Caging the muse: freewriting's place in the teaching of composition, an historical overview

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Caging the muse:
Freewriting's place in the teaching of composition.
An historical overview

by

Randy Dean Smith

A Thesis Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

Major: English

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
1989
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INTRODUCTION: THE CURRENT STATE OF EDUCATION

The current state of education has been perceived by the public media as a state of crisis. United States Secretary of Education, Lauro Cavazos, supports the view when he states that the "stagnant" performance of U.S. students frightens him (Norman, 1989). He cites declining SAT scores and a drop in the nation's high school graduation rate to below 72 percent as causes for alarm. Cavazos states, "We are standing still, and the problem is that it's been this way three years in a row. And frankly, this situation scares me."

The entire nation seems concerned. The crisis became a political matter in the 1988 election when one presidential candidate made education a prime issue and stated that he wanted to be known as the "Education President." Perhaps partially because of his purported strong stance on education, or at the very least, because of his staff's skill in striking a prominent American nerve, he was elected.

The educational woes are not new, of course, having been with us for hundreds of years, and the origin of the problem was not merely three years ago as Cavazos' statement would seem to indicate. But commission follows commission, each suggesting problems persist. One of the most famous, "Nation at Risk," released in 1983 by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, serves as a summary. The report states, in
commentator Richard Mitchell's harsh words, "no imaginable enemy of the nation could have done us more damage than what had been done to us by our own schools" (1989).

Perhaps the present crisis first appeared to the American consciousness in 1955 with the publishing of Rudolf Flesch's highly inflammatory book, *Why Johnny Can't Read*. Flesch loudly attacked the education system for failing its mission to teach, especially at its very foundation, the foundation of all learning--reading. Flesch begins the book by writing of an actual child named Johnny whom he was asked to help with his reading:

> Since I started to work with Johnny, I have looked into this whole reading business. I worked my way through a mountain of books and articles on the subject, I talked to dozens of people, and I spent many hours in classrooms, watching what was going on.

> What I found is absolutely fantastic. The teaching of reading--all over the United States, in all the schools, in all the textbooks--is totally wrong and flies in the face of all logic and common sense. Johnny couldn't read until half a year ago for the simple reason that nobody ever showed him how. Johnny's only problem was that he was unfortunately exposed to an ordinary American school. (9)
Flesch hailed for a return to the basics and crusaded for phonics in our schools. He railed against the contemporary system of teaching reading, which he termed "our Chinese word-learning system" and was most emphatic against the reading texts used. In a typical tirade, Flesch condemns the basal readers given to an average student:

He gets those series of horrible, stupid, emasculated, pointless, tasteless little readers, the stuff and guff about Dick and Jane or Alice and Jerry visiting the zoo and going through dozens and dozens of totally unexciting middle-class, middle-income, middle-I.Q. children's activities that offer opportunities for reading "Look, look" or "Yes, yes" or "Come, come" or "See the funny, funny animal." (13)


In 1975, *Newsweek* fueled the crisis talk and the public's concern in its December 8th cover story, "Why Johnny Can't Write." The article, written by Merrill Sheils, decried the state of the nation's schools, but did so by reporting that for well over a decade the ability of school children to write clear, well-organized English had declined at a "startling" rate. In the midst of this trend, and in response to it, the National Assessment of Educational Progress was formed in 1969 to attempt to measure America's writing skills. In every year...
since they began keeping track, the article stated, writing skills have slipped steadily.

The United States "is in the midst of a literary breakdown" (58), poet Karl Shapiro is quoted as saying. And Sheils quotes Ronald Berman, chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, as saying that there is a massive "regression toward the intellectually invertebrate" (58). Too much television, with its simplistic language, is cited as a major cause.

"The U.S. educational system is turning out a generation of semi-literates," Sheils states. It seems that Johnny can neither read nor write.

Despite the fact that the crisis is about fundamental learning and may be thought of as pertaining to elementary and secondary schools exclusively, there is much evidence to the contrary. Grade schoolers and high schoolers are not the only ones exhibiting writing difficulties. The article lists several examples of incompetent writing, including the following by a college freshman: "It's obvious, in our modern world of today there's a lot of impreciseness in expressing thoughts we have" (58).

The article suggests that the evidence of poor college writing "is massive" (59). Nearly half of the 1974 freshmen at the University of California at Berkeley were required to take remedial English. Cal-Berkeley draws all of its students from the top eighth of their high school graduating classes. At
Temple University the number of students failing an English placement exam was reported as increasing by 50 percent from 1968 up to the time of the article.

The culmination of seventeen years of public education is perceived by the general populace as a continued inability to write clear, well-organized English. And for some students, the difficulties persist beyond the collegiate level. The amassing of even more years of schooling, at the graduate level, does not alleviate the problem. Perhaps a fitting capstone to a description of the education crisis, some graduate schools are relaying ineffective writing skills among their students. Sheils states, "Increasingly . . . officials at graduate schools of law, business and journalism report gloomily that the products of even the best colleges have failed to master the skills of effective written communication so crucial to their fields" (58). Thus, as the media perceives the problem, the crisis in reading and writing seems all pervasive.

How much one can trust the public media to accurately and exhaustively report on the nature and depth of educational problems is questionable. Certainly the media have hyped the problem so that the public perceives a crisis, and a number of popular and even scholarly authors have ridden the crisis bandwagon. But the extent of the problem has never been definitively documented, and both the public and educators have had to respond to their own perceptions in their own
limited context. Such has been the case with teachers and researchers in the English language arts, specifically reading and writing. Graduates at various levels must learn to convey what they have learned. Educators have responded to the suggestion of crisis in several ways which we shall examine in this paper.
THE "CRISIS" IN WRITING INSTRUCTION

Today's "crisis" in education has included difficulties in writing instruction. If our students cannot articulate the knowledge they are acquiring, how can they assimilate it for themselves? To defuse the "crisis," we must ferret out the root cause and seek to understand what has been done in order to establish the best direction to achieving a permanent solution.

Specificity of blame for the crisis is apportioned to a variety of elements at various levels. On the popular front, the predominance of television is often cited as a major factor in the decline of language skills, as was earlier noted in the Newsweek article. However, engaging, active classroom learning that reaches out to a child's curious mind should offset and overwhelm the simplistic and passive voice of the TV. On the governmental level, the issue is primarily seen as a monetary one, an all-pervasive problem that is beyond the scope of local and state authorities. Bill Sherman of the Iowa State Education Association stated this position. "We . . . feel the federal government has to be a full partner" and "put their money where their mouth is" in regard to funding educational programs (Norman, 1989).

National Secretary of Education Cavazos countered the notion that increased spending is the panacea for America's
school ills. "Money alone is not the answer," he stated (Norman, 1989). While such a response was not totally unexpected from Washington, Cavazos did cite that per-pupil spending has increased 26 percent over the past seven years while SAT scores have declined, supporting his contention that recklessly throwing money at the problem will not solve it.

The very focus on declining SAT scores, or those of standardized tests in general, has been regarded as yet another contributing factor to the decline of writing skills. Perhaps precisely because of the over-emphasis on these tests, students are being impaired in their work in language and communicative areas. Ken Macrorie, a prominent teacher and author with forty years teaching experience, expressed such a view toward standardized tests:

Unwittingly, administrators and teachers, as well as the general populace, have elevated them [standardized tests] to such a position of unquestioned authority that we now find many courses in schools and universities tailored to prepare students for these standardized tests rather than to produce good works that help people become ongoing, creative learners.

(Macrorie 1984, xii)

A major complaint against I.Q. tests is that even the developers of the tests are unsure as to what exactly they are testing. The pat answer is that they are examining
intelligence, but recent criticism suggests that what they are in fact measuring is test-taking ability. In exactly the same vein, by definition, standardized tests can only measure learning that is in some way quantifiable and can only accept answers that are somehow compartmental. The answers must fit in neat little boxes or, at least, penciled-in ovals. The tests measure a form of digitized or item learning, the bits of information that students process and spit out on computer graded answer sheets.

By concentrating intensely on test scores, the public has been asked to focus on such item learning rather than on the interactive learning developed through writing. One reason for the scrutinization of test numbers is that they are more readily obtainable. Precisely because such learning is quantifiable--the scores can be stacked in myriad arrays and cross-sections--it appears more tangible and objective than interactive learning. Writing requires a complex response rather than a binary blip from evaluators and rankings of writings are accurately seen as more subjective than machine-graded scores. The test numbers are presumed more substantial and more easily comprehended and thus are more appealing to school officials who may parade the figures before the public to proclaim educational gains, or, as is more likely, they may flash the numbers at the public to demonstrate a school's declines and needs.
The shift of emphasis from writing to standardized tests as the prime means of measuring educational ability has relegated the teaching of writing to the back row of academics. Composition courses are almost universally thought of as service courses, courses secondary to the "actual" learning that takes place in other classes, rather than as courses offering the primary mode of communicating knowledge. Writing is assumed to be subservient to other learning rather than intrinsic to it. A skewed view of education that exalts test-taking ability, and the brief blips of short-term memory necessary to effect it, to the near-exclusion of writing ability is obviously a ground cause of the decline of effective writing instruction.

Of the three causes mentioned, the prevalence of television on the public level, the shortage of federal funding at the governmental level, and the over-emphasis on standardized tests at the administrative level, the last hits at the root of the problem. The distraction with test scores diverts attention away from the heart of instruction--writing. Ineffectual writing instruction hampers a student's ability to articulate what he has learned.

