Beyond the postmodern impasse of contemporary composition: The non-foundational alternative of Deweyan pragmatism

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BEYOND THE POSTMODERN IMPASSE
OF CONTEMPORARY COMPOSITION:
THE NON-FOUNDATIONAL ALTERNATIVE
OF DEWEYAN PRAGMATISM

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

September, 1996
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Date 7/1/96
DEDICATION

To my parents who gave me many advantages
and

to Mónica who has helped me achieve so much
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ABSTRACT

BEYOND THE POSTMODERN IMPOSSSE
OF CONTEMPORARY COMPOSITION:
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OF DEWEYAN PRAGMATISM

by

Donald C. Jones
University of New Hampshire, September, 1996

In their critique of the autonomous individual of foundationalism, postmodernists have rejected the epistemological assumption that a knower directly perceives reality in thought then expresses these perceptions through language. Yet as these theorists have asserted the influence of language upon an individual's thinking, they have been unable to explain an individual's agency - the ability to create, assert, examine, and maintain or modify a belief. Once considered to be situated in prior discourses, the individual has been conceived as a postmodern subject dominated by language. Yet the subject's ability to influence as well as be influenced by discursive practices has not been explained by postmodern theorists. An impasse has been reached as the previous explanation of an individual's agency has been rejected yet no tenable alternative has been advanced.

Within contemporary composition studies, this postmodern emphasis on language's influence upon thought has led to an epistemological divide between those writing pedagogies which are believed to assume an autonomous foundational author and those that acknowledge a writer's discursive position. Yet this divisive categorization risks rejecting the
valuable writing process practices of Donald Murray and Peter Elbow because their pedagogies have been miscast as individualistic, neo-Romantic expressivisms. Fortunately, a reconsideration of Murray’s and Elbow’s process pedagogies is already underway; Thomas Newkirk, Stephen Fishman, and others have started to articulate what Janet Emig first termed John Dewey’s “tacit tradition” within writing process theories. As this dissertation defends Murray and Elbow by reconceiving them as pragmatist composition theorists, this tacit tradition will resound in its relevance because Dewey’s pragmatic philosophy also draws a direction beyond the postmodern problem of agency.

Deweyan pragmatism can explain an individual’s agency — the ability to create, assert, examine, and maintain/or modify her beliefs — even as it acknowledges discursive influences upon those beliefs. By reconceiving such fundamental philosophic terms as experience, knowledge, and language, Dewey provides an alternative, non-foundational account of agency as well as a theoretical explanation of the best practices of writing process and postmodern composition instruction. This dissertation reconstructs and synthesizes writing process and postmodern pedagogies beyond the impasse over agency.
INTRODUCTION

No one has ever claimed it is easy to read John Dewey's most mature philosophical thought. As he tries to overcome philosophical problems that have confounded twentieth century thinkers, Dewey sometimes writes with the convoluted syntax of a nineteenth century man. Yet his prose is no more difficult to read than that of Jacques Derrida, and like this later, postmodern critic of foundationalism, Dewey disrupts and reconceives the very terms of the philosophic discussion.

In a witty criticism, Randolph Bourne once observed, "No man . . . with such universally important things to say . . . was ever published in forms more ingeniously contrived to thwart [public] interest." Dewey is never as fluid a writer as William James, but he was capable of passages of equal eloquence. He, for example, asserts, "[If nature were] a closed mechanical or closed teleological structure . . . the flickering candle of consciousness would go out" and "The saint sits in his ivory tower while the burly sinners run the world." Yet those who seek the philosophic importance of Dewey's writings must look on a larger scale than the sentence or the phrase. For Dewey reconceived such fundamental terms as experience, knowledge, and language in order to create a new, comprehensive framework for philosophy.

Once when Dewey was attending a gathering with several of his Columbia University students, someone complained about the difficulty of comprehending his philosophy. In response, Dewey gestured towards his
students and said, "Let some of these young men explain me: it will make a
career for some of them." The teller of this tale and one of Dewey's students,
Irwin Edman, then concludes: "It did." Edman, Sidney Hooks, and others
devoted their considerable careers to explaining the implications of Deweyan
pragmatism. I believe Dewey's value as a philosopher lies in the synergy of
the principles of his non-foundational thought; their whole exceeds their
parts. Yet, Dewey too often has been analyzed and applied in piecemeal
fashion, and the results can be disastrous as the example of progressive
education demonstrates.

Through the power of thought and text, I want to cross the distances
of time and place in order to join the circle of students to which Dewey left
his legacy to be determined. I want to consider the significance of the whole,
rather than a part, of Dewey's non-foundational philosophy in order to
resolve the epistemological problems that divide contemporary composition.
When I began writing this dissertation, my goal was not so ambitious; I
planned to use pragmatism to create an alternative perspective upon the
writing process theory of Donald Murray. Using Dewey, I wanted to disrupt
the predominant criticisms of Murray which present him as a neo-Romantic
"expressivist." Unlike most composition scholars, I had read some of
Dewey's educational philosophy before I encountered Murray's writing
process theory so I considered his composition theory from a different,
Deweyan viewpoint. Because I immediately discerned the pragmatism
implicit in his pedagogy, I resisted the neo-Romantic critiques. I believed they
distorted Murray's pragmatist principles, and the best aspects of his pedagogy
had to be defended since I found them to be very effective with first year
college students.
As I read about the pedagogical alternatives offered by Murray’s critics, I became both more confused and more committed to my dissertation topic because the specific practices advocated by these supposedly more social theorists resembled what I considered to be the most effective elements of Murray’s process pedagogy. As explained in chapter five, even the concept of writing as a process has been claimed by Murray’s critics as their own profound insight! I then realized a pragmatist synthesis of writing process and postmodern composition instruction was possible, and it was much needed if the best aspects of writing process and those of postmodern instruction were to be preserved. For postmodern theory can not explain the best practices of its own composition practitioners. In theory, postmodernists can not account for a writer’s agency. After critiquing the foundational concept of agency which taught student writers to think then write, postmodernists can not provide an alternative explanation of an individual’s ability to create, assert, examine, and maintain/or modify a belief. Once postmodernists declared the influence of discourse upon an individual’s thinking, they have not formulated a theory of how one can deliberately influence as well as be influenced by discursive practices. But Dewey has.

When I understood the postmodern problem of agency, my dissertation suddenly expanded from an impassioned, pragmatist defense of Murray’s process pedagogy to a Deweyan reconstruction of contemporary composition theory and practice. For Deweyan pragmatism can explain an individual’s agency — the ability to create, assert, examine, and maintain/or modify her beliefs — even as it acknowledges discursive influences upon those beliefs. Of course, what I intuited in a moment required months of reading and drafting be articulated in chapter three. In order to reconstruct
contemporary composition, I have ventured much further into several areas than I originally anticipated. Rather than begin a pragmatist defense of Murray with the discrepancies between his writing process theory and what his critics claim he states (now included in chapter four), I start by presenting the problem of agency and its importance to contemporary composition practices in chapter one. I link this theoretical impasse to the troubling practices of Lester Faigley’s and James Berlin’s postmodern pedagogies, then I examine the incomplete efforts by several theorists to overcome this problem.

In chapter two, I trace the path of this composition problem to its theoretical origins in structuralism and poststructuralism. I have limited my discussion of the postmodern theories of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault to the problem of agency, but I have relied upon existing scholarship to show that I am not the first person to discern the shortcomings of these theorists when they try to account for individual agency. I consider chapter three to be the most important one of this dissertation because Dewey reconceives the basic terms of philosophy and a reader’s failure to understand Dewey’s non-foundational reconception of philosophy thwarts the pragmatist reconstruction of writing process pedagogies in chapter four and its synthesis with postmodern composition instruction in chapter five. In chapter three, I establish the pattern of explaining Dewey’s reconception of experience, then knowledge, then language, and finally agency. Yet as I begin by asserting the primacy of experience, I have been careful to avoid presenting experience as a prior absolute, a first cause. Instead I stipulate, “Dewey’s concept of experience . . . cannot be comprehended fully until his concept of language is also understood.” In chapters four and five, I follow this sequence of Dewey’s reconceptions of experience, then knowledge, language, and agency in order
to reconstruct and synthesize writing process and postmodern composition instruction as a pragmatist pedagogy. In the final chapter, I am trying to present the pedagogical possibilities of a Deweyan composition course so that contemporary theorists and practitioners can follow this new direction beyond the problem of agency.
CHAPTER I

WHAT DO THE 'GOOD FENCES' ACROSS THE FIELD OF COMPOSITION STUDIES 'WALL OUT'? 

"Reform movements are notoriously ahistorical."
- - Lawrence Cremin

"John Dewey is everywhere in our work."
- - Janet Emig

Product. Process. Cognitive Research. Social Construction. Expressive. Epistemic. These labels, often paired in binary opposition, dominate too much of the recent history of composition studies. Like the "good fences" of Robert Frost's poem "Mending Wall," these taxonomic terms can be used to organize the field of composition. Yet we should not erect these barriers too readily, and we should never act as though they are set in stone. Like Frost's narrator, we need to pause and ponder his question: "Before I built a wall I'd ask to know/What I was walling in or walling out." When the complexity and the diversity within a category of composition theories are reduced to a single term, such as "product" or "current-traditional," then this discipline dismisses too much of its rich history. As the first sentence of *The Development of Writing Abilities* prophetically warns: "We classify at our peril" (1).

As recent reformers have announced their new directions for composition studies, they usually have erected these perilous fences and reduced the past to "a monolithic tradition" deserving dismissal (Meyers 154). For example, at the start of the modern writing process movement, Ken
Macrorie attacked those "deadly things called themes . . . [written with] a dehydrated academic tongue" to make a decisive break with the previous emphasis on the written product (vii). Donald Murray's 1972 article entitled "Teach Writing as a Process, not Product" provided the divisive slogan of this movement. When Janet Emig's *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* transformed the advances of writing process advocates into an agenda for cognitivist researchers, she likewise declared product-oriented writing instruction to be "pedagogically, developmentally, and politically an anachronism" (*Composing* 100, see Faigley *Fragments* 30).

By defining their new movement in opposition to a reductive, hence ahistorical, version of the past, writing process theorists replicated some of the very problems they sought to resolve. As product-oriented instruction ignored *how* the desired product was to be produced, writing process pedagogy initially concealed *what* the desired product was. As student writers learned "the way language works in us," Ken Macrorie assumed good writing would result from this "freeing . . . [of the students'] natural powers of language and perception" (*telling* 4, vii). These writers would write well *naturally*; no one would have to explain the desired features of the final draft. Students would not need to read the exemplary texts of published authors because, as Donald Murray declared, "process can not be inferred from product any more than a pig can be inferred from a sausage" (*Learning* 18). Subsequent warnings by Ann Berthoff and Thomas Newkirk to consider product and process dialectically, rather than dichotomously, have been heeded only slowly. 2

As cognitive researchers and social constructionists have announced their own successive reforms of composition studies, they too have reductively critiqued the predecessors against whom they have defined
themselves. Cognitivist theorists have conceived of writing process theories as entirely natural and spontaneous as they have presented a more mechanical and deliberate model of the composing process. To critique the writing process "metaphor of discovery," Linda Flower and John Hayes, two leading cognitivist researchers, have had to ignore Donald Murray's assertion that "a writer must plan and calculate, scheme and decide . . . make[e] a thousand executive decisions" (Flower and Hayes 21, A Writer 6). By countering the incomplete, language-centered writing process theories with a more mind-oriented, cognitive model, Flower, Hayes, and their colleagues have provided a useful schema of the factors that contribute to a writer's decisions. Unfortunately, they have been no more able than their writing process predecessors to explain the reasons a writer makes a particular decision during composing.

To explain a writer's particular decisions, social theorists argue that a writer's position within discourse communities must be considered because expectations for writing are socially constructed. Unlike their writing process predecessors who explain a writer composing within a large, implicit language group, social theorists emphasize the differences between smaller, explicitly distinguished discourse communities. David Bartholomae, for example, highlights the differences between academic and personal discourses in order to help disadvantaged student writers learn to "invent the university," to participate in the community of academic discourse(s) which is more compatible with the family language of their more privileged peers (134). Through this emphasis on diverse academic and cultural contexts, Bartholomae situates each writer in one or more discourse communities marked by power relations.

As Bartholomae and his colleagues take this "social turn" toward
"post-process, post-cognitive theory," James Berlin and Patricia Bizzell have 'walled out' too much of the complexity and the diversity of writing process and cognitive process theories (Trimbur 108, 109). In a series of influential analyses, Berlin criticizes the writing process concept of a writer because it slights the importance of language and "denies the place of the intersubjective, social processes" of composing (Rhetoric and Reality 146). Berlin contends that this concept of a writer depends on the expression, or the pressing out, of an "internal apprehension" of truth from a prior, absolute self so he categorizes writing process theories as "expressive" ("Contemporary Composition" 771).

From this questionable epistemological analysis, Berlin further argues that these individualistic composition theories can be "easily co-opted" by capitalism which, as a professed Marxist, he opposes ("Rhetoric and Ideology" 487). The writing process emphases, such as on originality and self-discovery, reinforce the capitalistic principles of initiative and personal responsibility. For example, when Peter Elbow advocates writing process techniques like freewriting to enable students to "take more control over their own lives" by "gain[ing] control over words," Berlin objects that this individualistic emphasis precludes the effective collaboration and cultural criticism necessary for true freedom (Writing Without Teachers vii). Yet Berlin's criticisms ignore the intersubjectivity suggested by writing process theorists. Elbow acknowledges a writer's transactional relationship with a reader when he asserts, "You can't give readers a finished product . . . any more than a playwright can send a live play through the mail," and freewriting assumes the influence of language upon an individual writer: "You stand out of the way and let the words be chosen by the sequence of the words themselves" (Writing 315, 16). Similar to Elbow, Donald Murray describes the
intersubjective quality of composing through his concept of a writer’s “other self” that anticipates the possible public responses to a text (Learning 167). Stephen Fishman and Lucille McCarthy recently have asserted that students in an “expressivist” classroom do collaborate to a much greater degree than Berlin ever recognizes (“Community” 71).

Because his theories of composing have been read reductively and dismissively, Peter Elbow opposes the label “expressivism.” He considers it to be a “hostilely motivated” term, originating with those who seem to want to “wipe out” writing process theorists (“Uses” 69 and 76, n. 16). I also reject the “expressivist” label as reductive, hence ahistorical, so I refer to Elbow and Murray as writing process theorists. I distinguish them from Linda Flower and John Hayes by referring to the latter as cognitive process theorists, a term taken from one of Flower and Hayes’ major articles entitled “A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing.” 3 Bizzell, like Berlin, faults both writing process and cognitive process theorists for being “inner-directed,” meaning they concentrate on a student’s presumed innate and universal language capabilities. Bizzell instead advocates “outer-directed” social theories that consider a student’s language-thinking capacities to be fostered by, and functioning within, particular discourse communities (“Cognition” 215). These “outer-directed” theorists emphasize the influences of, and the conflicts between, discrete discourse communities which process and cognitivist theorists minimize. They, therefore, deem no writer a modernist island, capable of detached, objective contemplation of the world beyond the self.

Because of their rejection of modernist assumptions, social theorists like Berlin, Bizzell, and Bartholomae are often labeled as postmodernists or poststructuralists. 4 As the term postmodernism itself suggests, these
theorists have shifted composition ‘away’ from more individualistic concepts of a writer who supposedly uses language for self-expression. Yet at this supposed critical distance ‘after’ writing process and cognitive process theories, these theorists still position themselves by referring ‘back’ to the rejected beliefs of modernism found in their reductive criticisms. Like their predecessors, these postmodern theorists have positioned themselves in relation to what they are moving away from as much as towards, and this retrospective critique has led contemporary composition into what another leading social theorist, Lester Faigley, terms the “postmodern impasse” (Fragments 20). This apparently unresolvable problem involves an individual’s agency, the ability of a speaker or writer to create and assert certain beliefs. This impasse, as its etymology suggests, leaves a postmodern writer in a theoretical ‘blind alley’ from which no advance, or even regress, seems possible.

The Postmodern Impasse

Postmodernists oppose the autonomous individual of modernism because, as structuralists and poststructuralists, they believe the individual is situated within prior discourses. They indicate this opposition by referring to the ‘individual’ as the ‘subject’ (Berlin “Poststructuralism” 18). The postmodern usage of this word, however, often conflates its original meaning of a subordinate person (from the Latin subjectus: sub - under; jectus - thrown) with the concept of the sovereign self it is supposed to oppose, as in “poststructuralists have systematically deconstructed all received notions of the subject” (Burke 106, Martin Jay qtd. by Burke 106). This paradoxical usage typifies the complexity of a postmodern subject being situated in prior discourses.

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When the subject is situated "among many competing discourses that precede the subject," Faigley cautions, "the notion of 'participation' becomes problematic in its implication that the subject can control its location and moves within a discourse" (Fragments 226-27). This questioning of an individual's ability to control his or her position within various discourses raises the perplexing issue of agency for postmodern theorists. Unlike Kenneth Burke's use of this term in his theory of the pentad where it refers to the means used to achieve a desired end, agency, for postmodernists, relates to their concern whether individuals have any control over their means and ends. As Rebecca Howard explains,

"It has become commonplace for rhetoricians to engage in the question of agency in the subject . . . . Can writers control their writing processes or are their writing processes -- and indeed the writers themselves -- constructed by their cultural settings? (349)

In his award winning Fragments of Rationality, Faigley reluctantly assumes the latter, at least, in theory. And, because he assumes "the subject is an effect rather than the cause of discourse," the postmodern concept of subjectivity becomes a debilitating pun (9). An individual writer must be conceived as an object 'subjected' to the dominant, and dominating, discourses that determine the beliefs formed and asserted (Fragments 139). Yet, as Faigley himself admits, this theoretical conclusion is contradicted by his own reading of several students' essays in which he grants them some agency. After Faigley analyzes their texts, he asserts these students are "more aware of how agency can be constructed from multiple subject positions than are many theorists" (224). Because postmodern theory cannot adequately account for the practices of successful writers, contemporary composition instructors face an impasse, a 'blind alley' from which we currently know not where to turn.
in theory or in practice. The current confusion over a writer's relationship with language must be resolved because it has created the pedagogical extremes of a postmodern denial of student writers' thoughts and an uncritical acceptance of their every word.

Agency and Authority in the Postmodern Classroom

Because they locate individual writers within prior discourse, Faigley and Berlin have made some troubling assumptions about what composition students can, and should do, with language. Some instructors, like Faigley, revel in the fact that their students are inscribed by language, and they celebrate this inscription without sufficiently questioning it. Other instructors, such as Berlin, revile the influence of the dominant discourses upon students, and they oppose the hegemonic culture with revolutionary alternatives. Unfortunately, these postmodern practices have questionable consequences for the agency of students and the authority of the instructor.

To oppose the foundational concepts of language as neutral and of individuals as autonomous, Faigley advocates the "the achieved utopia of the networked classroom," but the actual results are far from ideal (Fragments 163). As explained in Fragments, Faigley replaces the conventional class discussion with electronic mail exchanges to produce a collective text. These fragmentary, simultaneous comments, Faigley contends, disrupt "the conventions of turn-taking and topical coherence" that he incorrectly associates with all oral discussions (168). By claiming that every conventional classroom discussion consists of a linear pattern of teacher to student and student to teacher, Faigley tries to ascribe the success of some of these exchanges to their medium, the electronic forum (180). He, however, ignores the productive, decentered dialogues that the best conventional classroom
conversations can foster in order to advance his electronic alternative.

The transcript of the first exchange concerning gender roles shows that some students do "negotiate . . . [different] meanings with other students" and "try on and exchange identities . . . even from one message to the next" (185, 191, and see 170-78). Yet the computer network cannot be entirely responsible for these successes if it does not preclude other failures. In what Faigley initially terms his "worst" computer conversation, his students resist any meaningful discussion then resort to intolerant invective and inflexible opinions in order to avoid critical thought and constructive engagement (192-7). One student, self-identified as "armpit," comments, "isn't this so fun. let's not talk about the reading!!" and another denounces a classmate as "a FEMALE cha[u]vinist pig" (193, 195). Despite the claims to the contrary, this utopia has not been achieved. Faigley frankly admits the failure of these students and others to negotiate their different discursive practices, but his zeal for these computer conversations makes him lapse into a relativism which undermines his students' agency (189).

Not only do these students fail to develop the agency with which to articulate, defend, and modify their beliefs, but their instructor denies his own agency as well by abrogating his authority. Rather than address his students' unproductive and even objectionable discussion or take some credit for the much better exchange by another class, Faigley demurs, "I cannot defend these labels [for the 'worst' and 'best' discussions] because in both classes students claimed and used classroom space for their own purposes" (197)! The postmodern concept of language as endless signification apparently makes Faigley leery of interrupting the flashing display of electronic messages. He tolerates the unexamined opinions of students like those identified by the self-selected pseudonyms of "A. Hitler" and "armpit"
He also overlooks the crucial catalysts provided by a teaching assistant, JoAnn Campbell, during the "best" conversation; her provocative questions stimulate several of the most productive exchanges (169, 178). By his failure to question the students' objectionable assumptions and provoke insightful responses, Faigley fulfills his own postmodern skepticism about individual agency.

Through this enervating relativism, Faigley's networked classroom duplicates a weakness found within some writing process theories. Like Ken Macrorie in one of his first texts entitled Uptought, Faigley encourages "the sensational rush over the considered response" as James Vopat presciently warned at the inception of the modern writing process movement (42). This common problem again suggests that writing process and postmodern theories are not as mutually exclusive as Berlin, and Faigley himself, contend. 5

Rather than abrogate a postmodern composition instructor's authority, James Berlin aggrandizes it as he tries to resolve the impasse over agency in practice. In Berlin's experimental course, his postmodern assumptions require an instructor to ultimately dominate the students, and their passivity prevents the development of any agency as writers. "Given the ubiquitous role of discourse in human affairs," Berlin reasons, "instructors cannot be content to focus exclusively on teaching the production of academic texts . . . . We must take as our province the production and reception of semiotic codes" ("Poststructuralism" 24). As explained in "Poststructuralism, Cultural Studies, and the Composition Classroom," Berlin "refigures English studies along the lines of cultural studies" by engaging his students in collaborative learning sequences (26). Using the principles of deconstruction, Berlin teaches his students to identify the ever shifting binary oppositions within
texts and to consider the consequences of privileging, for example, masculine
over feminine in a tacit hierarchy (see 26-32).

