central aim of research paper instruction in freshman composition. Far
from being an exercise in "objectivity," the successful research paper must be recognized as a deeply subjective experience. For as both Belenky and Perry point out, epistemological shifts involve a fundamental restructuring of one's relationship to knowledge and authority, and ultimately one's identity. In emotional terms, this means feelings of uncertainty, bewilderment, and even anger. As Perry observes, "the conscious question 'Is everything relative?' can lead (the student) to question 'Even me? My own values? My own certainties?'" (115). Michael hints at this dilemma when he admits, after finishing his research essay, that his realization that truth is uncertain has caused "mental paralysis."

I have beliefs that I'd like to follow through with, but at the same time, the more and more information I get the more everything starts coming to a balance, and going one way would do x positive and x negative, going the other way would do something possibly different. And who's to say what's right? It's very difficult. Extremely difficult...Especially at eighteen years of age, not having any clue what's right and wrong is very, very odd. I'm not sure how it's going to pan out for my life yet.

For women, according to Belenky and her coauthors, the "quest for self and voice plays a central role in transformations in women's ways of knowing." They write that,

[i]n a sense, each perspective we have described can be thought of as providing a new, unique training ground in which problems of self and other, inner and outer authority, voice and silence can be worked through. (133)
Like Michael, Carrie is beginning to reexamine the "problems of self and other" as she struggles to position her own voice not with, but against authority. While she clings white-knuckled to her "right" to have her own opinion, and reacts to others, including authorities, who presume to tell her she's wrong, Carrie is still grappling with her right to question authority. In talking about doing so, she becomes momentarily self-reflective.

It's sometimes hard to believe everything you read, whether it's a fact or not. I read a lot of articles on stuff, and I'm, like, that's not right! I'm only a freshman in college...When I've written science papers I've never really gone out to question anything.

It is now almost commonplace to hear that we are all somehow "situated" in a discourse, but since the freshman research paper first made its appearance ninety years ago, students were instructed to mimic scientific discourse by removing any textual evidence of their "situatedness." While this isn't always an explicit instruction, the injunction against the first-person is easily interpreted by our students to mean that research papers shouldn't be authored by people (they author themselves?). Even among the contemporary textbooks I examined, only one of the sample research papers featured in the books used first person (The Riverside Guide to Writing), and then only briefly. The use of personal anecdote or observation was equally rare in sample research papers. While I don't want to suggest that the "I" and the use of explicitly
autobiographical material are the only means to register authorial presence (see Chapter 4), for our students they are the most readily apparent way.

The result of a pedagogy that perpetuates the myth of objectivity, or, as Carrie put it, forces the writer to "stand back" and transmit facts, is that it permits students to ignore the problem of "situatedness." More specifically, it turns what could be a profound exercise in identity formation into an empty performance of procedural knowledge.

Drawing on the work of social psychologists, feminist theorists, anthropologists, and educators, Robert Brooke offers a theory of "identity negotiation" that might be useful here. In Writing and the Sense of Self, Brooke maintains that identity formation arises from the tension between our internal understanding of self and our social understanding of who we're expected to be (12). In every social context, he argues, we are assigned roles that we either comply with or resist. "The pattern of individuals' stances towards the roles they are assigned (or can be assigned)," writes Brooke, "is the stuff of which identity is made" (22). These stances are negotiated; we are constantly trying to resolve competing demands about who we might be and our sense of who we are. Some of these expectations, however, we can easily escape or reject—we can choose not to join a fraternity, for example—others we want to embrace, and still others we are forced to comply
with. Learning, he believes, depends on students actively negotiating their identities as they try to resolve the tensions that arise from competing social expectations about who they should be.

Brooke's theory of identity negotiation suggests that "one important focal point" in examining the composition course is "what the class establishes as writers' roles and what versions of these roles participants develop as the class progresses" (19). The writer of research papers is a role we've assigned students for years, and it is one they feel forced to comply with, at least momentarily; but because it is not a role that engages their sense of self there is really no need for negotiation. It becomes easy to reject--"I just don't like doing research"--or misconstrue--"researchers are formal people and I'm not a formal person."

Disengaged and disinterested, feeling no dissonance at all because they're just pretending to be someone they know they're not, student writers of the traditional research paper gladly forgo the "revolution in identity" Perry suggests accompanies epistemological growth. The "quest for self and voice" that Belenky claims is central to the development of women's ways of knowing is reserved for some other, perhaps more "personal" writing assignment. And an assignment that could be central to our students developing self-conception as knowers becomes an opportunity missed.
CHAPTER NOTES

1. A study in the early sixties of the content of eleven high school English texts reported that all but one included instruction in a "formal research project" during the senior year. The one exception featured the assignment the junior year. Half of the texts studied, all from major publishers, included some kind of research instruction all four years (Lynch and Evans 302).

2. Of the 84 interviews with students that spanned their four years at the two schools, only two were women. Perhaps anticipating some criticism for this, Perry notes that the judges who evaluated and coded these interviews "engaged in a lively discussion of the differences between men and women" and their intellectual development. The judge concluded, however, that there was "no significant difference in locating men's and women's reports on the Chart of Development" (16).

3. Though Carrie says here that she has no problem arguing against an authority's claim, she admits later that she has never done so, and might be uncomfortable trying.

4. Most students make a key distinction between knowledge in the humanities and social sciences and knowledge in the natural and physical sciences. A "fact" in political science is much less definite than a "fact" in biology, partly because the latter is viewed as more quantitative. Jehng, Johnson, and Anderson's study confirms that a student's field of study influences her epistemological beliefs. Business and engineering students, for example, view knowledge as more certain than those in the arts or social sciences (34). A key moment in the epistemological development of our students is when they are less apt to make the distinction between "facts" in the sciences and humanities, something that occurred with both of the students I interviewed.

5. Personal experience also becomes for many students--both male and female--a means for evaluating the claims of their sources. Forty-six percent of the students I surveyed strongly agreed or agreed with this statement: "I judge an author's claims against my own experiences and observations." Only 19% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

6. Veysey offers a concise summary of this attitude: "The American academic scientist of the late nineteenth century usually prided himself more on the discovery of truth than on its pursuit. His goal was certainty--not a labyrinth of tentative opinions or opinions true only for the people of one
time or place. He was unable to partake of a thoroughgoing relativism, although if his studies concerned human behavior he was capable of making intermittent nods in what would later be termed a relativist direction" (145). The scientific paradigm adopted by most academic researchers led to a kind of dogmatism about one’s discoveries that, according to Veysey, accounted for disagreements as ignorance of the “facts” (146-147).

7. Almost half of the students surveyed (44%) in our freshman English program strongly agreed, or agreed with the statement “I look primarily for information that supports my point of view” when they approach sources for their research papers. Slightly more than a quarter of the students (27%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement.
CHAPTER III

"AN AMATEUR'S RAID IN A WORLD OF SPECIALISTS": THE ESSAYIST AS RESEARCHER

So it is no good our mounting on stilts, for even on stilts we have to walk with our own legs; and upon the most exalted throne in the world it is still our own bottom that we sit on. (Montaigne 406)

In early April, Michael and Carrie's composition instructors explained the details of the research assignment. Class members would divide into smaller groups, and each group would agree on a general topic of study relating to television, a theme of the course. Then every student would choose a "sub-topic" of their group's subject for an individual research project and paper. Later, each group would make a collaborative presentation, and each member would report on his or her individual research.

The paper was not to be a research report, the instructors emphasized, but rather an essay that incorporates their own ideas about the topic. They were expected to take some sort of "position" on it. The essay need not be formally structured, and they were invited to use the first person. "I want them to get into the mud of research," Erika, one of the instructors told me, "and get them excited about being part of the cog and wheels of university life...I don't give two hoots about how formal it is." She added,
I want them to understand how their voice fits into the voices of other researcher/thinkers dealing with similar ideas. It's all about seeing how they fit themselves into other things—what they stand in relation to. I guess it's the same sort of idea as the essays we make them write—it's about wanting them to think about themselves, take themselves seriously. And the research paper (ideally) makes them think about themselves vis-à-vis other people/thinkers in an academic community. But perhaps I'm too idealistic.

What is striking about Erika's pedagogy is not its idealism, but its dramatic departure from conventional approaches to the research paper. The image of research here is relational—"I want them to see how their voice fits into the voices of other researcher/thinkers"—and "richly peopled" (Frey 33), rather than adversarial and impersonal. It is also unapologetically subjective. What Erika hopes is that her students will "think about themselves" in relation to others through their research; the self is to be seen as an active agent, dialogically involved in listening and responding "to other voices," and in the process transforming and being transformed, "seeing how they fit themselves into other things." To do this, however, students must "take themselves seriously." They must believe in their own voices.

For Carrie, and perhaps for most committed subjectivists, at first that doesn't seem like any problem at all. She can't imagine writing a formal research paper in which she wasn't allowed to express herself: "I think that if I had to write a paper and I couldn't put my opinion
in at all I would have a lot of trouble." Michael, on the other hand, is not so sure. An experienced hand at writing "dry" and "impersonal" research papers, he confesses that "this research paper is taking me a little off the beaten path." He adds, "...I'm starting to develop my own voice very recently, so it's kind of weird now taking a research paper and doing it that way. It will be an experience writing this paper, I'm sure."

Their instructors' invitation to see the research paper as an extension of the personal essay writing Michael and Carrie have been doing all semester long will ultimately create separate challenges for each student, something I'll explore later in this chapter and in the next. Carrie will come to recognize that, at times, her attentiveness to her own voice makes it difficult for her to hear others' voices. Michael's sophisticated understanding of the rhetoric of conventional research papers, which once protected him from any strong commitment to his beliefs, will be subverted by his adoption of what he comes to call an "essayistic" stance. Among other things, Michael will find the need to take responsibility for his ideas bewildering, scary. But both students will come to see their conceptions of themselves as writers, a role they claimed earlier in the course, will be enlarged and challenged as they try to adapt it to the task of writing with sources.

Drawing on Michael and Carrie's experiences, along with
those of other students, I will argue in this chapter for an alternative research paper pedagogy much like the one Erika espoused— one that builds on the writing that came before it, is relational rather than adversarial, exploratory rather than explanatory, and openly acknowledges the writer/researcher's subjectivity. It is a form of research writing that no longer pretends to mimic the scientific model that so long dominated research paper instruction, but reconceives concepts like originality and objectivity to reflect current views about the nature of knowledge. And it demphasizes the importance of teaching the "rules" and conventions of research. I will also argue here that the freshman research essay should be seen as occupying a different rhetorical space than the one in which it has been circumscribed historically. But especially, I will maintain that it must be seen as an essay, and all that implies, if it is to be an assignment that effectively introduces students to the spirit of inquiry and a lifetime of wanting to know.

I.

I like to imagine that Michel de Montaigne, who first coined the word "essai" to describe his experiments in self-reflective writing, was among the first writers to bristle like our students at the fifteenth century version of the traditional research paper. As a Renaissance schoolboy, Montaigne received a classical education. He was fluent in
Latin and familiar with the models of classical rhetoric. He was schooled in the extensive use of quotes and adages from ancient Authority as an unquestioned source of wisdom and truth. In short, Montaigne was educated to write the conventional Renaissance research paper--formal in language and structure, well-planned, and composed drawing on ancient sources whose authority was well-established and whose words reflected accepted truths. As an adult writer of essays, however, Montaigne actively rebelled against the scholastic tradition of his schooling. J.M. Cohen, who edited a popular translation of Montaigne's essays, observed that Montaigne "seldom read books through, but preferred to dip into them in search of arguments, anecdotes, and observations that threw light on his current interests."

He did not care for the apparatus of learning, with its lengthy preliminaries, its strictly marshalled pleadings and proofs. He was always impatient to come quickly to the heart of the matter. (15)

If anything, Montaigne's essays represent an utter disregard for the dominant conventions, or as noted Montaigne critic Hugo Friedrich put it, "the most extreme antitype to Latin humanist prose" in its "determined abandonment of composition," particularly the formal arrangements of classical rhetoric (336). Montaigne's "antischolastic tendencies" (353) were partly playful irreverence, but more importantly they reflected epistemological challenges issued by a man who was no longer
content with the truth of received knowledge. In other words, Montaigne got tired of writing research reports and wanted to write research essays.

The open form that Montaigne devised grows very much from the word he chose to describe it: the "essai" is an experiment, an attempt, and the "essaier" one who take risks. The essayist, no longer certain of received truth, is no longer able to pretend certainty: "Could my mind find a firm footing I should not be making essays, but coming to conclusions" (235). The essay itself, then, becomes exploratory rather than explanatory, tentative rather than conclusive, much more concerned with the process of thought than the product, and enacted more as a conversation with readers than a treatise. In these ways it departed not only from the classical rhetorical tradition, but the scientific positivism which the learned embraced centuries later.

Above all, its epistemological assumptions distinguished Montaigne's essay from the more conventional rhetorical forms. Authority, he believed, should always be approached skeptically--"I hold that truth is no wiser for being old" (364)--and while Montaigne never ceased citing sayings of the ancients in his essays, he was careful to point out they are meant to serve his own thinking: "I only quote others to make myself more explicit" (52). In keeping with this skepticism about the truth of received knowledge, Montaigne was also a social constructionist. "Our opinions
are grafted one on another," he observes. "The first serves as stock for the second, the second for the third. We thus climb the ladder, step by step" (349). However, his vision of the making of knowledge is one that may allow for learning from the learned, but most of all celebrates direct experience as the best teacher.¹ Rather than chasing after "bookish examples," Montaigne advises that in the "most familiar and commonplace events" one can discover "the most marvelous examples" that can "make our testimony convincing" if we "could but see them in their right light" (364). He believed that the great variety and diversity of experience will reveal the world's disunity, rather than its "connectedness and conformity" (358) as laws, theories, and principles seem to wrongly suggest. Montaigne reminded us that as much as we may seek a transcendent understanding of the world by "mounting on stilts," it is our corporeal experience that makes knowledge meaningful and true for us: "...and upon the most exalted throne in the world it is still our own bottom that we sit on" (406).