The blame for the decline of writing instruction is not so widely distributed, however, particularly on the college level. Macrorie places the blame for poor writing ability squarely on the English professor. As the final source of writing
instruction for most people, and as the teacher of teachers of composition, the English professor and the teaching methodologies he espouses receive the brunt of the blame at the educational level.

Macrorie accuses him of developing a student attitude toward writing to grow that suggests the number of pages is more important than the content of those pages. Macrorie suggests that instructors encourage a stilted style and institutionalized voice in the prose of their pupils, allowing writing that is lifeless . . . that is ultimately as meaningless to the author as it is to his readers. Macrorie states that composing "in English-speaking schools has been an insulated act which produced writing no one except a schoolmaster ever read, and he only if forced and paid" (1970, 6). This attitude toward writing that the English professor has allowed to prevail strangles student writing even at its point of creation.

Macrorie points specifically to the professor's blame when he states that this "dehydrated manner of producing writing that is never read is the contribution of the English teacher to the total university" (8). He states in even stronger terms, "Of all teachers, professors think least about what they do in the classroom, and in general, teach worst" (xi).

The poor writing instruction served up by the English professor can impair a student's learning in almost all other
areas. It may occlude the outflow of ideas by bogging down a student's mind as his weaknesses in composition cause him to concentrate more on how to write than on what he is writing. Such a misdirected focus can certainly be an impediment to the logic and direction of a paper, a hindrance in much the same way as trying to drive a car while looking solely at the dashboard.

Students are hamstrung in their attempts to convey what they have learned because of the "dehydrated" manner of producing writing they have been taught. Writing is a tool they feel they cannot handle. They either deem themselves too clumsy and awkward wielding a tool too complicated to master to expect very much in their writing or they are terrified of putting anything down on paper at all for fear of the flood of red ink they will receive for doing it wrong.

The solution that is most easily offered when the conversation turns to improving writing instruction, is that schools must return to the basics. Flesch cried that we must go back to the basics in his book on reading reform, so quite naturally we should use this simple solution to also fix our writing problems. The only difficulty with this simple solution is that it is too simplistic. What are the basics? In his book The Teaching of Writing (1984), John Bushman states that it is a difficult issue because of the wide variety of interpretations given to the concept of the basics. He
exclaims, "To ask a random sampling of school patrons what the basics mean to them will yield almost as many different answers as the number of people asked" (151).

Ben McClelland and Timothy Donovan echo Bushman's sentiment and point to the public's perception of crisis in a nutshell in their article entitled "Where are English Departments Going?" (1985):

[T]he American public, responding to falling SAT scores and concern over a perceived decline in literacy, urge[d] the profession to go "back to the basics" as though the basics practiced by English departments had at some time really been coherently defined and were worth going back to. (3)

A return to the basics is impossible because we are not sure where, or even if, we ever left them. The fundamental problem of writing instruction is the lack of a precise definition. McClelland and Donovan write of "the confusion over what modern composition" is and its lack of a "comprehensive disciplinary system" (2). The basics have never been defined. Writing in the classroom has nearly always been equal to mimicry and reproduction, each year's teachers and students repeating what was done the previous year, further burying the "basics" under a pile of copies. That is why what is perceived as an educational crisis today is but the most recent outcropping of a century-old problem. The current
perception is just another segment of the ongoing difficulties education has continued to face. Today's crisis is only new in its focus on computer scores. Macrorie pointed out the persistent nature of "crisis" in education:

Every seven or ten years we read in the papers and hear on TV that education is in crisis. Our schools aren't turning out children competent in math and science. They can't write or read. We are falling behind other countries in high technology. We're hearing those complaints now. In the fifties we heard them about our failure to keep up with the Soviet Union's Sputnik. Now we're hearing about our failure to keep up with Japan in electronics. Old story. In 1893 a writer in the May issue of The Atlantic Monthly was discussing the "great outcry" about "the inability of the students admitted to Harvard College to write English clearly and correctly." He said the schools required frequent written exercises that were corrected and commented on by the teacher, and asked "With all this practice in writing, why do we not obtain better results?" Most of our schools have never found the answers to such a question. (1984, 233)

One reason that schools do not obtain better results, one reason that the perception of a crisis has persisted, is the
way education is viewed. "Most people think that teaching is throwing information at students and hoping they'll remember it" (234). This view is what Macrorie calls elsewhere the First Way of teaching: "In the First Way, the teacher sends out a packet of information and tests to see whether students can remember its contents" (1970, 27). That the First Way of teaching is still prevalent in our schools is obvious by the current emphasis on the digitized learning necessary to master standardized tests. The First Way uses students as a kind of educational bangboard to shoot knowledge at and catch as it rebounds off. The First Way calls for very little interaction between the student and subject and thus there is little impetus on the student's part to learn.

However, the main reason we continue to hear of an education crisis is that we have never been able to solve our problems with writing instruction. We never even gave it much consideration. Composition was so largely held to be a secondary concern that up until two decades ago virtually no scientific research had been carried out in the field at all. There was little theoretical knowledge for teachers to draw from and writing instruction was done by whim or by following some well-worn path around the piles of the previous year's essays. Only by examining what has been accomplished in the field of composition research, particularly in the area of the composing process, in the past quarter century and by
speculating where that research is likely to take us in terms of creating a coherent theory of writing can we hope to alleviate the writing difficulties that are the heart of the current difficulties faced by teacher of composition.
Composition research is a relatively new field of study, one that is seen as bringing the teaching of writing out from the dark ages. Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoer put it best in their report *Research in Written Composition* (1963) when they stated, "Today's research in composition, taken as a whole, may be compared to chemical research as it emerged from the period of alchemy" (5). In the same manner that chemistry had to free itself from the myths and superstitions that diluted its field of knowledge, composition is told it must shed its concepts that are inconsistent and counterproductive to forming a foundational theory of writing.

The main philosopher's stone that composition has had to overcome is the public notion of the basics. The general populace feels that research is not needed, but a return to the basics is, to right our floundering writing instruction. As we have seen, the "basics" are ill-defined. Yet the public clings to an idea of them as something so commonsensical that our over-educated instructors of higher learning have glossed right over them. The phrase "back to the basics" is waved around like a flag for the common folk to rally around in their battle against the ivory tower. Janet Emig, a pioneer in the field of the composing process, warned against accepting the back to the
basics argument. Kowal and O'Connell (1987) state that Emig voiced "a sweeping censure of all the adults involved in the back-to-basics movement for their magical thinking" (122). Emig would knock flat the notion that the "basics" are a charm to turn bad writers good.

In actuality, writing has always been taught by the basics. But the definition of the basics, that which is basic to writing, is so nebulous that it includes a mish-mash of all notions on composition. Previously, the teaching of writing depended on the instructor's caprice. He chose which slices of ideas on writing appealed to him and served them to his students. Lil Brannon, in an article titled "Toward a Theory of Composition" (1985), wrote, "Until recently, the teaching of writing had been governed more by tradition and personal preference than by theoretical or research knowledge" (21).

Brannon supported this contention by looking at composition textbooks, which she saw as "offering a hodgepodge of concepts, formulas, and instructional methods drawn from different rhetorical traditions with little philosophical or historical awareness" (21). It was as if everything to be known about writing was assumed to be already known, as if Plato and Aristotle had already had the last word, and all that was necessary was the reapplication of what had been done before. There appeared to be no need to strive forward. In other disciplines, scientific investigation was assumed to lead
to new discoveries and a building on the past. However, Brannon stated, "unlike most academic fields, in which textbooks reflect the basic concepts that make up the discipline, composition studies has textbooks that, all too often, perpetuate outmoded concepts." (21).

Little wonder that there was no progress made on the education crisis, what with inadequate writing theory stacked upon inadequate theory with each passing year. The point to break the cycle was of course with new teachers coming into the field but as Brannon states, "The new teacher's introduction to writing instruction ordinarily comes from these books [composition textbooks], not from rigorous academic training in composition studies, so that misinformation is perpetuated" (21). And despite recent research, Brannon concluded, "Even today, most textbooks are very much like their late nineteenth-century ancestors" (21).

Perhaps the first admission that little research was being conducted in composition was made nearly a century ago. Kowal and O'Connell, in an article titled "Writing as Language Behavior: Myths, Models, Methods," translate the following from German psychologist William Preyer's book Zur Psychologie des Schreibens (1895): "While speaking has frequently and successfully been engaged as a topic of scientific research, writing has only seldom and inadequately been given similar attention" (108). And although Preyer's remark was written
over ninety years ago, so little research was conducted in composition prior to the 1960s that older "reviews of research on writing customarily lamented its neglect in comparison to other major uses of language," report Scardamalia and Bereiter (1986, 780).

A review of reading research was written as early as 1938 by Robert Woodworth. Scientific investigation had already begun with Woodworth's own experiments of vision and eye movements in connection with reaction times in reading. He also incorporated the basic details of even earlier reading studies in his report. The first major composition research review was not written until 1963. Scardamalia and Bereiter, even in their 1986 review, state "writing still lags far behind reading as an object of research" (780).

However, both writing and reading research lag behind that of the other communicative fields. Kowal and O'Connell (1987) shed some light on why this is so by looking at how language usage is viewed. They begin their line of reasoning by citing Clark and Clark (1977), who state, "Communication with language is carried out through two basic human activities: speaking and listening" (109). They also cite Foss and Hakes (1978) as stating that speaking and listening are natural—"evolved in the history of the species" (109). Kowal and O'Connell conclude that reading and writing are generally thought of as "inventions" and therefore secondary to the prime
considerations of speaking and listening, which are termed "natural" and "basic."