Through this identification of these implicit values, Berlin hopes, "students who can demystify the subtle devices of persuasion in these cultural codes will be motivated to begin" participating in the development of "more democratic and personally humane economic, social, and political arrangements" (27). Although Berlin explicitly states, "students do not always submit to these codes," he conceives of the dominant discourses as an oppressive obstacle which students must overcome (30). He expects his students to "challenge the dominant ideological formations" and to "resist and negotiate these hegemonic [cultural] codes" (26, 27). When most of these students' experiences are considered products of the dominant ideology, this rhetoric of resistance, however, leads to a postmodern form of paralysis. The desired resistance against the hegemonic culture deprives these students of enough background knowledge with which to consider specific assertions.

As these students are deprived the necessary background for individual agency, Berlin believes the postmodern instructor must "problematize" the cultural codes that "students bring to college by placing their signifying practices against alternatives" (31). Alan France, another postmodern composition theorist, makes explicit that these alternatives are provided by the instructor; he advocates the use of "principled critical intervention" to correct a student's naive view concerning, for example, the purposes of imprisonment (550). This imposition by a supposedly neutral, non-authoritarian instructor, however, interferes with the continuing process of learning for the sake of an immediate product. When Berlin and France demand students challenge the dominant ideology, these students often resist not the privileged discourses, but their composition instructor.
According to Bizzell, Berlin's experimental course fails to achieve its stated goals. When Berlin, for example, "asks students to deconstruct dominant ideologies on relations between the sexes . . . [they] hold firmly to the ideologies they are supposed to question. [Both female and male students] defend prostitution as a woman's right to make money any way she sees fit" (Bizzell "Beyond" 670)! Like Bizzell, I believe the bitter medicine of this postmodern pedagogy is too much for Berlin's students to swallow. Resistance against presumably oppressive discursive practices requires most students to doubt too much of their previous knowledge. As Bizzell explains, many students have already experienced this pervasive skepticism "in the [mass media's] hip smirk of passive detachment . . . and they don't like it" ("Beyond" 671). Quoting Jackson Lears, she adds, students dislike this postmodern suspension of belief because, on some level, many already comprehend the consequences of uncommitted skepticism: "blase self-containment" (qtd. in "Beyond" 671).

As these postmodern instructors abrogate or aggrandize their authority, their students have difficulty developing the agency with which one asserts, examines, defends, and revises one's beliefs. Because of these pedagogical problems, other postmodern and feminist theorists have addressed and begun to resolve this impasse over agency. These partial solutions mean that this quandary, in both theory and practice, can and should be avoided.

Some New (and Old) Directions beyond the Impasse

To avoid this impasse over agency, the premises of postmodernism that created it need to be reconsidered. In contrast to the dichotomy assumed by structuralist and most poststructuralist theorists, Mikhail Bakhtin creates an alternative, dialectical relationship between society and the individual. As
Don Bialostosky explains in “Liberal Education, Writing, and the Dialogic Self,” Bakhtin’s concept of the dialogic self describes an individual who can develop the agency of forming “internally persuasive discourse” which Bakhtin distinguishes from “authoritative discourse.” The latter discourse creates a distance between rhetor and audience; it is to be received and repeated without question. Internally persuasive discourse, in contrast, is neither self-validating, nor self-generated. It is instead, “half-ours, half-someone else’s . . . . it organizes masses of our words from within and does not remain in an isolated and static condition . . . . it enters into interanimating relationships with new contexts” (Bakhtin qtd. Bialostosky 15). This discourse creates contact between speaker and listener, writer and reader; it responds to what has been or may be said by others.

In contrast to postmodern theories of discourse in which they are believed to “contain within them all the possibilities of utterances,” Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia gives an individual voice only their "occasions and provocations" (Bialostosky 19, 20). Our identities form and continue forming through our dialogue with others and among our own varied discourses; thus, the self is dialogic. As an individual deliberately selects and tests “new [discursive] ways of seeing and saying,” agency can be developed (17). In order to develop agency, student writers need to be protected temporarily from the cacophony of the competing viewpoints, lest they become overwhelmed by authoritative discourse. Yet to be able to participate in the ongoing dialogue, student writers need to listen to “some sample of its voices;” their voices depend upon “whom they have heard of and whom they have heard out” (21, 14). Yet Bakhtin’s theory of “internally persuasive discourse” does not offer a complete account of individual agency because he assumes that every voice is equally available for the student writer to hear. Bakhtin does
acknowledge the ideological import of discourse, but he does not address the marginalization of certain discourses examined by Michel Foucault in his historical studies of discursive practices and power relations. The dialogic self cannot anticipate and respond to voices unheard.

To hear voices silenced by the dominant discourses, the radical educators Ira Shor, Henry Giroux, and Nan Elsasser advocate Paulo Freire's theory of critical literacy. This literacy program affirms the students' own experiences and deconstructs the discursive practices that marginalize certain voices. Its goal is critical consciousness, the awareness that language constitutes, not merely names, a particular cultural 'reality' and each person is a dialectical participant in the existing social order and can be an agent in its reform. In Freire’s native Brazil, the peasants in this program learned they had the agency with which to voice their desires for democratic equality. In the United States, Linda Shaw Finlay and Valerie Faith have adapted Freire’s critical literacy to help underachieving college students overcome their unproductive assumptions about language and writing. These students developed a critical awareness of their participation and potential agency within the discursive formation of their cultural 'reality' (75). Yet this pedagogical success surpasses its theoretical origin. For Freire, the fruition of his students' critical literacy comes when they realize the dominant, capitalist ideology is a distortion of the true reality revealed by Marxism (Bizzell "Marxist" 64). Yet for Finlay and Faith, their students' agency is not measured by their commitment to Marxism.

A third and final example of a partial resolution of the postmodern impasse is the feminist theorist Dale Bauer's revision of postmodern agency to include more than the resistance theorized by Foucault and sought in practice by Berlin. In addition to critiquing the dominant discourse and
conceiving of alternatives, Bauer believes students need to learn "how to belong, how to identify, as well as how to resist" if they are to accept alternatives, such as her own feminist principles (391). Based on Kenneth Burke's rhetorical theory, Bauer encourages her students to engage in "identificatory readings" of feminist literary texts (391). Through this process of identification, an individual faces a decisive confrontation between two previously accepted values, and Bauer hopes, an individual learns to adopt the alternatives conceived through critical consciousness. Yet by disavowing any closure to her feminist composition course, Bauer mitigates the agency she theorizes and teaches. She claims, "These classes, indeed perhaps feminist pedagogy and rhetoric in general, end ambivalently: these disrupted values or assumptions are not occasions for reconstituting consciousness into clear categories of . . . good and bad politics" (394). Like Faigley in his networked classroom, Bauer lapses into an enervating relativism that precludes much of a collaborative effort for greater gender equality against continuing patriarchal dominance; she hesitates before imposing her desired alternatives which Berlin risks.

Although each of these reconsiderations of postmodernism impasse avoids some of the theoretical premises of the current impasse (the dichotomy of society and the individual, the silencing of alternative voices, and the paralyzing emphasis on resistance), none creates a complete account of agency. Nor does there seem to be any recourse to previous composition theories of agency. If Berlin's and Bizzell's criticisms of writing process and cognitive process theories are accepted, then any possible regress away from this impasse along these previous approaches has been blocked. Fortunately, an even older blueprint of the postmodern impasse already exists, one that will allow contemporary theorists to recover that which is valuable from
dismissed writing process and cognitive process theories as well as redirect composition studies.

"From that which is rejected"

Postmodernist theorists -- as they currently influence contemporary composition -- cannot direct any advance beyond the impasse over agency because they "take [their] clew . . . from that which is rejected" rather than "positively and constructively . . . [developing their own philosophy]" (Dewey Experience and Education 20 and see Newkirk more 187). In Experience and Education, John Dewey specifically offers this caution to progressive educators who never implemented fully, or even seemed to understand completely, his pedagogical principles. When considered in the larger context of Dewey's pragmatic philosophy, this criticism reveals the source of the postmodern impasse. As these social theorists critique the modernist author specifically and foundationalism in general, they have "take [their] clew . . . from that which is [to be] rejected." Deweyan pragmatism, in contrast, can provide a theoretical account of individual agency because this philosophy has been "positively and constructively" developed.

Until recently, the academic and political marginalization of pragmatism after Dewey's death has prevented many contemporary readers from realizing the full relevance of this non-foundational philosophy. Yet, like the literary theorist Giles Gunn, I believe that Deweyan pragmatism will prove to be the "most intellectually resilient American response to the quicksands and carapaces of cultural postmodernism" as well as, I will add, the impasse over agency within contemporary composition (7). Through his pragmatist reconstruction of foundational philosophies, Dewey identifies and replaces the false dualisms of society and the individual, language and
thought, and structure and agency which have trapped modernist, structuralist, and postmodernist thinkers. By reconstructing these false dualisms, this dialectical philosophy provides a coherent conceptual system that can guide contemporary composition beyond the postmodern impasse. This redirection of contemporary composition based on Deweyan pragmatism is already underway — although very quietly.

In 1980, Janet Emig identified Dewey as one of several seminal thinkers whose "tacit tradition[s]" within composition needed to be fully articulated (Michael Polyani qtd. on 150). Thomas Newkirk has continued this gradual realization by asserting, "Dewey articulated many of the cardinal principles of the writing process" (more 206). Newkirk explains the following pragmatist precepts using numerous quotations of Dewey: "the constructive model of thought; the primacy of experience; the social nature of learning; the relationship of classroom learning to democratic values," and these principles are related, by a few references, to James Britton, Donald Murray, Donald Graves, C. H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon (more 206). Without further analysis of these writing process advocates, this insightful explication of Dewey's relevance, however, has been overwhelmed by critics of writing process theorists. This dissertation, therefore, will redress these criticisms as part of its larger project to redirect contemporary composition.

Recently, Stephen Fishman has extended Newkirk's careful reading of Dewey with a detailed analysis of Elbow's writing process theory. Like Newkirk, Fishman believes that "the Deweyan tradition" provides the "philosophic roots" of modern writing process theories ("Explicating" 316). After examining Dewey's conceptions of education, community, and perception, he applies these concepts to the example of one student named Ramona engaging in peer response and multiple draft revision. Fishman's
article and other recent essays co-authored with Lucille McCarthy do not articulate, and probably cannot within the limited length of journal articles, Dewey's thorough non-foundational reconstruction of philosophy and its problematic terms. This dissertation, therefore, will extend the efforts by Emig, Newkirk, Fishman, and others to articulate the tacit tradition of Deweyan pragmatism within writing process theories.

I consider the postmodern impasse of agency to be one of those primarily theoretical problems that, I hope, will soon be seen in retrospect with incredulity. This problem will some day seem as distant and ridiculous as the apocryphal story of three Cartesian philosophers trying to determine the number of teeth in a horse's mouth. The first two were devout rationalists, faithfully trying to deduce the correct number from various first principles. The third, a more secular character, was looking out a window disinterestedly until he saw an actual horse in the courtyard. Suddenly he suggested, "Why don't we open the horse's mouth and count the teeth inside?" The first two Cartesians quickly dismissed this absurd suggestion and returned to their deductions from absolute principles. Although the third philosopher soon lapsed into unknown reveries, the inductive thinking based on empirical details represented by his suggestion was to transform Europe during the Enlightenment. Yet within this admittedly apocryphal story, the first two rationalists cannot conceive of actually counting the horse's teeth even after it has been suggested to them.

As shown in this introduction, the theoretical problem of the postmodern impasse does influence the practices of contemporary composition. Like the rationalism of these apocryphal philosophers, postmodern theory influences the problems considered significant and the solutions deemed conceivable by many contemporary composition theorists.
It is my hope that this study will lead not only to a better historical understanding of composition’s recent past, but in the spirit of Deweyan reconstruction of knowledge, this project will also look towards this discipline’s future beyond the postmodern impasse. A future, I want to demonstrate, in which the supposedly contradictory pedagogies of writing process and social epistemic instruction can be even more than “good neighbors.” Using Deweyan pragmatism, I plan to dismantle rather than rebuilt again the divisive boundary between these two pedagogies so student writers can learn to achieve greater non-foundational agency.
1. Taxonomic terms can make useful distinctions. For example, James Britton and his co-authors created the categories of expressive, poetic, or transactional writing to serve as "a possible means towards [greater] understanding" (198). The reduction, however, of these distinctions to formulaic assignments — explicitly opposed by the authors — demonstrates the perils of classification (198). Reductive labels are often applied when a new theory of writing is advanced. For example, when Daniel Fogarty wanted to trace the "roots of a new rhetoric" in 1959, he coined the term "current traditional" which many have applied to the nineteenth century theories of Barrett Wendell, John Genung, and A. S. Hill (118). Hill certainly seems to deserve this label when he does not require rhetoric to "furnish[!] a person with something to say . . . [only] how best to say [it]" (The Principles of Rhetoric qtd. in Young 29). Yet Hill also defies this categorization when he insists that students should not "hide [their] poverty of thought in [the] finish of style" (Our English 89). He seems positively progressive when he laments the "dreary" language of themes and advocates self-selected topics so students can "put forth their full powers" in "free and natural expression" (96, 93). The 'current-traditional' category not only treats Hill, Genung, and Wendell in a reductive manner, but as Lucille Schultz also objects, this label has obscured the diversity of nineteenth century writing instruction (10).

2. In The Making of Meaning (1981), Ann Berthoff warns, "Teaching process does not require that we ignore the product, only that we see it as a dynamic result, a coming into being" (22). In more than stories (1989), Thomas Newkirk similarly asserts that although Donald Murray "has written that we cannot infer the process from the product, 'a pig from a sausage.' My guess is that we do this all the time" (180).

3. In contrast to Berlin, Susan Jarratt considers the advances and the complexities of writing process theories in her article "Feminism and Composition: The Case for Conflict" published in Contending With Words.

4. Like its theory of meaning, the term postmodernism itself is unstable and heteroglossic. As Lester Faigley explains so well in the introduction of Fragments of Rationality, postmodernism can refer to three metadiscourses about 1) literature and art, 2) philosophy, and 3) the social history of capitalism (6). Within contemporary composition, postmodernism is often used as the preferred synonym for poststructuralism, yet postmodernism is a broader term that includes both the structuralist and poststrucualist critiques of modernism (see chapter one).
5. Faigley's abrogated authority and his students' attenuated agency stem in part from his conflation of the networked classroom's collective text and the "multiple agencies and origins" of discourse identified by Derrida ("Freud" 226). This collective text written by multiple students is not the same as the "overlapping and competing discourses" in which each student is situated (16). Thus, the technology of Faigley's electronic discussions can no more guarantee each student will confront and critique their fragmented and contradictory subjectivity than a stimulating conventional classroom conversation can prevent it. In his otherwise penetrating survey of postmodernism, Faigley fails to question the paradox of the networked classroom: in lieu of direct oral interactions, Faigley advocates the technological separation of subjects because it fosters more human contact between them.

In a subsequent chapter, Faigley includes the following quotation by the postmodernist thinker Jean Baudrillard: "Just look at the child sitting in front of his computer at school; do you think he has been made interactive, opened up to the world? Child and machine have been merely joined together in an integrated circuit" (qtd. on 209). Yet he fails to consider this telling quotation in relation to his own networked classroom. Although Faigley connects postmodernism to late capitalism's hyperreality, his enthusiasm for these electronic discussions is uncharacteristically uncritical and apolitical. For example, he also states, "Networked writing displaces the modernist conception of writing as hard work aimed at producing an enduring object. Acts of networked writing are most often quickly produced, quickly consumed, and quickly discarded" without questioning the desirability of this postmodern perspective (191).

6. Fishman also notes recent studies by John Trimbur, David Russell, and Louise W. Phelps that examine Deweyan pragmatism as one of several influences on contemporary composition studies.
CHAPTER II

BEYOND THE POSTMODERN IMPASSE:
REJECTING THE CLUES OF FOUNDATIONALISM

"There is always the danger in a new movement that in rejecting the aims and methods of that it would supplant, it may develop its principles negatively... Then it takes its clew... from that which is rejected instead of from the constructive development of its own philosophy." - - John Dewey

"The concept of the author is never more alive than when pronounced dead." - - Seán Burke

Like a hiker backtracking to find a missed turn, contemporary composition theorists need to retrace the steps that have brought them to the postmodern impasse over agency. As structuralist and poststructuralist theorists have critiqued foundationalism, they have identified the theoretical path they no longer want to follow, yet they have been unable to reach a tenable theory of non-foundational agency. I, therefore, refer to these thinkers as postmodern anti-foundationalists. The findings of their incomplete critique too often have been repeated without question or rejected out of hand. Roland Barthes' seminal structuralist essay, for example, has "been accepted unreflexively [by its supporters]... without [having his] arguments... held up to any critical scrutiny," or "it has seldom provoked more than derisory dismissal from its opponents" (Burke 21). A careful and rigorous retracing of the structuralist and poststructuralist critiques of foundationalism by Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault, however, will reveal their missteps towards the postmodern
impasse and the possible pragmatist recourse beyond this predicament.

Structuralist and poststructuralist theorists have undermined the foundationalist concept of agency by questioning the foundational concepts of reality, knowledge, and language upon which it depends. Foundationalists, from Plato to John Locke, have believed that thought precedes language because thought is assumed to be a direct and unmediated apprehension of an antecedent and ultimate reality. The mind, Richard Rorty explains, is conceived according to an ocular analogy. Just as the body's eye perceives physical appearances, the mind is believed to 'see' this prior reality (38). If a knower passively perceives an antecedent reality, then it is not altered by being known, and knowledge is not affected by its expression. Thought represents reality, and language represents thought. According to this representational theory, language is a neutral, transparent medium for the expression of thought. A word in language is believed to have one-to-one correspondence with an aspect of reality.

Although modernist writers, such as Ernest Hemingway, doubt the foundational reality has stable order, they still believe an individual is capable of autonomous, objective contemplation of the chaotic world beyond the self. For example, in A Moveable Feast, Hemingway presents himself as the expatriate in Paris who writes in unheated garrets or in uncrowded cafes. The scene of his writing is one of physical isolation, and each day it begins by "writ[ing] the truest sentence that you know .... start[ing] with the first true simple declarative sentence" (12). The problem with this depiction of composing is that it makes "transcription a synecdoche of writing" (Brodkey 398). It treats one part, the writing down of words, as though it represents the whole of composing; it suppresses the social aspects of composing that
influence a writer even as he or she is physically isolated from others. Based on these foundational conceptions of reality, thought, and language, student writers have been instructed to 'think then write,' and the composing process has been limited to thinking, perhaps outlining, then writing.

Structuralist theorists, such as Ferdinand de Saussure and Claude Lévi-Strauss, have rejected these foundational concepts and have sought to supplant them with postmodern alternatives. De Saussure, for example, has challenged the assumed transparency and the neutrality of language by reconceiving words as arbitrary signs. According to structuralism, these signs consist of a signifier and a signified, and they function within a contextual network. Each sign is meaningful because of its difference, its contrast with other signs. A spoken or written signifier suggests a signified based on these differential relationships, not because of its direct correspondence to a particular aspect of foundational reality. Lévi-Strauss has analyzed the systematic pattern of oppositions found in myths, narratives, and languages. These binary oppositions, he argues, not only influence the assertion of meaning but also the very development of meaning, consciousness, and identity. A writer, therefore, does not simply express an original idea after an acute perception of reality. Developed in opposition to foundationalism, structuralism has successfully critiqued the previous concept of agency. Unfortunately, it also leads to the current impasse as Jacques Lacan and Roland Barthes demonstrate.

Using Freud's analysis of dreams, Jacques Lacan denies that self-reflexive agency can be achieved. As shown by dreams, language involves the condensation and displacement of meaning on an unconscious level. The speaking subject enters a social position through language, yet the
unconscious distortions of meaning prevent this location from being critically self-examined. The translated title of a 1957 article by Lacan epitomizes the problematic implications of the structuralist critique: "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconsciousness, or Reason Since Freud" because, within this title, agency is not even ascribed to the individual, but to the "letter[s]" of language. This postmodern skepticism towards individual consciousness becomes absolute when Roland Barthes executes this modernist theory of authorship in his seminal essay appropriately entitled "The Death of the Author."

Because he assumes the structuralist axiom that "it is language which speaks, not the author," Barthes' argument ultimately goes astray, yet this misdirection suggests an alternative premise essential to a tenable theory of non-foundational agency (50). To execute the modernist author upon whom a conventional critic depends for textual closure, Barthes employs a twofold argument. First, he "suppress[es] the author in favor of writing" meaning language, and second, he "restor[es] . . . the reader's place" (50). To suppress the modernist concept of authorship, Barthes asserts,

We now know that a text consists not of a line of words, releasing a single 'theological' [or absolute] meaning (the 'message' of the author-God), but of a multi-dimensional space in which are married and contested several writings, none of which is original: the text is a fabric of quotations, resulting from a thousand sources of culture . . . . [a writer's] sole power is to mingle writings. (52-53)

Through this structuralist reconception of the text, Barthes reduces the significance the modernist author. If "a text consists of multiple writings," then a writer merely quotes and "mingles" many prior "sources of culture" (54). Through this reversal of the foundational precedence of the individual knower/writer to language, Barthes tries to restore the reader's relevance to
textual interpretaton. He argues, the "site where this multiplicity is collected . . . is not the author, as has hitherto been claimed, but the reader" (54). It is the reader/critic who creates an interpretation. Yet as a critique of the modernist author, of definitive textual criticism, and ultimately, of foundationalism, Barthes' argument "take[s its] clew" from the foundational conception of writers and readers as two distinct entities -- only one of whom produces meaning. It is this foundational clue that leads Barthes astray.

When Barthes tries to de-emphasize the privileged writer, he assumes he "must reverse the myth: the birth of the reader must be requited by the death of the Author" (55). Because Barthes has not rejected the foundational conception of writers and readers, he tries to "reverse" the hierarchy which privileges the writer. He overlooks New Criticism's previous methodological exclusion of the author, such as by the intentional fallacy, and creates an ominpotent author capable of absolute meaning. Then Barthes can employ the structuralist conception of language to execute the author and restore the reader. As Seán Burke notes, Barthes "does not so much destroy the 'Author-God', but participates in its construction. He must create a king worthy of the killing" (26). This argument, however, depends upon Barthes' flawed analogy between an author and an omnipotent God.