Ultimately Montaigne's epistemology is one that honors lived experience as a way to evaluate the truth of received knowledge. But he also views experience as a valuable source of knowledge if only we become scholars of the self as well as the world. There is nothing certain about what we learn, though; our judgements about the personal and the worldly are always provisional. According to Montaigne, as
time passes everything is in flux—"the world is a perpetual see-saw"—including the self, which is "always restless" (235). He writes,

I cannot fix my subject...I do not portray his being; I portray his passage; not a passage from one age to another...but from day to day, minute to minute. I must suit my story to the hour, for soon I may change, not only by chance but also by intention. It is a record of various and variable occurrences, an account of thoughts that are unsettled and, as chance will have it, at times contradictory, either because I am then another self, or because I approach my subject under different circumstances and with other considerations. (235)

For Montaigne, subjectivity is fluid, in part a product of intention, in part inscribed by circumstance and situation, but always changing. He further elaborates on the shifting nature of the self by suggesting that it is also constructed by language; he writes of his collection of essays, for example, that "I have no more made my book than my book has made me" (qted. in Freidrich 329).

For the essayist, then, to come to know means the knower cannot separate herself from the situation that gives rise to the need to know. Who is she at that moment? How might that influence her perceptions? Why does she want to know? What does her own experience tell her might be true? And especially, how does she come to know and what are her reflections on those revelations? Hugo Friedrich writes that it

[i]t is one of the fundamental features of the essay that it does not separate the subject about which it is speaking from the personal conditions
that led the author to that subject, nor does it separate it from the associate links it has to other subjects. The **occasions of reflection**, regardless of how and why they originate, are also preserved in that reflection. (346; my emphasis)

It is the writer's awareness of his "situatedness," to use a poststructuralist term, that seems crucial to the Montaignian essay, and this awareness is often explicitly revealed to the reader. In fact, Montaigne has little faith in the authority of any writer or speaker who does not reveal a high level of self-awareness, who conceal themselves "behind a mask, without the courage to show oneself as one is" (208). In "On Presumption," Montaigne observes that in a relativistic world he cannot fully believe the truth of a claim unless its proponent perceives that self-knowledge is as worthy a pursuit as worldly knowledge. Put differently, Montaigne believes that self-reflexivity both enables us as knowers and makes what we know more believable to others. If I cannot claim to know myself, Montaigne asks, how can I persuasively claim to know the world?

...I find an extreme variety of opinions, an intricate labyrinth of difficulties, one on top of another, and a very great uncertainty and diversity in the school of wisdom itself. Seeing therefore that these people have been unable to agree on their knowledge of themselves and of their condition, which is constantly before their eyes, and is within themselves; seeing that they do not know how these things move that they themselves set in motion, nor how to describe and explain to us the springs that they themselves hold and manage, you may judge how little I can believe them when they set out the causes of the rise and fall of the Nile. (193)
In the universe of the essay there is a "deeper"
knowing than reason, argument, and the methods of proof.
There is, as Kurt Spellmeyer recently put it, a knowledge
which gives essayists more than "one gospel or another";
rather, it assists them "in their particular struggles to
decide who they have been and what they will become"
("Language" 281). It is also, I would add, a genre which,
when deployed in the place of the conventional research
paper, makes this a personal struggle over epistemological
beliefs. As students measure their own voices against those
in sources, they confront their relationship to authority--
"in what ways do my opinions matter?"--and to truth--"how do
I know what to believe?" The self-reflexive nature of the
essay makes these questions almost inescapable.

The essay genre as Montaigne conceived it seems a
useful alternative to the traditional freshman research
paper on many grounds, especially epistemological ones. The
essay offers an opposing theory of knowledge from the
scientific paradigm that was valorized as central to the
research ideal, and it also seems more consistent with much
current thinking about nature of knowledge. While the essay
does not fully embrace the epistemic view of knowledge
articulated by Foucault and other poststructuralists because
it lends some weight to authorial intention, the Montaignian
view is that knowledge is a social construction and truth
never certain. The essayist never pretends to be objective
in the never-ending search for truth, but recognizes—as most postmodern theorists do—that our perceptions are shaped by our circumstances and "conditions," and that the self, like the knowledge one seeks, is unstable and difficult to fix. Because of the instability of knowledge and subjectivity, the essayist recognizes that whatever truth he arrives at is momentary.

While the essay genre may be an alternative to the positivism that seems the epistemological core of conventional approaches to the research paper, it also seems to oppose much disciplinary writing in its resistance to systematic thought—"it proceeds, so to speak, methodically unmethedically" (Adorno 161). In "The Essay as Form," T.W. Adorno observes that the essay defies the "unanimity of logical order" which in conventional arguments or treatises can deceive readers into believing that ideas are neatly hierarchical or reality whole. He writes that "[the essay] thinks in fragments just as reality is fragmented and gains its unity only by moving through the fissures rather than smoothing them over" (164). The essayist "gropes" at the pieces of what might be known rather than pretending to grasp the whole.

Thus the essay distinguishes itself from a scientific treatise. He writes essayistically who writes while experimenting, who turns his object this way and that, who questions it, feels it, tests it, thoroughly reflects on it, attacks it from different angles, and in his mind's eye collects what he sees, and puts into words what the object allows to be seen under the conditions
established in the course of the writing. (Bense qted. in Adorno 164)

What Adorno celebrates here is an approach to inquiry which is never stripped of the context that gives it meaning, and has an almost playful quality which allows for prolonging the doubt and uncertainty that Dewey believes is essential to reflective thought. In the essay, there is less need to prove an assertion than to explore its possible meanings, and this is departure from what William Zeiger calls the "scientific model of thesis and support" that dominates the teaching of the essay--and I'd argue especially the research paper--in most composition classrooms. Though the essay has long been the primary genre of freshman English, Zeiger argues that the essays of Montaigne are "distinct in kind from those we demand of our composition students today."

To "prove" an assertion today is to win undisputed acceptance for it--to stop inquiry rather than start it. There is nothing tentative or playful in this action; we "prove" an idea not to learn about it, but to fix it in certainty...When one sets out to prove an assertion in the modern sense, one tolerates no ambiguity; every hint of variance from the preferred line of thought must be solidly rejected. (456-457)

I am not suggesting here that the methods of argument shouldn't be taught in freshman English, or that argument should never be a feature of a academic research. But what students rarely perceive about academic writing is that a structured argument is the product of inquiry, and that the process of inquiry that preceded it often invites
complexity, ambiguity, and playfulness. Experienced academic writers rarely dream up a thesis before they begin research and then hunt for examples that support it, as most of our students do. The exploratory essay offers freshman as an introduction to research the invitation to experience that playfulness and uncertainty that both motivates researchers and gives them pleasure. In other words, the act of inquiry becomes the subject of the research essay in freshman English, rather than exclusively its product.

Admittedly, the essayistic approach to research I'm proposing does not model traditional academic writing particularly well. It is, if anything, almost "extra-disciplinary," argues R. Lane Kaufmann, in its determination "not to say within the well-charted boundaries of academic disciplines, not to shuttle back and forth across these boundaries, but to reflect on them and challenge them" (90). Graham Good adds that "the essay celebrates diversity when the disciplines seek unity." The essay, he says, "presents 'special' instances to the 'general' reader, where disciplines present 'general' conclusions to the 'specialist'" (6). Scott Russell Sanders, a personal essayist often anthologized in composition readers, observes that the essay represents "an amateur's raid in a world of specialists" ("First Person" 190). Sanders' characterization of the essay literally describes the experience of college freshman who undertake academic
research. But it also suggests a wholly different rhetorical situation for students than the one created by the conventional research paper, one that I think is more useful.

In his account of the history of the APA Publication Manual, Charles Bazerman notes that its steady growth in pages and detailed prescriptions for manuscript preparation coincided with the rise of behaviorist psychology, which sought not to describe the mind but quantify behavior. This led to what Bazerman called "incremental encyclopedism," or an approach to gathering knowledge whose aim was to simply add narrow descriptive facts--"to fill gaps in other results"--rather than "trying to find answers to theoretical questions" (139). The "rhetorical consequences" of this approach are some of the familiar features of the formal research papers taught to students: introductions that are summaries of existing factual knowledge rather than a discussion of a problem, a thesis pushed to the front of the article, formal and often specialized language, and the author/date citation which reinforces the "incrementalism of the literature" (139-140).

Bazerman writes,

Only when a community decides that there is one right way can it achieve the confidence and narrowness of detailed prescriptions. In rhetoric, "one right way" implies not only a stability of text, but a stability of rhetorical situation and rhetorical actors, so that there is little room or motive for improvisatory argument. Within a stabilized rhetorical universe, people
will want to say similar things to each other under similar conditions for similar purposes. In this context, prescribed forms allow easy and efficient communication without unduly constraining needed flexibility. The behaviorist picture of the world allows that stability and lack of free invention. (137)

The open form of the research essay seems the antithesis to the "lack of free invention" and "improvisatory argument" that characterizes the rhetoric of conventional academic research Bazerman describes. While writer of formal research assumes a "stabilized rhetorical universe," the writer of the research essay assumes a range of "rhetorical actors" whom one may not assume have "similar things to say." While the purpose of the formal academic paper is to "fill gaps" in existing knowledge, the purpose of the research essay is to experiment with new ways of seeing existing knowledge, to find out rather than prove. "Incremental encyclopedism" asks readers to consider primarily the results, while essaying draws readers' attention to person who tentatively suggests them. In the formal research paper, one gains acceptance by following the rules of presentation (Bazerman, "Codifying" 139). In the essay, the writer discovers an appropriate form through conversation--with herself, with her subject, and with her readers. In the traditional research paper reason rules, in the essay, the writer's intuition and personality (Zeiger 461).

The problem with the rhetorical discourse of the formal
research paper (and many of its less formal variations) is that it is in response to an exigency that students do not yet recognize as real: the need to fill gaps in existing knowledge, to prove results to an audience of fellow experts, to gain acceptance by a particular discourse community. Perhaps they should. Certainly David Bartholomae thinks so when he argues that students must "try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community" ("Inventing" 134). However, many students feel forced to conform to this role, and as a result they disengage themselves from it. "What you write begins to distance itself from you--become unfamiliar with your true feelings," said one student as she reflected on Bartholomae's call to model academic discourse. "...[T]he student capable of conforming to the ideologies of the university will succeed. Those that stay firm on their own feelings, unable to conform will no doubt fail. How sad!"

What does seem real to first-year students is a rhetorical discourse that is created in response to a more urgent, and often personal need to find out about something, to ask meaningful questions that research can help answer. By making the appropriation of knowledge personal, the essay introduces students to the real drama of inquiry: negotiating the tension between what their own experience and intuition tells them is true and what someone else tells
them is true. And when we ask students to explore this tension by writing about it in their own words, without pretending to be objective or certain or even original, they may begin to see that knowledge-making is not about following rules but making conversation.

The emphasis on teaching procedural knowledge—the formal structure of academic research, the methods of proof, the stylistic conventions—reflected in traditional research paper instruction, and lately in pedagogies proposed by proponents of teaching academic discourse, removes the tension that inspires genuine inquiry. When writing teachers insist that students strip away any visible evidence of their "situatedness," by asking that they pretend or forget or leave behind the experiences and discourses that defined who they are and how they speak so that they can learn "ours," makes it easy for them to lower the stakes of the encounter. Writing term papers then becomes the familiar game of "pleasing the teacher." As one student put it, "We are the ones who always need to reach for the professor...We as students know we need to control the language, but what we have to find out is how to do it in order to please the teacher."

On the other hand, the research essay insists that the students' encounter with other voices and other views is constantly filtered through their own "perspectives and presuppositions, and not with their disciplined suppression"
(Spellmeyer, *Common Ground* 110). As Spellmeyer observes,

...[T]eachers should recognize that English 101, with its tolerance for essayistic introspection and digression, is probably the only opportunity most students will ever have to discover the relationship of mutual implication, a relationship fundamental to all writing, between the self and the cultural heritage within which selfhood has meaning. To put it in the simplest terms, we do not deny the socially constituted nature of learning or identity when we ask our students to write from their own situations, but I believe it is both dishonest and disabling to pretend that writing, no matter how formal or abstract, is not created by persons, from within the contexts--historical, social, intellectual, institutional--of their lived experience. (110)

In "First Person Singular," his essay on essay writing, Scott Sanders writes that readers are drawn to the genre because they "feel overwhelmed by data, random information, the flotsam and jetsam of mass culture" and they "relish the spectacle of a single consciousness making sense of a portion of the chaos" (190). When we ask students to use themselves--their own situations, their own "consciousness"--as the organizing principle of their research projects in freshman English, they are more likely to ask the question that pragmatist William James insisted is at the heart of inquiry: "Grant an idea or belief to be true...what concrete difference will its being true make in anyone's actual life" (97)? And by asking this question, students produce writing that readers will want to read. But it also creates writing that is not the specialized discourse of the disciplines, with its concern for results that fill gaps and construction of convincing proofs, but a more public
discourse that attempts locate the meaning of disciplinary knowledge in people's lives. The research essay revives a rhetoric of public discourse that S. Michael Halloran believes should finds its way back into composition instruction, and that Spellmeyer argues will promote an "ethic of mutual understanding" (Common Ground 22) that has been made more difficult by the fragmentation of knowledge into disciplines. Isn't it far better than we initiate our students into academic research through a genre that reminds them of the meaningfulness of knowledge rather than its remoteness, and encourages them to look across disciplines for it? By urging them to write in a discourse that narrows the gap between their own language and the language of experts don't we make it more likely that the words they choose will allow them to appropriate, not be appropriated by specialized discourses? And by urging them to produce research writing that people will want to read, don't we remind them of the importance of doing research that matters?