Once again composition is labeled with the stigma of being secondary. Such a view has been carried since its inception and throughout its history. William Riley Parker (1967) paints an unflattering portrait of the beginnings of composition in his short genealogy entitled, "Where do English departments come from?" He writes that because of the doubling of college enrollments in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, professors of English literature were willing to "increase the prestige of their subject and the numbers of their students" by embracing not only linguistics, but also rhetoric, which included oratory" (15). This leads Parker to suggest that English is the offspring of Oratory, or speech, and Philology, or linguistics, and the grandchild of Rhetoric. The aggressiveness of the newly forming English departments led to the acquisition of all manner of writing courses, from composition to business writing to writing for engineers. "In sum, English departments became the catchall for the work of teachers of extremely diverse interests and training, united theoretically but not actually by their common use of the mother tongue" (15).

But regardless of the fact that it was "the teaching of freshman composition that quickly entrenched English departments in the college and university structure" (13), the
departments rapidly emphasized literature and criticism while composition, the descendant of the ancient subject of rhetoric, was "dispersed to academic thinness" (17). Rhetoric was in effect distilled into the modes of discourse of description, narration, exposition, and persuasion and thinly served up for the beginners—the freshman students. This gruel was presented by beginners as well—graduate assistant teachers. For English professors relegated the role of teaching composition to their incoming graduate students. Earlier we saw that Macrorie said composing in our schools produced writing only a "schoolmaster would read and he, only if forced and paid" (1970, 6). The English professor passed on this loathsome task and forced the teaching assistants to pick it up. "Professors of English, once freed from this slave labor," Parker writes, "became as remote from everyday affairs as the classicists had ever been" (14-15). As composition was taught by less-experienced teachers, it became little more than a place to check writing mechanics. A teaching assistant acquaintance of mine once remarked that we were "guardians of the language." He meant that we were wardens who had to be on the constant lookout for any infractions against the laws of English. I always imagined him charging into his classroom with his red pen blazing. As McClelland and Donovan (1985) put it, "a discipline with the heritage of Aristotle and Quintillian settled for drilling in rules and correcting mistakes. The medieval trivium (grammar,
logic, rhetoric) had finally become trivialized" (2).

Parker blamed this decline on the "acquisitiveness and expediency" of English departments that "cared much less about liberal education and their own integrity than they have about their administrative power and prosperity" (18). The acquisition of composition was somewhat of a coup because, as he explains, "Surprising as the idea may first appear to you, there was, of course, no compelling reason at the outset why the teaching of composition should have been entrusted to teachers of the English language and literature" (14).

English departments latched onto the composition courses, courses which are required by nearly every student at every university, and effectively carved out for themselves a large chunk of academic funding. Unfortunately, composition was in no way held in esteem proportionate to the funding it generated. The main reason, as has been seen, is its lack of a coherent definition. Parker sums up by writing, "Thanks first to its academic origins, and then to the spirit of competition and aggressiveness engendered by departmentalization, 'English' has never defined itself as a discipline" (15).

McClelland and Donovan (1985) continue Parker's mode of thought in their article "Where are English departments going?" They also relate composition's low esteem: "It was after all, a subject in which few teachers had specialized. In fact, it was not considered much of a subject at all" (2). They cite James
Kinneavy, an influential rhetorical theorist, as corroborating this view by pulling a paragraph from the first page of his major work, *A Theory of Discourse* (1971), which was published just four years after Parker's article and continues his genealogy by naming composition as the stepchild of English.

Composition is so clearly a stepchild of the English department that it is not a legitimate area of concern in graduate studies, is not even recognized as a subdivision of the discipline of English in a recent manifesto put out by the major professional association of college teachers, in some universities is not a valid area of scholarship for advancement of rank, and is generally the teaching province of graduate assistants or fringe members of the department.

Not only was composition virtually ignored, but quite naturally, its research was as well. Donald Graves, outspoken researcher and author of a major writing process case study for the National Institute of Education, wrote that writing research between 1955 and 1972 was held in such low esteem "that eighty-four percent of all studies were done by dissertation alone" and that research in composition was only "an exercise for students to apply courses in statistics to their dissertations" (qtd. in Hillocks 1986, 94).
But McClelland and Donovan look ahead from that anarchic period and project a more established position for composition. "Within the last decade, especially, the English department's stepchild has come of age as an academic field" (3). Whereas Brannon used an examination of composition textbooks to support her contention that outmoded concepts were being perpetuated, McClelland and Donovan point to the number of composition research reviews as an indication of the improving status of the field:

That composition is emerging as a significant academic field can now be read in the record of its published research and scholarship. Every year for about the last ten years there has appeared at least one important collection of essays in composition studies.

(3)

The first major research review, the one generally acknowledged with beginning the reversal of the status of composition, was Research in Written Composition by Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer. The National Council of Teachers of English, because of concern over the public outcry about how writing should be taught, appointed a committee to prepare "a special scientifically based report on what is known . . . and what is not known about the teaching and learning of composition" (1). The work was much more than a simple survey of the error count and comparative studies that had been done
previously. In many ways the review was a monumental work, not merely because of the size of its bibliography (which contained 504 items), but because it set the tone for the research that was conducted over the following two and a half decades.

George Hillocks, Jr. states that while he and his co-workers compiled research studies for his own expansive review (1986), he noticed that in the intervening years between the Braddock review and his that "researchers had followed a number of suggestions by Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer for future research" (xvi). Furthermore, Hillocks states that many "questions raised by Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer have been the foci of studies" (xvi) in the 1970s and early 80s and the attempts to answer those questions "have led to new breadth and depth of interest in the teaching of writing" (xvii). Along with raising vital questions, they made recommendations for research design which "had some influence" on those succeeding studies (xvi).

The two main points from the Braddock report that shaped future research were their conclusions on the effect of the teaching of grammar on composition and their call for a more adequate understanding of the act of writing. These two points combined to create in the composition community what has been called "a wave of enthusiasm for 'naturalistic' approaches to writing" (Strong 1985, 68).
The finding with the most immediate impact was the conclusion that the teaching of grammar did not aid writing instruction. In what Hillocks (1986) terms a "now-famous statement" (xv), the Braddock report states, "The teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing" (37-38). One of only five research studies prominently featured by the Braddock report was conducted by Roland Harris (1962). Bushman (1984) declares that Harris' work is generally considered the most important single study on grammar up to its time, citing Abrahamson's (1977) claim that "most studies dealing with grammar instruction and its effect on composition refer to this study" (5). Harris' research was a two-year longitudinal study carried out in five London schools and encompassing 228 students. The control group, the students who were not taught with formal grammar instruction, scored significantly higher on eleven aspects of a composition maturity style sheet. The only area the experimental group excelled in was on a test of grammar terminology. The Braddock report states that Harris' study is uncommon because it was carefully conducted and extended over a longer period than most. Summarizing Harris, the report states "the study of formal English grammar had a negligible and surprisingly a harmful effect on the correctness and effectiveness of students' written compositions" (37).
Although Braddock terms Harris' findings "surprising," there is the sense that many writing teachers were not surprised at all. Harris was not the first to question the link between grammar and composition. Bushman, cites two older studies that had cast doubt on the ability of formal grammar instruction to improve student writing. The first one was published in 1906 by Hoyt, who tested 200 ninth graders and reached the following conclusion: "About the same relation exists between grammar and composition . . . as exists between any two totally different subjects, such as grammar and geography" (Bushman, 98). The other study was conducted by Hatfield in 1935 and, like Harris, his conclusion was also labeled as unexpected. Bushman states that Hatfield's conclusion--"There is no scientific evidence of the value of grammar which warrants its appearance as a prominent or even distinct feature of the course of [language arts] study"--is probably "the most surprising pronouncement from any early investigator" (99). Bushman mentions that Hatfield's report "was received as curious and eccentric" by the majority of the profession (99). Bushman states, "Probably the greatest barrier to research findings up to the early 1960s" was "the reluctance of language arts professionals to accept scientific studies" (102). But these studies demonstrate that there was sentiment against formal grammar instruction prior to Harris. However, it was generally shot down by statements such as the
following by Gordon (1947): "Grammar not merely has a use in the English classroom, but it is indispensable . . . Its value is that it provides part of the technique for good writing" (Bushman 99).

By 1963, however, there was a growing undercurrent in the profession against formal grammar instruction, a sentiment that was intuitively assumed, though not substantiated. That current was pent up until the publication of the Braddock review. Then the dam burst. Harris supplied the scientific evidence that Hatfield lacked and Braddock gave voice to the conclusions on grammar instruction which reverberated throughout the teaching community. The weight of the Braddock report gave verification to the anti-grammar movement and opened the floodgates for the naturalistic approach to the teaching of writing that followed.

The naturalistic approach was a wholly new approach which suggested that in order for students to learn to write, they must simply do it. They must be allowed to write on their own, as if writing were a natural process. The naturalistic approach appeared as a reaction to the casting off of the shackles of grammar instruction. For many, grammar had comprised the basics of writing, and the announcement of its ineffectiveness by a scientific report such as the Braddock review left a gaping hole in their teaching. The naturalistic approach rose to fill that gap as teachers allowed students to
do their own writing. Some instructors carried this new approach too far. It was as if they felt chastised for leading students wrongly, so they let the students lead themselves. Macrorie calls this the Second Way of teaching, where "the teacher provides complete freedom and no direction at all" (1970, 27).