Unlike the Christian concept of God, there are alternative theories of authorship with which it is possible "without contradiction, to conceive of authors . . . who do not hold a univocal mastery over their texts," such as Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic concept of the self (Burke 25). Yet Barthes does not consider any of these alternatives, and this failure has a tragic effect on his stated desire of seeing the reader reborn. When Barthes wields the stucturalist concept of language to kill the "Author-God," he announces, the reader is the
very space in which are inscribed, without any of them being "lost, all of the
citations out of which a writing is made; the unity of a text is not in its
origins but in its destination, but this destination can no longer be personal;
the reader is . . . only that someone who holds . . . all of the traces from which
writing is constituted" (54). Yet, due to the structuralist priority of language
to an individual, the reader which Barthes hopes to deliver from the grasp of
the "Author-God" is stillborn. Instead of being the passive recipient of a
modernist's author text, Barthes' reader is a receptive destination point for
the system of language and its individual utterance.

By placing both the writer and the reader within a prior language
system, Barthes denies both any agency; each becomes a passive conduit of
discourse. Barthes' misstep reveals that an adequate account of agency must
include a transactional conception of writers and readers as well as a
Bakhtinian dialectic between these individuals and their society's language. If
Barthes had considered another, less divine, concept of authorship, he could
have conceived of a collaborative relationship between a writer and a reader
which grants both limited agency within a language system. Yet in order to
conceive of such collaborative agency, Barthes cannot accept "that which is [to
be] rejected."

As postmodernist thinkers, such as Jacques Derrida and Michel
Foucault, have furthered the structuralist critique of foundationalism, their
partial successes and ultimate failures again can be retraced in order to avoid
the postmodern impasse. Foucault furthers his predecessors' criticisms of
modernism by subjecting structuralism itself to discursive analysis. He
realizes one's "terms and concepts . . . are always bound up with the signifying
processes [they set] out to analyse" (Norris 9). Foucault, therefore, analyzes
discursive practices as cultural products rather than as the universal system imagined by structuralists. If one's discursive practices are historically contingent, then individual knowledge is even less of an direct description of foundational reality. Despite this provocative revision of structuralism and its critique of foundationalism, these two leading postmodernist thinkers have not "develop[ed their own] principles," as Dewey warns, "positively and constructively" enough to avert contemporary composition's impasse over agency.

Jacques Derrida and Absolute Absence

Like Freire's critical literacy, Derrida's deconstructive strategy tries to make resistance possible against the dominant ideology. The strategy of deconstruction begins with the identification of binary oppositions; for example, Derrida deconstructs foundationalism by examining "the opposition of presence and absence" (Grammatology 143). He refers to foundationalism as "the metaphysics of presence" because in this epistemology, one's inherent identity or 'self-present-ness' is assumed to be demonstrated by one's individual consciousness or 'inner voice.' This initial assumption of one's self-presence leads to the parallel assumption of a foundational reality when the apparent relationship between identity and voice is transferred to that of reality and mind. Just as the individual self is assumed to be manifested by consciousness, so too is an absolute reality believed to be revealed by one's thoughts (Crowley Teacher's 2-3).

After identifying this binary opposition between presence and absence, Derrida employs the second tactic of deconstruction; he reintroduces the marginalized supplement which, in this case, is writing. Within the
foundational metaphysics of presence, writing is believed to be the mere transcription of speech which, in turn, is considered the expression of an individual's prior thoughts. Yet Derrida warns, "writing is dangerous from the moment that representation there [in writing] claims to be presence and the sign of the thing in itself" (Grammatology 144). By "presence," Derrida means the self-presentation of the author "there" in the text using words conceived of as "sign[s] of the thing in itself" according to a representational theory of language. Writing disrupts the untenable hierarchy of presence over absence because, Derrida argues, writing functions not through a writer's presence but by her or his absence.

As Derrida explains in "Signature Event Context," his concept of absence does not just refer to the delayed presence of the reader or the prior presence of the author in relation to the text (179). Instead he insists, a text communicates when "the mark that [the writer] abandons . . . continues to produce effects independently of his presence" (177). Writing functions as the writer disappears into language, for writing "is a mark which remains, which is not exhausted in the present of its inscription, and which can give rise to an iteration both in the absence of and beyond the presence of [the author]" (181). In other words, the possible chain of signifiers extends beyond the moment of a text's composition. Like de Saussure, Derrida conceives language as a differential network of signs in which signifiers only refer to each other. Derrida states, "[language is] a system of differences in which each unit is constituted in reference to [another signifier]" ("Discussion" 8). De Saussure's differential network of signs becomes Derrida's "differance" in which he puns on the meaning of the French verb "differer" - - 'to differ' and 'to defer.' Language functions not only as signs that differ from each other, but also as
they defer, or delay, any certainty of meaning.

Using the multiple definitions of the word "communication," Derrida demonstrates this "differance" to show a word does not possess one "unique, univocal, rigorous controllable, and transmittable" meaning ("Signature" 172). Nor does context completely narrow a word's "polysemic aspects" because context itself "is never entirely determinable" since it is inferred from the separate, polysemic words that comprise a text (173, 175). With this possibility of multiple iterations and endless signification within a non-representational theory of language, the foundational metaphysics of presence collapses. A text is not a "transitional medium of . . . a unified meaning" based from an author's presence; writing does not simply record the oral expression of a writer's prior thoughts (172). Instead, as Paul Smith explains, Derrida considers writing to be the textual site where the "machinery of language . . . goes on without us . . . any 'I' exists only as a passive construct of a system of [linguistic] forces" (48).

Similar to Barthes, Derrida reduces individual writers and readers to passive conduits of discourse so he is a much better critic of foundationalism than an advocate of non-foundationalism. For he does not offer any account of the ability of a subject, situated in discourses, to deliberately create, assert, examine, and maintain/or modify meaning. Derrida himself exposes the limits of his anti-foundationalism. In response to criticisms of his deconstructive theory, Derrida reverts to such foundational claims of authorship as being misinterpreted as though his presence determines meaning in order to answer his critics (Dasenbrock 670).

Derrida cannot explain non-foundational agency because he "take[s his] clew" from foundationalism's assertion of a writer's absolute presence. In
"Signature Event Context," Derrida negatively develops his postmodern theory as he insists on the absolute absence of readers and writers:

all writing must . . . be capable of functioning in the radical absence of every empirically determined receiver in general . . . . What holds for the receiver also holds, for the same reasons, for the sender or producer. To write is to produce a mark . . . which [a writer's] disappearance will not, in principle, hinder in its functioning, offering . . . itself to be read and rewritten. (180)

Yet this insistence that writing functions independently of any and all writers and readers precludes individual agency. By taking his clue from foundational presence, Derrida conceives of "subjectivity as a mere passivity, a simple conductor of semantic forces" (Smith 50). Lacking a tenable concept of human age, Derrida's deconstructive theory has been analyzed as a rigorous critique and an irrational subversion of Western thought by Christopher Norris and Jurgen Habermas respectively. More moderately, Richard Rorty deems Derrida to be more of a utopian dreamer than a rational philosopher. (For a lively exchange, see Norris' "Deconstruction, Postmodernism and Philosophy: Habermas on Derrida" and Rorty's "Is Derrida a Transcendental Philosopher?" in Derrida: A Critical Reader).

In his later writings like "Deconstruction and the Other," Derrida claims not to have killed the author/subject as his structuralist predecessor Barthes did without remorse. Derrida contends, "To deconstruct the subject does not mean to deny its existence . . . . [deconstruction] does not . . . destroy the subject; it simply tries to resituate it" (qtd. by Szkudlarek 56). This resituation, however, does destroy the subject as agent because, as Smith objects, "Derrida does not provide ant notion of how human agents mediate the actual proces [of signification] . . . . Derrida's promise of resistance cannot be fulfilled, simply because he cannot imagine 'who' might effect the
resistance" (53). By not granting the individual agent even a limited presence, Derrida risks the relativism that always threatens anti-foundationalism and appears in Faigley’s postmodern networked classroom. Although Derrida partially succeeds as a critic of foundationalism, he ultimately fails as an advocate of non-foundationalism. This partial success and ultimate failure suggest that deconstructive resistance requires some individual presence if an adequate account of non-foundational agency is to be achieved. Derrida’s postmodern colleague Michel Foucault, over the course of his career, also struggles to situate the subject within discursive practices without precluding individual agency. His greater degree of success suggests that the postmodern impasse is not irresolvable.

Michel Foucault and Discursive Oppression

Like Derrida in his later writings, Foucault, in retrospect, states he has always been concerned with the subject rather than committed to its elimination. He claims, “The goal of my work . . . has not been to analyze the phenomena of power . . . . [but] to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings have been made subjects” (“Subject” 208). A retracing of Foucault’s gradual revision of his concept of subjectivity reveals another crucial missed turn along the path towards the postmodern impasse.

In his early writings like The Order of Things (1966), Foucault asserts the structuralist reversal of language before thought which creates the postmodern impasse. He predicts, like Barthes, the autonomous subject “is in the process of perishing as the being of language continues to shine ever brighter on the horizon” (Order 386). 1 Foucault, however, quickly
complicates this poststructuralist priority of language and the resulting denial of agency. In "What is an Author?" (1969), he distinguishes between a writer and an author by comparing their relationship with that of an author and a narrator. He states, "It would be just as wrong to equate the author with the real writer as to equate him with the fictitious speaker" (270). In contrast to the living writer, "the author does not precede the works" but is "only a projection . . . of the operations that we force texts to undergo" (274, 269). Formalist critics, for example, analyze authors as well as literary works according to their assumed theoretical coherence and stylistic unity. Foucault, therefore, demands, "we must entirely reverse the traditional idea of the author" by "depriving the subject . . . of its role as originator" (274). Yet as he analyzes "the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse," Foucault never again mentions the previously distinguished "real writer" in this essay (274).

When Foucault does address the role of "the individual . . . who wrote the text" as distinct from the author function, he begins to differ significantly from his structuralist predecessors (221). Unlike Barthes, Foucault argues in "The Discourse on Language" (1971), "it would be ridiculous to deny the existence of individuals who write, and invent" even as he critiques "the founding subject [who] permits us to elide the reality of discourse" (222, 227). 2 Although Foucault, like Derrida, situates the individual writer within discourse, he does not insist that language totally predetermines the subject's thoughts. As an example of agency, he cites Mendel's ability to disrupt the discourse of nineteenth century botany and to advance his genetic theory based on his study of the dominant and recessive characteristics of peas. Foucault also mentions the complete incomprehension with which other
nineteenth century botanists responded to Mendel's study to demonstrate the difficulty as well as the possibility of individual agency (224). As Foucault continues his historical study of discursive practices, he concludes that the very complexity of modern societies' invasive powers requires, rather than precludes, individual agency.

Discursive practices, Foucault explains in "The Subject and Power" (1982), "in a given society, are multiple; they are superimposed, they cross, impose their own limits, sometimes cancel one another out, sometimes reinforce one another" (224). These practices are never entirely consistent, and they actually depend upon constrained individual agency. In contrast to physical violence that "closes the door on all possibilities," Foucault conceives of discursive power as "a total structure of actions brought to bear upon the possible actions [of the subject]" who reacts according to "a whole field of responses" (220). Thus, the power of dominant discourses "includes an important element: freedom. Power is exercised only over free subjects" (221). Confronted by the multiple and inconsistent demands of the dominant ideology, a subject has some autonomy to determine an appropriate response. Or as he states in The History of Sexuality, "Discourse transmits and produces power, it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (vol. 1 101). This agency with which an individual responds to and possibly thwarts discursive power implies a positive concept of freedom, meaning the freedom to act. In contrast, a negative conception of freedom stresses freedom from external constraints (Szkudlarek 42). Yet as Foucault tries to explain an individual's resistance within yet against discourse, he implies a negative concept of freedom which blocks his own path towards postmodern agency.
In "The Discourse on Language" and "The Subject and Power," Foucault "take[s his] clew" from the assumed neutrality of foundational language by insisting upon the violence of poststructuralist discourse. In the first essay, he tries to expose "the prodigious machinery of the [foundational] will to truth" that makes "only one truth appear before our eyes" ("Discourse" 220). 3 Like Derrida, Foucault opposes a representational theory of language and warns, "we should not imagine that the world presents us with a legible face, leaving us to merely decipher it . . . . we must conceive discourse as a violence that we do to things, or, at all events, as a practice we impose on them" (229). This conception of discourse as violence, however, results in a negative notion of freedom incompatible with Foucault's anti-foundationalism and implies the very foundationalism he opposes. When he implies "things" have some prior, and presumably better, existence before language is "impose[d] on them," Foucault reverts to a foundational epistemology. Although Foucault later distinguishes discursive power from physical violence in "The Subject and Power," he does not avoid the incompatibility of a concept of negative freedom and his anti-foundationalism.

In contrast to physical violence, Foucault admits, "a society without power relations can only be an abstraction" and discursive power does not "constitut[e] a fatality at the heart of societies" ("The Subject" 222, 223). Yet he persists in describing discursive practices as external impositions or constraints that the subject "is placed in" and internalizes, "turn[ing] him- or herself into a subject" (209, 208). These practices "give the ability to modify, use, consume or destroy" and ensure "the maintenance of privileges, the accumulation of profits, the bringing into operation of statutory authority, the
exercise of a function of trade" (217, 223). Foucault concedes that these practices are productive, but never that they are very beneficial. Discourse does not enable individuals, for example, to achieve greater security within their material and social environment, and this persistent rhetoric of discourse as oppressive, if not violent, unfortunately leads to the postmodern paralysis Bizzell observed in Berlin's postmodern course.

Because of this discursive oppression, a Foucauldian subject would seek the negative freedom of escape from the dominant discursive practices instead of the positive freedom to act within the complex matrixes of discourses already acknowledged by this theorist. Yet if a Foucauldian subject rejects the dominant discursive practices entirely, then non-foundational alternatives can be neither validated, nor disproven. Foundational truth is verified by its correspondence to a prior reality, but non-foundational truth is validated in relation to other previously yet tentatively accepted beliefs. Within this network of contingent assertions, "doubts about our knowledge are possible . . . [but not] all at once" (May 98). Unlike an absolute foundational reality, this prior network is never assumed to be "stable or uniform" because "any part of the background may be brought forward for questioning in its own turn" (May 96, 99). Yet Foucault's rhetoric of discursive oppression precludes this methodical consideration of separate beliefs because the pursuit of negative freedom deprives an individual of the neccesary network of contingent assertions within which to consider the validity of a particular belief. Foucauldian subjects do not grasp the revolutionary agency of absolute resistance; they instead are seized by postmodern paralysis that gripped Berlin's students. An adequate account of non-foundational agency must recognize that discourse is not neutral.
without insisting on its oppressiveness so that an individual’s positive freedom to act within the complex matrixes of discourse can be maintained.

Reconstructing a Deweyan Direction Beyond the Impasse

At the end of his career, Foucault finally "weakens his anti-modernist edge" by reconsidering poststructuralism's assumed dichotomy between society and the individual (Szkudlarek 55). For Barthes and Derrida, this dichotomy reduces the individual writer to one who mingles prior cultural sources and one whose absence permits endless signification. Yet in "The Political Technologies of Individuals" published posthumously, Foucault addresses the complications of postmodern subjectivity often implicit in his earlier writings. Foucault still warns, "individual life is becoming at this moment a duty for the state," yet he subtly revises his rhetoric about subjectivity (147). He examines the "political technologies which we have formed in our societies," not the dominant discourses that have formed us (162, italics added). Through this subtle revision, Foucault places the postmodern subject in a dialectical relationship with society's discursive practices which represent his original concerns of power and knowledge. Within this dialectic, an individual's discursive choices depend upon a society's discursive practices, yet a society's discursive practices also are dependent upon individual discursive choices. At the end of his career, Foucault reconsiders the "poststructuralist tendency to overlook the power of individual discursive voices" as the pragmatist literary theorist Louise Rosenblatt has objected (Crowley "Derrida" 180). The social and the individual, according to Rosenblatt, are "always implicated in [each] other" so a critically conscious individual can be more than a discursive object or a
paralyzed subject ("Transactional" 385).

Within this dialectical relationship with the social, an individual can develop agency through an intersubjective process. The theoretical question, therefore, should no longer be the postmodern dilemma quoted in chapter one: "Can writers control their writing process or are their writing processes -- and, indeed, the writers themselves -- constructed by their cultural settings?" (Howard 349 italics added). The framing of this question itself reveals the "deterministic heritage of structuralism, still visible in postmodern thinking" (Szkudlarek 56). It requires an affirmation of either the foundational precedence of the individual to society or the postmodern priority of society to the individual. In addition to his admonition against developing a new philosophy "negatively," Dewey cautions, humanity "likes to think in terms of extreme opposites. It is given to formulating its beliefs in terms of Either-Ors, between which it recognizes no intermediate possibilities" (*Experience and Education* 17). As he developed his own non-foundational, pragmatist philosophy, Dewey did not "take[e] his clew ... from that which is be rejected" and create a false dualism between the individual and the social.

This dialectical thinker instead developed pragmatism "positively and constructively" with many of the concepts already discussed in the first chapter and in this one. With Bakhtin, Dewey shares a dialectical conception of society and the individual, but he also recognizes that the discursive forum is not completely open which his Russian counterpart overlooked. Like Freire, Dewey believes that critical consciousness can be developed, but he also does not predetermine Marxist principles to be its fruition as Freire does. Like Bauer, Dewey realizes that resistance against the privileged must be
balanced with identification of the other, and unlike Foucault, this pragmatist philosopher advocates anti-foundational resistance without creating an epistemological crisis. According to Deweyan pragmatism, an individual can achieve agency through a non-foundational process of knowing. As chapter three will show, if one attends "to the thematical premises from which [Dewey's] more mature reflections procee[d] and the critically radical ends to which they [lead]" (Gunn 73), it is possible to avoid the postmodern missteps and reconstruct a path beyond the current impasse.
CHAPTER TWO NOTES

1. One of Barthes' later texts demonstrates the similarity of his structuralist theory and Foucault's first writings. Compare this quotation of Foucault and Barthes' assertion that language is "the destroyer of all subject[s]" in Sade Fourier Loyola (qtd. by Burke 14).

2. It is helpful to note that the French title "l'ordre du discours" has been translated as "The Order of Discourse" as well as "The Discourse on Language" because Bruce Herzberg and Kurt Spellmeyer have used these two different translations respectively to refer to this one essay.

3. In "The Discourse on Language," Foucault describes three procedures of exclusion by which "the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised, and redistributed" (216). These procedures consist of the outright prohibition of certain discourses (such as homosexual desire in contemporary Western society), the division into binary opposites with the rejection of the subordinate (such as sanity and madness), and the will to truth with its concomitant opposition to falsehood (216-7). Foucault ultimately argues that not only are the first two procedures arbitrary, modifiable, and violent, but so is the third (218). Although he qualifies "arbitrary" with the stipulation "if not developing out of historical contingency" (218), Foucault never examines its significance and persists in this rhetoric of discourse as violence.

4. Foucault offers an inadvertent example of this dialectical relationship in "The Discourse on Language." In the first sentence, Foucault states his wish "to have slipped impereceptibly into this lecture . . . . to be enveloped by words . . . . to have perceived a nameless voice, long preceding me, leaving me to merely enmesh myself in it" (215). Then, he concludes by identifying Jean Hyppolite, a deceased intellectual mentor, as the voice he "would have wished for, preceding me . . . inviting me to speak and lodging within my own speech" (237). Although Foucault wishes his mentor's voice would "lodg[e] within [his] own speech," he has done more than "merely enmesh [him]self in it." Foucault's voice does not simply mingle quotations of prior sources as Barthes contends, nor is its just an absence that permits endless signification as Derrida claims.
CHAPTER III

THE NON-FOUNDATIONAL ALTERNATIVE OF DEWEYAN PRAGMATISM:

"The problems ... of [traditional] philosophy are ... blocks to inquiry [and] blind alleys"

"[The concepts] of freedom and of a free human subject ... are hardly present in the discourse of postmodernism, apart from appearing as objects of deconstruction."
- - Tomasz Szkudlarek

"The effect of the pragmatist move ... is not to disconfirm the subject but to reconfirm it." - - Giles Gunn

Like Derrida's deconstruction of absolute presence and Foucault's critique of autonomous subjectivity, John Dewey's pragmatic philosophy opposes the tenets of foundationalism. Deweyan pragmatism denies the foundational beliefs that a knower has direct and unmediated access to a fixed and prior reality, this access yields reliable knowledge upon which one acts, and this knowledge can be conveyed through neutral, unambiguous language. Yet, as Dewey opposes these tenets, he does not "take[e] his clew" from the very foundationalism he seeks to reject. He "surrender[s] not merely the old solutions, but the old problems" of foundationalism as well ("Need" 20-1). For Dewey realizes these problems involve irreconcilable dichotomies or, what he terms, false dualisms created by flawed "Either/Or
thinking" (*Experience and Education* 17). * Instead of offering new solutions to these dichotomies, Dewey reconsiders the very premises that produce these puzzling obstacles like the postmodern impasse of agency.

To "positively and constructively" develop pragmatic philosophy, Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and Dewey reconsidered the foundational concepts of knowledge, language, identity, and philosophy. Through this reconsideration, these pragmatists created a non-foundational alternative that avoids false dualisms entirely. Deweyan pragmatism rightly rejects classical and contemporary dichotomies as "blocks to inquiry, blind alleys . . . [and irresolvable] puzzles" (*EN* 9). This epistemological alternative, for example, heralds postmodernism's subsequent emphasis on discourse without locating the subject in a prisonhouse of language. By examining "the ways of experiencing" which include language, Deweyan pragmatism denies absolute certainty can ever be claimed yet affirms an individual's ability to establish provisional meaning (*EN* 15). Thus, unlike postmodern anti-foundationalism, this non-foundational philosophy provides a tenable theory of agency.