II.

Consider how Julie chose to begin the first draft of her freshman research paper on eating disorders:

It's getting harder and harder living with Jennie. It's almost like living with two different people. She is so paranoid with her weight. Half the time she is on some strict diet, then suddenly she's eating like a madwoman. Sometimes she will each all the food in the house (Seigal 25).
What Margaret doesn’t know is that Jennie has an eating disorder. Eating disorders are characterized by an obsession with food, body image, and weight. When people talk about “eating disorders” they are usually referring to either anorexia nervosa, bulimia, compulsive overeating, or some combination of the three. These eating disorders are mostly found among younger women (Ciliska 123).

Julie’s first draft continues after this opening with a factual report, studiously avoiding use of the first person or any self-reflexive moments, and ends with a page and a half of impersonally stated “opinion” on what must be done about the problem of eating disorders. In her written comments, Julie’s instructor admired the ambitiousness of her first draft, though she complained that Julie had so much information that the “prose breaks under the pressure.” Indeed, the draft cites eleven sources and ranges widely on the topic, including information on the three most common types of eating disorders, family, biological and psychological causes, as well as media influences on female body image. The instructor’s final comment to Julie was one that only became clear to me when I read Julie’s next draft: “I can understand your not wanting to use yourself as a case study (though I bet you’d profit by it), but you can introduce your own voice as a researcher. That’s the best way for your commitment to the paper to come across to the reader.”

Julie’s final draft of the paper begins this way:

Jennifer, are you making yourself sick again? I’m really worried about you. Do you realize that you have an
eating disorder? Denying that she had a problem, my sister continued this daily routine. That night, I discussed my sister's problems with my parents. I felt it was my place to tell them that something was wrong with Jennifer. I knew that they were not aware of Jennifer's eating habits because they were never home when Jen made herself sick. When I told them, they knew that the only thing that could help Jennifer would be to seek professional help. They also knew they could not get Jennifer this type of help without her approval. She had to want help in order to receive it.

As a reader, the second version is clearly more compelling to me than the first, and it's not simply its confessional quality. When Julie reveals the circumstances that lead her to this topic--her own sister's struggle with eating disorders--I expect Julie's engagement with it, an engagement I also expect to share as a reader. I also sense a genuine anxiousness to communicate about the topic that is less apparent in the earlier version. And when she acknowledges that her perceptions are both informed and colored by her experience, I more fully understand the context out of which her assertions arise, which ultimately make them more persuasive. Michael, with his keen sense of the rhetoric of school writing, recognizes this possibility immediately as he begins to approach his research paper on the exploitation of women in TV advertising "essayistically" rather than using the "cold, hard system" of the formal research paper.

...when you're reading a very narrative (research) piece, your instinct is to kind of fall in with it, and bob along with the story...you can get the
reader going in a stream and slip an idea in, almost like a sleight of hand artist, and bump, boom, you've got their wallet. With something extremely factual it's hard to do that because you've already put up their defenses. They're already reading every single word to get the most meaning out of it, to understand where you're coming from. But in understanding where you're coming from they're figuring out why you came from there.

Because the essayist couches her assertions in the particulars of her experience and shuns the leap to make universal claims, writers like Michael and Julie discover that this does not make those claims less convincing; they discover, quite simply, that honesty is often disarming, especially in research papers, where it's unexpected. Julie's final version of her paper was quite striking in this way. It revealed the deception of the first draft, where she implies that the woman Jennie is no relation to her by creating a fictional character named Margaret, and that the anecdote about her eating problems was borrowed from a text she read—"Seigal 25"—rather than her own life. Because Julie was not my student, I never had the chance to ask her about this. I wish I had. But I wonder if the deception of her early draft isn't a striking example of the less-than-honest writing that is encouraged—or at least made more likely—by the conventional freshman research paper. Because such papers don't engage the students' beliefs or identities, and don't make the writer's situation an organizing principle of the investigation, it becomes easier to fake it. The essayist, on the other hand, has
nowhere to hide.

Critics of the approach I'm advocating here might say this is exactly the problem with the essay--students don't hide enough. They see the opportunity for a soapbox and seize it. While I'm no fan of the monologic essay that's "all opinion," I think the researched essay forces students to navigate through multiple perspectives in ways that a non-researched essay doesn't. In fact, resolving the dilemma of how to establish a presence in the research essay turns out, I think, to be among its most instructive features.² The ways that students solve the problem of subjectivity involves a reassessment of their rhetorical situation, their assumptions about the nature of research, and sometimes reveals how they've temporarily settled deeper questions of epistemological belief.

Michael observes, for example, that when he began his first draft he struggled to feel comfortable with "where [he] was coming from."

I didn't know how formal a voice to use because it was still a "Research Paper." [My first attempt] was dry. Very, very up on my horse. It wasn't what I wanted to write. It's not what I've been writing all semester. And I don't think it will wash for this. I think...the way I'm coming at this from an essay standpoint, as opposed to a research paper, is making it easier.

Michael's experience with the "objective" report of the conventional research paper clashes with his sense that essay, as he has practiced it all semester, demands something else. The dissonance he feels grows from his
anxiety over genre--what kind of writing should this be?--but I don't think he is resolving it by choosing to conform to expectations imposed on him, which is typical of the rhetorical decisions students make when writing term papers, particularly about voice. "It wasn't what I wanted to write," he says. Like Julie, Michael implies here a commitment not only to his project, and his desire to communicate about it clearly, something that did not require getting high on his horse. Freed from the need to give the appearance of authority and certainty that the conventional research paper implies, Michael discovers that the essay suddenly alters his relationship to his audience:

I feel like I'm almost having a conversation with my reader about television and the implications of advertising...[With] the old approach I felt like a teacher, like a lecturer, standing before a whole lot of people who didn't want to be there, because I didn't really want to be there. For this, I felt a lot more involved...Being able to say "I" left me so much room to put a little bit of me into the paper as opposed to just "this was," "it is"...I'd have to say that it makes it easier for the reader to identify with you because it seems a lot more like a conversation because you're letting yourself think and feel, so I think it tends to let the reader think and feel.

The way Michael constructs the rhetorical situation as an essayist is profoundly different from the "cold, hard" world of the formal research paper; it is, in James Moffett's, a much more "realistic communication 'drama'" (12) that involves a genuine "interaction among communicants." That interaction is lacking, Moffett argues, when audience is an abstraction, or perceived as
uninterested in the message, as is often the case in the traditional research paper. But when the writer imagines she is speaking to someone, often by deploying the first or second person, she is more motivated because the purpose of the communication is more compelling. "Put into the drama of somebody with something to say to somebody else" (12), she can grasp not only what she is writing about, but what for--to reach a real audience. Moffett characterizes these two contrasting rhetorical situations as the "I-you"--one that emphasizes the relationship between speaker and listener--and the "I-it"--a relationship between speaker and subject. "A whole, authentic discourse," maintains Moffett, involves the "crossing" of both (31).

Rhetoric, or the art of acting on someone through words, is an abstractive act. That is, one performs the same activities in pitching a subject to an audience as one does in extracting that subject from raw phenomena: one selects and reorganizes traits of things, digests, codes preferentially...Both abstracting from and abstracting for concern the same kinds of choice. The difference is whether the speaker-subject relation or the speaker-listener relation is determining the choice--the extracting from the source or the anticipation of audience response. (32)

I want to propose here that by abandoning the rhetorical structure of the formal research paper, Michael is now allowing the "I-you"--or the speaker-listener relation--to begin determining the choices he makes about how to write his essay, but without abandoning the "I-it" relation, his own working out of what he makes of his topic.
He is conversing, both with himself and his readers, and this dialogue is structuring his thought. There is a genuine "crossing" in the research essay between these two relations that is lacking in the traditional paper, with its emphasis on abstracting from rather than abstracting for. Unable yet to imagine the members of a particular discourse community as a real audience, freshman find that the research essay creates an unabstracted audience of peers--class members and the instructor--that preserves the "drama" of the writing situation. This strikes me as a much more logical, and natural initiation into research than the sudden shift to the much more artificial rhetorical situation of the formal research paper or discipline-specific writing.

Michael, then, resolves the problem of presence in his research essay by restructuring the rhetorical situation. But he also begins to see the process of inquiry differently: "This is the first time I've written a 'fact-based' paper where I didn't feel that I already knew what my answer was going to be when I started." Rather than trying to "sell a point," he finds that essayistic approach allows him to come to the project with "a beginner's mind." Part of this, apparently, is Michael's willingness to put up with a degree of uncertainty--and even a temporary lack of focus--something that he frames as both an issue of objectivity and subjectivity.
[The unfocused stage is valuable] because I think it's going to let me be a lot more—and it's always put in quotes—"objective" as far as what I'm getting [from sources]. I won't be saying, this is good, I agree with this, this is something I need to read. And it won't be, this is bad, they didn't go about it right because they disagree with me, because I don't know who I am yet, and I don't know where I stand on the issue.

The essay allows Michael to withhold judgement, and as a result he believes he reads more objectively, weighing and evaluating sources rather than judging them based on a preconceived opinion about what is true. The task is no longer about lining up ducks but seeing where they fly. The research essay, then, encourages Michael to be both objective and subjective. He accounts for how his own situation determines what he thinks and feels, but by tolerating a certain amount of uncertainty—resisting quick judgement—he is able to stand back and listen to other voices more openly. Yet what is more fascinating to me is the way that taking a "stand on the issue" for Michael is linked to how he constructs an identity. As he put it, "I don't know who I am yet." In the essay, the writer discovers a self along with an argument, or makes it possible to "think oneself and thus create oneself" (Tetel 2). This is something that Michael senses intuitively. It is that self—or its presence, as I've termed it—that shapes and is shaped by the open inquiry.

For Michael, this is both exciting and unsettling. Free to explore his topic rather than explain "what was in
concrete before the beginning," he found the writing more honest, and more "natural" to write and to read. But his most significant discovery was to recognize the part that writing can play in leading him to meaning, rather than serving simply as an objective vehicle for transmitting fact. In contrast to past papers, "in this case the writing led itself," Michael observed. "What I would write at one point would dictate the next part to be written." He is most eloquent about the constructive power of language as he describes revision of his essay. Before he began the rewrite he reflected on his instructor's comments. She urged Michael to keep "digging" at what seemed to be the central theme of his paper.

...I wonder if what she was trying to say in a very nice way was, yea, but so what? What do you really mean? And I think that was the other thing I was really trying to dig at...I finally found my north star as it was...but I had to dig through my own writing to get at it, which was rather different. It's something I'd never experienced before.

Michael's "north star," the force that guided him to what he wanted to say, was his own writing; it was an experience which transformed his relationship to language by suggesting its power--even in a research project--to aid in discovery. While this insight about language may be something students learn by writing essays earlier in the semester, it is rarely applied to the research paper, where language has historically been viewed as arhetorical; the essayistic approach to research, however, seems to encourage
an understanding of the power of language to construct reality rather than objectively transmit information about a reality discovered before it is described in words.⁴

Yet there are also some unsettling implications to the way the research essay makes the appropriation of knowledge personal. By unmasking the knower the essay forces him to take responsibility for his judgements. At first, both Carrie and Michael responded to this in similar ways: they took refuge in the characterization of their essays as "I feel" papers. Sensing that this informal approach to research largely freed them from making authoritative statements that imply certainty or universality, they both concluded that their papers did not deal in "fact" but "just opinion." For a subjectivist like Carrie, the implication was that her claims were her own, not subject to debate because she doesn't pretend they represent some general truth: "Everyone can have an opinion. No one's opinion is wrong. So I don't think they should be able to judge the paper because they don't think it's right." Michael had a somewhat similar view, at first, but for him it was more an issue of honesty: "I didn't want to state something that could be argued is my opinion and make it sound like fact. I think it's almost deceiving the reader."

It appears that in some ways, the research essay lets students off the hook. Because it seems to deal in opinion, not truth, they may feel less compelled to make defensible
claims. There is some truth to this criticism of the essay, which is one reason why it's essential that terms like "opinion," "fact," and "truth" which get at epistemological beliefs must be part of instruction in the research essay, something I'll discuss in the next chapter. But I also think that student writers who are confronted, often for the first time, with the notion that their ideas are an important part of their research papers find the situation complicated; they sense that they lack the authority to speak on subjects outside themselves. As they navigate their way through the multiple, and often alien voices of their sources, taking possession of the material involves a sometimes difficult negotiation of authority, a negotiation that I believe is much easier to avoid with traditional research paper.

For example, the following passage is excerpted from a paper on dream interpretation written in my Freshman English section several years ago. The writer, Christine, excelled at composing research reports in high school, and had strong library skills, but when she was encouraged to write a researched essay she struggled to establish her presence in it, and in particular find a way to "express her opinions." The result, as you can see, is often awkward writing, in which the writer enters the discourse self-consciously and appears to have a tenuous relationship to the facts she's gathered. Here Christine shifts at the end of her paper
from exposition of fact to her expression of "opinion."