Teachers who used the naturalistic approach also drew from the research that grew out of what has become the Braddock report's second major contribution to the field, their call for a better understanding of the act of writing. That call was but the posing of a simple question, one of twenty-four under the "Unexplored Territory" heading: "What is involved in the act of writing?" (53). The very wording of the question allowed researchers to think of writing as a process, letting them focus on the "act" of writing instead of merely on the finished, written product. The entire first chapter of Hillocks' lengthy review "is devoted to studies focusing on that question" (xvi), studies that make up the body of knowledge on writing as a process.

The publishing of the Braddock report was of course not the sole impetus for the number of process studies that followed. At virtually the same time, Rohman (1964) was laying groundwork for thought on the composing process. Young (1976) credits Rohman with coining the term "pre-writing," or at the very least, with popularizing it.
Rohman begins his report by asking the same basic question which we have confronted, "Why do students write poorly?" He muses that there are only two answers to why there is so much "incorrectness and ineffectiveness": either the students are not taught enough about language or they are not taught effectively enough. With all the emphasis on grammar prior to his study, he rules out the first answer. In looking at how to teach more effectively, he turns to Jerome Bruner's essay "The Art of Discovery" (1962). Bruner distinguishes between two types of teaching, the expository mode and the hypothetical mode. The expository mode is another term for what Macrorie calls the First Way of teaching, namely an instructor up in front flinging information at his students. The hypothetical mode, on the other hand, requires cooperation and participation by both student and teacher.

Rohman surmises that most writing instruction fails because "it is conceived within what Bruner calls the 'expository mode,' and the student-writer, as a result, never is given the chance to participate in the essentials of the process which he is being called on to master" (3). In summing up the problem, Rohman states that "we must fundamentally reconsider the entirety of the writing act, not just that part which appears 'above water' on the page" (8). Rohman proceeds to look below the water line and discovers that writing is best thought of as a linear act composing of pre-writing, writing,
and rewriting. Theorizing that the major task of the writer is "to discover," since that is the literal meaning of the Latin word for invention (L. invenio, to discover), Rohman focuses on pre-writing. While his notions of linearity and the use of religious meditation for invention are later questioned, Rohman does accomplish foundational work for the process movement by presenting new definitions and emphasizing the main reason for teaching writing as the chance to allow greater self-actualization by students.

Although working at the same time as Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer and arriving at basically the same conclusions, Rohman did not receive the same critical acclaim and attention. Rohman supplied the initial terminology for the process movement, but the Braddock report provided the directive that fueled the research on writing as a process that was to follow.
THE INITIAL PROCESS STUDIES

The amelioration of the field of composition began with *Research in Written Composition* and continued with the increasing knowledge of writing gained by the process studies. Janet Emig is generally considered the first researcher of the composing process, more so than Rohman, because of the "significant attention" (Hillocks 1986, 1) she received from the case-studies used in her dissertation. With these studies she began to answer Braddock's question by observing writers in the "act of writing." Perl (1985) states, "It was not until Janet Emig (1969) used a case-study approach to observe writers during the act of writing that empirical data concerning what writers do began to be collected" (2). Emig's research was recast into a report for the NCTE in 1971 entitled *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*, which Young (1976) labels a "pioneering monograph" (33). Emig's conception of the writing process was essentially similar to that of Rohman's in that she also perceived of the process as a linear event.

Sondra Perl (1979) shows that following Emig's lead were a number of other small scale studies "based on the systematic observations of writers engaged in the process of writing... Graves, 1973; Mischel, 1974; Pianko, 1977; Stallard, 1974" (317). Perl's own research follows that lead and is based on five case-studies of remedial, or as she prefers, "unskilled",...
college writers. A self-proclaimed major finding of Perl's research captures the position of the process view:

A major finding of this study is that . . . all of the students studied displayed consistent composing processes; that is, the behavioral subsequences prewriting, writing, and editing appeared in sequential patterns that were recognizable across writing sessions and across students . . . . The students observed had stable composing processes which they used whenever they were presented with a writing task. (334)

However, Perl propels forward the knowledge of the writing process when she states, "Composing does not occur in a straightforward, linear fashion" (330). In her report she discovers the idea that writing is a recursive process. The writer gathers bits of information on which he imposes a structure which leads to a further development of what he is attempting to say, which in turn prompts the need for more information. "It can be thought of as a kind of 'retrospective structuring'; movement forward occurs only after one has reached back, which in turn occurs only after one has some sense of where one wants to go" (330).

Perl noted this recursive nature because she was the first to encode the writing process. She had her subjects compose aloud into a tape recorder as they wrote and later marked those
recordings on a time line with notations such as W for writing, PL for planning, R for reading, and so forth. She discovered that a particular rhythm could be seen on the time lines: writing led to reading, which led to planning, which led to more writing. From this rhythm, she deduced the recursiveness of the composing process.

As the process studies began to flourish, the atmosphere of the composition classroom changed as instruction was influenced by the naturalistic approaches and began to move away from traditional, grammar centered methods. Baden (1973) experimented with a class which did not use a textbook, had no assigned papers, and was not graded on writing done. Instead, the class was led in "activities to increase interpersonal awareness" and focused on feelings of "satisfaction" (392-A). This atmosphere of attention to feelings and self-actualization, in which the influence of Bruner and Rohman can be seen (as well as the threat to textbook companies of the notion of teaching without texts), spawned a number of what one instructor has called the "touchy, feely" textbooks of the 1970s. These books emphasized the need for students to get in touch with their feelings in order to empower their writing. One example of this kind of textbook is William Coles' Teaching Composing: A Guide to Teaching Writing as a Self-Creating Process (1974). In his first chapter, "To the Teacher," Coles states that he wanted a course whose subject
would be "the activity of composing in the largest possible sense of the term . . . a course that would enable us to suggest to students the ways in which their lives, no less than their papers, are composed;" a course that would express that it is language "by which we are in turn given the identities we have" (1).

A message received by the teaching community from the process studies was not to grade solely on the final, written product. Teachers were encouraged to grade the written work in progress or to evaluate parts of a final work, as Baden did. The NCTE even saw this as a way to lessen the instructor's work load and released a book entitled How to Handle the Paper Load (1979). The work is a collection of essays which "closely reexamined the need and purpose of assigning and grading full-length compositions" and "concluded that it is often more effective and less time consuming for students to practice with shorter forms of writing." In short, teaching was revamped in the 1970s as traditional methodologies were brought under attack by information learned from the process studies and held to hinder rather than aid the teaching of writing.

Also with the process studies and their notion of prewriting came a greater appreciation and attention to invention. As the focus in composition teaching was diverted from a finished product it came to rest most naturally on the
opposite end of the process, the beginning rather than the end. Richard Young (1976) writes in the middle of the decade that among "the most important subjects of rhetorical study now being opened up is the composing process itself:"

It is no accident that the gradual shift in attention among rhetoricians from composed product to the composing process is occurring at the same time as the reemergence of invention as a rhetorical discipline. Invention requires a process view of rhetoric; and if the composing process is to be taught, rather than left to the student to be learned, arts associated with various stages of the process are necessary. (33)

Young's article, "Invention: A Topographic Survey," is the first listed by McClelland and Donovan in their succession of important collections of essays in composition studies. Young sees a similarity between the subsequences of classical rhetoric--the five arts of invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery--and those of the process approach to composition--prewriting, writing, and rewriting. He looks at invention as a process that can be guided but not controlled. He presents four heuristics to nudge invention along but states that "one cannot teach direct control of the imaginative act" (1). Imagination is a muse that may be invited, but not summoned, appears to be the gist of his statement. Half a
significant focus of their work is on invention, in the form of freewriting. Freewriting is a method of invention best defined as the unrestricted flow of words on paper. Macrorie terms it a "random rehearsal." Diane Burkhardt, a teacher observed in Perl's study (1985), upon instructing her students to freewrite said, "Hook up your arm to your brain and let go" (183). Elbow's definition (1981) is perhaps the most precise and concrete: "To do a freewriting exercise, simply force yourself to write without stopping for ten minutes" (13). The main prerequisite is that the writer not stop for anything, especially not to correct spelling or to check mechanics.

Elbow states "paying attention to spelling, grammar, and usage while you are engaged in trying to write clear language" is like "focusing simultaneously on the pane of glass and on the scene beyond it" (36). Exercises in freewriting are exercises in deferred judgement, reserving mechanical concerns for a more appropriate time. As Murray puts it, the writer turns his mental editor off and simply concentrates on putting words on paper.

In many ways, freewriting epitomizes the knowledge gained from the initial process studies and the Braddock report. Consistent with the findings on grammar presented by the Braddock report, freewriting sets aside concerns about grammar which can impair writing and block the flow of ideas. Also, freewriting is innately a conception of writing as a process
because it consciously divorces the rewriting portion of the process from the prewriting. Elbow (1981) states "freewriting helps make the writing process transparent" (15).
Freewriting is the final two steps of the process peeled away, writing at its moment of transubstantiation from thought, fully dependent on meaning and totally independent of grammatical or structural constraints.

One of the chief aims of freewriting is to increase creativity. Students are encouraged to let their writing take them where it will. Because freewritings are only the initial part of the writing process and therefore not graded, such exploratory writing, in theory, allows students to leave their conventional wooden writing and attempt something more creative, something that appeals more to them. A class engaged in freewriting in its broadest sense has no assignments but those chosen by each student.

The philosophy behind having students select their own assignments is certainly not new, and may be traced back to Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). In their book *Foundations of Teaching Method*, John Laska and Stanley Goldstein state the following:

Rousseau must be accorded a unique place among Western educational writers, for he is the only one who can be credited with both the formulation and elaboration of a fundamentally different conception
of instructional method, called the Student Interest Method, of which the essential requirement is for the student to be interested and as a result seek to learn. (35)

The concept of a student oriented education, rather than a teacher proscribed education, is the center of Rousseau's teaching and also the center of Macrorie's as he attacks the First Way of teaching.