**False Dualisms and the Pragmatic Reconstruction of Experience**

Dewey reconsiders the premises of "old" foundational problems by tracing them to their classical origins. The ancient Greeks, he explains in *The Quest for Certainty*, sought absolute truths because they had little control over the frustrating vicissitudes of daily life. To feel more secure, the Greeks worshipped mythical gods, like Zeus, then more abstract entities, such as the Platonic forms. By assuming these ideals existed as an ultimate reality, the

*For brevity of citation, the similar titles of *Experience and Education* and *Experience and Nature* will be cited as the respective abbreviations: EE and EN.*

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Greeks could avoid the frustrations of daily life and seek invariant answers by contemplating this realm. If this reality precedes and transcends daily appearances and activities, then contemplation of its ideals -- it was hoped -- would provide absolute certainty. 1

To assume the existence of this ultimate reality, classical thinkers had to confuse the known with the real. The Greeks actually believed in the reality of the Platonic forms Truth, Beauty, and Goodness by generalizing their knowledge of particular examples, such as a true statement, a beautiful face, and a good deed. Yet the Greeks reversed this reasoning to assume that these transitory appearances were produced by the abstract ideals. They confused, or better yet - conflated, their knowledge of good deeds with the reality of Goodness. Even Aristotle, who rejected Plato's idealism for empiricism, inductively developed taxonomies of natural forms, then reasoned from his knowledge of these forms as though they were absolutely real in order to posit the Prime Mover - God. Dewey identifies this conflation of the known and the real as the "philosophic fallacy" (EN 27).

When this fallacy occurs, absolute concepts, such as Truth and Beauty or thought and language, are assumed to exist. Convinced of the reality of these abstract entities, the Greeks believed they could reason from their knowledge of them in order to be more certain about transitory appearances, such as of the true and the beautiful. Yet once absolute aspects of a foundational reality are believed to be known, the epistemological problem then becomes to reconcile the false dualisms between them and create a coherent philosophy. The Greeks' foundational reality has been reconceived several times, but the problem of reconciling false dualisms persists. Medieval Christians, such as Augustine and Aquinas, replaced the classical ideals with an eternal divinity, and Enlightenment Age empiricists, like
Galileo and Newton, substituted mathematical quantities for divine traits. Yet when empirical scientists, for example, conflated the mathematically known — the quantitative — with the real, they stripped science of any concern with the imediately experienced — the qualitative. These scientists erected “a hard and fast wall” between the individual who experiences the qualitative, the world of shapes and colors, and a foundationalist reality of quantifiable objects and concepts (EN 48). This false dualism between subjective experience and and objective reality locates all qualitative aspects of experience in the individual. Mind is separted from matter; practice is divorced from theory, and philosophers from Spinoza to Kant have struggled -- in vain -- to put them back together again.

By examining the influence of language upon thought, postmodernists like Foucault and Derrida have deconstructed the false dualism between the mind of an individual knower and the matter of a foundational reality. Yet as they redress the foundational neglect of language’s influence upon knowledge, postmodernists also risk creating another false dualism through the philosophic fallacy. Like the foundationalists they oppose, postmodernists analyze one aspect of experience — in this case, language — as though it precedes all others. These anti-foundationalists reject one false dualism only to suggest another in which discursive practices are assumed to dominate the subject. Unfortunately, they cannot reconcile discourse and subjectivity because they too reason from their knowledge of language as though it were absolutely real.

Unlike foundationalism which misconceives knowledge and the anti-foundationalism which misconstrues the influence of language, Deweyan pragmatism begins with experience "as the starting point of philosophic thought” (EN 10). Dewey defines experience as an individual’s interactions,
or better yet - transactions, with the material and social environment. Late in his career, he substituted the term 'transaction' for his previous use of the word 'interaction' in order to emphasize that the individual and the environment are mutually affected by each other. These transactional experiences, Dewey insists, are "had" initially, meaning they first are undergone rather than known. Unlike idealistic and realistic foundational thinkers such as Plato and Locke, Dewey does not dismiss experiences as mere appearances, nor does he mistake these transactions for immediate knowledge. He distinguishes experience from knowledge by asserting the primacy of experience.

From this philosophic starting point, Dewey reconceives knowledge and language without creating a false dualism between them. He instead conceives of experience, knowledge, and language as dynamically interrelated concepts; one is not granted a paramount reality that is then used to determine the other two. Dewey opposes foundational knowledge without reaching the postmodern impasse because he considers the influence of an individual's experience and knowledge on language as well as language's influence on an individual's experience and knowledge. Dewey's reconception of these fundamental premises represents his philosophical brilliance and his dazzling difficulty of his thought for others. Dewey's concept of experience, for example, cannot be comprehended fully until his concept of language is also understood. Yet if one attends to the reconstructed premises of Dewey's mature thought, the false dualisms of foundationalism and anti-foundationalism are no longer irreconcilable, but irrelevant.

Experience and the Pragmatic Reconstruction of Knowledge

According to William James' famous phrase, experience is a
continuous "stream of consciousness," a ceaseless flux of mental and physical transactions (*Principles*, vol. I, 238). As an individual undergoes these experiences, these transactions do not have to be enjoyed or endured passively. To repeat an enjoyment, to end some suffering, or to satisfy one's curiosity, an individual can develop knowledge from this experiential stream by becoming an active participant in a constructive process of inquiry. This deliberate method begins when an individual tries to resolve the "felt difficulty" of a physical need, an emotional desire, or intellectual curiosity (*How* 107). From the creative tension of a felt difficulty, an active knower can engage in exploratory activity to define the problem. The problem is defined by relating some, apparently significant qualities from the stream of experience. As the problem is defined, a knower tries to form a hypothesis which can be tested through deliberate experimentation. Through such testing, knowledge not only develops from experience, but also returns to experience for verification. The actual practice of this constructive process of knowing, of course, is never as orderly as this neat description of its components: felt difficulty, problem definition, hypothesis formation, deliberate experimentation, and provisional verification.

The primacy of experience does not mean that all experiences are relative and equal because the development of knowledge enables an individual to distinguish "educative" experiences from "mis-educative" one. For an experience to be "educative" according to Dewey, it must fulfill two criteria: "continuity" and "interaction" (*EE* 37). First, an experience must have "continuity" with both past and future experiences so the anticipations and expectations that constitute knowledge can be formed and tested. Second, "interaction" between the internal and external factors of learning must be balanced. For example, a Deweyan educator can use a student's admitted
aversion to writing formal literary analyses by asking him to write an informal journal entry specifically addressed to a classmate. The internal factor of a student's dislike for formal criticism, based on negative experiences in the past, cannot be changed instantly. The eternal factor of the learning environment, however, can be modified. The journal entry hopefully extends the student's past preference for informal writing. This text then can be treated as a useful gathering of critical insights from which the conventions of their more formal presentation, such as the difficult issue of audience, can be developed.

Once this academic discourse has been composed, its differences and similarities with the original journal entry as well as with published literary criticism can be examined to establish continuity with subsequent efforts to write formal analyses. By fulfilling the twin criteria of continuity and interaction, Dewey's ultimate educational goal of growth can be achieved, and this growth is the "reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience . . . [and] increases the ability to direct . . . subsequent experience" (Democracy 89-90).

If an experience fails to fulfill the twin criteria of continuity and interaction, Dewey distinguishes this event as "mis-educative" because this experience permits a learner to continue a routine response without reflecting upon its efficacy (EE 37). In contrast, an educative experience requires a learner to act deliberately and to undergo consciously the consequences of an action so that continuity with the past and the future can be created. During educative experiences, thoughtful reception alternates constantly and cumulatively with creative activity so Deweyan pragmatism does not just reverse the foundational subordination of activity to thought. It instead maintains "that action should be intelligent and reflective, that
thought should occupy a central position in life” (“Development” 19). Thus, pragmatism “is far from the [American] glorification of action for its own sake” as some of Dewey’s critics have claimed; it is a non-foundational philosophy seeking the individual’s growth of intelligent activity (“Development” 5).

Through this educative dialectic of thought and action, a knower can achieve unexpected results so a knower should “leave the outcome to the adequacy of the means . . . instead of insisting upon . . . a conclusion in advance” (Art 138-9). As knowledge is constructed from continuous experiences, a knower depends upon prior beliefs, but the results of this process cannot be predetermined. Dewey’s constructive process of knowing may be better termed a reconstructive process for two reasons; new knowledge is built using past beliefs, and it may rebuild the significance of some of those previous beliefs.

When an individual constructs a new assertion through this process, this idea can alter the contextual background upon which which a knower considers both prior and subsequent knowledge. This alteration can be so subtle so as to appear to be a simple addition or so extreme to cause a Kuhnian paradigm shift. An extreme contextual alteration, such as from geocentrism to heliocentrism, epitomizes what Dewey terms the “real though limited” constructive function, or reconstructive effect of knowledge (“Development” 13). A new belief like Galileo’s assertion that the sun, and not the earth, is the center of the cosmos constructs a substantially different context for experience. The reconstructive effect is real because new knowledge can yield future experiences “which could not have been produced otherwise” (“Development” 13). Yet the reconstructive effect is limited because a new belief cannot alter what is experienced completely and
permanently. Although Dewey refutes all claims of foundational knowledge, he does not deny the existence of an environment with which we interact experientially. There is something 'out there', but by distinguishing experience from knowledge, he insists no direct knowledge of the inferred reality is possible. A pragmatist knower can use past experiences to anticipate the future, but he can never claim to have revealed the real. By conceiving of knowledge as an anticipation of the future rather than a revelation of the real, Dewey avoids committing the philosophic fallacy.

Because Dewey acknowledges the "suffusive presence" of "past affairs" as knowledge is developed, he conceives of freedom positively (EN 249). He considers freedom to be the "power to act" instead of a negative freedom from external constraints (How 87). The negative concept of freedom requires an emancipation from one's background of prior beliefs which is impossible. According to Deweyan pragmatism, this dynamic network of accepted beliefs is alterable but inescapable; the possibility of an emancipating "direct appeal to nature" is only a "fiction . . . . [because] We bring to the simplest observation a complex apparatus . . . of accepted meanings and techniques" (EN 180). By conceiving of freedom positively, Dewey avoids the epistemological crisis wrought by Foucault's poststructuralist critique and demonstrated by Berlin's postmodern course.

Among the postmodern anti-foundationalists favored by contemporary composition theorists, Freire comes closest to these pragmatist conceptions of experience, knowledge, and freedom. Like Dewey, he exposes reified knowledge by including the knower, even a marginalized one, in the process of knowing. Yet Freire prematurely limits the constructive process of knowing by predetermining its eventual outcome to be an undistorted reality revealed by Marxism. Even more than Freire, Dewey acknowledges, "the
ways in which we believe and expect have a tremendous effect upon what we believe and expect" because he does not circumscribe this process by predetermining its results (EN 15, italics original). The pragmatist's development of knowledge always retains a modest awareness of its tentativeness, its fallibility. Peirce cautions, we know "the very best of [our knowledge] . . . in only an uncertain and inexact way" (Collected Papers 5.587). Dewey likewise warns, the experimental method of inquiry can validate beliefs so they "may have a practical or moral certainty," but knowledge "never lose[s] a hypothetical quality" (EN 129). Future verification can only be assumed, not assured. Deweyan pragmatism offers neither the comfort of foundationalism's absolute certainty, nor the distress of postmodernism's paralyzing skepticism.

Experience, Knowledge, and the Pragmatic Reconstruction of Language

As Dewey creates a non-foundational theory of an individual's development of knowledge from experience, he also reconceives the role language plays in this process. He rejects the foundational concept of language because this representational theory overlooks language's influence upon knowledge and even experience. According to foundationalism, knowledge reveals the real, an antecedent and absolute reality, and this knowledge then is communicated through language. Words name or represent the reality known. It is this priority of knowledge to language that Dewey opposes and whose origins he explains.

Words, according to Dewey, "register [an experiential] relationship and makes it fruitful in other contexts of particular experience" rather than name the real (EN 155). He uses the example of the word "fire" to explain that language enables a knower to anticipate the possible conditions and
consequences of this flaming event. This word conveys our expectations that "fire" can warm, cook, or burn depending on its conditions (EN 154). Language converts previously experienced events into considered meanings for the future. As these expectations are confirmed by other, later experiences, it is easy to imagine that "things, meanings, and words correspond" Dewey cautions (EN 142). Yet this assumption leads to the philosophic fallacy in which knowledge of eventual outcomes is conflated with a reality of antecedent objects. Once this prior reality is assumed to exist, then thought can be misconceived by foundationalists as "complete prior to language. Language thus 'expressses' thought as a pipe conducts water" (EN 141). These flawed foundational assumptions reduce language to a hollow medium that carries individual thought - - a conception that Dewey does not accept.

As Dewey reconstructs the foundational concept of language, he does not oppose the false dualism between language and knowledge only to create another between discursive practices and the individual knower. Dewey neither overlooks, nor overstates language's influence; he and his fellow pragmatists acknowledge the influence language has upon our knowledge of experience. Some beliefs, James explains, have been "built into the very structure of language" because "these extraordinarily successful hypotheses . . . straighten the discontinuities of . . . immediate experiences" ("Pragmatism" 85). These built-in beliefs constitute the background of prior beliefs upon which subsequent experiences and developments of knowledge occur. Or as Dewey asserts, "experience is already overlaid and saturated with the products of . . . past generations . . . . It is filled with interpretations [and] classifications . . . which have been incorporated into what seems to be fresh [thought]" (EN 34). Language is not a neutral medium of self-expression; it is a discursive
system of "interpretations [and] classifications" created by "past generations."

Similar to Bahktin, Dewey believes an individual's 'own' thoughts develop through the collaborative relationships created by language. As a child acquires language, Dewey states,

The conceptions that are socially current and important become the child's principles of interpretation and estimation long before he ... [seeks] personal and deliberate control of conduct. Things come to him clothed in language, not in physical nakedness, and this garb of communication makes him a sharer in the beliefs of those around him. (Reconstruction 92)

Even as an adult, an individual is influenced by this discursive intersubjectivity, this implicit collaboration with others.

In *Art as Experience*, Dewey uses the example of an artist to illustrate this collaboration. Every creative process involves both productive activity and evaluative reception. Before the next brushstroke or line can be added, an artist must undergo, meaning to experience, the consequences of the developing work. These evaluative pauses are often so short and subconscious that many creators deny having any audience awareness at all. Yet as they undergo their works in progress, these artists "becom[e] the receiving audience" by drawing upon the concepts and the criteria built into their creative medium, be they painter or poet (*Art* 106). Even the most avant garde artist depends on her audience's conventional expectations even as she tries to disrupt and redefine them. In all communication, one individual creates meaning through the common terms of a discourse and tries to conceive the meaning "as it functions in [another's] experience" (*EN* 148).

Because we acquire an influentially way of experiencing from others through language, Dewey states, no individual can ever "withdraw[w] into a
wholly private realm" (EN 141). Or as Peirce states, “a person is not absolutely an individual” because all thought involves the collaborative enterprise of language (Collected Papers 5.421). Even when a writer seeks the physical isolation often associated with composing, this individual is involved in this discursive intersubjectivity. Like Dale Bauer and Kenneth Burke, Dewey considers communication to be a discursive collaboration with the other.

Without such identification with the other, Dewey’s goal of “intellectual and moral growth” cannot be realized (Democracy 362). Instead of seeking wider democratic associations, a group may curtail “full interaction with other groups” in order to protect “what its has” (Democracy 99). Language can aid such premature closure as much as it can foster reconstructive collaboration. Like Foucault, Dewey acknowledges the power relations implicit within discourse because language “condenses meanings that record social outcomes and presage social outlooks” (Democracy 46). Yet this condensation of meaning is not so thick as to be impenetrable. By the pragmatist acknowledgment of “the extent to which [the] ways [of believing] are unwittingly fixed by social custom and tradition,” a member of a society can seek the deliberate coordination of these discursive and conceptual influences if a positive concept of freedom is sought (EN 34). Then an individual can pursue the power to act, meaning agency, through the reconstruction of accepted beliefs using what Dewey terms “the tool of tools . . . the cherishing mother of significance” — language (EN 154).

Agency and the Pragmatic Reconstruction of Philosophy

As he acknowledges language’s significant influence on experience and knowledge, Dewey does not assume the individual is dominated by discursive practices. He does not analyze language as an fixed cultural reality
then inhabit this theoretical structure with subjects who must be considered "an effect rather than a cause of discourse" as Faigley does (Fragments 9). Dewey instead believes individuals can critically examine language's influential ways because he locates individuals and language in a transactional relationship. He readily acknowledges the influence of language when he asserts, "experience is dependent upon an extension of language" (EN 143). Yet Dewey conceives of language with the same complexity with which he considers experience. After asserting the dependence of experience upon language, he immediately stipulates in his next phrase, "[language] which is a social product and operation" (EN 143, italics added). By considering discourse as a social product and operation — or process, Dewey is able to offer a tenable theory of non-foundational agency.

Language must be conceived as a process as well as a product because, like society for Dewey, it "not only continues to exist by transmission, by communication, it may be fairly said to exist in transmission, in communication" (Democracy 5). As a social product, language only exists in the process of its transmission between individual members of a society. When postmodernists analyze language as an influential product, they ignore the process by which it exists. Although they "point out that the self . . . is socially constructed," postmodernists "neglect to point out that the social . . . is itself previously . . . constructed" by its individual members (Vitanza 157). During their continuation of language, individuals can reflexively reconsider its influence. Within a society, they can achieve the positive freedom to act, meaning agency, through the reconstruction of accepted beliefs and ways of believing. This reconstruction is possible because experience and knowledge influence language as much as language influences them.

As each person acquires language, they form a "personal linguist-
experiential reservoir" according to the pragmatist literary theorist Louise Rosenblatt ("Transactional" 381). Through this personal internalization of language, individuals can create variations of meanings for a specific term, such as subjectivity. Postmodernists, for example, have varied the foundational meaning of subjectivity, a personal viewpoint upon an experience, by denying that an individual has any personal control over one's perspective. In addition to such variations of meaning, postmodernists also have substituted one term for another. They have replaced the foundational term "individual" with "subject" to indicate their opposition to any concept of autonomous agency (Berlin "Poststructuralism" 18). As demonstrated by the postmodernists' own use of varied meanings and multiple terms, the dominant discourse is never so stable and uniform so as render the individual a subject completely subordinate to discursive practices. The instability and heteroglossia of language create the discursive space for individual agency.

Through language, Dewey asserts, all "events are subject to reconsideration and revision" because "their meanings may be infinitely combined and re-arranged in [the] imagination" of individuals (EN 138). These imaginative recombinations can lead to the reconstruction of prior beliefs because the differences between these alternatives can be considered and verified. In contrast to foundationalists, Dewey does not conceive of verification as correspondence to "a world [assumed to be] already constructed and determined" ("Development" 13). He instead develops Peirce's theory of meaning in which meaning is determined by the effect a belief has on one's actions: "the purport of any concept is its conceived bearing upon our conduct" (Collected Papers 5.460). For James and Dewey, knowledge becomes true when a belief permits an individual to achieve a
desired outcome. Yet verification is not just a matter of 'what works' immediately, for it involves the continued success of a belief in relation to other accepted assertions. The common connotation of "pragmatic" as 'crassly expedient' is far different from the philosophical denotations of "pragmatist" and "pragmatism" for Peirce, James, and Dewey.

The pragmatist's standard of verification also differs significantly from the postmodern criterion of coherence within an solipsistic system of language. For de Saussure and Derrida, an assertion can never be verified beyond its statement in a particular discourse because they conceive of language as a differential network of signifiers. Or as Derrida explains, "[language is] a system of differences in which each unit is constituted in reference to [another signifier]" ("Discussion" 8). Since these signifiers refer only to each other -- and not to a prior reality or to an anticipated outcome -- postmodern verification depends entirely on discursive coherence.

Based on the pragmatist theory of verification, knowledge never attains absolute certainty, and language never becomes a postmodern prisonhouse. The contingency of belief means that the known cannot be conflated with the real, but the consequences of one assertion can be compared with another. In *Experience and Nature*, Dewey likens this critical inquiry to intellectual disrobing. We cannot permanently divest ourselves of the intellectual habits we take on and wear when we assimilate the culture of our own time and place. But intellectual furthering of culture demands that we take them off, that we inspect them critically to see what they are made of and what wearing them does to us. (35)

Our entire contextual background of beliefs cannot be cast off all at once, but separate beliefs may be foregrounded for examination.

Through the process of intellectual disrobing, we can never remove all
of the cultural garments we wear at once in order to reveal an "original, eternal, and absolute" innocence or identity (EN 185). But we also do not have to be the passive occupants of postmodern subject positions. This examination of one's cultural habits instead suggests the self is, and can be deliberately, constructed as a "historic, intermediate, temporally relative, and instrumental" subjectivity (EN 185). Dewey's assertion of this alternative theory of a self "in continuous formation through choice of action" exemplifies this critical comparison of specific beliefs (Democracy 408). Upon the background of his non-foundational concepts of experience, knowledge, and language, he has weighed the consequences of asserting a theory of an antecedent and absolute self or of a fluid and dynamic identity. The foundational concept of a complete self reduces expression to an impulsive "spewing forth," but the non-foundational concept means expression is "to carry forward in development" (Art 62). The crucial difference is that the former emphasizes the pressing out of a product from within and the latter balances the creative self with the external conditions. In this transactional relationship between creator and conditions, the process or "methods . . . [are placed] upon the [same] level of importance as has, in the past, been imputed exclusively to ends" or the product (Quest 279).

The critical process of comparing contingent beliefs is not limited to only extant knowledge; an individual can create previously unimagined alternatives. Dewey, for example, practices the dialectical method of his early Hegelian training when he considers the foundational conundrum of objectivity and subjectivity. Dewey examines the contradiction, or false dualism, created by foundationalism between objectivity and subjectivity. He rejects the thesis of complete objectivity by acknowledging the knower's influence upon the known. He also opposes the antithesis of total subjectivity
by affirming the discursive collaborations between individuals. He then creates a synthesis according to which knowledge is objective and subjective based on his reconception of those terms. As a culturally constructed product, knowledge is 'objective' as a "standardized habit . . . of social interaction" (EN 157). Yet as an individually influenced process, knowledge is also 'subjective' because "every new idea . . . must have its origin in an individual" who reconstructs prior beliefs (Democracy 346).

As Dewey theorizes the reconstruction of beliefs through individual activity, he does not overlook the myriad obstacles to individual agency (Democracy 408). In Democracy and Education, he acknowledges, first, the capacity for intelligence often is not realized because the vicissitudes of material comfort make most people unwilling to tolerate intellectual uncertainty as well. Because "thinking is unsettling," many people will accept dogmatism and dependence in order to avoid doubt when threatened by physical distress as well (380). Second, schools foster this preference for passivity through their foundationalist "principles of authority and acquisition rather than . . . discovery and invention" (327-8). Educational reform requires such great philosophical and economic changes that education based not on "telling and being told, but an active and constructive process, is a principle almost as generally violated in practice as [it is] conceded in theory" (46)!