Personally, all three theories seemed to make sense to me. The dreaming to forget theory appears to be very logical. I always wondered how the brain is able to store so much information without going haywire. Maybe this is what causes headaches. I support the dreaming to forget theory because it only seems apparent that new space must open up for new learning. Besides, it's nice to think my brain is refreshed after cramming for a big exam, which I've been doing a lot of lately.

I do believe that dreams are full of symbols and hidden meanings as Freud claimed. With interpretation, I believe dreams can be applied to our lives to help us overcome personal obstacles.

This passage seems representative of the kinds of problems many students have when they try to "stick in" their own views, rather than exploit the opportunity the essay offers to "work out" what they think in a more dialogic relationship with their sources. Like many students, Christine codes her entry into the text by signalling that she is about to comment by using stock phrases--"I believe...," "I support..." These phrases typically appear in student papers preceding some broad statements of belief, and here these statements are only loosely tethered to facts she's assembled about theories of dream interpretation. The location of "opinions" is also telling. Usually they are placed at the end of a paragraph of mostly factual information, in isolated paragraphs in the body of the paper or at end as they are here. There is no elaboration of the ideas, no qualification, no substantiation, no exploration. They serve more as a broad
summary of beliefs, especially the student's simple
agreement or disagreement with an authority's claims. The
writer has a presence, but it is not as one who is
dialectically engaged with the information she has gathered.
She is more a hesitant bystander.

I get the sense reading passages like these that
students view this kind of insertion of opinion as an
obligatory move. Though they are at first taken with the
openly subjective nature of the research essay, they find in
practice that it is awkward and difficult to say what they
think, particularly when their voices are posed against
those of experts. They are struggling for their own
authority as knowers, or to borrow from Bakhtin, they are
struggling against the colonizing power of "authoritative
discourse." Students resolve this struggle in a variety of
ways. Some ultimately give up trying to establish some
sense of authority in their papers. In the worst case they
resort to writing the research reports of their high school
days, in which the only evidence of a writer is in the
selection and arrangement of fact, or they write research
papers that ignore sources altogether and are "all opinion."
But most try, like Christine, to find appropriate places to
"put" their opinion.

Carrie's research essay on the social value of the TV
program The Simpsons, for example, integrates "opinion" much
like Christine's. Her commentary is frequently concentrated
in separate paragraphs, and information gleaned from her reading in other paragraphs. While she claims that she has very little experience in the formal research paper, her essay on *The Simpson's* has a number of conventional features, including a thesis statement embedded in the final two sentences of the first paragraph: "In my opinion, these topics and the everyday show themes are aimed toward the older viewers, that don't quite watch cartoons anymore. I'd have to say to me, they're a sitcom [rather than a cartoon] with no doubts."

Like Christine, Carrie's repeated self-references here-"In my opinion" and "I'd have to say to me"--announce her entry into the text. While my editorial antennae twitch seeing such phrases--and they should be cut in the next draft probably--behind those unnecessary words is perhaps a necessary epistemological move: it often is the sound of a writer who is measuring the timber of her own voice. As Mina Shaughnessy alerted us to the logic of the grammatical errors of basic writers, we must also be alert to logic of the awkward writing in student research papers, particularly how it reveals issues of authority.

But Carrie presents a complicated case. Is she struggling to establish her own authority in her paper, or is she simply announcing it? Since Carrie is a relativist committed to the belief that "every one is entitled to their own opinion," and she is at times resistant to the "right"
of authorities to claim their judgements are more true, the research essay would seem to suit her perfectly. It offers the soapbox I mentioned earlier.

But did Carrie and Christine enact the essay genre as I've described it? Carrie, unlike Michael, noted that she does not see the research process as an opportunity to explore a topic. "I usually decide what I think [before I start]," she told me. Like Christine's, Carrie's enactment of the research essay form, then, does not exploit one of its most prominent features—the desire to find out rather than prove. Lacking the willingness to withhold judgment, and especially to see uncertainty as the condition of inquiry, students like Carrie often revert back to the hunting and gathering approach to research: look for "opinions" in sources that "back up" what you already think. Carrie did tell me that she would have considered using views that conflicted with hers had she found any. But she was relieved she didn't because it made the paper "easier to write." She added, "If I had encountered [a view that conflicts with hers] I would have put it in there, but then I would have been battling with an imaginary person on the paper." Had Carrie approached her topic more like an essayist, listening more attentively to other voices because she hopes to learn what she thinks, the shift in her relationship to authority may have allowed her to see a conversation where she now sees a battle.
My point is this: some of the difficulties students have with the problem of presence in the research essay derive, I think, from their genuine confusion about genre. When I ask them to write a research essay rather than a research paper, they aren't sure what I mean, so they devise a kind of mixed genre—it is subjective, even autobiographical at times, but it also argues from the thesis-example model. Lacking the structure and tone of a formal paper, however, they struggle with ways to make that argument, and especially how and where to express their "opinions." (In the next chapter I will propose that one way to help them negotiate their authority in the research essay is to refocus students on the act of note taking). To clear up confusion about genre, a fuller explanation of what we mean by a research essay will help, drawing especially on models from writers like Lewis Thomas, John McPhee, Joan Didion, Barry Lopez, Diane Ackerman, and others. It's especially instructive to look at how these writers handle the problem of presence. What are the many forms of "opinion?" How do experienced research essayists move from narrative to exposition of fact? Is presence always autobiographical, or as Gordon Harvey put it, can the "'personal' in essays" be "implicit as well as explicit" (648)?

However, some students instinctively grasp the possibilities of the research essay. Julie's essay is
transformed in her rewrite of the first draft as she makes her own personal situation the grounds of the inquiry. And as she does this, some of the features of the first draft that were problematic disappear. For example, a page and a half of generalizations about what ought to be done to deal with the problem of eating disorders in the first draft vanishes in the second. Instead she grounds her discussion in the specifics of her sister and her friends' recoveries. She uses sources more selectively, and weds them more seamlessly to her own personal observations, rather than isolating the source information in separate paragraphs.

The following passage from Kim's paper on the meaning and patterns of old gravestones in New England cemeteries demonstrates this integration of sources particularly well. The paper begins with an anecdote in which Kim describes her father's announcement that their family was going to spend the day hunting for their ancestors in Cape Cod cemeteries. It continues this way:

I think Dad was more interested in just seeing the family tree grow and to see where his (and my) roots actually came from. I don't think he actually realized how important graveyards really are. They not only become a "home" or resting place for the dead, but they are the deceased's way of linking their earthly church during life to their so-called heavenly church after death (Watters 89). They're a place where their bodies may rest while their souls continue up to heaven. And sometimes their epitaphs tell about the life they are leaving. But graveyard sounds so morbid, like one of those horror films. The Greeks referred to them as cemeteries or sleeping (Trask 36). I don't know if those bodies were actually sleeping or not. It was all kind of eerie,
tiptoeing through the yards, seeing what we could find.

Kim wedds the narrative of her journey through Cape Cod graveyards with an informal writing voice throughout her paper, and while it doesn't always work (I cringe a little at lines like the reference to horror films which seem unnecessary and overly colloquial), she does seem to both "own" her words and her information. While we don't see her making all the moves a budding scholar might, including questioning the truthfulness of "facts" or evaluating the claims of the authorities who offer them, Kim does discover that sources can be used, not only subordinated to her purpose but made part of her conversation. Note, for example, how the authorities she cites are embedded within the paragraph, rather dominating the discourse, which is so typical of conventional student research papers. Kim stakes a claim on both knowledge and language, one that is the product of successfully negotiating her discourse with others. It's also an essayist's claim, "an amateur's raid," whose purpose is to appropriate knowledge to make sense of experience. And in a way, it's mostly a war over words.

Bahktinian scholar Don Bialostoksy describes dialogics as a "vision of ideologically situated persons involved in struggles over the meanings of things and the ownership of words."

And it envisions what Bakhtin calls "an individual's ideological becoming" not just learning of "information, rules, models" or
conventions but as the individual's struggle to make other people's language his or her own and to resist being owned completely by alien languages.

(15)

Kim's overturning of the conventions of the traditional research paper does--in a small but significant way--situate herself ideologically, calling into question her relationship to "authoritative discourse" and its rules. This resistance, I would argue, is a necessary prelude to "entering the conversation" of the academy because it demystifies authority and the language of power. It is also a resistance that is encouraged by the essay because of its celebration of personal voice and its insistence that knowledge continually be put to the test in experiential terms. In most cases, the essay does not encourage mindless opposition to authority which Perry fears will hinder the development of some dualistic college students when they discover multiplicity, but rather a sense that an authority's words can be temporarily "owned" by the student, and the language of authority can be domesticated, however awkwardly.

III.

Even when research essay doesn't work in these ways, I hope at the very least that it establishes curiosity as the force behind inquiry. Encouraged to see the world as the essayist does--uncertain, confusing, a "gigantic puzzle"--and given fairly free rein to find some piece of it to explore, students have a chance to recover the sense of
wonder many lost somewhere along the way. It is "a mode of inquiry" students need to learn that the conventional term paper cannot provide, says composition theorist Chris Anderson: "Answers, abstractions, assertions come later, with experience and knowledge. Students first need to learn the discipline of exploring, of asking questions, of testing possibilities" (331). After using Lewis Thomas' essays in a composition course on research writing, Anderson confesses he was initially ambivalent about encouraging students to model such reflective writing. While the essays provided a provocative alternative to the more systematic and impersonal academic article, he feared he was letting down his students and his colleagues in other disciplines by not spending more time teaching the term paper. Ultimately, however, teaching the essay led him to "question again the subordination of the English Department to the practical demands of other disciplines."

Yes, we have an obligation to teach our students how to write in the ways they will need to in other classes and out in the world, yet the implicit argument of Thomas's work is that we also have an obligation to teach how to discover and test who they are in the process of writing...Even more than that, Thomas forces us to question the basic premises of those practical demands from other disciplines. If scientific research must proceed by error, motivated always by wonder, a sense of mystery, grounded always in the sensibilities of the inquiring subject [as Thomas suggests], then the term paper as it is conventionally conceived is simply not useful, in any discipline. In both the form and the themes of his essays, Thomas argues that there are no easy answers, in any field, that everything must be seen in terms of the self, that every self must...
be in constant interaction with other things in the world and other people, that writing is relationship and that all good writing captures the act of relating, the process of thinking about important things. (330-331)

When it's successful, the research essay encourages students to own their words and the insights they glean from following those words. And just as it revives the notion of authorship effaced by the objective report of the conventional term paper, it strengthens the rhetorical relationship between writer and reader. As my students become writers who research, rather than researchers who have to write, I hope they expand the role they claimed earlier in the course as writers of personal essays. I hope they will come to share Richard Larson's observation that research is not a separate activity, "but can inform virtually any writing or speaking if the author wishes it to do so" (813). Accepting this, students can roam more widely, exploring questions through writing they would have ignored earlier in the course because they run outside the range of their personal knowledge.

Rather than a separate activity, research becomes another source of information that helps students find out what they want to know, topics that remain deeply embedded in questions about who they are. Tim, a senior history major at the time I talked to him, told me that his experience writing personal essays and a research paper in freshman English that was "personally linked" was
transformative for him, largely because it taught him to examine his own subjectivity, and particularly how the personal informs academic writing even when he's not talking about himself.

I think the key to being a good writer is that you have to know yourself. I think all good writing is a reflection of you, your way of looking at the world...[I]f I go back and look at history papers over the years, I can see an improvement as I became more aware of myself. Your ability to think improves with that. While you might not talk about yourself in a paper, you know your views a little more...Even with history papers, the connection is there...If I hadn't kept a journal, and I hadn't had the opportunity in one class to write my thoughts, then my research papers would be rather bla-a. I wouldn't know how to figure out what I think. (Lippold)

The research essay makes "figuring out what I think" its subject, and in doing so, gives students like Tim a method for working out the relationship between the self and the world. And by giving students the confidence to project their voices into the Burkean parlor, they are more likely to keep the conversation going, and perhaps even to dissent from time to time. "I wrote plenty of those scientific papers where you label the introduction, the conclusion, you label the hypothesis," said Kate Carter, a senior in wildlife management. "But for me what was helpful is believing in my voice, not knowing I can write a scientific paper...As the years went on, I think I would stray from the traditional format, including my voice and including opinions that weren't 'scientific'...It ended up helping my paper."
As students like Kate and Tim progressively acquire the disciplinary habits of their respective fields, the essayist's sensibilities may be supplanted by those of a specialist. That is, in part, what a modern university education is supposed to do. But as both students demonstrate, the essay's lessons remain.
CHAPTER NOTES

1. In "On Experience," which is Montaigne's most eloquent and most complete statement of his beliefs, he complains that "there are more books on books than any other subject" and "there is more trouble interpreting interpretations than in interpreting the things themselves." This could be a critique of modern scholarship, which has made its business, as Montaigne put it, "learning to understand the learned" rather than reporting first-hand encounters with the objects of study.

2. The term "presence" is one I borrow from Gordon Harvey, who offered it as an alternative to "the personal" as a description of how prose can create a sense of an individual writer giving the writing life and personal investment. It's an appealing alternative, I think, because "presence" seems a much broader concept, suggesting the many ways--besides first-person and explicit autobiography--that prose can reflect the personal.