Further philosophical foundations of freewriting can be found in Edward Campagnac's monograph titled *The Teaching of Composition* (1912). Campagnac was a progressive professor who as early as the beginning of the century thought of writing as a process, for he said the definition of composition should "include both the process of composing and the finished result of composing" (11). He lays down what have become three tenets on freewriting, though the term "freewriting" was not coined until 1936 by Dorothea Brande, according to Macrorie.

The first tenet is that composition has value only if it stands for real experiences. If the student has no stake, no personal interest in what is being written, then the writing will be lifeless and wooden.

The influence of Rousseau is here, but perhaps Campagnac is also borrowing from a contemporary reformer, John Dewey, whose *School and Society* was published thirteen years
earlier. Dewey states, "Think of the absurdity of having to teach language as a thing by itself." When language is used only "for the repetition of lessons, it is not surprising that one of the chief difficulties of school work has come to be instruction in the mother-tongue." Children have plenty of their own thoughts to express but in "the traditional method, the child must say something that he has merely learned." There is no personal stake and therefore no life in his writing. After all, there "is all the difference in the world between having something to say, and having to say something."

Campagnac echoes Dewey as he writes that "composition must be rarely, if ever, in school regarded as an end in itself" (30), and that in "school, children are told to write, and what impresses them first and most deeply is the fact that they are told; it is a command, the initiative is not with them" (43). The naturalistic approach holds that students be allowed to write on what interests them, their own real experiences, rather than on topics thrust at them.

A second tenet of freewriting is that students be allowed to explore with their writing, because such exploration leads to increased creativity. Campagnac saw this idea flowing out from the first one, a result of students writing, not at the teacher's behest, but on their own initiative, and writes of the need for instructors to allow freedom for their students: "We must find space and time for our pupils to do what they
like, to be artificers and creators on their own account* (51).
Campagnac extols play and alludes to the tendency of instruction to interfere with creativity:

In schools we find children taught to work with plasticine and other materials; making under instruction little figures, some of which— but not all—are attractive enough to them; but you know very well that if these children could be carried from the schoolroom to the seashore they would at once be moulding and fashioning without any instructions, in the wet sand, things which would please them quite as much, things which would be far more fantastic; far more imaginative, than most of what we find them doing in school. (51-52)

Freewriting encourages play, or rehearsing, because freewritings are not graded. Mearns noted that grading inhibits imagination and suggested that by not grading all writing, teachers could aid in facilitating their students’ imaginations. But before the emergence of the naturalistic approach, his suggestion was mostly ignored. However, this idea was brought to light by E. Paul Torrance and Robert Meyers, the two principal researchers of the widely known Minnesota Tests of Creative Thinking, who conducted research on creativity concurrently with the process studies. In their studies, they (1972) found that "too frequent evaluation of
creative activities during the practice stage, regardless of its nature, seemed to interfere with creative exploration and the initiation of ideas" (83).

Macrorie fixes this notion as basic to freewriting when he writes, "At the beginning there must never be discouragement. Only encouragement or no comment at all" (1970, 78). He would, however, extend the idea even further to all of college education. He writes, "The omission of grading in the college years would be a larger sign than any bachelor of arts or science degree that students are living in that period of life when Americans come of age" (95). Though that day is inestimably far away, the process of grading has generally been accused of dampening creativity. In an article written prior to the Braddock report entitled "Are Colleges Killing Education?" (1962), Handlin states that current evaluation systems encourage memory, accuracy, and neatness, but they rarely encourage students to develop the speculative ability to dig for answers by themselves because of the premium placed on grades; only the reckless will not answer in the manner they think the teacher expects. Freewriting, as an initiator of ideas, allows for unrestrained exploration and development of creative ideas by suspending too early evaluation of them.

A third tenet of freewriting espoused by Campagnac sixty years before the method became popular is the notion that individual writing style can only proceed from writing of real
experiences. In his call for reform in the introductory chapter titled "New Philosophy of Education," Campagnac notes that there is little correlation between children's writing in the classroom and their speech on the playground. Their "verbal expression" seems to have "little kinship with the free creative effort of children at play" (1). Later, in a summarizing chapter, Campagnac states, "To allow the child to write of his own experiences in his own way is to get the real foundation for style" (60).

In a textbook on style from the time of the initial process studies, Writing with Style (1975), John Trimble's first recommendation to student writers is to pick a subject that means something to them. He quotes George Orwell, who said, "The great enemy of clear language is insincerity." By encouraging students to write of their own emotional experiences, Trimble contends that instructors will be tapping into a powerful source of self-expression, one that will allow students to circumvent the hollow, institutionalized voice they had been using.

Although Campagnac can be seen as a grandfather of thought on freewriting, we can note that his ideas lay fallow until the upheaval caused by the Braddock report and the subsequent process studies. The three tenets of composition he presents are used virtually unaltered by instructors of the naturalistic approach: composition only has value if it is based on real
experiences; exploratory, non-graded activity leads to increased creativity; and real experiences are the foundation of writing style.

Freewriting is a direct issue of the initial process studies, one of the original creations spawned by the spate of research generated by Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer's review. Since it rejects the attention to grammar that was prevalent before the Braddock report and inherently presents writing as a process, the employment of freewriting and the naturalistic approach should have led to a renaissance in the field of composition by the beginning of the present decade. While a renaissance did not take place, changes in methodologies did, and curriculum reformers began to add the process of writing to courses and textbooks.
THE IMPAIRED EFFECTIVENESS OF FREEWriting

Although the teaching of composition demonstrated an improving status in the 1980s, as evidenced by Michael Holzman (1982), who reported of the "growing importance of freshman composition within the university" (129), the method of freewriting failed to immediately usher in a new age of creativity and improved writing instruction and quell the shouts of crisis in education. The naturalistic movement was met with reluctance by many in the general teaching community because they could not accept the method's liberality and its de-emphasis of teachers. Works like Elbow's Writing without Teachers put off a number of instructors and prompted the earlier quote by Young on teaching: "if the composing process is to be taught, rather than left to the student to be learned . . . ."

The refusal of the teaching community to embrace the naturalistic philosophy of giving students free rein stems from the very nature of teaching, the act of aiding students rather than merely getting out of the way. Bill Silver, a junior high teacher observed by Perl (1985), sums up the difficulty he had employing the process approach:

Can I convey the overwhelming difficulty of giving up control, of having patience, of "knowing" in my heart of hearts that probably the less I do, the more and
better kids will write? Getting out of the way is a hard thing for an activist teacher. It's the feeling of not being needed or wanted. It's the pain of setting up a circumstance that makes me feel superfluous in so many ways. (11)

But even apart from the lack of general acceptance, the enthusiasm for the naturalistic approach waned as experiment after experiment failed to show any improvement in the quality of writing of students using the freewriting method over those using the traditional method. Mary Delaney (1980) measured experimental and control groups on both Cooper's Holistic Dichotomous Scale and the Hunt Measurement of Syntactic Maturity and found no significant difference. Even in the midst of the enthusiasm for the naturalistic approach, in 1973, the best comment that Baden could arrive at was, "certainly there was no indication that the students in the experimental group suffered from the absence of conventional instruction." He concluded that the experimental group "gained more satisfaction" and that the major goal of composition should be to help students realize that "writing is satisfying."

Hillocks lists thirteen experimental studies from 1971 to 1981 that failed to indicate a significant difference in the quality of writing of groups using freewriting versus control groups. He states, "This box-score review suggests that even a steady diet of free writing (daily or several times a week)
does not accomplish what its proponents hope for" (178).

Reacting to these studies and rising to the defense of freewriting, Macrorie and Elbow released another salvo of books, Searching Writing: A Contextbook (1980) and Twenty Teachers (1984) by Macrorie and Embracing the Contraries (1986) by Elbow. Both note that some instructors consider freewriting too anti-disciplinary; Elbow says that "some look on free-writing as a holiday from thinking" (55), while Macrorie goes as far as saying some "fear freewriting may be just mucking around in mud puddles" (1980, 8). However, Macrorie implies that composition's attempts at reform without a corresponding change in teaching method are bound to fail. He relates, "In thirty-five years of close observation of schools . . . I've seen again and again the same supposedly drastic or fundamental reforms of curriculums brought up as new ideas and dropped after a few years of disillusionment" (1984, 241). The reason these attempts failed, Macrorie says, was because they were off-centered; they attempted to change the form but not the context; they did not change teaching. A true reform would lead teaching from a "Lecture-Test-Grade System" to a system of "Enabling." "Enabling" is Macrorie's new term for teaching in a naturalistic way, of "letting learning happen."

To counter the statistical evidence of the studies against freewriting, Macrorie points instead to the good works produced
by students of enablers. In Twenty Teachers, he presents nineteen interviews of instructors who, by battling the continuing ineffective system, enabled their students to do good works. His subjects ranged from writing instructors to a wood-working teacher to a teacher of teachers, James Britton. He admits that such teachers are in the minority, and in his final paragraph says they are part of a counter-movement. He sums up by stating, "Most of the enablers presented here . . . continue in the face of incredible obstacles to provide a context for learners to do good works, and to grow out of and beyond themselves" (250). By focusing on teaching and the context for learning, Macrorie helped redirect the process movement. Process research began to turn from examining the writing process to examining the teaching of the writing process.