After realizing schools alone cannot foster individual agency as he initially had hoped, Dewey acknowledges the need for simultaneous social as well as educational reform. The moral theologian Reinhold Niebuhr criticizes Dewey's meliorist theory of social reform by questioning whether gradual, harmonious change is possible. Given the privileged class' desire for self-preservation, Niebuhr objects: "Failure to recognize the stubborn
resistance of group egoism to all moral and inclusive social objectives inevitably involves them [liberals like Dewey] in unrealistic and confused thought" (qtd. by West 154). Dewey, however, does realize the problem of selfish preservation of social privilege. He considers schools to be political institutions that are slow to change because of the "opposition of those who . . . . realize that [reform] . . . would threaten their ability to use others for their own ends" (Democracy 373). A better criticism of Dewey is that he only partially recognizes the need for disruptive demonstrations to force the privileged to confront a conflict in their values. He acknowledges the necessity of "public agitation [and] propaganda" as well as "legislative and administrative action" to achieve social reform (Democracy 383). Dewey is the first author of a philosophy textbook to use a labor strike as an example of an ethical dilemma. Yet as a young professor in Chicago, he did not publicly support the Pullman strike though he later granted his considerable stature to the Trotsky Commission and many other political causes (Westbrook 86-92, 480-2). Although it is important to question Dewey's own political involvement, this criticism, I fear, asks too much from one man and diminishes his considerable accomplishments.

The contemporary neo-pragmatist Cornel West, for example, diminishes Dewey's philosophical achievements when he faults him for failing "to articulate a plan of social reform" (85). For Dewey does offer some specific suggestions for social reform, and West's own prophetic pragmatism provides even fewer details (see West 235-9). West also slights his predecessor's considerable accomplishments when he claims Dewey seeks both an evasion of, and an emancipation from, the epistemological problems of modern philosophy because the first, negative word -- evasion -- dominates his text and even his title - The American Evasion of Philosophy.
According to West, Dewey attempts “intellectual regicide” as well as a positive redirection of contemporary thought. Yet West is himself guilty of evading Dewey’s revolutionary rejection of not just the “old solutions” but the “old problems” as well. Dewey’s reconstruction of philosophy precludes, rather than evades, epistemological conundrums like the postmodern impasse over agency.

Dewey reconceives the problematic premises of foundationalism that have created the false dualisms of classical and contemporary thought. He proffers alternative concepts of experience, knowledge, language, and self which eliminate the persistent puzzles of foundational epistemologies. Yet there still remains “a sufficiently large task” for Dewey’s reconstruction of philosophy itself (“Need” 69). Instead of being the classical contemplation or the modern reconciliation of absolutes, philosophy, for Dewey, becomes the pragmatist study of “what the known demands of us” or, in contemporary terms, this consideration “of what is possible” is known as cultural criticism (Democracy 381). This reconstruction of philosophy eliminates false dualism between theory and practice. For Dewey, “the only distinction worth drawing is not between practice and theory but between those modes of practice that are and are not intelligent” (EN 290). The sufficient task of philosophy is the study of cultural practices that should be repeated because they are effective. Dewey does not — and given his assertion of knowledge’s reconstructive effect, cannot — provide any final blueprint of social reform; he instead offers a comprehensive account of the process by which we can reform society deliberately. He offers a non-foundational philosophy with which we can learn to create, critique and assert beliefs so we can “think of ourselves as agents, not as ends” (Quest 276).

Dewey asserts the primacy of experience as his philosophic starting
point from which knowledge can be constructed, and he acknowledges language's influence upon this constructive process and even experiencing itself. As validated beliefs are built into discourses, they can influence subsequent experiences and our beliefs about previous ones. Once these influential ways of believing are acknowledged, a particular one can be examined within the context of other related, tentatively accepted assertions. Depending on its consequences, a belief can be maintained, modified, or replaced as an individual tries to fulfill Dewey's goal of growth — the continuous reconstruction of experience to increase its present meaning and to improve the anticipation of future events. By theorizing an individual's ability to influence as well as be influenced by accepted ways of believing, Dewey explains the process of non-foundational agency.

It may not be easy to hear the resounding relevance of the tacit tradition of pragmatism within composition studies because Dewey offers only a few, direct references to writing. Yet these few references should make us lean forward and listen very carefully because they whisper the significance of pragmatic philosophy for contemporary composition; for example.

Even a composition conceived in the head and, therefore, physically private, is public in its significant content, since it is conceived with reference to execution in a product that is perceptible and hence belongs to the common world. (Art 51)

This collaborative concept of composing in which neither the individual writer, nor the discursive system predominant is one point where Deweyan pragmatism, writing process theories, and postmodernist composition studies intersect, a point of intersection which is central to the issue of agency. To arrive at this intersection, however, process-oriented and postmodern
theories have to be read from an unconventional, almost non-Euclidean perspective. James Berlin and other postmodern critics resemble Euclid by their contention that the parallel lines of writing process and postmodern theories never met. Berlin, for example, argues that process-oriented and postmodern composition are mutually exclusive because of their incompatible epistemological assumptions about a writer, audience, reality, and language. Yet Deweyan pragmatism offers an alternative analysis in which writing process and postmodern approaches do intersect, and through this point of intersection, a new line can be drawn to redirect contemporary composition beyond its current impasse. This redirection, however, cannot occur until the intersection of Deweyan pragmatism and writing process theories is located and mapped.
CHAPTER THREE NOTES

1. This privileging of contemplation over activity had prior cultural and economic sources in the negative associations made towards physical labor. Classical philosophers, however, provided the "intellectual formulation and justification" for privileged Greeks to perpetuate this divisive epistemology (Quest 30).

2. Later realists, like Newton, treated experience as the quantifiable source of scientific problems, yet, like Locke, they failed to activate the active role of the mind in inquiry. Newton, for example, declared, "I do not invent hypotheses" and therefore ignored the influence of the knower on the known (qtd. in Quest 115). Yet as Dewey quips, "The history of the theory of knowledge would have been very different if instead of the word 'data' or 'givens,' it had happened to start with calling the qualities in question 'takens' " (Quest 176).

3. Dewey repeats this non-foundational conception language when he states, "[the] qualities we attribute to objects ought to be imputed to our ways of experiencing them, and these in turn are due to the force of intercourse and custom" (EN 34). As suggested by the final clause of this quotation, he also appreciates the possibly, but not necessarily, insidious effect of discourse: "[Language has] unrivaled significance a a means of social direction" (Democracy 39).

4. Peirce and Dewey were very ambivalent about the term "pragmatism." As this term, in the words of Peirce, "was abused in the merciless way" of literary journals, he relinquished it in favor of "pragmaticism" - - a term he deemed "ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers" (Collected Papers 5.414). To develop a comprehensive, non-foundational philosophy, Dewey struggled even more to establish alternative meanings for fundamental philosophical terms like 'experience.' In Experience and Nature (revised edition-1929), Dewey explicitly names his theory "empirical naturalism or naturalistic empiricism," and he almost never mentions "pragmatism" (1). When he does, Dewey, like Peirce, abandons this term to the negative connotations of others: "capricious pragmatism based on exaltation of personal desire" (198). Despite these difficulties, I have decided to use "pragmatism" because its positive, non-foundational denotation is being recognized recently, and I find the aforementioned alternatives too awkward and unappealing -- just as Peirce wished.

5. Dewey's collected works reveal many more specifics on social reform than Niebuhr or Cornel West admit. For example, see "Unsettled Problems in the Economic Order," "Unsettled Problems in the Economic Order Continued,"
and the specific applications of Dewey’s thought suggested by Prof. Seager, a colleague at Columbia. These proposals include raising the standard of living and enacting worker safety and child labor laws (*Middle Works*, vol. 5, see 468-509). Or see Dewey’s article entitled “Federal Aid for Elementary Education” (*Middle Works*, vol. 10, 121-29). Cornel West faults Dewey for failing “to articulate a plan for social reform” yet his own prophetic pragmatism is, at least, as vague (*American* 85 and see 235-9). Like Giles Gunn, I consider Dewey’s pragmatic philosophy to be an initial, admittedly broad, reconstruction of democratic culture. This reconstruction transforms the traditional concept of democracy into a moral, economic, and educational ideal as well as a political one (75). To demand that Dewey provides a detailed as well as a comprehensive blueprint for this democratic culture ignores both pragmatism’s commitment to only contingent answers.
CHAPTER IV

FROM “EXPRESSIVISM” TO NON-FOUNDATIONALISM: THE INTERSECTION OF WRITING PROCESS THEORIES AND DEWEYAN PRAGMATISM

It's not a question of throwing out the innovations of teachers like Elbow and Murray... it's a question of relocating those practices and interests in a different theoretical context.
— Susan Jarratt

If the self... does not exist as [an] agent, the process approach to teaching writing would seem to be a sham — Robert Yagelski

When Janet Emig identifies pragmatism as one of the tacit traditions within contemporary composition, she offers only the one sentence statement: "John Dewey is everywhere in our work" ("Tacit" 150). She does not elaborate to support this assertion, but she does make a valuable suggestion. She suggests the exemplary model of pragmatist theory and practice created by "our greatest ally in literature research, Louise Rosenblatt" ("Tacit" 150). Before I articulate the intersection of Deweyan pragmatism and writing process theories, I want to follow Emig’s suggested direction; I want to venture from writing process theories to Rosenblatt’s pragmatist literary theory to explain the beneficial consequences of putting Dewey’s general principles into practice. I hope this foray into a somewhat foreign field will create a new perspective on the too familiar terrain of contemporary composition. This new perspective is needed because we are are in danger of losing sight of the best practices of Murray’s and Elbow’s pedagogies. Too
many composition teachers have become so familiar with the current categories of composition that complex and effective writing process practices have been reduced to and dismissed as "merely expressive" (Murray "But" 2). 1

After visiting Rosenblatt's pragmatist model in the allied area of literature, I expect to return to the writing process theories of Donald Murray and Peter Elbow. Then, as with other homecomings, I hope we will see them differently. Discerning the pragmatist principles already at work in writing process practices will relocate Murray's and Elbow's theories from their presumed 'expressivism' to their actual non-foundational pragmatism. When viewed within this pragmatist context, Murray's and Elbow's pedagogies be explained and extended.

Rosenblatt's Pragmatist Model of Literary Interpretation

Although Rosenblatt began developing her literary theory independently of Dewey, she has acknowledged her debt to his pragmatist philosophy. 2 Her theory of interpretation and its instruction implements Dewey's more general concept of experience, for she reconceives reading as "a transaction between the reader and the text" (Literature 35, italics original). Like Dewey denying foundational absolutes, Rosenblatt rejects the New Critical notion that a reader interprets a literary text by perceiving a fixed object. She distinguishes the printed page that physically exists in space from the literary work that is a particular "event in time" (Reader 12). The title of her 1978 book -- The Reader, The Text, and the Poem -- makes manifest the importance of this distinction: it is the reader's experience with the text that creates the literary work or "poem." A text is only paper and ink "until the reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols" (Literature 25).
We must conceive "literature as exploration" — to borrow another title — as Rosenblatt asserts in her major work. 3

This pragmatist theory of interpretation and its instruction fulfills the Deweyan principles of the primacy of experience, the constructive process of knowing, the influence of language upon thought, and the achievement of non-foundational agency. Rosenblatt believes literary interpretation and its instruction must begin with the reader's experience. She quotes the nineteenth century literary theorist Walter Pater who urges "to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realise it distinctly is the first step" (Reader 131). This first step begins the process through which a reader creates a literary work from the printed page. During this first step, a reader constructs "hypothetical frameworks, entertains speculations . . . [and discriminates between] alternative responses" (Reader 137). These activities usually are completed rapidly and unconsciously so reading may appear to be "a passive process of absorption," but Rosenblatt instead insists, it is "an intense personal activity" (Literature v).

To stress a reader's active role, Rosenblatt compares a text to a musical score and asserts that readers need "to learn to perform in response to a text" (Literature 279). Like a musician, a literary reader should develop the positive freedom to act in relation to a text. This initial experience only begins an interpretive performance because "a spontaneous response should be the first step towards increasingly mature" reflections (Literature 75). After this first response, a reader can develop greater knowledge of a literary work through an interpretive method that corresponds to Dewey's constructive process of inquiry.

Citing Dewey, Rosenblatt explains, the development of interpretive knowledge usually begins with some felt difficulty, an uncertain or a
contradictory response to a text (Literature 226). To resolve a difficulty, the framing, speculating, and discriminating that are primarily intuitive during an initial response must become much more deliberate. Rosenblatt requires a reader to seek not only an initial response but also to ask "What in the text justifies [this] response?" (Literature 282). In contrast to Pater's impressionistic criticism, Rosenblatt's interpretive method returns a reader's attention to the text, but it also turns a reader's attention towards two directions a New Critic would not permit.

To resolve an interpretive difficulty, Rosenblatt's reader should follow "ever widening circles of interest" that radiate from her initial responses to the text (Literature 117). These widening interests also expand beyond the text to the cultural context of the writer and the work. A reader could seek biographical information, such as on Keats' short life, to understand better his recurrent theme of fleeting beauty. Or a reader could examine the cultural context of Elizabethan drama, for example, to appreciate the significance of the drunken porter's comedy in Shakespeare's tragedy *Macbeth* (Literature 117). These widening circles of interest expand not only beyond the text to the cultural contexts but also before the text to the reader. As a pragmatist, Rosenblatt places any single act of cognition within the context of previously accepted beliefs so textual interpretation should involve "the parallel effort to understand and evaluate [a reader's] personal emphases" or prior knowledge (Literature 96). Using student-centered discussions and other collaborative activities, a reader's assumptions can be foregrounded for examination. 4

As readers become aware of the possible, alternative responses made by other readers, "the unspoken assumptions behind [their] own judgments" can be examined (Literature 120). This examination of one's own tacit
traditions requires a reader to consider the pragmatist concern of language's influence upon an individual's thoughts. For many of these previously unarticulated beliefs "have been unconsciously absorbed from the society about" (Literature 253). Once reading has been recognized as "deeply conditioned by the social context," a reader can learn to try on and take off many cultural beliefs like a Deweyan individual engaged in intellectual disrobing (Reader 135). Reading, for example, Richard Wright's frequently anthologized "The Man Who Was Almost A Man" can prompt privileged students to reconsider conventional assumptions about male maturity and individual responsibility. If a reader considers this story's historical context of Post-Reconstruction share-cropping and Klan lynchings, then the applicability of these dominant beliefs to the main character Dave Sanders becomes questionable. 5

As some students first understand the influence of social discourses, Rosenblatt cautions, they "may think of the individual as completely at the mercy of the dominant [ideological] forces . . . . This is as erroneous, of course, as is the earlier notion that the individual has complete free choice and self-determination" (Literature 254). Between these extremes, Rosenblatt asserts, "We can recognize the shaping power of . . . culture, yet we should understand the possibilities of choice . . . [within] our complex culture" ("Transactional" 384-85). For a pragmatist like Rosenblatt, there always is "an individual human being choosing, selectively constructing meaning, and consciously and unconsciously responding" to specific situations ("Transactional" 385). As explained in the previous chapter, an individual is always involved in the continuation of society and its discourses so we should seek more deliberate and critical consideration of the alternatives. Thus, "we no longer need [to] accept [the dominant ideology] as unthinkingly
as the air we breathe . . . we [instead can] have the knowledge to consciously influence the future development of our customs and institutions" (Literature 159). By seeking the intelligent activity Dewey promoted, non-foundational agency is attainable.

Rosenblatt is careful not to guarantee the achievement of greater agency through literary reading alone. Similar to Dewey stating his later reservations about education leading social reform, Rosenblatt warns: "The mere reading of a play by Shakespeare or a novel by George Eliot or Henry James cannot in itself be expected to wipe out the effect of all the desensitizing [social] influences" (Literature 93). Yet she maintains, practicing the pragmatist process of literary interpretation "can be a means of helping students to develop conscious resistance to those [social] influences" because it can foster the habits of thought that allow an individual to become a more reflexive and critical agent (Literature 93).

Rosenblatt’s reader response pedagogy demonstrates that Dewey’s philosophic principles can be enacted to teach students to achieve greater non-foundational agency. When this pragmatist literary theory is compared to Murray’s and Elbow’s composition instruction, Dewey’s tacit tradition for these writing process theorists can be articulated. We need to heed the pragmatist principles of the primacy of experience, the constructive process of knowing, the influence of language upon thought, and the achievement of agency already at work within writing process theories, for when we do, their resounding relevance to the postmodern impasse will be heard.

Murray’s and Elbow’s Pragmatist Construction of Knowledge from Experience

Like Dewey in theory and Rosenblatt in practice, Murray accepts the initial responses of student writers. He too begins with the starting point of
pragmatist philosophy -- the primacy of experience -- by placing his trust in student writers' already "extensive contact with life and language" (Learning 152). He urges them to get words on paper, for once they begin to participate in the writing process, he is confident they can learn to write and write to learn. Student writers must learn to "write badly before [they] write well" (Learning 49). Once student writers have placed these initial words on a page, they can learn to revise this "productive jumble" into a better interpretation of experience (Write 33).

Murray's process of writing "to learn, to explore, [and] to discover" expands towards Rosenblatt's widening circles of interest and conforms to Dewey's constructive process of knowledge (Write 3). Like the expanding interests of Rosenblatt's reader from response to text and from text to contexts and on to another response, Murray describes the writing process as "an experimental art" because a writer must "try it, step back, observe, think, redefine the problem, redesign the experiment, [and] try again" (Expecting 134). Yet in order to discern and discuss the writing process, Murray explains, "we must stop time (and therefore the process itself) and examine the single elements . . . in unnatural isolation" (Learning 18). Like Dewey's constructive theory of knowledge, Murray believes the writing process follows a "logical, understandable process" that involves collecting, ordering, focusing, developing, and clarifying (Write 4). A writer's actual experience of composing, of course, is far messier that this description, and Murray is careful to explain that writing is a recursive rather than a linear process.

Like Dewey's non-foundational epistemology, Murray's theory of writing begins and ends with experience. He teaches student writers to approach ordinary events, such as a grandmother's death, with an "open susceptibility" (A Writer 2). While student writers collect a "necessary
abundance" of information, Murray advises them to look for the creative tensions, the Deweyan felt difficulties that can lead to "experiments in meaning" (Write 63, Expecting 23). As a problem is defined, a student writer should create a tentative idea that Murray variously refers to as a lead, a line, and a focus. A writer follows this focus by developing and clarifying during which various possibilities are tested against the emerging text, memory, and literary expectations. As he tries one phrase or image then another, Murray's commentaries about a draft under revision reveal the experimental quality of his composing process (for example, see Write 253-4). Murray, as much as Dewey, subscribes to a constructive theory of knowledge so he compares a text to a photograph because "slowly, it evolves" and his pragmatist predecessor similarly asserts "to express . . . is to carry forward in development" (Writer 11, Art 62).

Elbow too upholds the pragmatist principles of the primacy of experience and the constructive process of knowing. Like Dewey, he asserts "an epistemology of experience" in which a writer begins by trying "to hold [a preconceived] theory at bay . . . [and] articulate what happens" ("Uses" 67). Elbow, for example, encourages students to write discourse that renders as much as the academic discourse that explains favored by David Bartholomae. As this non-academic writing "conveys to others a sense of [the writer's] experience," this rendering discourse "often yields important . . . insights such as helping us see an exception [to] or a contradiction" of prior beliefs ("Reflections" 136, 137). Similar to an initial response by Rosenblatt's reader, this first rendering of an experience by Elbow's writer can reveal felt difficulties that fuel the construction of new knowledge.

Like Dewey, Elbow considers knowledge to be a "process of interpretation" from experience (Embracing 298). He identifies the two
fundamental forces of the constructive process of knowing; for Elbow, they are his believing and doubting games. The believing game does not seek immediately "to construct or defend an argument but rather to transmit [or enlarge] an experience" ("Shifting" 288). Believing supports creating, and doubting fosters criticizing by "drain[ing] the experience from an idea and see[ing] . . . its pure propositionality" (Embracing 263). Although Elbow's critics ignore his advocacy of the latter, he always has described writing as the creative development and critical evaluation of meaning. The alternating forces of believing and doubting, of creating and criticizing propel a writer from felt difficulty to the problem definition and later from the formed hypothesis to the deliberate experimentation of Dewey's constructive process.

Murray and Elbow conceive of experience just as James defines it; for these two writing process theorists and this pragmatist philosopher, experience is a "double-barrelled word" (James qtd. by Dewey EN 10). By this definition, James means that experience involves both an immediate activity and its interpretation as knowledge. Through his advocacy of creative freewriting and believing (in relation to criticizing and doubting), Elbow has only sought to balance the two fundamental and contradictory forces of the constructive process of knowing. Neither Elbow, nor Murray advocates the primacy of experience in order to preclude the development of knowledge. Murray values descriptive and narrative writing that renders experience, but he also considers analysis to be "as important to the writer . . . as the wrench is to the mechanic" so he encourages students to write reflective narratives (Write 142). In these "personal, but . . . not private" essays, there should be both "immediacy and detachment" (Write 100).

When Murray begins to construct meaning from experience through writing, it is with the desire to see "what I have to say in the hope that what I
discover will be significant" (Expecting 89). Yet Murray makes clear that a text's significance can never be determined by only the writer. Just as Rosenblatt's reader considers the responses made by others, a construction of meaning by Murray's writer is verified by its consequences for others. In the first edition of A Writer Teaches Writing from 1968, Murray stipulates that a writer "may write for himself, but he does not write to himself," and he elaborates, "the writer does not exist without a reader [because] the purpose of writing is . . . to convey information" to another (3). Murray subsequently has enriched his notion of this verifying reader by positing the existence of a writer's "other self" who anticipates public responses to a text (Learning 167). Murray's "other self" perceives a draft just as Dewey describes an artist viewing a developing image "as a third person might" (Art 106).