3. In a study of graduate students' efforts to rewrite their highly technical papers for a lay audience, David Green reports that one of his subjects "felt that writing nontechnically allowed him to express conviction" (375). While Green's study didn't assert this was true of all the students he studied, I would maintain that it describes the feelings of many of my students who are encouraged to approach the research paper informally.

4. The research essay's form contributes to students' discovery of the constitutive nature of language, but so does its emphasis on "unpacking" sometimes technical language for a more general audience. Green's study of the writing of graduate students in psychology demonstrated that when they were asked to rewrite their technical prose to clarify its meaning for a non-technical audience, the students found that the writing gave them a new understanding of their research problem. As Green put it, they discovered that "writing becomes a resource for discovery and the page a type of laboratory" (378).

5. Moffett also argues that the movement from "narrative discourse" to "explicit generalization"--or in our students' papers, from show to telling, or exposition to anecdote, etc.--"necessarily entails shifts in language and rhetoric" that involve "different language structures and compositional issues" (53). Among these are grammatical shifts, including tense, transitions, and organization, as well as paragraph structure. That may account for the frequent student--and
instructor--complaint that when writing a researched essay they don't like the shift in tone between the expository and narrative parts.
CHAPTER IV

SKATING BACKWARDS ON THIN ICE: TEACHING THE RESEARCH ESSAY

Six hundred years ago, the patron saint of ice skating fell on the ice and broke her ribs. She never fully recovered and spent the rest of her life in prayer. I'm not sure why ice skating rated a patron saint, except that is one of those things—like losing a wallet—that sometimes inspires prayer. I consider this fact as I glide along the frozen Lamprey River, near my New Hampshire home, and listen to the thump and ping of shifting ice.

I try to trust the physics of frozen water. My friend Brock tells me that 2 inches of ice will easily hold a person, and that the four inches below my blades make skating completely safe. My yellow lab doesn't buy any of it, and she trails us from the bank, whining whenever she is forced to cross the frozen river. When it groans from our weight, she tucks her tail between her legs and races back to solid ground.

There is something to be said for instinct.

I have skated often this winter. The cold, snowless days have stretched in January, and on the ponds a cap of ice—like the paraffin on a jelly jar—safely seals the black water below. Even the rivers like the Lamprey, where moving water normally resists ice, are frozen to the dams and to the heaviest rapids. Like Dutch canals, they wind
their way through the New Hampshire countryside.

Ice travel is new to me. Though I grew up skating, it was mostly on a flooded playground, where people skated in large, slow circles to music which came from metal speakers high on telephone poles. Skating was a social activity, one of the few during the seventh grade where it was possible not only talk to girls, but to touch them. I was always somewhere nearby when Lori Jo Flink lost her balance.

I don't remember the day I first learned to skate backwards, which surprises me now because I do remember the day I did my first back flip off a diving board. Both are ways that I marked my passage through those awkward years. I would begin on one end of the skating rink and begin wiggling my way backwards to the other end, watching the undulating trail my blades etched on the ice, not daring to look behind me to see if I was about smash into the low wooden wall of the adjacent hockey rink. It was one of the first times I felt I had mastered something physical, something involving the choreography of feet, legs, hips, and arms. I imagined I was very good at skating backwards. I imagined that Lori Jo knew it, too.

This is the beginning to an essay I wrote several years ago, and it insists on making an appearance here. I'm not sure why. On second thought, there's an obvious reason, one that comes to mind almost immediately: asking students to
write essays, and research essays in particular, involves faith in thin ice. If a guiding principle of the Montaignian essay is that it is genuinely exploratory, it sets out to find out rather than to prove, then to teach the essay demands that we convince our students to go against their instinct to rush to judgement. Uncertainty is uncomfortable, and it certainly runs counter to their training in school writing--especially the conventional research paper--with its emphasis on mastering formal conventions and accumulating evidence to make a point. Even students who do, initially, dare to approach their subjects openly may head for the bank at the first sound of shifting ice; it might be a teacher's critical comment, an encounter with a research source that seems to have all the answers, or the awkwardness of their own prose as it struggles towards meaning.

Just as Brock taught me to trust two inches of ice, to read the sounds of shifting ice not as signs of certain danger but signs of my own movement over its uneven surface, composition instructors must find ways to teach the research essay as a journey across and into disciplines which, like the ice on the Lamprey, shift and grind against each other.

But how are we to do this? And especially, if we encourage students to explore rather than prove, don't we risk promoting a discourse that is not only a poor model of traditional academic writing, but just poor writing as well-
unfocused, digressive, pointless? In this chapter I will examine some practical considerations of teaching the research essay, including the questions I raise here. While students like Michael and Julie seem to easily embrace the essay genre as a means of finding new meaning and a new approach to researched topics, the struggles of students like Carrie and Christine are much more typical. Urged to explore, they revert to proving what they already know. Encouraged to express themselves, they look for places to "stick in" their opinions. Asked to be Huck's, they are more comfortable being Toms. How can we teach the research essay to these students so that they, too, learn to exploit its possibilities?

I realize now that there is another reason I chose to begin this chapter with the opening of my own unfinished personal essay. It was an essayistic intrusion into a text that has seemed to lose that quality in the last three chapters. I did not know what would happen if I began the chapter that way, but I trusted that somehow, by jamming the frequency of the argument I've been making the last 100 pages with a personal digression, something interesting would happen. And something did. I found a metaphor that helped me explain what I want to do in this chapter, and deepened my own understanding of the challenges my students face when they do what I am asking them to do here: write researched essays instead of term papers.
I recall now what prompted the essay on ice skating. A winter of no snow left the river with clear ice for months—a remarkable occurrence—and I skated as much as I could. The more I skated the more I reflected on skating; I began attending to the experience in a writerly way. I wondered about the physics of ice—what's so magical about two inches? I wondered about skating accidents, about people who misread the ice. I wondered about skating Dutch canals, and what the skaters used before steel blades. All of these questions took me to the library, where I discovered, among other things, the patron saint of ice skating, and sketches of Dutchmen skating on bones. But along with wondering, I also remembered: the sensation of skating backwards, the smell of wet rubber mats in the warming house, and Lori Jo Flink. There is in this wondering and remembering—questioning and self-reflecting—a looking outward and inward that is exactly what we are trying to teach when we teach the research essay. It is now habit with me. But how do we teach it to our students, most of whom don't share the habit? How do we help them to see how experience can easily yield questions that can be researched? How do we help them see how experience can deepen their understanding of what they find in their research, as it has for me here, and learn to integrate personal knowledge with worldly knowledge so that they achieve the "new way of thinking" Belenky describes as
characteristic of "constructivist" knowing (134)? Or as one of her subjects put it, to learn to "let the inside out and the outside in" (135).

These are difficult questions. But in this chapter I hope to elaborate on a practical pedagogy that encourages students to see personal experience and knowledge as a means of moving outward into the world, and language as a vehicle for negotiating the journey. I also hope to suggest ways to encourage students to see research the way Chris Anderson believes Lewis Thomas does: "motivated always by wonder, a sense of mystery, (and) ground in the sensibilities of the inquiring subject" (331). This spirit of inquiry demands, of course, something that is very difficult to teach: a willingness to put up with doubt, and a faith that skating backwards on thin ice is worth the risk of running into a wooden wall.

I.

Teaching the research essay must begin by suspending some of the "rules" of research writing students assume are already scripted: that they must be "objective," make original contributions to knowledge, follow a strict format, always have a thesis before they start, write for a specialized audience, and choose topics that are removed their "everyday life." But perhaps most of all, students must be persuaded that good research does not have to mean bad writing. Instructors can convince students of this by
using lively researched essays as models, by both published writers and students.\^2

One of the most important things these essays teach is that the essayist is fascinated by the commonplace, the ordinary. "The world is everywhere whispering essays" (460), wrote the 19th century British essayist Alexander Smith, and it is this celebration of wide availability of subject matter for the researched essay that is exemplified by the work of Diane Ackerman, Richard Conniff, John McPhee, Barry Lopez, Nancy Mairs, and others. For example, one can write powerfully on houseflies, as Conniff does, on oranges, as does McPhee, on kissing, one of my favorite Ackerman topics, and on multiple sclerosis, Mairs' affliction. To help our students see the promise of their often ordinary experiences as material for the research essay, we must ask them this question: what have you seen or experienced that raises questions research can help answer?

What we are really asking for is a revival of curiosity as a motive for research. But not just any question that arises from personal experience or personal interest will do; it must be a question to which there is no quick answer, for as Dewey pointed out, curiosity becomes intellectual when "its ends are more remote." He writes,

To the degree that a distant end controls a sequence of inquiries and observations and binds them together as a means to an end, just to that degree does curiosity assume a definite intellectual character. (39)
That "distant end" for the essayist is to discover how the personal context which gave rise to the question might be changed by the answers she discovers along the way. Those discoveries must be constantly measured against the writer's perceptions, personal knowledge, and intuition, but they should be complicated by many other voices and perspectives. Research questions that are easy to answer, or do not lead students to encounters with multiple perspectives, and especially conflicting and alien discourses, are not as productive. As I reflect, for example, on Carrie's research on The Simpson's, I wonder if another reason her essay seemed to revert to a more conventional thesis-example approach was her inability to find conflicting views or sources other than popular magazines. Had she confronted more authoritative sources—particularly journal articles or interviews with TV experts—that represent colliding points of view, Carrie might have had more to work out. Her topic choice, however, might have made that more difficult.

Challenge students to dig deeply for library information, beginning (as most researchers do) with less authoritative, more general treatments of their topics and then working towards more authoritative, specialized materials. It may help them to conceptualize the relationship of sources as an inverted pyramid (see Figure 4.1). Whenever possible, they should be urged to work their
way to the bottom, the site they are most likely to
encounter alien, but richly informative discourses. While
some topics chosen by students may not lead directly to this
kind of scholarly material, very few don't lead there at
all.

Table 4.1
A Pyramid of Sources
Students must also be encouraged to find other voices and views in more than just books. While a number of contemporary composition texts suggest that interviews, "field research," or surveys can be suitable sources of material, most textbooks—including the most popular, Writing with a Purpose, are exclusively focused on the library. It rarely occurs to students that live sources of information can be even more useful than book or magazines.\(^3\) Approached "essayistically," this assignment becomes simply another writing project—another essay—that is distinguished from those that came before it in its potential use of all four sources of information that nonfiction writers draw on: library research, interviews, observation, and memory.

And like the other writing produced in the composition class, students should be encouraged to write for an audience of peers. In keeping with the essayist's imperative to conduct an "amateur's raid in a world of specialists," and to "make sense of a portion of the chaos" for the general reader (Sanders, "First Person" 190), the student writer must not assume that her readers are already interested in the topic, or that they are convinced of its relevance to their lives. Instructors join this general readership as particularly interested, but in many cases no more expert members. In this sense, we are asking students to be rhetoricians, not researchers, charged with speaking
out compellingly about problems that concern the "common
good." In addition to the usual classroom practice of
peer workshops of drafts, students might be asked to do a
class presentation on their project, as Carrie's and
Michael's instructors required. I find this particularly
useful in the middle of the research process, when students
have done sufficient research to begin feel like authorities
on their topic. Mimicking a press conference format,
students make a brief 10 minute presentation and then
entertain questions from the class.

It's important to make the research project not just a
collective activity, but a social one. Writers may work
alone, but they should be in constant conversation with each
other. In an earlier chapter, I observed that one of the
misconceptions reinforced by the traditional research paper
is what Patricia Sullivan calls "the myth of the independent
scholar." The researcher, she writes, is pictured as "[a]
lone actor" who is "masked in self-sufficiency," and the
"act of research is always figured as a solitary pursuit"
(18). Sullivan joins many in the composition field who
note that research is much more often a social act, and
characterized by collaborative practices. In some ways, the
research essay seems to reinforce the myth of the
independent scholar; after all, Montaigne spent his days
writing alone in a stone tower above his Bordeaux estate,
and the essay form he invented celebrates the individual
consciousness. But as I noted in a previous chapter, this is a self in constant conversation with its author and others, a conversation that is never stripped of its social context. The dialogic nature of the essay should be preserved, not only in the writing of individual students and the methods of research—including actual conversations with authorities through interviewing—but in classroom activities where the research essay finds its audience. I’ve mentioned a few already, including workshops and class presentations. In addition, some instructors might use discussion journals, kept on reserve in the library, that encourage students organized in small groups to talk to each other through writing about their individual projects. In the entries, students report to each other on their progress—including often quite frank admissions about their emotional involvement in their topics—solicit advice about useful sources, as well as respond to each others' drafts and discoveries.

Clearly, however, collaborative research projects, especially those requiring that more than one student work on a single topic, model the social nature of knowledge-making even more explicitly. While I don't want to go into a great deal of detail about collaborative research pedagogies, an approach used by two colleagues seems especially consistent with the theory I espouse here, particularly its emphasis on encouraging students to
tolerate uncertainty as they work "out (their) relationship to the information" (Ballenger, "Teaching" 149).

Donna Qualley and Barbara Tindall organize students into groups of two or three, then challenge each group to come up with a compelling topic through negotiation. Then the students begin the research, sharing what they find, discussing--and often arguing about--its significance, and working towards a focus. Even the resulting paper is collaboratively written. Perhaps most important, Qualley and Tindall ask students to keep a double-entry journal in which they document and reflect on the process of working together.