Borrowing the idea of enabling, Perl took the initial step of observing enablers in her final report to the National Institute of Education entitled How Teachers Teach the Writing Process. Her earlier research had revealed a better understanding of the writing process, but she realized that focusing "on writers in isolation [did] not tell us anything about enabling circumstances" (653). She also borrowed the thought from A. Bartlett Giamatti, the former president of Yale, that teaching itself is a process and quotes him to open her report: "Teaching is an instinctual act, mindful of
potential . . . a pausing seamless process," one which students may observe and "enter in, and begin to do what the teacher has done: make choices" (1980, 24).

The enablers Perl follows teach by example, rather than command. "No teacher can give a student knowledge, as if it were an object to be transferred from one owner to another; the student must make her own" (699). The enablers either complete the same assignments as their pupils or bring to class works-in-progress, showing that they "are not afraid to make mistakes" and they don't have to get their "writing right the first time either" (21). Not only did the students learn from the teacher, but to "make writing meaningful, students were encouraged, and expected, to learn from each other" (15).

Hopefully this new direction in process research will pay off in a renewed understanding of the interaction between teachers and students and deter the detractors of the process approach from denying the initial gains made into improving writing instruction. At present, however, the naturalistic approach continues to be less than the accepted norm, as Perl notes in a follow-up to her successful study.

After her study, Perl kept in touch with a few of the high school graduates as they entered college. She hoped they would carry their knowledge of the writing process with them and infect freshman composition. However, in the follow-up she reports that what occurred was the "opposite of what was
intended: the students have become confused, discouraged; their writing shows no improvement" (698), and they were the ones infected. One teacher, according to one of the students, considered himself "in the business of certifying competence. He wants to make sure, before his students pass on to upper level courses, that they have learned 'what they were supposed to in high school'" (698). Another student thought her teacher confused "teaching students with editing texts" (698). Perl's follow-up then shows that perhaps one of the reasons the process movement did not lead composition into a new age in the 1980s is that the gains made by students in their younger years may be undone in later years, as they are diverted back to the conventional modes of teaching writing. We can extrapolate that the nonacceptance of the naturalistic approach in general has caused it to dwindle to scattered pockets of resistance whose students are swallowed up as soon as they depart.

The largest blow to freewriting and the naturalistic approach was delivered the year following Perl's report by Hillocks' massive review, Research on Written Composition: New Directions for Teaching (1986). Styled after the Braddock report in more than name only, Hillocks' book is labeled by reviewer Robert Schwegler (1988), as 'the announced successor' to the monumental 1963 work. Hillocks and his associates pared down a working list of 6000 items on composition research to the 2000 of their bibliography. Another reviewer, Richard
Larson (1987), calls the report "among the most expectantly awaited, and forcefully promoted, publications . . . in the last few years" and states that readers "evidently anticipated that the decisive word about how to teach writing effectively" would be contained therein (207).

And the decisive word that Hillocks proclaims is not what proponents of freewriting wanted to hear: "As a major instructional technique, freewriting is more effective than teaching grammar in raising the quality of student writing. However, it is less effective than any other focus of instruction examined," including the traditional method of teaching from models; and on the average, the inquiry technique of examining a concrete set of data is "nearly four times more effective than freewriting" (249).

Hillocks reached his conclusions by attempting to conduct a meta-analysis of "every experimental study produced between 1963 and 1982" (108). A meta-analysis computes standard scores and relies on standard deviations, rather than on significance of differences, thus eliminating the distortions that could be caused by varying sample size. The standard scores of the meta-analysis allow the comparison of unlike studies.

However, Hillocks' conclusions are not based on as much evidence as one might first surmise, because the exacting criteria that must be met to be included in the meta-analysis "eliminated over 80 percent of the experimental treatment
studies" (110). Actually, the stringent rules appear to have discarded well over 80 percent, for Hillocks states that the "application of the criteria resulted in 60 studies" being chosen (110), which would appear to be considerably less than the remaining 20 percent of 2000 (60 is actually three percent of 2000).

Further, out of the initial 6000 items gathered, the comparison between freewriting and inquiry as modes of instruction was based on a total of only 15 studies, nine on freewriting and six on inquiry (Tables 13 and 14, 212-13). And of the six inquiry studies, half were conducted by Hillocks himself. Of course it is not Hillocks' fault that the vast majority of the studies were not amenable to a meta-analysis. In speaking of most of the experimental studies, he states that too "often the treatments are poorly conceived (occasionally silly), and the studies are badly designed" (93). Nevertheless, his conclusions are not supported by the wealth of evidence one might suppose from the amount of material examined.

Another reason to question Hillocks' objectivity is his continual arguing against proponents of the process approach. He agrees with Wesdorp. who "believes that 'process research is still in its infancy and therefore does not yield clear recommendations for practice yet.'" and states, "I would go farther" (103), arguing for experimental studies. Larson
speaks of this as Hillocks' "declaration of unabashed advocacy" for quantitatively-based studies and terms it his "nonhidden secondary agenda" (210).

In all fairness, Hillocks relays that he is reacting against the "vituperative" attacks of Emig and Graves against experimental research, such as Graves' statement that "experimental designs have contributed least" to classroom teachers, who "have been unable to transfer faceless data to the alive, inquiring faces of the children they teach" (18). However, when Hillocks refers to proponents of freewriting by speaking of "Murray and others of his persuasion" (176), it sounds rather insulting, as if he meant to say, "Murray and his ilk." And he terms Graves' statement "curious" (94), as if he has trouble comprehending it, taking exception to the charge that experimental studies are "contextless."

Hillocks would rebut Macrorie's defense of displaying good works by suggesting that such works may be idiosyncratic. atypical works chosen to demonstrate a causal link that is not present. If he were to chart freewriting on a line graph, he would mark Macrorie's good works as aberrational points putting above a straight, level line depicting the mean effectiveness of freewriting. Just above and parallel to this line would be a dashed line representing the effectiveness of the traditional mode of instruction, for Hillocks claimed that freewriting was less effective than all other modes. We would have a graph of
two lines, one level for the greatest percentage of its length, but incorporating peaks that pierce upward through the other, flat, dashed line.

Macrorie would argue that the difference between these lines is all the difference between the EKG of a beating heart, and that of one which stopped beating long ago. He might contend that the peaks are worth the continuance of the method, that these summits elevate the line above the other, dashed line of minimal competency. But Hillocks would lop off the peaks, isolating and discarding them by claiming that the researchers of freewriting are inclined to misinterpret their findings.

While Hillocks does include the process studies in his review, they are not used in the meta-analysis that makes up the bulk of his work and leads him to his conclusions. Perl (1985) suggests that we can only learn about writing in the context of a classroom, and labeled her report an ethnographic study, a case study which acknowledges the social relationships of a classroom. Citing Perl, and Emig and Graves, specifically, Hillocks attacks case studies in general, questioning their designers' abilities to properly assess their findings:

In the case studies, there are tendencies to present data selectively rather than systematically, to interpret data without a consistent analysis, to infer
cause-and-effect relationships without adequate warrant, and to ignore the range of possible effects which the presence of researchers might have on results. (51)

For these reasons, process case studies are not used in the final analysis; only the handful of freewriting research quantifiable enough was used.

Although Hillocks’ report does not deliver a death blow to freewriting, the final paragraph draws a direct bead on this method of the natural approach. As the Braddock report shot down the emphasis on formal grammar instruction, Hillocks attempts to do the same to freewriting:

If we wish our schools and colleges to teach writing effectively, we cannot retreat to the grammar book or rely on the presentation of rules and advice, or expect students to teach themselves how to write effectively simply by writing whatever they wish for varied groups of their peers. We must make systematic use of instructional techniques which are demonstrably more effective.

Obviously here in his final recommendation. Hillocks is advocating the superiority of the experimental studies.

The selective evidence Hillocks presents calls for the discontinuance of the freewriting method, since he disallows the works of process research and the naturalistic approach to
be submitted to his meta-analysis. The weight of Hillocks' long-awaited report attempts to stamp indelibly on composition research the desire to turn from freewriting to more systematic techniques. However, the main effect of the report is the heightening of the tension between the proponents of the two major methodologies that now dominate research on writing: the process case studies and the experimental studies. Although Hillocks appears to present the definitive word on composition research, in the favor of experimental studies, Witte relates that "rather than resolving the controversy over methodologies in research on writing, Research on Written Composition contributes to it" (206).

The discovery by the initial process researchers of enhanced writing ability and creativity through the use of freewriting was met with a barrage of skepticism that diminished its acceptance and therefore, diminished its effectiveness. Any new age of writing instruction was postponed by the feuding between the two sides of the contending methodologies.
THE NEED FOR SYNTHESIS

The current state of composition research is one of discord and discursiveness. The 1963 review by Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer, with its questions and implications for future study, touched off an explosion of research. This explosion resulted in the 6000 far-flung items that Hillocks and his co-workers examined from the twenty years following the Braddock review. The first coherent body to coalesce from these studies was the research on writing as a process, which originally granted primacy to freewriting. A second body consisted of myriad clusters of varying focus, held together by their precise, statistical emphasis. These works sprang forth to stand beside the traditional texts on teaching writing. Brannon notes that currently these are the three spheres of influence in composition research and identifies them as "phenomenological-ethnographic," "empirical-experimental," and "philosophical-historical" (7).

In the article in which she identifies these spheres, Brannon also mentions the competitive nature of these strands of study, and demonstrates that competitiveness herself in a criticism of experimental researchers. She questions the empiricists' scientific objectivity when she states that they "observe and study some range of experience while assuming that they stand apart from and are independent of it" (7, my
emphasis). Highlighting a basic similarity between the two most prominent perspectives, Brannon points out that empiricists obtain their data by observation, just as naturalistic researchers do. But, she states, naturalistic researchers do not consider "phenomena" observed as something "dispassionately reducible to 'objective' characteristics" (8).