Although Murray insists on the influential role of an "other" in this constructive process of knowing, his writing theory has been reductively categorized as an impulsive, solipsistic pressing out or 'ex-pressing' of a Romantic self beyond inhibiting layers of social conventions -- hence the label "expressivism." 6 Yet a writer's "other self" is able to anticipate public responses for Murray, and according to Elbow, a writer is able to close her eyes, to ignore her audience while composing because writers can never isolate themselves completely from the influences of social discourses (Elbow "Closing" 61-2). The discrepancy between Murray's and Elbow's writing process theories and the "expressivist" label created by their critics is so glaring, the time has come to ask why this inaccurate categorization, or should I say - caricaturization, persists. Like Lisa Delpit discussing the process vs. product debate, I believe this contest between "The Competing Theories of the Writing Process" -- to borrow the title of one of its originators -- is "an illusion created . . . by academics whose world view demands the creation of
categorical divisions . . . for . . . easier analysis” (Delpit 296, see Faigley “Competing”). I also agree with Tomas O’Donnell who asserts, “critics of expressivism seem committed to attacking straw rhetorics of their own making” (426, italics added).

The history of contemporary composition could be beneficially rewritten if we considered cognitive process and social process theories of writing as developments of as much as departures from the writing process theories of Murray, Elbow, and their contemporaries. Social epistemic composition theories can be deemed developments from Murray’s and Elbow’s pedagogies if the pragmatist tradition of the modern writing process movement is articulated, for Dewey heralds the contemporary concern for language. Then the best aspects of Murray’s and Elbow’s composition theories can be explained and extended until they bridge the apparent epistemological chasm that divides them from the most effective practices of postmodern writing instruction.

Assuming and Acknowledging Language’s Influence Upon Thought

Despite criticisms to the contrary, Murray and Elbow do assume that a writer is immersed in language. They do not believe that a writer’s thought or “inner vision finally exists apart from language” as Berlin claims (Rhetoric 152-3). Writing, for Murray, is “a process of discovery through language,” and his writing process pedagogy depends upon the influential currents of discursive practices (Learning 15). Murray encourages student writers to follow “meaning-searching language” and to “allow language to lead [them] to meaning” (Expecting 45, Learning 74). Writers are able to begin composing without critically considering their readers or their purposes because they can let themselves be supported by the buoyant medium of
language. Rather than urging a writer to swim deliberately after predetermined intentions, Murray advises against trying to establish one’s purposes too quickly (Learning 44). Instead writers should begin composing by floating uncritically upon discursive currents by brainstorming, freewriting, and mapping.

Although Murray’s pedagogy depends upon a writer’s immersion in discourse, it is true that he rarely states this implicit assumption as an explicit acknowledgment. Yet this omission does not mean that “once [students] start grappling — on the page— with meanings,” Murray’s writing process pedagogy fails to “help [students] see how the traditions of form and language help clarify thinking” (Expecting 103). This quotation by Murray himself suggests otherwise because in its entirety he states, “once [students] start grappling -- on the page-- with meanings, we [instructors] can help them see how the traditions of form and language help clarify thinking.” Murray, however, has not explained an instructor’s “help[ing]” a student understand this pragmatist principle in great detail. Yet this failure to elaborate by Murray does not mean a writing process theorist cannot do so. For Elbow has acknowledged the influence of social discourses upon a writer’s thinking, and he has advanced several practices that enable students to appreciate language’s influence without undermining their potential agency.

In contrast to Murray, Elbow repeatedly acknowledges language’s influence upon an individual’s thought. A writer, he declares, is “immersed in discourse itself,” and freewriting “exploits the autonomous generative powers of language and syntax” (“Shifting” 287, Embracing 59). For skeptics who may wonder whether Elbow finally is heeding his critics, it is important to note that even in his earliest texts, Elbow acknowledges this discursive immersion. In Writing Without Teachers (1973), Elbow locates writers and
readers in "speech communities" to explain interpretation as a transactional process much like Rosenblatt’s theory (155). And in "The Value of Dialectic" (1975), he recognizes that "the hallmark of the twentieth century" is examining "the limitations of that system we work in most closely, the one whose blind spots are hardest to notice: language" (Embracing 245). As he acknowledges language’s influence, Elbow is well aware that others have concluded that a writer is "written by language," but he is able to avoid the postmodern impasse of agency ("Toward" 209).

Like his pragmatist predecessors and his postmodern critics, Elbow realizes that a writer’s immersion in discourse means that every individual is engaged in constant collaborative relationships with others. Dewey’s previously quoted assertion that "a composition conceived in the head . . . is public in its significant content" could be attributed to Elbow. For this writing process theorist states, "we can carry on thinking, writing, and even talking, while alone on a deserted island, but in doing so we are living off capital accumulated through a community process" (Embracing 293). According to Elbow, the physical isolation of a deserted island or even a quiet study cannot be confused with the ways of believing shared by language users. These two quotations are so similar because Elbow’s writing process theory is "living off" the pragmatist principles “accumulated” by Dewey, James, and Peirce, a debt Elbow has begun to repay with interest.

In "The Uses of Binary Thinking," Elbow identifies "John Dewey" as one notable thinker among several unnamed others who recognizes that "either/or thinking is the problem" in the current controversy over whether writing is either a social or an individual process (60). Elbow does not cite Dewey’s almost verbatim warning against our tendency to "formulate beliefs in terms of Eithers/Ors" (EE 17), but he does quote the similar assertion:
"The very idea of education is the freeing of individual capacity in a progressive growth directed to social aims" from Dewey's *Democracy and Education* (qtd. in "Uses" 76, n.16) And in another recent article, he echoes Rosenblatt as well as Dewey when he insists, "the personal ... need not be at war with the social. The personal and the social are [often] reciprocal" ("Foreword" 13). It is this pragmatist transaction between self and society that Elbow enacts in even his earliest textbooks.

In *Writing Without Teachers* and *Writing With Power*, Elbow conceives of writing as not an either/or matter, but as both an individual and a social process.* In *WWT*, Elbow is more concerned with an individual writer creating initial material than fulfilling a teacher's critical standards for a final text. The apparently individual act of creating through even freewriting, however, is supported by peer response groups who try to believe a writer's draft in order to encourage further invention, and generation is only the first of Elbow's two explicitly stated goals. As Christopher Burnham notes, the second is "to improve [the writer's] ability to make [one's] own judgment about which ... writing to keep and ... throw away" (Elbow qtd. 164, italics original). Yet this individual judgment, like that by Rosenblatt's reader, is fostered by considering the responses made by others. Elbow's writer must assume the responsibility for revision that the traditional teacher's red pen took from many students, but these decisions are aided by knowing what material elicited the strongest and weakest reactions by the supportive readers. The social group represented by the peer responders enable the individual writer to make more informed choices. *WWT*, Burnham further observes, is only a "prelude" to *WWP* in which

*Given their similar titles, Elbow's two early textbooks will be identified as *WWT* and *WWP* in subsequent references.

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response groups are "used for both support and evaluation in an effort to help a writer develop voice" (166).

In *WWP*, evaluation becomes an overt concern, and peer responders practice critical doubting as well as supportive believing. Informed by the responses of the social group, the writer seeks a powerful voice that can communicate with the reader. This voice is not the revelation of a prior self; it is the construction of a contingent persona required by meaning and audience. It is only by distorting the purpose of peer response as eliminating "inauthentic writing" that Berlin and others can claim that Elbow (and Murray) "deny the intersubjective, social processes of writing" (*Rhetoric* 14, 146). Yet as the guidelines of analytical responding, for example, demonstrate Elbow’s writer is engaged in a collaborative, social relationship with her readers as they offer other supports for, possible objections against, and alternative conceptions of a main claim (see *Sharing* 27-8). Like Dewey advocating the "associated life" and even a postmodernist focusing on the 'other,' Elbow advances a composition theory in which the individual develops through social activity (*Dewey Democracy* 401).

Like Burnham, I believe Elbow’s critics have overlooked his Deweyan conception of the individual and society because they do not treat his earliest textbooks as the theoretical statements that they are. Although these texts were written primarily for a "non-scholarly audiences," they do formulate a theoretical explanation of composing that closely corresponds to Deweyan pragmatism (Burnham 155). Anyone who doubts the theoretical sophistication of *WWT*, for example, should note Elbow’s references to Tertullian, Descartes, and Thomas Kuhn, especially when the final figure’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* was not widely known when this ‘textbook’ was published (149,150, 166).
When Elbow has written for a scholarly audience, he accepts some responsibility, but let me stress very little, for his critics’ confusion. In “Uses,” Elbow explains his theory of writing as both an individual and a social process, yet he inexplicably changes one of the terms of this controversy. He substitutes the word “private” for individual. He defends his theory by asserting that writing is both a “private” and a “social” process (60). He acknowledges the facile argument that composing is always social because “language comes to us from the outside,” but he adds, “the language we speak and write also comes to us from the inside” (60).

By considering language as a both/and process, Elbow is able to explain that it is the social aspect of language that stimulates individual development, and during this development, it is the individual aspect that maintains and remakes social discourses. Thus, language involves the “private” and the “inside,” meaning the individual, just as much as the “outside,” meaning the social. Elbow’s critics, unfortunately, have not heeded Dewey’s warning against either/or thinking as well so they consider his argument for the individual as a denial of the social. Yet Elbow explicitly states, the individual and the social as “opposed sides can work together and reinforce each other” in one theory of composing (61, italics original). The entire controversy over expressive vs. social epistemic composition pedagogies is itself another failure to avoid either/or thinking.

The Achievement of Agency by Pragmatist Writing Process Students

With the acknowledgement of language’s influence by writing process theorists, the potential agency of Elbow’s and Murray’s composition students can be explained and extended. For pragmatism explains two practices Elbow has championed: freewriting and the believing and doubting games that
foster greater non-foundational agency. Dewey’s tacit tradition also can extend
the best aspects of Murray’s pedagogy so that its current categorization as
“expressivist” becomes even more intellectually untenable and absurd.

As theorized and practiced by Elbow, freewriting enables a writer to
generate meaning because “words call up words, ideas call up more ideas”
(*Embracing* 59). A writer, “immersed in language” as Elbow acknowledges,
uses this unplanned, exploratory prose to exploit language’s own generative
powers (“Shifting” 287). Yet this power of language to conjure more language
is not necessarily so great that the writer ultimately is the one exploited, taken
advantage of by the dominant discourses. Through the unplanned invention
stimulated by freewriting, a writer may be able to disrupt as much as follow
the conventional currents of discourse because according to Elbow,
freewriting harnesses “the mind’s capacity for chaos and disorganization”
(“Shifting” 288). When practiced well, this unplanned composing is one
form of what Elbow refers to as “first order thinking” which is the ability to
construct new conceptual terms from experience (Without drawing an
absolute dichotomy, Elbow distinguishes this first order thinking from the
second-order which involves the ability to apply already-known concepts to
new experiences; see *Embracing* 55). The first order thinking fostered by
freewriting can “lead the person spontaneously to formulate conceptual
insights that are remarkably shrewd” as demonstrated by Elbow’s own insight
that, contrary to common belief, speech sometimes is better considered
indelible and writing, ephemeral – an insight I soon will discuss to explain
Elbow’s exemplary demonstration of the agency achieved through his
believing and doubting games (*Embracing* 56, italics original).

Elbow believes that unplanned exploratory prose can stimulate fresh
insights rather than just reproduce discursive influences because he does not
conceive of language as a monolithic whole that predetermines the perception and expression of every new experience. Instead, he considers language to consist of multiple discourse, or speech, communities. In *WWT*, he cautions, “The picture [of language] is oversimplified, however, if we talk of only one speech community” (155, italics original). Elbow’s more complex image of “many overlapping speech communities for each individual” provides the discursive space for personal agency (155). Although the explicit topic of Elbow’s discussion of speech communities is the interpretive abilities of individual readers, his theory of their agency applies to writers as well. Elbow describes the “constant tug of war” between individuals who create new meanings and discursive communities that “curb this looseness” (154). Like Dewey, Elbow considers language to be a series of “flexible transactions among people” so both the process and the products of language use must be considered (156). The process of individuals using language leads to subtle variation and stark invention, and the products maintained by a specific community limit this alteration and addition. Yet for neither Elbow, nor Dewey can the existing product of one discourse community completely control the ongoing activity of the individual agent. Elbow likens an individual’s alteration of meaning to a “dream-like fluidity,” but agency does not have to depend upon only the unconscious invention of freewriting (155).

As freewriting exploits the generative power of language, it also exposes the conventional currents of discourse to scrutiny so an author does not have to be conceived as being written by language. For Elbow, “valuing experience . . . [does not leave] the articulation of experience unchallenged” (O’Donnell 436). Like an initial response reconsidered by Rosenblatt’s reader, a first draft by an individual freewriting places felt difficulties onto the page
where they can be identified and Dewey's constructive process of inquiry can begin. Elbow explains, writers "can think better when they examine their thoughts . . . as a string of assertions arranged in space" across a page rather than in the mist of the mind ("Shifting" 284). To encourage this conscious consideration of our ways of believing, I, for example, ask the students of my process-oriented composition course to freewrite about three words: "writing," "composing" and "experimenting" in order to foreground their assumptions about the first concept. The word "writing" too often functions as a synecdoche; one part - transcription represents the whole - composing so the experimental process of constructing meaning is obscured, hence ignored (see Brodkey 398). The equally problematic assumptions that many first year student writers have about "revision" and "research" also can be addressed by asking students to freewrite about these crucial terms of composing. Thus, freewriting can function, as Elbow states, as "Both an invitation to become less self-conscious about writing" and "to increase our awareness of what we have written" ("Toward" 210). This pragmatist analysis of freewriting explains its efficacy to exploit a writer's social ways of believing and to expose them to deliberate scrutiny.

A Deweyan writing instructor likewise could extend Murray's classic assignment by taking the personal essay for a wider social turn without reaching the postmodern impasse. This assignment still would develop from the primacy of the writer's experience. The student still would narrate a significant life experience, yet a Deweyan instructor would ask the student to reflect not just on the significance of the experience itself as Murray does but also on the cultural assumptions implicit within the narration which influence her reflections.

To encourage a student to reflect on these cultural influences, a
pragmatist instructor would pose questions not usually asked in process-oriented draft comments and writing conferences. For example, when I was teaching a process-oriented first-year writing course, one student named Brian wrote about trying to maintain a friendship with an openly gay student named Todd. Brian, who was a talented performer, described practicing dance steps and songs with Todd for an upcoming college musical. Although these practices were productive and enjoyable, Brian did not want to be considered by others as being too ‘friendly’ with this homosexual student. As a self-described ‘artsy’ heterosexual, Brian worried about being labeled — in his own words — a ‘fag’ by an intolerant peer. During our actual conference, I probably asked Brian such typical process-oriented questions as “Was there a specific incident that made you worry about being associated too closely with Todd?,” “Are you trying to answer an intolerant student, to explain your concerns to Todd, or to examine your own concerns?,” and “How has this experience made you think and act differently?”

To extend the efficacy of Murray’s pedagogy and become more of a Deweyan instructor, I should have asked Brian to consider the cultural assumptions perpetuated by language, to reflect on the discursive practices that influence his own stated ambivalence towards homosexuality. A possible question for a showing detail, a Murrayan “revealing specific,” might have made him mention a dislike for homosexual graffiti in public bathrooms that solicits impersonal sexual encounters (Write 61). I then could have asked him to consider the dominant terms for a participant in such encounters. A heterosexual male who engages in loveless sexual encounters is commonly referred to as a ‘stud,’ and a heterosexual female who does so is crudely known as a ‘slut.’ A homosexual male, regardless of whether his sexuality is expressed in a loving relationship or not, is called a ‘fag.’ An analysis of these
terms may have led Brian to consider the “tremendous effect” of language on our beliefs that Dewey asserts.

By confronting the conventional discourse of homophobia, Brian may have begun to practice the intellectual disrobing, the critical foregrounding of one belief against a background of other accepted assertions that Dewey advocates. Brian could have examined the effects of “wearing” the discourse of homophobia and that of tolerance. He might have questioned why some heterosexual men enjoy accusing other males of being a ‘fag.’ What behaviors elicit this accusation? Why can some of these behaviors, such as tears or touching, be construed very differently if they occur on a sports field or a theatrical stage? Why does the patriarchal culture draw such an abrupt yet ambiguous distinction between male bonding and homosexual desire? Is sexual intimacy between two loving people more important than the patriarchal distinction between ‘stud’ and ‘fag’? If loving intimacy between any two people is more important than homophobic intolerance against same sex intimacy, then does this assertion conflict with any other beliefs? Do any of those beliefs silence an assertion that loving intimacy is more important than homophobic intolerance?

Like Murray, a Deweyan instructor would want a student to engage in a process of discovery. Murray has been much criticized for his his emphasis on discovery, his insistence that “students become writers at the moment when they first write what they do not expect” (Expecting 3). Yet Murray emphasizes discovery because only then are student writers engaged in a constructive process of inquiry. Both Murray and Dewey have few illusions about the originality of these discoveries. Murray believes a “writer’s illusion of innocence is essential” because it motivates writing, but he immediately stipulates all of a writer’s “problems have been worked out by . . .
...other[s]" (Learning 8). Dewey also cautions, "No one expects the young to make original discoveries" (Democracy 354).

By pursuing this process of discovery through language even more than Murray acknowledges, Brian could have critically examined his ways of believing and achieved greater agency. If Brian had decided that he believed loving intimacy was more important than homophobic intolerance, he would have been drawn into a transactional relationship with language itself because the terms of homophobia are incompatible with this belief. Like advocates of homosexual tolerance who have foregrounded the American discourse of personal liberty, he may have considered the conflict between the cultural discourses of homophobic intolerance and individual freedom and concluded that the same-sex intimacy some refer to as 'an unnatural act' is better conceived as a 'sexual preference.' He could have begin to participate in the deliberate reconstruction of discursive practices that postmodernists often overlook in theory. He could have learned to be an agent of ideas without ever imagining himself to be the sole author of these thoughts. 10

One of Elbow's and Murray's critics may object to my pragmatist extension of their writing process pedagogies. They may claim that my Deweyan version of their composition theories seems as unrecognizable as I consider their "expressivist" caricature to be, but Elbow's believing and doubting games represent the fundamental forces of a deliberate Deweyan re-construction of our current ways of believing. Elbow advocates believing and doubting in order to try on and take off particular ways of believing, and by this Deweyan act of intellectual disrobing, Elbow himself demonstrates that greater non-foundation agency can be achieved.

In "The Shifting Relationship between Thought and Speech," Elbow believes and doubts the dominant assumption about talk and text that have
been built into language. he begins by believing, or consciously trying on, the dominant beliefs that speech is ephemeral and writing is indelible. Speech, he states, is ephemeral because it can be heard only once. Writing, in contrast, is indelible because it is recorded on the more permanent page. Elbow then doubts or, takes off, these assumptions that have persisted since Greek Antiquity. Speech can be considered indelible because once we have spoken, our words can never be retracted, only amended. Writing can be ephemeral if a writer's first draft is not the final public one; with revision, print ceases to be permanent. Elbow then advocates revised freewriting because it combines the spontaneity and specificity of speech with the revisibility and reflexivity of writing (see 285-91). Although Elbow may seem to be like Jacques Derrida deconstructing a binary opposition between speech and writing, his analysis actually relies on Dewey's dialectical thinking, the pragmatist preference for maintaining the creative tension between both/and rather than eliminating either one or the other extreme. For Elbow not only has demonstrated but also advocated this Deweyan dialectic of believing and doubting in theory and in practice.

In "The Value of Dialectic," Elbow advocates the dialectical thinking that keeps two opposed assertions in creative tension by affirming and questioning each one. On the issue of free will vs. determinism, Elbow offers the example: "If I think of my behavior as free, the best way to notice and understand behavior that was hidden from me is to try to see it as determined" (Embracing 241). Like Dewey, Elbow avoids the tendency to think in terms of either/or extremes. He instead encourages a dialectical thinker "to search for potential contradictions . . . to heighten them by affirming both sides rather than by trying to resolve or eliminate them immediately" (Embracing 251). After believing each assertion to reach its
limitations, Elbow then advises a dialectical thinker to doubt both in any way possible, to deliberately disrupt the previous affirmation. Through this conscious trying on and taking off of beliefs, Elbow hopes a thinker may be able to achieve a more critical understanding, and possibly - alternative conceptions, of the assertions examined. Even then he does not engage in simple either/or thinking, for he advises the previous way of believing may be considered as a "subset of the larger one, a special case that does not really contradict [the alternative belief] if [it is] correctly restricted" (Embracing 251). Elbow follows his own advice when he "restrict[s]" the role of doubting and the related criticizing to later stages of composing without denying its final importance for effective composing.

Elbow has encouraged writing students to practice this dialectic of believing and doubting. In one of his earliest publications, Elbow describes a "non-disciplinary" -- or what we now call, an interdisciplinary -- course in which writing students examine a "single concrete particular" from "the widest range of conflicting models, metaphors, hypotheses, conceptual schemes and disciplines" (Embracing 9). By considering this range of conceptual alternatives, a student is encouraged to apply, or believe, known concepts to new experiences, Elbow's second-order thinking. The resulting conflict of these multiple concepts causes a student to doubt each one as well. This Deweyan act of trying on and taking off various concepts can provoke Elbow's first order thinking which creates new concepts to understand better an experience. More recently Elbow has suggested this intellectual disrobing and redesigning by asking students to write two essays on one topic for two different audiences. The contrast between the discourse expected by an academic audience and the language desired by a non-academic reader tests the writer's knowledge and exposes the influence of language, such as
academic terms and colloquial phrases, upon this knowledge ("Reflections" 137, 151). Elbow wants to teach his students “the principle of discourse variation” so they learn to recognize the “different perceptions and reactions” that result from different discourses, to realize language’s tremendous effect ("Reflections" 152).