"...When you're writing a paper with another person," wrote one student about her experience with this approach, "you force yourself to ask a lot of questions. Then you force yourself to ask more questions when you write in your journal. The gift of being able to ask why is essential to writing. The 'why' is the most important question in life and writing is simply a reflection of that" (Ballenger, "Teaching" 150). This student articulates a new habit of "question-posing," something Belenky believes is "central to the constructivist way of knowing" (149). As the student observes here it is also a writer's sensibility--constantly asking questions invites complexity where others see nothing of the sort.

Qualley and Tindall add that because their
collaborative pedagogy involves substantial negotiation between students about what are believable claims on their topic, the collaborative approach constantly subverts easy answers and quick agreement, and it seems to do this in much the way I hope the writing of an exploratory essay does. As they put it,

Collaboration puts emphasis on the research process. In traditional research papers, students want to reach closure as quickly as possible, so that little time is spent working with the information, or more importantly working out the writer's relationship to the information. When many writers create a single paper, they need to negotiate the task, the teacher, the information, one another and their own history as writers. (qtd. in Ballenger, "Teaching 149"

As Qualley and Tindall suggest here, what prevents students from quick closure—in other words, what keeps them skating backwards on thin ice—is the imperative to not just work with the information they generate, but to work out their relationship to it. Their collaborative pedagogy creates this imperative through talk. The essay creates it through self-reflective, exploratory, sometimes digressive writing. So far I've implied that the site for this writing is the essay itself—the draft and its revisions. But some of the most important exploratory writing might take place in the middle of the research process, not at the end—a moment when the only writing most textbooks ever talk about is what can fit on an index card.

III.

Note cards are, for many students, the ubiquitous
symbol of our failures in teaching the research paper.

Kate's story is typical.

They tell you [in your junior year of high school] you're going to write a source theme to prepare you for your senior year...[They say] it's going to be really hard, you guys aren't going to know what you're doing unless you do it this way. It was just amazing, the mechanical process they turn writing into. Twenty note cards today, twenty note cards the next day, sixty note cards the day after that. I remember my teacher saying if you have any crossouts, if you spelled something wrong, or if you put your name on the left side of the note card rather than the right, your note cards were torn up and you had to do it over. (Carter)

Though note cards may be the symbol of student frustration with what they perceive is the meaninglessness of the research assignment and the failure of many of us to teach it well, I believe they also represent a moment in the research process that may be the key to its success. In preceding chapters I argued that for many students difficulties with research writing often were related to epistemological beliefs, and particularly the struggle to develop a faith in one's ability to speak with authority about knowledge outside the self, territory that is already staked out by experts. I have come to believe that it is in the middle of the research process--the so-called note taking stage--where these negotiations might take place most productively for the student writer. For many students (and instructors less comfortable with digressive and tentative quality of the essay) it may be the note taking stage, not the drafting stage, when the exploratory writing I'm
promoting here makes the most sense.

As Doug Brent points out in *Reading As Rhetorical Invention*, composition texts have been strangely silent on how students "perform the intricate rhetorical dance" of reading and evaluating sources: "...[I]nstruction on the research process...deals with the beginning and the end of the process (using the library and writing the drafts), but it has a gaping hole in the middle where much of the real work of knowledge construction is performed" (105). Since the research paper was introduced into freshman composition in the 1920's, that hole has been mostly filled with talk about note cards. While note cards have their merits, they have generally reinforced the idea that research is not about the construction of knowledge but the collection of it.

Then what can we talk about beyond note cards?

For many years, I had very little to say. Disdainful of note cards because of my own high school experience, I couldn't bring myself to say much about how to take notes for a research paper. Instead, I would refer my students to appropriate sections in our textbook, if we were using one, which would usually include the obligatory section on what to write where on an index card, and feature exhaustive explanations of what is meant by summary, quotation, and paraphrase. I noticed that a few students dutifully used note cards as they researched their freshman research
papers, but most did not. What did they do instead? They photocopied to beat the band.

The omnipresence of the photocopy machine in the college library has fundamentally changed information gathering for students. Students take fewer notes, and I think there may be some profound implications to this. What does it mean that students delay writing about and with their sources until they begin a draft? How does that delay affect their own position of authority as they seek ways to use their sources? How does it affect the ways students express themselves?

As I've noted before, students often have great difficulty incorporating outside texts into their own writing. The seams show everywhere, and they can be particularly evident in the research essay. For example, students may adopt stiff, often pedantic language, or create an obvious shift in tone between informational passages and more personal ones, or completely surrender to the words and ideas of outside authorities by using long, quoted passages. In the worst case, students commit (usually unintentional) plagiarism. The challenge for our students, says Bakhtin, is that they must "populate" alien discourses "with (their) own intentions," something which he concedes is "a difficult and complicated process" (293-294). He writes,

As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is
half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention...And not all words for just anyone submit equally easily to this appropriation, to this seizure and transformation into private property: many words stubbornly resist, others remain alien, sound foreign in the mouth of the one who appropriated them and who now speaks them; they cannot be assimilated into his context and fall out of it; it is as if they put themselves in quotation marks against the will of the speaker. (294)

This "appropriation of the word" of others so that it can be "seized and transformed" and made one's own describes the struggles of students with difficult texts. The research essay highlights this struggle, I believe, because of the genre's explicit subjectivity and contextuality--the essay must be "populated" by the writer's intentions and foreground the context from which the research question arises or it is not an essay. Students can get around this to some extent by avoiding difficult texts, as Carrie did in her essay on The Simpson's; popular periodicals and books often represent discourses (and views, in this case) which are not so alien, and therefore more easily appropriated. But even then, the seams often show.

This is not only a struggle over the possession of words, but authority--who will control the discourse, the student or her sources? I've already suggested that the "essayistic" alternative to traditional research paper instruction seems to grant students more authority. But Bakhtin offers a further insight: the appropriation of
other discourses is more or less complicated based on their distance from what he calls "the zone of contact" (345). It is the contact zone where two different discourses encounter each other, each competing for authority, when an "authoritative discourse" no longer has its usual distance from the speaker (or writer's) own "internally persuasive discourse" (342), something I would roughly equate with "voice." 6 Put more simply, when it is drawn into the zone of contact authoritative discourse is more approachable, less reified, and therefore easier to appropriate dialogically. I believe that the moment this is most likely to occur for many student researchers may not be the drafting stage, when they are confronting a whole array of other writing problems (purpose, structure, documentation, coherence, etc.). Instead, authoritative discourse is more likely to be drawn into the zone of contact when they first encounter it, at the note taking stage, in the middle of the research process as they're reading (or interviewing) for their paper. Note taking, then, becomes more than a mechanical process of vacuuming up information to deposit later; instead, it becomes a key site for the negotiation of authority in their papers.

If this is true, conventional note cards will simply not do. They are simply not big enough for the messy and in some cases extensive writing that students might generate as they struggle to take possession of other peoples' words.
Methods like freewriting, in which students think through writing, seem especially useful at this stage. If nothing else, students might be encouraged to carry notebooks with them into the library where they can not only collect information and build a bibliography, but freewrite their reactions to each source while--or after--they read it. Doing this, they are essentially essaying, or at Montaigne put it, letting their "mind(s) and style(s) alike go roaming" (qtd. in Freidrich 335), but at a moment when some students feel freer to roam because they are less likely to feel committed to a particular point of view.

In addition, the more conventional note-taking approaches--summary, paraphrase, and quotation--must not be limited to the simple parroting of information that is so often typical of textbook explanations of them, but involve more creative translations (taking care, of course, not to plagiarize) in which the writer responds more purposefully, asserting her own sense of emphasis and responses to what is being said. One textbook warns students to "leave out your own comments, elaborations, reactions" when paraphrasing (Connors and Lunsford 573). But why? While students should always be encouraged to represent the ideas of a source fairly and accurately, why shouldn't they also take the opportunity to respond to them during this key initial encounter?

For example, the following passage is from Paulo
Friere's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider know nothing.

The conventional textbook paraphrase might be something like this:

One approach to education is to view students as empty banks and teachers as depositors of knowledge.

Consider the following alternative paraphrase of Friere's passage, in which the note taker, writing a paper arguing for educational reforms, does much more than re-tell the original in his own words, but enters into a conversation with it. Friere steps in and out, and the writer takes over.

Friere's "banking concept of education"--which suggests that students are things into which knowledge must be deposited--only further alienates them from learning, reinforcing the idea that knowledge isn't meant to be used but simply absorbed like a sponge.

This is the kind of writing we hope for in the draft of a research paper; and I believe we are much more likely to get it when students write thoughtfully in the zone of contact, well before, to borrow Faulkner's metaphor, they try to nail things down in a windstorm, during that last-minute burst of draft writing after the research is completed.

Bialostosky also notes the importance of encouraging students to re-tell in their own words, observing it
encourages a "double-voiced practice" that involves a "working-out of evaluative relations between the reporting and the reported discourse" (18). He also seems to suggest something that goes beyond the neutral paraphrase or summary, about which the writer withholds comment.

When we interrupt the quoted text, interrogate it, clarify its point, or expose its ambiguities, we make an opening for our own utterances and give shape to our own roles in the conversation. (18)

At the suggestion of several colleagues, I have lately begun to experiment with variations of Anne Berthoff's double-entry journal as a vehicle for encouraging such utterances. Because I hope they'll customize this method of note taking, my description of the approach to my students is fairly open-ended. I simply encourage them to divide each notebook page in half (or use opposing pages), and on the left side write down material directly from their sources and on the right side explore their reactions to what they wrote down on the left. Most students used the left column the way they would have used note cards—listing fairly conventional summaries, paraphrases, or quotes from their sources. The right column is then keyed to some particular fact in the left, usually in a freewrite.

Jason's double-entry journal, (see Figure 4.2), proved particularly successful, he said, in helping him write his research paper comparing American soccer with how the game is played in other countries. He chooses to use the left side exclusively for quotations. As Jason draws on his own
Figure 4.2
Sample Double-entry Journal

Jason Pulisifer

The players in the US would never play such a heavy schedule. On the ASL they play 20 games most and games the only played 1 or 2 times a week at the most.

The number of games played will be 45 in the league, 6 in English club, plus anything from 5 to 10 on European exhibition—a total of 54 games.

For a top player, the weekly base wage would be £70 and $200 to $300 to $400. A similar average would be £60 for a top player for 16 weeks, perhaps adding £3700 a year.

A player selected to play for the national team, it will be paid (by the football association) £200 to £500 for each game, plus $500 from a sports agency. If it's a US team, players would receive a similar salary. The English players will earn £500 to £1000.

In the 1970 US WC, 15 players received about $25,000. Hardly amazing given the size of the prize. To public the average earnings of a US player, Eric 'Dateline' who lost a red card (dejected) and received a $70,000 fine. It couldn't win pay if because his yearly earnings were almost...
Sample Double-entry Journal

[Handwritten text]

So wrong in the U.S. Everybody else in the world plays soccer in a blue collar work (working class) but in the U.S it's mostly played by upper-middle class children whose families are well off and prosperous and from white-collar backgrounds. Children in other countries mostly Underskilled, Uneducated, play soccer all day long. While do I have much soccer so I learn to work for them. And other things like play even a small extent would like. A Brazilian child plays everyday for at least 5-8 hours while US. Children don't play practiced 2 days a week and 1 game on Sat, practice run about 30 minutes 2 hours.

Another discrepancy future soccer players in 14-15
experience as an American soccer player, he is able "interrogate" and "clarify" the quoted passage from the Gardner book. He discovers a contrast between the socioeconomic class of soccer players in the U.S. and those in less developed nations and teases out the implications of that: children who play soccer here will put in less playing time than those in poorer countries, which may account for the differences in levels of play. In a very real sense, Jason is "entering a conversation" with his sources, rather than passively receiving authoritative knowledge and then transmitting it without comment in his paper.

In fact, Jason is writing his essay as he is taking notes. The passage excerpted here appears in slightly more polished form in his final draft. For students—or instructors—who are uncomfortable with the tentative and digressive discourse of the essay, but still want to encourage their students to use exploratory writing, essaying can still take place, but in the middle of the research process rather than at the end. The "working out" occurs as students take notes, and the draft becomes an opportunity to report on their discoveries.7

There are undoubtedly other moments during the research process when essaying can help students appropriate authoritative discourse and tighten their grip on the material. For example, as students finish collecting

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sources they often feel overwhelmed with other voices. In order to assert their own, they might be encouraged to increase the distance between themselves and their sources by first reviewing all the material but then setting it aside, trusting they'll remember what's important. Then students should be encouraged to write as a means of working out their relationship to the material. A "loop-writing" exercise is often helpful, incorporating the following steps: (1) Ask students to tell the story of their research, to construct a "narrative of thought." When they began the project, what did they think? Then what happened? What happened after that? What were their preconceptions about the project? How were they changes through reading and talking with others? (2) Now have them fastwrite about "Moments, Stories, People, and Scenes"--specific case studies, people, situations, personal observations--that occur to them as they reflect on what they've learned. (3) Write an imaginary dialogue about the topic between the writer and someone else, beginning with the most commonly asked question. (4) Finally, ask students to fastwrite their response to this question: "So What?" This step encourages them to work out the significance of the topic to their readers, and pushes them towards a tentative statement of their own understanding.

By privileging "internally persuasive discourse"--or personal voice--the research essay seems to encourage a more
democratic relationship with academic discourse. Students are not so ready to be silenced by the language of power when they've discovered the power of their own language. As Kate put it, "You can give people self-confidence and what they do with it is up to them. But it's going to help them in any academic setting because they believe in their voice, and they're going to have more power about what they say." But this is not, and should not be, a static situation. As students negotiate this power by writing research essays, and perhaps especially taking notes for them, they also discover new discourses and new voices of their own. Bakhtin comments on the dynamic nature of voice when it encounters and subsumes other discourses.