Schwegler echoes the issue of competition in his article entitled "Conflicting Methods in Composition Research" (1988). He speaks of "a growing tension between naturalistic and experimental modes of inquiry" and notes a tendency toward "factionalism" (445). He reports of Charles Cooper and Lee Odell's attempt to wrest the direction of study away from controlled experiments in their 1978 review Research on Composing: Points of Departure, where Cooper and Odell bluntly state their "audacious aim--that of redirecting and revitalizing research in written composition" (xiii).

Schwegler then presents Hillocks' review, which is subtitled "New Directions for Teaching." Hillocks' aim, which is announced with "unabashed advocacy," is to divert composition back toward experimental studies. Hillocks contends that researchers who employ the case-study approach have a tendency to interfere with results by their presence in the classrooms they observe. The dispassionate objectivity of statistics eliminates this bias, in his view.
However, what Hillocks considers a weakness, the ethnographic perspective consider its strength, its prime method of operation. Brannon states that what is learned about writing "arises from the researcher's way of looking and making connections" (8). Researchers from this perspective admit they are actively involved with their subjects, and would state that "context cannot be stripped from the experience under study and that the researcher cannot stand apart from what he or she observes" (8). Here Brannon appears to be invoking an idea similar to that of the Heisenburg Uncertainty Principle from modern physics. The uncertainty principle reveals that at the subatomic level the very act of observation will immobilize a particle, fixing its location so that nothing can be learned of its momentum. At its core, this principle, imbedded in modern notions of relativity, irrevocably links observer and phenomena, suggesting that the observer must be factored into the data. The ethnographic perspective agrees that observation alters experience and would contend that researcher bias cannot be filtered out by a statistical screen.

Objectivity and the role of the observer are the central issues that divide the feuding bodies of research. Some of the ethnographic perspective might even accuse the empiricists of not analyzing writing at all, but rather of examining a self-created screen, an artificial subject, that is once removed from the act of writing. A popular tool to measure writing
maturity is the T-unit. Kellog Hunt was one of the primary developers of the T-unit, which is defined as an "independent clause plus any grammatically attached subordinate elements" (Strong, 68). While considered vital to the field from one perspective, Hunt's work is seen as mere "scientism" by others. His preoccupation with his measuring device, his focusing more on the yardstick than on what was being measured, earned him this label. Holzman defines scientism as "the practice of the forms of science for their own sake, or for the sake of wearing those gorgeous cloaks over a poor reality" (qtd. in Strong, 69). In like manner, some empirical researchers may be accused of engaging in scientism, of paying excessive attention to statistical models and analyses, of examining and rearranging self-made cloaks while ignoring the body of work beneath.

Another point of contention between the two schools of thought on composition research may be tied to the conceptions of writing held by each side. The ethnographic perspective, with its naturalistic focus grounded in freewriting, inherently views writing as a creative process, with a strong emphasis on "creative." Purveyors of this perspective would define writing as "expressing ideas." The empirical perspective is largely concerned with measuring the final written product, counting the number and measuring the length of T-units and so forth to determine more precisely the quality of writing; its emphasis is more on form and delivering information. The empiricist
would define writing as "conveying information."

These distinct definitions of writing suggest that the two perspectives view writing at two distinguishably different levels. Modern psychology presents us with five ascending levels of communication, beginning with cliches, information, and ideas and opinions, and moving through emotions to complete openness (Knox, 1989). While the information-oriented approach of the empirical conception of writing generally only moves through the first three stages, which center on information, the ethnographic focus is on the fourth level, urging students to tap into their emotions and develop their own style through self-expression. The ethnographic view aims at a higher communicative level than the empirical view, conceiving of writing more in terms of expressing oneself than merely conveying information. The disagreements between the two perspectives may stem partially from the very definitions of writing held by each side. The distinction may merit future consideration in any attempts at peaceful coexistence.

This feud is nowhere more evident than in each perspective's approach to the first art of writing--invention. Hillocks states that while freewriting "treatments occasionally achieve results significantly greater than their controls, the inquiry treatments . . . always do" (186). Apart from his general criticisms, Hillocks, citing Scardamalia and Bereiter, levels the specific charge that freewriting leads
to a "what next" strategy. He defines this strategy by describing young writers 'who write a sentence, think of something else to write, write it, then think of another idea--all without any overriding plan governing the statements, holding them together, and giving them focus' (231).

The "what next" strategy might be seen as built into the system because one of the main creeds of freewriting is allowing the writing itself to guide the work, and taking the author where it will. This is particularly true with a specific form of freewriting identified by Elbow (1981) as the loop writing process. Also called the "voyage out," this form of freewriting encourages a writer to use successive freewritings as launchpads to purposely leap further and further from an initial point to discover a more creative topic. But indeed, all freewriting to a certain extent urges leaps of creativity that may lend the appearance of disjointedness.

The opposite of writing that builds and discovers as one works through the process is the method of prewriting that begins with a strict outline guiding the writer through the entire paper. Elbow addresses the users of rigid outlines, saying that they stifle their own writing:

You have locked yourself into dullest thinking than you are capable of; indeed, you have virtually ruled out your best thinking. When you see a piece
of really vacuous writing, you can be almost certain that it was the result of someone feeling she had to figure out her thesis before starting to write and then stick to it at all costs. (1981, 43)

By not tightly adhering to a preset program the writer who freewrites allows the work to grow naturally, to let each point build from the one preceding it. Elsewhere Elbow, in his book entitled *Embracing Contraries* (1986), suggests the advantages of shunning planning at the prewriting stage:

> When someone really gets going in a sustained piece of generative writing and manages, as it were, to stand out of the way and relinquish planning and control—when someone manages to let the words and images and ideas choose more words, images, and ideas—a more elegant shape or organization often emerges, one more integral to the material than careful outlining or conscious planning can produce. (56)

Here Elbow counters the "what next" charge by stating that freewriting can direct a work to a more consistent, a more elegant structure than one that is imposed from the outset.

Perhaps the primary defense against this accusation should be that freewriting is not the final stop in the writing process; freewriting is a method of invention, not revision.
An adequate revising strategy should be employed to correct defects in organization. In this book Elbow suggests that there may be only two subsequences involved in writing—writing and revision. He equates writing with first-order thinking, thinking that "is intuitive and creative and doesn't strive for conscious control" (55). Revision is second-order thinking, critical thinking that "is conscious, directed, controlled" (55). From these notions it might be suggested that perhaps the prime concern of a strictly logical, empirical approach should be revision. A coldly critical method of rewriting could be used to determine whether material needs an imposed structure—whether a paper is carried along by its own internal workings or is in need of reworking. Future empirical research might do well to concentrate on revision.

At present, however, experimental researchers are not solely concerned with rewriting and they have their own candidates for invention strategies, such as those previously mentioned, like Burke's pentad, Pike's tagmemic method, and Hillocks' inquiry technique. Perhaps foremost among these are the heuristic procedures. Unlike the leaps into the unknown encouraged by freewriting, heuristics seek to close in on an idea from all sides. Heuristics narrow, pin down, and eliminate options. Chasing an idea is a matter of stalking, much like a group of cowhands trying to fence in a bull. Cut him off from this side, don't let him wander too far to that
side, slice up the ground he can cover by systematically advancing from several directions. Finally, corner him and slam the gate.

The empirical approach to invention seems to be concerned with developing a precise method to surround something as nebulous as a new idea. Tagmemic invention has six concepts--particle, wave, field, contrast, variation, and distribution--which are arranged in a nine-cell chart to help explore a topic. This three by three grid resembles not so much a door opening to further ideas as a cage to trap a muse. The earlier interpretation of Young, that heuristics are simply invitations to the muse, appears to have been erroneous. The questions and paraphernalia used in caging the muse are only an invitation in the same sense that bait is an invitation to a trap. All the effort put into building the snare is largely external to writing and is not necessarily conducive to creativity. Hillocks, in an article for College English (1982), states that the tasks involved in utilizing the tagmemic method of invention are so complex that they "appear to require instruction focused on them rather than on the larger heuristic which subsumes them" (661). Here, again, is a system that looks more to a screen that is once removed from writing than writing itself.

Elbow warns that a too mechanistic method of invention may sap the very creativity an author is searching for. He writes
of a certain resistance inherent in writing; from this resistance, this struggling with words, writing gains its vitality, he surmises. For him, writing is like trying "to wrestle a steer to the ground, to wrestle a snake into a bottle, to overcome the demon that sits in your head" (18). However, a mechanical form of invention that is trotted out when necessary and slammed over an idea may succeed in eliminating that resistance; it may succeed in breaking the back of that steer, that snake, that demon. Breaking the back of the muse will give writers power over it and allow them to bend it to their will and the writing that follows may even be clear and fluent. But, the writing will be limp and lifeless. The words will be "too abjectly obedient," according to Elbow. That is why, he states, some people—who "say just what they mean in adequate, errorless words—are really hopelessly boring to read" (18).

That the writing of Elbow, a staunch member of the process approach, could be used to criticize heuristics is hardly surprising. However, the fact that Hillocks, an avowed advocate of the empirical perspective, provides fuel for such an attack is unexpected. Hillocks' purpose in writing the article mentioned above, however, was to demonstrate the superiority of his techniques of inquiry over other methods.