By theorizing, practicing, and teaching believing and doubting, Elbow avoids committing the philosophic fallacy and creating false dualisms. He does not extract one concept, such as the social, from experience and then treat it as an absolute with which to consider the entire experience of writing. He instead has drawn upon his own experiences as a blocked writer to create a theory of both creating and criticizing, both believing and doubting, and both individual and social. As Elbow explains, “My thinking grew out of a process of trying to be true to my experience and to find a theory that didn’t violate it” ("Uses" 65). Thus, Elbow’s theory not only asserts the primacy of experience, it also demonstrates the construction of knowledge from this first pragmatist principle. And Elbow is aware of the philosophical origins of his epistemological practices. He has made explicit references to “William James and John Dewey” to explain the development of the modern writing process movement ("Uses" 65). Elbow has connected the pragmatist emphasis on experience to the work of . . . Macrorie, Britton, Murray, myself, and others. What these figures had in common . . . was a burgeoning interest in the ‘experience’ of writing . . . . People wanted to talk about experience during the process of writing, not just the resultant text as product. ‘Process’ connotes experience. ("The Uses “ 66)

Elbow furthermore correlates the “opening period of the ‘process’ movement” in composition studies to the corresponding interest in a reader’s experience -- the reader response movement led Louise Rosenblatt whom he fails to name ("Uses" 67). Yet as I have tried to show, the writing process and
reader response movements are parallel developments that both follow the philosophical principles of Deweyan pragmatism.

It's time for contemporary composition scholars to practice Dewey's intellectual disrobing; it's time to take off the conventional conceptions of writing as either expressivism or social constructionism and try on a pragmatist design for composition. It's time to reject the reductive, dismissive, and just plain wrong categorization of Murray and Elbow as "expressivists." As Elbow himself objects,

What really needs explaining is why there is such a tendency to see me as one-sided and extreme, to see me as someone only interested in generating, making a mess, and the private dimension; to be blind to my support for critical thinking, revising, doubting, and the social dimension in writing - when I preach over and over this theme of embracing contraries and of trying to get opposites into unresolved tension with each other. ("Uses" 70)

Elbow can support his objection that the social aspects of his writing process theory have been overlooked by his critics. For he has identified his assertion of language generating freewriting, of the believing game, and of peer response as three examples of his contribution to the social aspects of writing ("Foreword" 16). Elbow always has enacted a process-oriented pedagogy in which students are "writ[ing] to each other . . . [and comment[ing] on each other's writings" ("Closing" 64). It does not require a large theoretical reorientation to connect Elbow's collaborative course to Bartholomae's learning sequence pedagogy, especially if one remembers the sequential writing assignments of another supposed 'expressivist' - William Coles in The Plural I. When the tacit tradition of Deweyan pragmatism is articulated within the writing process theories of Donald Murray and Peter Elbow, I believe it is possible to explain and extend the best aspects of writing process. And by this extension, these pragmatist practices can be combined with the
most effective elements of postmodern instruction. Dewey has drawn a
course beyond the current impasse over agency, and we have only begun to
heed the possibilities of this new direction.
CHAPTER FOUR NOTES

1. This quotation comes from a rejection letter received by Murray that criticized his anonymous submission for being "merely expressive" and too "Murrayesque" (Murray "But" 2). This kind of reductive and dismissive response to writing process theorists is widespread. For example, at the 1996 College Composition and Communications Conference, one presenter cautioned against the rise of the new expressivism which he warned was the same as Elbow's original expressivism based on the 'authentic self' -- a phrase and concept that only appears in the analyses of Berlin and other critics, but not in any of Elbow's own work. Like Christopher Burnham, I believe "existing scholarship does not offer a close reading of [the] primary texts" by Elbow and other writing process theorists (155).

2. Rosenblatt, for example, admits her debt by stating, "Dewey's Art as Experience especially left its mark . . . [with] its vision of aesthetic values woven into the texture of . . . daily life," and Dewey's own change in terminology from 'interaction' to 'transaction' was crucial to Rosenblatt's successive editions of Literature as Exploration (Reader xi).

3. Similar to Dewey, Rosenblatt adamantly opposes any false dualisms between text and reader or reader and writer. As a reader engages with a text, he "selects out and synthesizes - interanimates - his responses to the author's patterns of words" through "a continuing, constructive 'shaping' activity" (Reader 53). Although a reader is an active participant in a literary transaction, she should not dominate this process of interpretation. Rosenblatt's pragmatist emphasis on the reader does not disregard the significance of the literary products created by writers and other skilled readers. Rosenblatt carefully stipulates, "Nothing I have said . . . denies that the text is the outward and visible result of an author's creative activity" (Reader 15). Unlike the postmodernists Barthes and Derrida or even the contemporary reader response theorists such as Stanley Fish and Jonathan Culler with whom she is often associated, Rosenblatt's rebirth of the reader does not require the author's death. Nor does her emphasis on the student reader demand that the exemplary interpretations of published critics be ignored. Rosenblatt only cautions that published criticism should only be read after, and not before, a student's experience with a text. Criticism can help clarify a student's own responses, but it should never replace them. A literature teacher should never try to transmit these prior readings to students as though they should be treated as the passive recipients of these fixed objects.

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4. In addition to the student-centered discussions advocated by Rosenblatt, I have found collaborative student journals to be very effective in fostering an awareness of and a respect for the responses of others. I assign two students to one journal and for alternating classes, they are responsible for responding to their partner's previous comments and adding an entry for the reading due. These collaborative journals usually become a constructive conversation that encourages each participant to reconsider and reconstruct their initial responses recorded in the journal and elaborated during class discussions. With its ease and informality, email exchanges can replace the written pages of the paper journal, but it is the dialogic collaboration rather than its medium that is most important.

5. Richard Wright's frequently anthologized "The Man Who Was Almost A Man" is a good text with which to foster this reflexive examination of a reader's influential -- and socially influenced -- assumptions. A student's response to this story depends to a great degree on his or her prior beliefs about male maturation and individual responsibility. As the critic John Loftis explains, this story parodies the traditional tale of masculine initiation through hunting. Unlike William Faulkner's character Ike McCaslin, Wright's protagonist Dave Sanders, the son of an African-American sharecropper, is denied an initiation into manhood through learning to use a weapon from an older male mentor (Loftis 437-442). If a reader interprets Dave's impulsive acquisition of a gun and his accidental shooting of a mule based on those traditional expectations for male maturity and individual responsibility, then this seventeen year old is deemed an immature youth as some of my students respond. Dave's decision to flee the humiliation and the exploitation of the exorbitant price he must pay for the dead farm animal then seems to be final proof of his immaturity. Yet this interpretation ignores the ambiguity of the title that asserts as well as qualifies Dave's manhood, and it overlooks the poignancy of the final line describing his departure for "someplace, someplace where he could be a man." For Dave has not come of age in a community that provides models for his maturation. He instead is "treated like mule" from whom little assertiveness is tolerated. His father, for example, accedes to the landlord's exorbitant charge and forces Dave to submit as well. The father's acquiescence and the mother's ulterior motive for the gun purchase -- defense against racial violence -- suggest the inappropriateness of traditional standards of masculinity. If students pursue this story's widening circles of interest to understand the Post-Reconstruction era of share-cropping and Klan lynchings, then Dave's actions will be judged to be more a matter of racist exploitation than personal maturation. By placing the student's individual beliefs within a cultural context, the appropriateness and the validity of these assumptions can be examined.

6. An increasing amount of scholarship has begun to call into question the categorization of Murray and Elbow as neo-Romantic 'expressivists.' In addition to the articulation of Dewey's tacit tradition by Newkirk and others, Stephen Fishman and Lucille McCarthy in "Is Expressivism Dead?" and
Sherrie Gradin in *Romancing Rhetorics* have questioned the usual reading of Romanticism as an asocial attempt at self-expression.

7. Murray, for example, states that a “writer must plan and calculate, scheme and decide . . . make[e] a thousand executive decisions,” and cognitive researchers, led by Linda Flower and John Hayes, have sought to create a mental model of this decision-making process (*Writer* 6). Despite Murray’s own divisive title to “Teach Writing as a Process, Not Product,” the writing process movement can itself be seen as a development of as much as a departure from current-traditional teaching. Writing process instruction made the methods of skillful product-oriented writers accessible to more students, especially those whose family discourse differed from the middle class language privileged by schools. The writing process movement, led by Murray and Elbow, should be considered a democratization of the academy. It is no coincidence that the attention to process parallels open admission policies.

8. Although writing process theorists are accused of offering a simplistic account of agency, Murray actually foreshadows the postmodern problem when he describes “being led by a piece” of writing (*Expecting* 141). Murray assumes language’s influence upon thought and suggests a way beyond the current impasse when he conceives of writers as agents who “us[e] written language to find out what they have to say” (*Learning* 31). As Dewey explains, agency is possible by examining language’s tremendous effect upon thought.

9. First-order thinking, Elbow elaborates, involves “constructing new words from experience” and the second entails “constructing new experiences from words” (*Embracing* 33). Sounding like Dewey, Elbow does not draw this distinction without adding the disclaimer, “Of course, there is a continuum” between these complementary ways of thinking, yet he insists “we can still usefully treat them separately” (*Embracing* 14, 15).

10. As many contemporary composition instructors urge their students to seek greater agency, I believe we must be very forthright about its consequences. Pragmatist knowledge demands action so Brian would have to risk his own, sometimes tenuous, social acceptance if he were to defend his homosexual friend against ridicule or worse abuse. He would have to weigh the importance of his own immediate acceptance against the eventual consequences for himself, Todd, and a homophobic student. Although I would want Brian and any other student to defend another classmate like Todd and become even more deliberate agents of social reform, I think we need to be very honest about the possible consequences of such agency and our own personal willingness to accept them.
CHAPTER V

TOWARDS A SYNTHESIS OF WRITING PROCESS AND POSTMODERN INSTRUCTION:
THE DEWEYAN DIRECTION

"A deconstructive reading of writing pedagogy underscores the appropriateness of much of the lore connected with process pedagogy . . . [and] demonstrates . . . some alterations remain to be considered." -- Sharon Crowley

"It takes nothing away from [postmodern] theorists to say that sensible writing teachers were implementing some aspects of their theories in the classroom before the theories were . . . articulated." -- Edward White

When postmodern composition theorists explain the classroom implications of Derrida and Foucault, I'm usually struck by the fact that the practices proposed resemble, and quite closely, the best aspects of Murray's and Elbow's pragmatist pedagogies. Teaching writing as a process, beginning with student experiences, constructing knowledge from these experiences, engaging in collaboration between writers and readers, acknowledging language's influence, and trying on as well as taking off various ways of believing all are proposed as though no one else had ever advanced these ideas, or if they did, Murray or Elbow must have mumbled these insights. In A Teacher's Guide to Deconstruction, Sharon Crowley, for example, describes a deconstructive pedagogy that "would reinforce the notion . . . that writing is a process" yet "interpret this slogan more profoundly" (46). By claiming to interpret "more profoundly" what previously was only "a slogan," Crowley shows with one hand and conceals with the other a significant similarity
between her Derridean pedagogy and those of Murray and Elbow.

Crowley's profound interpretation of the writing process is to deny the existence of any universal methods of composing and to assert "This does not mean that the writing process can not be generalized about" (46). Her generalizations, however, are very familiar to a practitioner of Murray's and Elbow's theories. For example, she states "On the deconstructive account (and in process pedagogy as well) writing is conceived as continuous and dynamic" (41). Based on Derrida's deconstruction of the author, the writing process is "continuous" since it is impossible to discern when composing exactly begins and ends. Composing also must be considered "dynamic" because it entails endless collaboration and revision. By her parenthetical inclusion of "process pedagogy," Crowley admits yet minimizes these similarities; her parentheses symbolize her attempted marginalization of Murray and Elbow.

Crowley tries to conflate writing process theorists and current-traditionalists by claiming, "a deconstructive analysis undermines the notion that the composing begins with an originating author; this notion characterizes both traditional and process pedagogies" (31). In contrast to these pedagogies, her deconstructive instruction would demonstrate the "complicity" of writers and readers to disrupt the foundational concept of an author (36). Students would "read their colleagues' works-in-progress and comment on them" so they would become "as much a part of their composition as is the 'original' author" (37-8). But the "complicity" of writers and readers Crowley claims for her deconstructive pedagogy closely resembles the individual-social dialectic enacted by Elbow's peer response groups. For Elbow is well aware that a writer "can't give readers a finished product . . . anymore than a playwright can actually send a live play through the mail" (WWP 315). Crowley's related assertion that a Derridean instructor would
teach students to anticipate "the probable responses of the audience" again resembles Murray's concept of the writer's other self (A Teacher's 42). Once Elbow's and Murray's emphasis on the writer is not considered according to their critics' either/or thinking about the individual and the social, their emphasis on the writer's process can be interpreted "more profoundly" than "a slogan."

In a similar analysis of Foucault's pedagogical implications, Kurt Spellmeyer concludes, student writers must learn to seek "knowledge made" rather than "knowledge received" (724). Students must start to "ask questions for which no answers or containing forms wait ready at hand" (723). They must -- dare I paraphrase, but whom? -- write to learn, and when they do, Spellmeyer continues, they will "speak first and then learn what [they] have said and whom [they] have become" (723). Yet Murray has been categorized as an 'expressivist' for advocating writing to learn which is "not so much self-expression as self-exposure, and perhaps self-creation" (Learning 137). Like Bizzell criticizing Flower and Hayes' cognitive research, I find these postmodern pedagogies to be "a surprising mix of daunting complexity and disappointing familiarity" (Bizzell "Cognition" 222). 2

Although Crowley and Spellmeyer, in theory, declare the social construction of knowledge, they seem determined, in practice, to draw a line in the sand between the "old" that includes 'expressivism' and their supposedly "new" pedagogies. These pedagogies, I will prove, include something borrowed and something old as much as something new so a pragmatist synthesis of their most effective practices and those of writing process pedagogies is possible. Like Dewey and Elbow, I want to reconstruct an either/or opposition into a both/and dialectic that eliminates the possible failures of each of these presently opposed pedagogies.
Beginning with the Primacy of Experience

The Deweyan direction for contemporary composition begins with the primacy of experience already enacted by Murray and Elbow. At a time when New Criticism made most English departments "institution[s] of literary studies unresponsive to student lives," writing process theorists "encouraged students to write what mattered to them" (Jarratt 109). Like Murray, Elbow and Crowley, a Deweyan instructor would continue encouraging students to select "issues that concern them directly" (Crowley Teacher's 38). These topics, however, would not be limited to such personal events as the big game and the broken friendship as some misguided writing process practitioners and their critics assume. Instead these issues of direct concern would be any topic with which students have enough experience and interest to seek greater understanding. In my composition course, such topics have included the everyday use of lasers, the thrills of reading fantasy literature, and the identity problems of biracial adolescents. When students use familiar language to write about these self-selected subjects, I, like Macrorie, have found their writing reveals "a surprising occasional command of metaphor, forceful beginnings and endings, telling detail, word play, [and] irony" (Macrorie Uptauget 22). Yet the success and the possible failure of Macrorie's pedagogy demonstrates a pragmatist composition teacher would not rely on student experiences completely.

Macrorie named his pedagogy the "Third Way" because he wanted to avoid the first two alternatives created by the either/or thinking that pits teacher control against student liberty (Uptauget 27). To achieve the third possibility of student freedom fostered by teacher direction, Macrorie provided the student with "first, freedom, to find his voice and let his subjects find him; and second, discipline, to learn more professional craft to
supplement his already considerable language skills” (telling viii). Instead of “complete freedom,” this pedagogy sought Dewey’s positive freedom as a student learns to do more, to write better with an instructor’s guidance (Uptought 27). Yet the possible failure of this student-centered and teacher-directed pedagogy shows that Macrorie’s concern for how students write should not eliminate entirely the previous concentration on what students compose.

To avoid the “bloated, pretentious” prose he ridiculed as “Engfish,” Macrorie demanded writing that is “alive and honest enough to be dangerous” (Uptought 21, 27). This demand was successful, as even Macrorie’s critic James Vopat states, because a student was engaged in “asserting the worth of his own experience and feelings . . . . [writing] honestly about actual event and emotional reaction” (41-2). Yet when an instructor’s concern for process does not include teaching students how professional writers use this experiential immediacy to reach analytical insights, Vopat warns, “the student-centered class places such a premium on personal truth, that there is a tendency to encourage and reward the sensational rush at the expense of the considered response” (42). Macrorie’s college textbook telling writing does include chapters on “Tightening,” “Sharpening,” and “Writing Critically,” but it does not include sample texts by published authors to demonstrate the results of such revision and reflection. Without these exemplary products, the textbook’s sections on revision and analysis were not effective for Vopat’s students. They wrote “well and excitedly about their personal experiences,” but they were “at a loss when asks to write about ideas, when asked to question values” (42). Vopat’s prescient warning means that a composition course ultimately will fail if it begins and ends with only the primacy of experience. Like Elbow, a Deweyan instructor would encourage
both discourse that renders and discourse that analyzes.

Without exaggerating the primacy of experience, a pragmatist pedagogy also cannot overlook its importance. Unlike the postmodernists Berlin, Bartholomae, and Spellmeyer, a Deweyan instructor would not violate the starting point of pragmatist thought and writing process practice. In a revised presentation of his postmodern course, Berlin stresses the central importance of "the response of students to the materials and methods considered" and claims "We start with the personal experiences of the students" (Rhetorics 115, 116). Unfortunately, Berlin's continued rhetoric of discursive oppression contradicts his pedagogy's supposed emphasis on experience because he still wants his students to "negotiate and resist these [cultural] codes, these hegemonic discourses" (Rhetorics 116). By advocating this pursuit of negative freedom from external constraints, Berlin creates the epistemological crisis faced by Foucault (as explained in chapter one). Subjecting all previous beliefs to doubt denies an individual the necessary context in which a non-foundational knower considers the alternatives for a particular assertion.

Similar to Berlin, Spellmeyer requires a student to resist the dominant discourse because the Foucauldian "I speak only in those moments when it overcomes the rules designed to contain it" (716, italics added). This postmodern assumption that student essays generally are written by discursive practices leads Bartholomae to respond to a student's initial drafts by doubting rather than believing the account of her experiences. He declares, "I begin by not granting the writer her 'own' presence in [a] paper . . . by asking her to read her paper as a text already written by the culture . . . . I begin by being dismissive" ("Response" 85). By beginning with doubt and demanding a student start with resistance, a postmodern teacher induces the
paralysis observed by Bizzell in Berlin's course (as explained in chapter one). For most students will resist this paralysis as much as, if not more than, the dominant ideology, which may explain Bartholomae's belief that it is the teacher who must force students to question "the things that seem beyond question . . . . It will not happened on its own, but only when prompted" ("Response" 87).

Like France's call for critical intervention by an instructor, Bartholomae's "prompt[ing]" makes me ask Foucault's question of "Who is speaking?" Will it be the teacher or the student? Crowley criticizes traditional instruction because "the teachers do most of the writing in composition classes" through their syllabi, assignments, comments, and corrections (Teacher's 35). Yet Bartholomae only recognizes student writers as a speaking "I" if they "write against the grain of the [dominant] discourse" ("Response" 85). Bartholomae, Berlin, and Spellmeyer define agency too much in terms of resistance, yet their conception of agency "dismisses" students' prior experiences so these writers are left in Foucault's epistemological crisis. A Deweyan instructor, in contrast, would conceive of agency as reconstruction as well as resistance. A pragmatist pedagogy would neither exaggerate, nor understate the primacy of experience. Then the similarity that John Schilb notes between "teachers who want their students to engage in personal, expressive writing" and "the attention to daily life that theorists of cultural studies have shown" can be fulfilled (187). Following Dewey's constructive process of inquiry, student writers would begin with experience then develop knowledge that could reconstruct as well as resist conventional beliefs.
Dewey's Constructive Process From Experience to Knowledge

Since experience is James' "double-barrelled word," its primacy includes rather than precludes the construction of knowledge in a pragmatist pedagogy. To foster this process, a Deweyan instructor would have to be wary of the possible weakness of Macrorie's writing process theory: encouraging "the sensational rush" too much. Although prior experiences and present abilities "furnish the initiating . . . forces in all education," Dewey also cautions, "learning is not a matter of [their] spontaneous flow" (Democracy 133-34). By placing a premium on emotional rendering, Macrorie does not encourage the constructive process of knowing enough. And when students do not write to learn, Murray and Spellmeyer agree, "writing [is] drudgery, something that has to be done after the thinking is over" and "writing can never be more than a mechanical reproduction" (Murray Expecting 3-4, Spellmeyer 726). To foster "the considered response," a Deweyan instructor would ask students to select meaningful topics that represent "questions to which [they] need answers, problems to which [they] can use solutions, [and] situations [they] need to . . . explore" (Murray Write 29).

As creative tensions, these topics for inquiry would be resolved by pursuing Dewey's constructive process from felt difficulty through problem definition, hypothesis formation, and deliberate experimentation to provisional verification. Like Murray and Elbow, a Deweyan instructor would teach composing as an understandable process that progresses — recursively, of course — from collecting to clarifying and involves believing and doubting. Similar to Murray and Elbow's preference for the first-person essay, a pragmatist teacher would emphasize a writer's active participation in the construction of meaning. Dewey's non-foundational philosophy denies that an individual is a passive spectator of the known, yet
the pragmatist emphasis upon a knower's activity does not mean this process always must produce an original discovery.

Dewey clarifies an instructor's commitment to "write to learn" when he explains, learning "should take place under such conditions that from the standpoint of the learner there is genuine discovery" (Democracy 354). From the perspective of the student writer, "this thinking is original" because she is making meaning which has "not been previously apprehended . . . even though everybody else in the world knows it" (Democracy 187). Like the text for Rosenblatt's reader, meaning for a pragmatist writer must be made anew since knowledge does not exist as a fixed, foundational entity.

As Dewey advises, a pragmatist teacher would place the composing process "on the [same] level of importance as. . . [its] ends," the written product (Quest 279). This instructor would not invert the previous hierarchy and privilege process over product because one false dualism should not be avoided only to be replaced by another. To stress the writing process, Murray risked such replacement early in his career when he asserted "teach writing as a process, not product" and "Process can not be inferred from product any more than a pig can be inferred from a sausage" (Learning 14, 18). One of the implications of "teaching writing as a process," Murray concludes, is "The text of the writing course is the student's writing" so the texts of published authors were excluded from the classroom -- or so it seemed (Learning 16).

For Murray states another implication: "Papers are examined to see what other choices the writer might make" which reveals the deconstructionist's supplement in the binary opposition of process over product (Learning 17). An instructor's awareness of "other choices" involves her knowledge of published texts as well as other student writings and so these texts were never really excluded from the classroom. To make students
more aware of those alternatives, sample essays by published authors have been reintroduced into most writing process classrooms. Even at such bastions of ‘expressivism’ as Murray’s University of New Hampshire, the expulsion of published texts ended more than a decade ago. 5 Dewey’s definition of a target explains the relationship between a product and a process because “a target is not the future goal of [a shot]; it is the centering [or aiming] factor in a present shooting” (Democracy 206). And the contingent quality of these targets must be remembered because these products, like language for Murray, “evolve . . . rules are not what writers do, but what writers have done” (Learning 151).