...Internally persuasive discourse--as opposed to one that is externally authoritative--is, as it is affirmed through assimilation, tightly interwoven with "one's own word." In the everyday rounds of our consciousness, the internally persuasive word is half-ours and half-someone else's. Its creativity and productiveness consist precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words, that it organizes masses of our words from within, and does not remain in an isolated and static condition. (345; my emphasis)

As part of a composition course that emphasizes essay writing, the research essay becomes a key bridge between the personal and the academic. If the personal essay awakens students to their own voices, then the research essay forces an confrontation with external authority that leads those voices out of isolation, but without robbing students of sense that their words are still "half-theirs."
This is a pedagogy that helps students to see that their struggle to incorporate sources into their own prose are not insignificant—perhaps due to some technical shortcoming, like the inability to write good transitions, or follow the rules of paraphrasing—but often a much more profound contest over whose words matter. And because this struggle implicates epistemological beliefs, it's no small thing.

II.

In my final interview with Carrie I remember a poignant moment when my persistent questions about the certainty of "facts" seemed to finally jolt her out of subjectivism, at least temporarily. A fact, she said at first, was something "definite," particularly in science: "...[I]t's absolutely right, there's no contradicting it, you know. It's not opinion. It's truth." But as I pressed her she begin waver on that assertion.

Q: Do the Humanities have facts, or is that the exclusive domain of science?
A: I think everything has. Hmmm. I'm not sure on that one. I think everything has facts. Even science, when you're doing chemical reactions, I mean, they're always finding, oh, well, it's definitely this, and then a couple months later—nope, it was this, too. So facts change.
Q. So they're not definite?
A. I don't think they always are. No. I think some things are and some things aren't. I think anyone can try and contradict it. Stuff that's been studied and studied and studied, I guess it could end up being (contradicted) sometimes. I'm contradicting myself.
Q. You're qualifying it. You started out saying facts are things you know are true, and now...
A. Now I'm starting to think that all these things that have been challenged, I guess they can be
challenged. I guess they aren't always, I don't know. I guess nothing's definite. You take it as being definite. When we read a book, a research book or whatever, I think that we've been all brought up to automatically take it as being the truth, you know.

At the risk of giving into "magical thinking," I would like to think that Carrie's tentative move into multiplicity, and her new-found suspicion of foundational truth came as a direct result of her experience writing the research essay. I don't think that's so, however. Her insights came as much from talk, as from writing. As our conversations continued over five weeks, we continually explored the implications of her relativism. Yet I don't think this discussion about her epistemological beliefs would have been nearly as powerful for her without the writing. When we talked about what she meant by an "opinion," for example, it was always anchored to how she was handling her opinions in her essay.

My conversations with Michael and Carrie convinced me that virtually any research pedagogy, but perhaps especially the one I'm proposing here, should feature frequent classroom conversations about ways of knowing. In particular, instructors should help students unpack the meaning of freighted terms like "opinion," "fact," "truth" and "idea." As students discuss with each other their beliefs about the relationship between, say, an opinion and a fact, instructors should press them to reflect on how those beliefs influence the practical decisions they're
making as they work on their research essays. For example, how do they assess the worth of another writer's "opinion" as they're reading, and does that determine what they write down in their notebooks? What "facts" have they encountered that conflict? How did they resolve that conflict in their essays? In what forms does "opinion" appear in their drafts, and where does it appear? How does the way they handle quotes in their essays suggest their relationship to authority? What do they see as their larger purpose as researchers—to seek truth, to challenge it, or simply to "express their own opinion," and how does that affect the way they read sources for their papers?

As I interviewed Carrie and Michael, I often saw their beliefs reflected in Perry's stages, or Belenky's perspectives, or Newman's constructs. For methodological reasons, I usually withheld these judgements from them during the course of this study. Yet as a matter of classroom practice I can see no reason why this information about intellectual development of college students should be withheld from students. While taking great care to avoid suggesting that these studies imply a hierarchy of moral value associated with each stage—in other words, you're a better person if you're a connected knower than if you're a dualist—studies like Perry and Belenky's might help freshman researchers see their own beliefs in context. These works should be used selectively, and presented as
contestable claims about the way things are. In that way they can also provide a useful classroom illustration of how to approach all sources skeptically.

A parallel writing assignment to the research essay might be a narrative account of how each student perceives his ways of knowing evolved. These might be highly personal accounts of moments that triggered a shift in thinking. For example, students might be asked to explore through writing one or more of the following occasions in their life:

* The first school writing assignment in which you felt your opinions mattered.
* When people made you feel your opinions didn't matter.
* When you stopped believing everything you read in books.
* When you believed that parents or teachers didn't have all the answers. If not them, who did?
* The period of your strongest rebellion against authority.
* When you felt most certain about what was true in life, and when you felt most uncertain about that.
* When you first began to trust your feelings about what's true.
* When and why you got interested in science or humanities. How that changed the way you see things.

Consistent with what I've argued all along here, this approach to helping students reflect on their intellectual
development is rooted in the personal. It assumes that changing epistemological beliefs grow out of specific experiences, and also implicate identity. As they tell the story of their intellectual growth, students will see how it continually involved a negotiation between who they were and the roles others presented to them, or as Robert Brooke suggests, their internal understanding of self and their social understanding of who they're expected to be.

In the midst of their research, students are at that moment confronted with a new role--writers who are researching essays. How is that challenging their beliefs about who they are and how they see the world? This discussion should be the starting point for what I believe is a crucial in-class exploration of how this assignment--which departs in many ways with the conventional research paper--reflects a particular epistemology that may be a sharp contrast with their past experiences as academic researchers. This need not be a theoretical discussion at all. Focus again on practical matters: What are the implications of using "I" in a research paper? Is there anything "original" about the way they wrote their essays? Was there anything "objective" about the way they approached their topics? Should personal experience count as evidence? How does revealing their own specific situations change the way they write their essays, and change the way they are read?
The most important question, however, may be this: how does writing a research essay prepare you to write papers for other classes? It's a question I'll admit makes me uneasy. While I remain ambivalent about the service function of freshman English, and I've argued here that composition and literary studies should put their own stamp on the freshman research paper, I also believe the assignment I've proposed is a more useful introduction to academic research than the traditional term paper. But it is my experience that students don't necessarily see that connection unless I make it explicit.9 When I asked Carrie, for example, whether the informal research essay she wrote in her freshman English course prepared her for academic writing in other classes, she was ambivalent.

I'm not sure, because it's so laid back. I think that (if) I had to have specific (things)...Compared to my friend's paper she was telling me they had to have a thesis, and had to have all these certain things...So I think this is a lot different that what I'm going to be thought to know how to do, and when I go to do it, then I'm not going to know how to do it.

A few moments later, however, Carrie conceded that the informal approach to research might have been a useful first step for writing more formal term papers: "I imagine with all research papers you start at the bottom and work your way up. And I'm kind of in the middle. The end of this paper goes halfway."

Michael, on the other hand, experienced as much more self-conscious change in thinking as a result of his foray
into the research essay. He became increasingly skeptical about notions of objectivity, and finds that as he abandons his usual rhetorical stance as "an all powerful knower" it increases his responsibility and his freedom. He felt a greater responsibility to his readers to get his "facts" straight, when he uses them, but by abandoning false authority, his "opinions" don't get confused with facts.

I feel as though...maybe down the line I will write something that will be put in a journal for who knows to see, and maybe someone will reference it, and at that point I want to make sure that anything that they're going to pull out as fact is as close to fact as I can get it. And everything else, they're going to have to decide how they want to frame my opinion. If they want to frame my opinion as fact, that's their own hot water they can get themselves into with their readers. But for me personally, I'd like to let it stand as my opinion. And if they want to agree with my opinion and say it's their opinion, that's wonderful. We'll keep the opinions flowing. I'm terribly afraid of setting someone up to believe something that may not be true.

The research essay freed Michael to "frame" his opinions as opinions, as subjective truths that are open to discussion and debate: "We'll keep the opinions flowing." It is the conversational quality of the essay that seemed to move him most, something that struck me immediately when, during our last interview, he quipped, "There was a part of me that said lab reports would be a lot more fun if I could talk to my reader."

While Michael, even without much explicit in-class discussion about the relevance of his experiment with the essay, seems to have gleaned a great deal from the
assignment, I think Carrie's ambivalence if far more
typical. That is why the question of the relationship
between the research essay and the term paper must be raised
openly in class, a discussion that may be most useful as
students are completing their projects.

This discussion could very well lead to a useful
critique of academic writing. Is scholarly prose, as
Patricia Limerick charged, so plagued with conventions and
dense writing—deployed primarily to deflect criticism—that
it is wholly inaccessible to the general public? On the
other hand, what useful purposes might actually be served
the conventions of academic research? Does academic writing
over-emphasize the logical, linear, and impersonal over the
intuitive, contextual, and personal, as many feminist
critics have charged? Or does the infusion of academic
writing with the personal promote intellectual solipsism?

What I'm suggesting here is that the research essay,
because it subverts many of the usual research conventions,
provides an unusual opportunity to take up the question that
most proponents of teaching academic discourse believe is
important: what does it mean to become a member of a
discourse community? Yet it raises this question in the
lively spirit of dissent rather than blind conformity.

III.

The thing about skating backwards is that you don't
know where you're going, but you can see where you've been.
When the ice is smooth and black my steel blades finely etch its surface, and two white undulating lines stretch away from me until they disappear in the glare. I like these lines because they record my presence—it is my trail I'm etching on the ice—a presence which is both historical and immediate. I can see where I've been, but I can also see where I am at any moment. The essay seems to reflect this way of seeing, I think, in its reluctance to anticipate where it's going, and its fascination with the self in motion—who was I, and who am I becoming? But the essayist's particular interest is much more immediate than historical. She asks, "who am I, and what do I know now?"

There are several practical implications of this. One is the essayist's willingness to enact the drama of figuring out what she thinks in prose, much the way someone does it in conversation with a good friend. I am doing that right now, and I did it in the beginning of this chapter as I tried to explain, through second thoughts and third thoughts, why I began the chapter the way I did, what relevance ice skating on the Lamprey might have for this project. This demands a certain amount of faith: faith that the trail of words I'm making will lead somewhere, faith in the usefulness of digression, in undulating lines of thought rather than linear ones. I must also assume that the drama of working things out at the point of utterance is as interesting to a reader as it is to me.
I am describing here, I think, a particular mode of thinking that can be distinguished from analysis and argument not just by its lack of linearity or systematic method, but by its concern with process, and in particular the positioning of thought in time and place: What do I know now under these circumstances? Now what do I think? And now? This is narrative thinking, a chronology of thought that stretches behind me like lines etched on black ice. Of course, narrative thinking is not held in very high esteem in the academy. But as Thomas Newkirk points out, the assignment of abstract and theoretical thinking as more valued than narrative thought is a hierarchy that, to some extent, reflects our own academic biases--it validates what we do (25).

I value narrative thinking--and want to teach it to my students through the essay--because it creates a trail of a mind in motion, dialogically engaged with itself and the object of inquiry, constantly doing and undoing claims about what seems true. This dialogue becomes richer with the research essay because it brings more voices into the conversation, if they are invited to unsettle as well as settle things. I have to confess, however, I've found this enormously difficult to teach. My students' experience with school writing has not prepared them to believe that play, which is what really what I'm talking about here, is worthwhile. They need to be convinced that the experiments
the essay encourages--turning the object of inquiry "this way and that," questioning it, feeling it, and "attack(ing) it from different angles...under the conditions established in the course of the writing" (164), as Adorno suggested essayists do--will produce not just good ideas but acceptable papers. Indeed, for some audiences it won't.

That's why a pedagogy that promotes the research essay rather than the freshman research paper must acknowledge that, in many instances, what they are modeling is not a usual form of academic writing but the kind of thinking that sometime produces it. Peter Elbow makes the point that teaching freshmen the intellectual practice of academic writing is much easier if separated from its conventions, which vary widely from discipline to discipline anyway. It is talk about those practices, he says, as well as experimenting with them, which will help students understand their purpose and usefulness as a way of making sense of the world ("Reflections" 149). I submit that the research essay, with its emphasis on the process of thought, is much more likely to focus students' attention on habits of mind than the traditional research paper. But we must make these intellectual practices a topic of classroom discussion, something that up until now I have failed to do.

While acknowledging the research essay's departures from the traditional term paper, we must also speak up for narrative thought--and autobiographical thinking--as an
intellectual practice that should be represented in the products of academic writing as well as its processes. Most academic essays are not essays, but articles--carefully argued from a predetermined position. They represent the residue of thought--what has already been worked out--rather than the working out of what one thinks. Feminist critics like Jane Tompkins, Olivia Frey, Diane Freedman and others have led the movement for an alternative to the "adversarial method" of traditional academic discourse, or as Tompkins described it in her famous essay "Me and My Shadow," an "'authoritative language'" that "speaks as though the other person weren't there" (31). Academic writing, Tompkins argues, often creates a "public-private hierarchy" by insisting that it must "transcend the merely personal" (25). The approach I espouse here finds its roots in the essay tradition initiated by Montaigne, but much feminist theory provides powerful support as well, particularly for seeing the essay as a viable alternative to traditional forms.