A most appropriate word to describe the competing invention strategies of the two perspectives is "discursive,"
understood as digressive or rambling, the way in which freewriting seeks new ideas. Writers are encouraged to let their thoughts on paper leap from a straightforward narrative, to form spirals tangent to the original line of reasoning. Another meaning of discursive suggests that one proceed by reasoning or argument and not intuitively. Quite aptly, this meaning sums the empirical approach to invention. The heuristics proceed logically, building on the responses to their prompting questions to reach a conclusive topic. The inquiry strategy presents concrete data to be used as blocks to help students put the pieces in place. The strategies of both competing approaches seem to be two sides of the same word.

An end to the feud between the conflicting research perspectives does not appear imminent. Each side has fired volleys at the other, vying for the leadership of the field of composition. Cooper and Odell on one side depart from the main path and guide composition scholarship in one direction; Hillocks charges in from the other side with a New Direction, snatching the banner away and heading off the opposite way. The field is torn and there seems to be little attempt to unite, or even to strike a peace between the two sides.

At first blush, Hillocks' inclusion of the process studies in his highly statistical review may be seen as an attempt to placate researchers of the ethnographic perspective. He devotes the first sixty pages to process studies, over
one-fifth of the book. However, because they are not incorporated in the meta-analysis, Witte failed "to see any necessary connections between [the first chapter] and the remaining seven chapters" and noted a "different authorial stance and tone" in the later chapters (204).

Though there are few overtures of peace between the two battle-scarred sides, each talks of the need for a unity in composition theory. While Macrorie speaks of a "fusion" and Brannon looks to "discover some unifying theoretical premises" (9), Hillocks views his own report as a "synthesis of available research findings" (xvi). Although each side talks about synthesis, they conceive of it in a modern notion, that of simply blending the best of elements. And, naturally, each believes that the best theories are contained in their own side only.

Classical logic, on the other hand, states that a synthesis is the combination of a thesis and its antithesis. In Greek philosophy, a general law of becoming that was commonly held by early theorists is put forth by Plato in his Phaedo, stating that "opposites come to be out of opposites" (Lloyd, 1966, 24). A new idea, a thesis, leads to, or causes, an antithesis. Together, they lead to a synthesis.

As has been demonstrated, the process movement was an antithetical response to the traditional, grammar-based methodology that preceded it. In like manner, the empirical
approach grew over and against the process approach, as experimental researchers sought to redirect the field from an apparent de-emphasis of instructors and what was perceived (by Young, among others) as the abandoning of students. The empirical perspective tended to resolidify the position of instructors in the classroom through its presentation of more or less stringent guidelines, such as its heuristic procedures for invention, whereas the process movement's freewriting method can easily be viewed as the extreme opposite of any step-by-step approach to invention.

A necessity for the development and continued improvement of the field of composition is the cooperation of the diametrically opposed perspectives. An appropriate beginning would be a fusion of the two sides' polar opposite methods of invention, a coming together of their discursive approaches to generating ideas. Freewriting is an excellent method of tapping into one's creativity, as it is an unrestricted rehearsal that allows one to wander untrod areas in the way prescribed by such authors on creative writing as Julius Hook and Percy Bernard. Hillocks even admits that "free writing may be useful as a means of generating ideas" (1986, 232). But as helpful as it is for discovering and exploring new territory, it is not, nor should it be intended as, a complete system of writing. Freewriting desperately needs a method of revision to sort and straighten its digressions and ramblings.
However, there are also times when freewritings can lead to nought, when leaps and jumps do not lead to nor land on anything new. In such cases, a methodical approach would be more effective, as it achieves results, albeit at the expense of creativity. A possible consideration for future research is the question whether certain kinds of writing are helped by freewriting while others are helped more by methodology.

Since Hillocks proclaims his technique as the consummation of the scientific approach applied to invention and statistically demonstrates the superiority of the technique, the inquiry strategy should be used as a counterpoint to ground freewriting. The concrete data presented by the strategy could be used as a springboard for further ideas as long as students are allowed to totally disconnect from that data if their writing so directs. Some of the best, most creative papers are those which present a twist on the ordinary, those which start with mundane facts but present them uniquely. Such a combined method of the inquiry technique, truly a straightforward thesis, and freewriting, very much its antithesis, would create a synthesis that encompasses a structured, data base as well as the leaps above and beyond that base.

Such a synthesis would incorporate a method that dampens creativity for the price of results, and a method that disregards results for the coin of creativity. This synthesis would be helpful for those students who claim they cannot think
of anything to write about and need a push to begin. The specific details derived from the examination of the presented concrete data would provide an initial impetus. As long as the students are allowed an unrestricted rehearsal after that starting point, to let their considerations and musings on that data carry them off, to even completely break away from that starting point if they desire, the method will also contain the way to creativity.

An attempt at such a synthesis will in all likelihood be rejected, for, even though opposites are said to attract, each perspective continues its exclusive appeal to teachers of composition. Elbow states that the battlelines between the two sides, between creative and critical thinking, are drawn throughout our society:

Because the history of our culture is often experienced as a battle between reason and feeling, between rationality and irrationality, between logic and impulse ... we end up with disciplined critical thinking and uncensored creative thinking dug into opposed trenches with their guns trained on each other. (1986, 62)

He suggests, however, that should not be the case and that an alliance is necessary to arrive at the heart of the matter.

If we would see clearly how it really is with thinking and writing, we would see that the
situation isn't either/or. It's both/and . . . . (63)

The only way the revitalization of the field of composition that began in the 1960s will continue is through the acknowledgement that an alliance between the opposing camps is necessary. Although Witte claims that composition remains "a field struggling to define itself" (207), Schwegler contends that the area of scholarship is close to definition. He cites Brannon's contention that composition is a recognizable, albeit a predisciplinary, field, and goes further, stating that "the existence of two clearly articulated approaches to research, however recent their development, argues that the identity of the field may be clearer than even its practitioners are willing to acknowledge" (445). However, even though the existence of the two competing perspectives may signal the initiation of the field as a true discipline, a truly separate entity of study, composition will arrive stillborn as a discipline if it cannot quell its own internal fighting.

Witte states, "A field that presumes the efficacy of a particular research methodology, a particular inquiry paradigm, will collapse inward upon itself" (207). In order for composition to proceed and improve, let alone emerge as a field, it must move beyond the feud, beyond what Witte calls the "counterproductive bickering about methodologies" which
"diverts attention away from . . . more critical issues" (206-7). It must move toward the cooperation of the two sides, toward what Witte terms a "true marriage of discovery and validation" (207)—a marriage of the interactive explorations of the ethnographic perspective and the quantifiable results of the experimental perspective. Such a union would bring together creativity and criticism, process and product; in other words, the methods of writing would be brought to bear on the study of writing.

This marriage is necessary 'if [the field of composition] is ever to develop a comprehensive theory capable of explaining acts of writing or of guiding the teaching of writing and if its findings are ever to contribute significantly to educational policy" (207). A synthesis of the two perspectives' most effective approaches to the first art of writing, invention, would certainly be a logical first step.

Witte implies that a comprehensive theory of writing that would drastically alter national educational policy will most likely not be generated from one perspective only, not even from the most scientific approach. Lloyd-Jones, who declares himself a "sometime empiricist," even in the introduction to Hillocks' meta-analytical work, thinks "of lore and other forms of experiential knowledge as essential to our crafts." And yet, a wholly phenomenological-based methodology will not arrive at a comprehensive theory either because its results are not finely
replicable.

Only a unified theory that acknowledges contributions from the process studies, particularly with regards to student-teacher interaction, as well as recognizing experimental studies will enable the teaching of composition to vigorously move forward in its attempts at alleviating our nation's education crisis. Only a synthesis that promotes creativity as well as clarity will invigorate the teaching of writing. The current, most popular approaches are haphazard attempts that strive only for a minimal competency from their students. The reason they fail is because they aim too low. Students are neither interested, nor involved.

Some, such as Holzman and James Sledd (1988), contend that the prime reason the aim of composition is so low is that the main objective of education is to fill slots in the labor force, instead of any attempt at a higher, more liberal education. Sledd is quite vehement in his protestations, shouting that "the executives of the transnational corporations and their flunkies in the military-industrial-educational complex" are working to "maintain and extend corporate control of schooling and--more generally--corporate control of the accumulation, storage and dissemination of knowledge" (168). The education system, he maintains, is designed to stratify society by dividing along the line between those who have mastered the technological 'Institutional Voice,' and those who
have not.

Front page news stories somewhat confirm this view as heads of corporations are shown to be alarmed about the next generation of workers. Diane Capstaff, vice president for John Hancock Mutual Life in Boston, states that some "applicants don't have the writing skills to prepare a brief letter to a policyholder" (Fiske, 1989). David Kearns, chairman for Xerox, sees in the crisis, "the makings of a national disaster," while the chief executive officer of Johnson and Johnson, James Burke, exclaims that it is "the American dream turned nightmare." The article states that "American schools are graduating students who lack even the skills needed to fill existing assembly-line jobs, let alone fill the sophisticated new jobs that increasingly dominate the economy."

The public media continues to proclaim to the nation tales of an education crisis, shaping this generation's perception on the issue. Sledd, in his controversial view, goes even further than merely stating its existence; he states that it is perpetuated on purpose, and thus there is little hope of ending it. The creation of a comprehensive theory of writing could alter the public's perception by contributing significantly to the nation's educational policy. But such a theory can only come about through the acceptance by more empiricists, such as Lloyd-Jones, of the insights gained from the process studies, regardless of their newness to the field. Only by aiming for
the peaks of creativity, rather than settling for the plains of minimal competency, by infusing hard, empirical findings like the inquiry approach with the vital spark of freewriting, will writing instruction radically improve.


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