Given the tentative nature of pragmatist truths, an instructor cannot always ensure the validity of a desired outcome in advance. As a Deweyan instructor “involve[s] himself in [a student’s] . . . exploration” as Murray recommends, future verification cannot be assured, only assumed (Learning 132). An instructor, therefore, should not let his greater knowledge of alternative products, especially the preferred ones, make him intervene too directly in a student’s constructive process. A pragmatist pedagogy, like its writing process precursors, would remove “the teacher from the center of the classroom,” and this de-centering Jarratt notes, can also be considered “a postmodern move, in the sense that the teacher [previously] was taken as the locus of a Truth” (109). Yet as Dewey stipulates, “When [a teacher’s] external authority is rejected, it does not follow that all authority should be rejected,” and Murray confirms, “student-centered does not mean permissive” (EE 21, Learning 133).

Rather than recenter the classroom on students only, a pragmatist teacher would try to maintain a dual focus upon the subject matter as well as students experiences (EE 56). As David Russell explains, Dewey believes an
instructor "must consciously and carefully interweave the interest of the learner with the demands of the discipline" (187). A pragmatist teacher's knowledge of composition studies would inform the first focus on the subject, but unlike a traditional teacher, an instructor would make not try to transfer this knowledge directly. Instead this knowledge of the discipline would serve as a part of the "working resources" for a Deweyan instructor to create educative experiences for composition students (Democracy 214). Students, for example, will learn about freewriting and language's influence when these "general methods" help a writer "siz[e] up the needs, resources, and difficulties" of resolving a particular problem (Democracy 202). When students try to write to learn about problematic topics, freewriting will be useful to collect ideas and reflect on their significance; and during this reflection, understanding language's tremendous effect will have a "constructive value" (Democracy 354). Through this manipulation of the external factors of learning, such as by encouraging the selection of problematic topics, a Deweyan instructor can stimulate students' growth. Murray sums up the authority of a pragmatist teacher when he advises, "In teaching the [writing] process, we have have to look not at what students need to know, but what they need to experience" (Learning 25).

It is the postmodern emphasis on revolutionary critique of presumably oppressive discourses that make France and Berlin so eager to intervene in the results of a student's constructive process. France, for example, wants to predetermine that a student writer will conclude incarceration should not be primarily punitive, but by predetermining a student's resistance to imprisonment as punishment, this student's active participation is thwarted. Yet, "If the [constructive process] has worked in our case," Dewey asks, "how can we assume that the method will not work with our students?" (qtd. by

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Berlin hopes that his postmodern course will enable students “to bring about more democratic arrangements” (Rhetorics 116). Yet his pedagogy is predicated on declaring the dominant ideology undemocratic. The premium placed on resistance — if I may allude to Vopat’s criticism of Macrorie — rewards revolutionary criticism at the expense of reconstruction. A Deweyan instructor would approve of a student’s effort to reconstruct a generally accepted assertion and to understand its validity. A student’s reconstruction of the American ideal of democracy, for example, would be valued by a pragmatist teacher just as much as a critique of its current imperfections. Berlin, however, would value the second at the expense of the first because of his emphasis on resistance against conventional beliefs. Yet this revolutionary emphasis can curtail a student’s constructive process and prevent the development of any critically understood belief. A Deweyan instructor would avoid intervention which curtails a student’s constructive process -- even when a questionable meaning has been asserted.

Like the contemporary writing process theorist Lad Tobin, a Deweyan instructor should realize a students’ need “to get detail down on paper, write her way through that phase before she can (or dares to) shape it [and] interpret it” (“Personal” 162). By encouraging discourse that renders like Elbow, an instructor may have to read results that he finds objectionable. Tobin, for example, felt moral dismay towards one student’s topic, but he approached a student named “Tim” with “disarming . . . empathy” rather than Bartholomae’s ideological dismissal (“Personal” 173). In his essay, Tim described his cat and mouse encounters with one store owner from whom he repeatedly shoplifted merchandise. Instead of immediately dismissing the masculine bravado of this anti-social defiance of authority, Tobin asks Tim conference questions posed “with curiosity and without judgment” that
would further his construction of meaning, and this student was able to construct further knowledge about his struggles with male authority, especially that of his father, and his confusion about the collapse of his nuclear family ("Personal" 173, 174-5). By stimulating a student's further construction of meaning, a Deweyan instructor can fulfill the suggestion by another postmodernist John Clifford that

students want to become writers.... because they are convinced they have something to say, and more importantly, somebody to say it to. They want an audience they can trust, one that encourages them... to look carefully at the social contingencies of family, religion, gender, and class that have shaped their unique histories. (46)

As Tobin fulfills Clifford’s suggestion, the divisive barrier between writing process and postmodern pedagogies collapses. By assuming that the constructive process will work for our students, a Deweyan instructor can encourage a student’s active participation in this process without anyone assuming that the resulting knowledge is the product of an autonomous agent.

Through Individual-Social Transactions

Similar to her writing process and postmodern composition predecessors, a pragmatist teacher would teach student writers to construct knowledge within an individual-social transactions because, for Dewey, learning is an “active undertak[ing] which involves mutual exchange” (Democracy 352). Like Murray and Elbow, an instructor would enact this dialectic through conference comments and peer responses so individual writers learn to acknowledge their social influences. Rather than respond to students’ draft with the traditional “awk,” a pragmatist teacher would offer conference comments and questions like “This is exciting but I need a lot
more. What did you hear? What did you feel?” as Murray advises and Tobin demonstrates (Murray Learning 151, 155). By offering these provocative responses, a Deweyan instructor would teach students to develop a writer’s “other self” who anticipates a reader’s probable reactions. Using Elbow’s peer response groups, an instructor again would teach students to “assume the point of view . . . [and] carry on an imagined dialogue with potential readers” which Crowley urges in her deconstructive pedagogy (Teacher’s 36). After a response session, one of my students, for example, commented, “Her contributions . . . helped me to revise and add things I couldn’t see in my own writing.” Like Murray, Elbow, and Crowley, a pragmatist teacher would dispel the foundational concept of a text as a container for a writer’s fixed meaning and reconceive the New Critical text as a collaborative site of meaning making by writers and readers.

Like Crowley, Edward White, another contemporary composition theorist, attributes this non-foundational conception of a text to postmodern thinkers, arguing “there is a basic correspondence between [post-structuralist] theories and the practices of the best writing teachers” (187). Yet he fails to notice pragmatism’s tacit tradition in the “very familiar ring” of postmodern theories for contemporary writing teachers (192). White links such practices as write to learn through successive drafts and collaborative conceptions of text to Derrida rather than Dewey. Yet composition instructors who “creative[ly] misread . . . the drafts [they] receive” in order to perceive “possibilities as well as [finished] products” rely on Rosenblatt and Dewey as much as Derrida and the other postmodernists White credits (191). It is Rosenblatt who asserts a reader’s active participation in constructing a literary text without denying a writer’s contribution to the text the reader receives. And it is Dewey who explains an individual writer’s constructive process without denying the
Beyond Murray's conference comments and Elbow's peer response groups, a pragmatist synthesis of writing process and postmodern pedagogies offers an instructor several other ways to engage an active knower in individual-social transactions. Like Bruce Ballenger and Kenneth Bruffee, a Deweyan instructor could encourage students to construct knowledge by researching what others believe about their topics. In *The Curious Researcher* and *The I-Search Paper*, Ballenger and Bruffee ask students to resolve a felt difficulty by writing researched essays. Unlike the traditional research paper, these essays encourage the use of the first person "I" while the writer's construction of knowledge involves not only the student's lived experience but the experience of others' beliefs too. To maintain the writer's active role, Ballenger asks students to engage in personal observation as well as traditional library research. Using Ballenger's approach, I have found that the non-traditional research helps to keep students actively involved and it transforms their often foundational notions of library sources. Students begin to consider the 'facts found in books' as assertions constructed by other researchers like themselves. As constructed knowledge, the information gathered by library and non-traditional research can be questioned and used to question the writer's initial beliefs.

Like William Coles and David Bartholomae, a Deweyan instructor could design learning sequences that enact individual-social transactions in even more direct collaborations with other students. In *The Plural I* and *Facts, Counterfacts, and Artifacts* (co-authored with Anthony Petrosky), Coles and Bartholomae create a sequence of assignments that require students to write, read and respond to shared essays examining a common topic. Through such collaborative inquiry, these writers fulfill Dewey's concept of
education as "a constant reorganizing or reconstructing of experience" that is neither an unfolding from within, nor a forming from without (Democracy 89). Through all of these collaborative practices, a Deweyan instructor would "prolong discursive tension" and "encourage . . . critical reflection on the knowledge produced" as Spellmeyer recommends (727). Yet a pragmatist teacher also would ask an individual to consider the less obvious influences of language itself.

To engage a writer in a transactional relationship with language, a Deweyan instructor would encourage a student to examine discursive practices as positive as well as negative influences. As described in chapter four, a pragmatist teacher would extend the reflection within Murray's first person essay by asking the student to consider not just the significance of the experience but also the cultural assumptions implicit in the narrative. The purpose of this extended reflection is not to dismiss the student or to deny the writer but to widen the circles of interest. This attention to social influences, of course, can occur much earlier in the composing process. Like Elbow, a Deweyan instructor also would use freewriting to expose as well as to exploit language's own "generative powers." An instructor, for example, could ask Tobin's student Tim, after an early freewrite for his essay, to consider the cultural models for his conflicts with male authority figures. This question would not be asked to curtail a student's constructive process but to continue it by clarifying the experience. If Tim were to realize his shoplifting was replaying his relationship with his father and this defiance repeated a troubled teen, James Dean model of male rebellion, then he might consider why he was responding in this anti-social way and whether there are other possible responses. Such social reflection would widen Tim's interests from a narrative of shoplifting to an analysis of a male defiance that challenges his
father as much as the store owner. Although student may take this acknowledgment of social influences to mean “the individual [is] completely at the mercy of the dominant forces” as Rosenblatt warns, an instructor should ask these provocative questions to help an individual make more deliberate choices, to distinguish intelligent activity from routine actions as Dewey advises (Literature 254).

To help students make more deliberate choices about language, a Deweyan instructor also could engage students in the interpretive paraphrase activity created by one of the first social theorists, Ann Berthoff. In this activity, Berthoff asks students to offer one way of considering an idea, to paraphrase that first statement to create an alternative, then to examine the consequences of using this phrase versus that one (86). The differences between alternative ways of believing are especially noticeable as students try to write overtly persuasive essays. I, for example, use the sample topic of abortion (which so many students consider selecting) to show that so much depends upon the phrase ‘the fetus conceived’ or ‘the unborn child’ which many students uncritically employ. Rather than intuitively adopt one of these phrases, these writers can be asked to consider the rhetorical and logical implications of each phrase upon the larger issue of abortion. Instead of assuming a phrase that predetermines abortion is right or wrong, students can be encouraged to consider this central phrase and assumption of their essays. This consideration leads to further examination of the definition of life and the difficult weighing of all of the ‘lives’ involved. By considering the phrases used in persuasion, students can be lead from a foundational argument that tries to debate one issue in isolation to the non-foundational consideration of a topic foregrounded upon a network of other related and equally contingent beliefs.
Because academic discourse is a central concern of their studies, students also can consider language’s influence by examining this issue. Using the collaborative inquiry advocated by Coles and Bartholomae, a Deweyan instructor could start a learning sequence by asking students to freewrite about ‘writing in college.’ From this first writing about their experiences, students would begin constructing greater knowledge in the subsequent discussion during which the generally unknown term of “academic discourse” would be introduced. After these initial activities, students would read and discuss several samples of academic discourse by their own classmates that are drawn from across the curriculum. As they look for similarities and differences among these samples, the students would try to compose collectively a definition of “academic discourse.” The students then would read, discuss, and write responses to excerpts from recent scholarship on this issue (such as by Elbow, Bartholomae, Nancy Sommers, and Mike Rose). As Bartholomae advises, the students would learn to locate and explore their ‘personal feelings’ in the larger context of others’ ‘published knowledge’ (“Inventing” 152). By contextualizing their developing beliefs, the students would compose academic discourse about “academic discourse” itself. When I followed this sequence of assignments in my composition course, I found that many of my students remain wary of disciplinary jargon, yet several realize that the specialized term “academic discourse” galvanizes their previously unarticulated intuitions about this issue. As one of my students wrote, “Until now I never understood why I’ve struggled to write college papers, but after the readings and the discussions [on academic discourse], I have a better idea of the differences between [personal and academic writing].” This student and others began to realize the powerful and often positive influence of discourse upon their thought so they could make
deliberate choices between alternative practices. They began to achieve non-foundational agency.

Non-Foundational Agency Achieved

A pragmatist pedagogy would begin with the primacy of experience, foster the constructive process of knowing, and acknowledge language’s tremendous effect in order to culminate with Dewey’s intellectual disrobing. By trying on and taking off particular alternatives, an individual can learn to make deliberate choices between alternative beliefs and ways of believing. Like Carol Snyder, a Deweyan instructor could ask students to engage in historical research to appreciate the discursive choices that have been made already and their consequences. Through an adaptation of Foucault’s genealogical studies, Snyder has created a researched essay that resembles those advocated by Ballenger and Bruffee. Snyder begins by encouraging her students to question their, often foundational, assumptions about the classifications common to almost all academic discourses. To encourage these questions, Snyder, for example, asserts, “the products of our acts of classifying and dividing have only a historical reality,” and she quotes the paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould, “Historical changes in classification are the fossilized indicators of conceptual revolution” (211). Then she provides the following questions to guide the students’ analyses of specific classifications:

1) What is the object of the classification system?
2) What does the classification exclude or overlook?
3) Who has devised and/or employed these classifications?
4) When was this system devised and/or modified?
5) Where was this classification system devised and where has it been used? (212-14, paraphrased)
Snyder hopes these questions lead her students "to see that the classifications that order their disciplines are meaningful human inventions with significant effects" and they are "open to question and explanation, and thus by writing about them might lead to useful discoveries" (215). Unlike Foucault, Snyder does not imply that the discursive systems are external constraints from which one must seek an untenable escape.

Like a Deweyan instructor, she conceives of her students as individuals who can seek the positive freedom to act within complex discursive practices. She encourages her students to discover the benefits, flaws, exclusions, and possible alternatives of particular classification systems. Depending on the consequences of these discourses, these students can choose to accept, alter, reject, or replace these influential practices. By encouraging these historical examinations of discursive practices, a Deweyan instructor, like Snyder, would foster the trying on and taking off of particular ways of believing.

To foster Deweyan disrobing, an instructor could ask students to examine the contemporary as well as the historical diversity of discursive practices. Through a learning sequence similar to Elbow's "non-disciplinary" course, Kathleen McCormick and her colleagues at the University of Hartford encourage students to understand "a given subject as it has evolved over time" (1). After this historical research, students then examine some aspect of a common topic as "it is understood by different people in different ways today" (1). The ultimate assignment is to present a detailed analysis of the "range of contemporary perspectives on the subject and . . . their historical antecedents" then to assert a specific position which examines the "advantages and disadvantages of taking up one or another perspective" (17, 18). Rather than "reporting" the knowledge of authorities, students are encouraged to "develop an authoritative voice" and use their knowledge "for
a rhetorical purpose" (2). By weighing the "advantages and disadvantages" of each perspective as in Berthoff's interpretive paraphrasing, they consider the consequences of one way of believing versus another to establish an opinion and purpose "of [their] own" (2). As they learn to practice this process of intellectual disrobing, these students are becoming non-foundational agents.

Pragmatic philosophy provides a comprehensive framework for creating a pedagogy for teaching student writers to be non-foundational agents. The Deweyan principles of the primacy of experience, the construction of knowledge, the acknowledgment of language's influences, and the critical disrobing of unexamined beliefs indicate a direction beyond the postmodern impasse because a pragmatist writer is neither an asocial individual pressing out an innate self, nor a passive occupant of prior subject positions. A pragmatist writer is an individual who has learned to construct beliefs from experience, to participate actively in individual-social transactions, and to examine "what [particular beliefs] are made of and what wearing them does" (EN 35). A pragmatist writer fulfills Dewey's assertion that "the role of the individual . . . [is] the reconstruction of accepted beliefs" (Democracy 346). By this reconstruction of beliefs and ways of believing, a pragmatist writer is an individual whose identity is "in continuous formation" so it must be understood as "historic [and] temporally relative" (Democracy 408, EN 185). Lacking an identity fixed by either an innate self or a prior discursive position, the pragmatist writer can establish Murray's authentic or McCormick's authoritative voice, but this vital tone is a construction as contingent as any other pragmatist assertion. The current
controversy over ‘voice’ can be resolved by rejecting the false dualism between experessivism’s innate self and postmodernism’s subject positions.

Although Deweyan pragmatism can help resolve such current controversies as writing to learn, an instructor’s intervention, and a student’s voice, this non-foundational philosophy offers no final blueprint for a composition pedagogy; its commitment to continuous reconstruction forbids any attempt to draw one. As I have tried to synthesize the best aspects of writing process and postmodern instruction, there still must be great variation between actual pragmatist composition courses. A pragmatist pedagogy enacted by Murray probably would emphasize a writer’s active participation in the construction of knowledge from experience. One by Elbow would stress exploiting and exposing language’s tremendous effect through freewriting and peer responses. Another by Crowley would assert discursive influences sooner to hasten deliberate choices between alternative ways of believing. The grave danger for such variations is that one pragmatist principle would be stressed so much that it precludes the fulfillment of another. As Vopat’s and Bizzell’s criticisms demonstrate, a composition course should not, for example, emphasize what has been done - experience, or what may be desired - resistance, at the expense of constructed knowledge. Yet the current taxonomies of composition pedagogies encourage just such imbalances by categorizing expressivists who teach writing as an entirely individual act and social epistemicists who teach composing as a completely social process.

The brilliance of Deweyan pragmatism is its rejection of such false dualisms by reconceiving such fundamental philosophic terms as experience, knowledge, and language and considering them in a dynamic relationship instead of binary oppositions. When this difficult reconception is
understood on its own terms, then a pragmatist composition pedagogy is possible. Like philosophy for Dewey, contemporary composition studies then becomes a question of "what the known demands of us" (*Democracy* 381). As I have articulated the resounding relevance of Dewey's tacit tradition, I have been able to understand better the efficacy of many aspects of Murray's and Elbow's writing process pedagogies that I already practice. The primacy of experience, for example, explains the importance of students' self-selected topics, and the constructive process of knowing clarifies my expectation for and my involvement with a student writing to learn. The influence of language upon thought will make me ask students (like Brian in chapter four) to extend the reflection within their personal essays. I will seek student reflection beyond the event's significance to its cultural context for those topics such analysis is appropriate and those writers ready for such further reflection. Rather than demand every student writer resist the dominant discourses, I will try to seek Dewey's goal of growth more consciously. For students composing the vague prose of Macrorie's *Engfish*, I will encourage them to render their experiences in greater and more vivid details. For other writers already engaged in extensive reflection, I will ask them to deliberately try on and take off different ways of believing and compare their consequences. I also want to prompt other composition scholars to take down the divisive barriers of "expressive" and "social epistemic" pedagogies. I plan to reconstruct the best aspects of these composition practices as a pragmatist theory of composition instruction, and I hope to inspire others to design and implement other, similar Deweyan pedagogies so we and our students can "think of [our]selves as agents, not as ends" (*Quest* 276).
CHAPTER FIVE NOTES

1. Similar to Crowley, many other other postmodern theorists try to conflate the current-traditional writer with that of writing process theories. Clifford, for example, asserts, "Traditional and expressive rhetorical theory . . . unproblematically assumes that the individual writer is free, beyond the contingencies of history and language, to be an authentic and unique consciousness," and his use of "theory" in the singular rather than the plural 'theories' conflates them completely. Faigley repeats this claim with an important qualification that when Murray states, "the writer is constantly learning from the writing what it intends to say," this statement "gestures towards a Derridean view of writing, where meaning is continuously deferred as added meanings displace earlier meanings. But Murray could not pursue such implications because he theorized the source of meaning in the mind of the individual writer" (Fragments 245, n.9 and see 225). But does the assertion that Murray's writer is conceived as an autonomous author reflect Murray's own belief that "once [students] start grappling — on the page — with meanings, [instructors] can help them see how the traditions of form and language help clarify meaning" or his postmodern critics willingness to displace this belief and add on their attempted conflation with current-traditionalism (Expecting 103)?

2. There are other similarities between the best aspects of writing process and postmodern composition instruction beyond considering writing as a process, asking student writers to select personally meaningful topics, encouraging writing to learn, decentering the traditional classroom, advocating an instructor's involvement to further this process, and acknowledging the transactions between writers and readers. Crowley, for example, believes a deconstructive pedagogy would disrupt traditional teaching based on "generic categories," and Murray too advocates revising narrative prose into a poem or a first person essay into a more objective analysis (41). She also proposes, a deconstructive teachers "would sensitize their students to the institutional realities in which they write," and Elbow has urged teaching discourse variation to increase students' awareness of the "institutional realities" of academic discourses (47).

3. Although Murray's process 'ends' with clarifying, he has no illusion that absolute clarity is possible. Like Crowley, Murray considers the writing process to be endless; it ceases because time and motivation run out (see "The Maker's Eye").

4. Murray later softened this pig-sausage dichotomy between process and product by explaining that writers can "read within the page [of another writer] . . . bringing their own experience with their craft to illuminate the hidden craft of [that] writer" (Write 5, Expecting 63-4).
5. One of my main assertions is not to deny that Murray can be categorized as an ‘expressivist.’ Instead it is that the best aspects of his pedagogy can be understood better by considering him from a pragmatist perspective. As shown by my reading of Murray’s implications for “teaching writing as a process,” Murray’s writing process theory can be interpreted according to postmodern principles rather than those of New Criticism. The definitive interpretation known as ‘expressivism’ -- offered by postmodernists -- can be deconstructed and reconstructed into much more than naive neo-Romanticism. Murray can only be made to fit into the smooth, round hole labeled ‘expressivism’ when the multifaced, square edges of his theory are worn off.
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