"Feminist theory has always built out from the personal: the witness 'I' of subjective experience," writes feminist critic Nancy Miller in *Getting Personal*. "The notion of the 'authority of experience' founded a central current in feminist theory in the 1970s and continues--dismantled and renovated--to shape a variety of personal and less personal discourses at an oppositional angle to dominant critical positionings" (14). While instructors who
teach the freshman research essay should acknowledge that it departs in significant ways from the conventional college paper, the methods and habits of mind the essay encourages have value in their own right, and much theoretical support as well. Encouraging classroom discussion of academic essays by personal literary critics like Tompkins, Nancy Sommers, Miller, as well as those who practice personal scholarship in other disciplines, like Patricia Williams (law), Susan Krieger (sociology), and Naomi Weisstein (biology) can provide students with inspiring examples of this personal scholarship. They also help students locate their own research essays as further experiments in this alternative tradition.

While a number of these feminist critics offer the explicitly autobiographical as a means for integrating public and private ways of knowing, that is not the only way for students to have a personal presence in their research essays. "Being personal, I want to show my students, does not mean being autobiographical," writes Nancy Sommers. "Being academic does not mean being remote, distant, imponderable. Being personal means bring their judgements and interpretation to bear on what they read and write, learning that they never leave themselves behind even when they write academic essays" (425). This is helpful advice, particularly for students who choose research topics that don't easily lend themselves to autobiographical thinking.
Yet in my experience students find it difficult to imagine any other way to get personal than talking directly about themselves and their own lives.

As I mentioned in an earlier chapter, Gordon Harvey argues that we should help our students understand that presence in the essay can be "both implicit as well as explicit--a matter of felt life in the writing rather than anecdote or self-analysis" (649). He suggests, for example, that "presence is felt, or missed" (650) by a sense of the writer's "motive" for exploring a topic, a sense that is sustained throughout, or by his "control of quotation and detail," particularly if other voices are not allowed to dominate the writing (651-652). Avoiding cliches and stock phrases, and taking care to "find one's own way of saying something," also establish a writer's presence, and so does what Harvey calls "broadenings": those moments in the writing when the essayist leaves textual sources behind and asks larger questions, particularly those that reveal an "experiential grasp of human behavior, of how life tends to go" (652). All of these can register presence, Harvey believes, without using the pronoun "I."

I'm not sure how many of the "implicitly personal" ways of creating a presence in the research essay will make sense to students. Some of the moves Harvey suggests do not seem to me to distinguish the unique nature of the personal essay from what generally constitutes good writing in almost any
genre. I might, for example, emphasize narrative thinking and voice as personal signatures that do not require autobiographical self-reference. But classroom time should be spent exploring ways to make the research essay personal without necessarily talking directly about one's own experience. Often published essays can help. I've found several Lewis Thomas' essays, for example, to be wonderful examples of scientific pieces where the writer's presence is felt, often without personal anecdote. A classroom exercise using these essays suggested by a former student involves reading one of them in class and asking students to put an "A" (for author) next to every paragraph where Thomas's presence was felt. We then examined these paragraphs to explore how he established that presence without the usual self-references.

In short, while the assignment I'm proposing asks students to "get personal," that must be conceived of in the broadest possible way, making room for students like Carrie, who admits that she liked her research essay much more than the autobiographical essays she wrote for her freshman English course. Writing "strictly" autobiography was difficult, Carrie told me, "because it's all me." She preferred the research essay, she said, because "it's easier for me to have other people's opinions to put my opinion on. It's kind of hard to give an opinion about myself...This is I'm kind of going with the paper. I'm learning as much as
I'm writing so it's not that I'm just reciting my life."

While I think that autobiographical essays that just "recite a life" are not what we have in mind, Carrie is like a number of students I've had over the years who are uncomfortable with confessional writing. These students often find the research essay a much more comfortable and enlightening project, especially if notions of the personal are broadly conceived.

But most students are like Julie and Kim, and, I must confess, me—-we seize at the opportunity "think through autobiography," or as Nancy Miller put it, to invite "the chain of associations that I am pursuing in my reading [to pass] through things that happened to me" (11). We like watching those undulating lines under our feet.
CHAPTER NOTES

1. I'm often asked which "rules" I wouldn't suspend, and particularly whether I insist that students cite sources. While I see value in teaching the informal research essay without citations, I encourage freshman to learn to use the conventions for two reasons: it is a practical skill we can teach students that is useful in later courses that doesn't compromise our claim to the essay, and it reinforces the idea that knowledge is socially constructed, or as Montaigne put it: "Opinions are grafted one on another. The first serves as stock for the second, the second for the third" (349).

2. For years I've been using a piece by Richard Conniff, "Why God Created Flies," which appeared in Audubon Magazine a few years back. It's not only carefully researched, but funny, and interesting to most students who love the commonplace subject. I also use a student essay, "Lemming Death," which is undocumented but beautifully written. It appears in the appendix of my text The Curious Researcher.

3. Over half (52%) of the students I surveyed agreed that information for a research paper "should come mostly from books."

4. A research paper pedagogy that exemplifies the recasting of assignment as part of the rhetorical tradition of public discourse is Carol Hawkins' freshman course at the University of New Hampshire. Hawkins' students are urged to volunteer (about half do) at various educational sites in communities near campus, allowing them to do "field research" on the general theme of literacy. Students then collaborate in pairs, matching a community volunteer with a non-volunteer on a topic of their choice related to the literacy theme. In many cases, the volunteer contributes observations from the field work, while her partner focuses on library work. Final papers are then given to the institutions where the students volunteered, providing the community with potentially useful information. One group, for example, researched ways to improve a program for adolescents with a history of conflict with local police. Another compared elementary school programs. While this approach seems to depart in significant ways from the one I'm proposing here, the research questions, Hawkins told me, almost always "bubble up from autobiography" because they are rooted in personal experience and observation.

5. This is not just a social construct, Sullivan argues, but an ideological one, wedding notions of individualism to academic research that is based on "androcentric assumptions" (25).
6. My desire to equate "internally persuasive discourse" with voice needs to be qualified. Bakhtin's version of voice, as I understand it, assumes that it doesn't "belong" to a writer as some kind of linguistic reflection of the "true" self. Voice, or any words we claim to possess, are always only "half ours" and "half someone else's." Because of this, voice is a dynamic not a static thing, particularly as we appropriate new discourses and attempt to make them our own. A writer doesn't find a voice, then, but is continually constructing new voices.

7. Students who resist more extensive note-taking because of its demands on their time need to be reminded that it may ultimately be more efficient, rather than less. Not only might they write stronger papers, but they essentially begin writing them earlier, saving time in the drafting stage.

8. This exercise is partly modeled after the "looping" method described in Pat Belanoff and Peter Elbow's text, The Community of Writers.

9. The great risk of proposing an unconventional form like the research essay is that students will simply dismiss it as perhaps interesting, but not very useful. I'm mindful of Barbara Walvoord and Lucille McCarthy's study--Thinking and Writing in College--which describes students writing papers in four different disciplines. One of their observations, based on interviews with students, was that "students seemed to devalue papers that were not labeled research or term papers" (61).
CHAPTER V

DEFLATING THE BALLOONS

My eighth grade dance teacher was a slender man, with long sideburns and thick, wavy auburn hair that obediently stayed in place, even through "the jerk." I remember there was a great deal of initial enthusiasm about dance class among the boys and girls of Elm Place Junior High. Most thirteen year-olds are desperate for physical contact, and in an age when teenage promiscuity was still considered bad form, slow dancing was the closest thing to sex. But Mr. Schommer had other ideas. He insisted that the girls wear white gloves, minimizing hand contact, and he forbade close dancing. "You will always dance as if there is an inflated balloon between you and your partner," he said. He then demonstrated with his wife, who usually handled the 45 rpm records. I will never forget the sight of the two of them, whirling around the gymnasium--he in a double-breasted blue coat and silver ascot, she in something unmemorable--dancing as if they had a distinct disliking for each other.

If ice skating offers me a metaphor for essaying, then Mr. Schommer and his wife--and all of us on those Thursday evenings who were forced to imitate them--are a competing metaphor for the conventional research paper assignment. Urged to be objective, to efface any direct evidence of their relationship to the material, students dance at arm's
length to their topics, and as the distance grows so does the dislike for them. Asked to prove, rather than explore, students avoid the genuine conversation that comes with more intimate contact. Challenged to make original contributions to knowledge, to practice (pretend?) being scholars in the scientific tradition, students watch their feet in despair, hoping at least to do the right steps. While it is true that I learned how to do the box step this way, it was never a dance I appropriated with any understanding, or a dance I ever enjoyed.

I've advanced the argument in this book that it's time that we deflate the balloons. As an introduction to research, freshman should be encouraged to embrace their topics with wonder, passion, and a strong desire to find out, rather than to prove. Rather than pretending false authority, they should acknowledge their subjectivity, and by doing so they may discover what Michael did: a kind of objectivity that allows them to approach sources more openly.

I've proposed here that we shift the emphasis of our research paper pedagogy from the imitation of the traditional products academic discourse to an initiation in the process of inquiry: how to ask meaningful questions, resist quick judgements about what is true, and participate in a on-going conversation. I've tried to make the case that if the research assignment engages our students'
beliefs, feelings, and experiences, it is much more likely to entangle them in questions of identity, particularly the roles they see for themselves as students, writers, researchers, knowers.

These questions become even more compelling as students see themselves writing for a real audience, rather than an abstract or narrowly limited one, to whom they genuinely wish to communicate. And as they see their research as part of a rhetorical tradition that encourages a public discourse on matters of general concern, they discover that a commitment to their beliefs involves a social responsibility. By assuming their audience needs to be convinced that their research matters, students are challenged to put their topics—and their ideas about them—to the pragmatist's test: what difference will they make in people's lives?

I believe the research essay, not the traditional freshman research paper, will encourage these things. Simply renaming the assignment will not make much difference, obviously, and even changing some methods of instruction may not result in the kinds of papers and practices we hope for. As I asserted in an earlier chapter, the research paper is a genre captive to its history. It is laden with 19th century assumptions about the nature of academic research, has long been considered the untouchable centerpiece of composition's service obligation to other
disciplines, and has been a largely static fixture in composition textbooks for over 60 years.

Few things better remind me of the difficulty of dislodging inherited assumptions about the research paper genre than my work with high school teachers. While dislike of the assignment runs deep among these instructors, I often discover that the pleaders for euthanasia are among the formal research paper's biggest defenders. I'll never forget the indignation of one high school English department head--someone who earlier had bitterly complained about the quality of her students' research papers--after I handed out a copy of Kim's paper on New England gravestones. "This isn't a research paper," he sniffed. "This is--I don't know what this is. But it's too informal, it lacks scholarly detachment, it lacks an introduction with a thesis, a body, a conclusion. What are you people doing over there?"

What are we doing? We're trying to turn Toms into Hucks, teach students to skate backwards on thin ice, and deflate the balloons. I didn't have that answer at the time, of course. Next time, I will.


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- - -. Personal Interview. 7 April 1995.
- - -. Personal Interview. 19 April 1995.
- - -. Personal Interview. 26 April 1995.
- - -. Personal Interview. 12 May 1995.


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-- -. Personal Interview. 3 May 1995.

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Sullivan, Patricia. "Revising the Myth of the Independent


APPENDIX
The following questions are part of a study on student attitudes towards writing. Thanks for your willingness to participate.

I.

When you're given an assignment to write a research paper, what do you assume you're being asked to do? Describe below in a sentence or two.

A doctor's role in diagnosing an illness can be described as analogous to a mechanic trying to fix an engine, or a minister's role compared to tending sheep. What word or words—particularly what comparisons or analogies—would you use to describe your role as a writer of research papers?

II.

When you're given an assignment to write a research paper, which of the following do you generally assume about it? Check all that apply.

(a.) __I can't use "I"
(b.) __My information should come mostly from books
(c.) __I can use my own experiences and observations as evidence
(d.) __I have to know my thesis before I start
(e.) __I'm supposed to use my own opinions
(f.) __Summarizing what's known about the topic is most
important

(g.) __I have to try to say something original
(h.) __I need to follow a formal structure
(i.) __The instructor probably knows more than I do about the topic
(j.) __I can write in my own writing voice
(k.) __I'm writing exclusively for the instructor
(l.) __I'm supposed to make an argument
(m.) __The paper won't be revised substantially
(n.) __Form matters more than content
(o.) __It's okay to say things the instructor might disagree with
(p.) __I have to be objective

III.

When you read a book or article for your research paper, how do you tend to approach your sources? Mark your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

(a.) I believe in the truthfulness of the author.

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(b.) I look for primarily for information that supports my point of view.

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(c.) I question the author's claims.

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(d.) I question the author's facts.

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(e.) I take notes as I'm reading.

Strongly agree 3 4 5

(f.) I look mostly for good quotes.

Strongly agree 3 4 5

(g.) As I read I change my mind about what I think about my topic.

Strongly agree 3 4 5

(h.) I pay special attention to how the author disagrees with others I've read.

Strongly agree 3 4 5

(i.) I think about the author's (sometimes hidden) purposes in saying what he or she says?

Strongly agree 3 4 5

(j.) I judge an author's claims against my own experiences and observations.

Strongly agree 3 4 5

(k.) I evaluate an author based on my "gut feeling" about what kind of person he or she is.

Strongly agree 3 4 5

(l.) I ignore books and articles that are hard to read and understand

Strongly agree 3 4 5

IV.

How many research papers have you written in college so far? Circle the appropriate number.
none 1 2 3 4 5 more than 5

Personal information

Age:______________

Year: Fr So Jr Sn Gr Sp (circle one)

Sex: M  F

College:______________

Major:______________