2010

The Neopragmatist's Hammer: Forging Administrative Authority

David Oliver Kasdan
Cleveland State University

Recommended Citation

Kasdan, David Oliver, "The Neopragmatist's Hammer: Forging Administrative Authority" (2010). *ETD Archive*. 729.
https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/etdarchive/729

THE NEOPRAGMATIST'S HAMMER:

FORGING ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY

DAVID OLIVER KASDAN

Bachelor of the Arts in Philosophy

DePaul University

February, 1995

submitted in partial fulfillment of requirement for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN URBAN STUDIES AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

at the

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

MAY, 2010

This dissertation has been approved

for the Department of URBAN STUDIES

and the College of Graduate Studies by

_____

Dissertation Chairperson, Michael W. Spicer

_____

Department & Date

_____

Camilla Stivers

_____

Department & Date

_____

Gary Marshall

_____

Department & Date

THE NEOPRAGMATIST'S HAMMER:
FORGING ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY
DAVID OLIVER KASDAN
ABSTRACT

Public administration is challenged to provide a coherent model of authority in modern democratic society. Authority is necessary for governance, yet it runs against the liberal state. Reconciling administrative authority with the American polity requires an approach that situates governance as the outcome of communal solidarity. This reconciliation includes deflating the metanarrative of authority that has been constructed on traditions of administrative representation, expertise, and practice. These traditions of authority must be redescribed in current contexts and shaped by the discourse between public administration and the polity as equal members of an epistemic community. Neopragmatism, the postmodern upgrade to classical pragmatism's "truth as justified belief", is offered as the theoretical approach to reframe administrative authority by a process that works for consensus about public problems and governance in light of the objective of social progress.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

AUTHORITY, NEOPRAGMATISM, AND THE PROBLEM OF

METANARRATIVES

The problem of administrative authority is reconciling how a free society can

agree to governance. American public administration operates in a liberal

democracy, pitting its authority against traditions of bootstrap individualism and a

prevalent distrust of government. The growth of government in response to public

problems brings out issues between the polity and administrators as the frequency and

depth of their interactions increases. Coupled with the belief that Western progress

implies better democracy, the growth of public administration and accompanying

claims of authority to conduct governance have come to require a redescription of

what that authority means for America and social progress in the 21st century.

O.C. McSwite cautions that, "It is when institutions begin to fail, to lose

legitimacy, that they become of concern. This starts to occur when authority begins

to contradict itself and the vacancy on which it is founded becomes exposed" (2003,

p. 190). How can public administration, derived from American political theory in

the context of the liberal constitutional state, operate using standards that are at best

democratically dynamic and at worst unfathomably nonexistent? If our access to the

Truth, as the postmodern perspective holds, is an elusive objective that necessarily

fosters asymmetric epistemologies, then how does governance proceed under the

principles of social justice and liberal democracy?

Authority is a social, political, and ontological problem that necessarily breeds

dichotomies at every turn, such as the schisms between facts and values or means and

ends (Harmon, 2006). Authority has maintained the status of a metanarrative, a

grand tradition of axiomatic import; since the first human settlements, the warrant for

action in the public interest has been allowed under assumed traditions and protocols.

Authority has traditionally hinged on epistemological tenets that were established in

adherence to the dominance of rational empiricism. As the main stream of human

inquiry has focused on understanding causal relationships, authority has been

associated with one's access to the understanding of such relationships.   For

example, the physicist who can explain the workings of complex mechanisms holds a

form of authority because the phenomenon can be conveyed from the observation into

an operational theory of mechanics.

Authority is a language problem; by acting "in the name of" an authority, one

is engaged in discourse about the extension and limits of authority as a concept.   The

problem of authority is at the level of political theory, yet it is also a philosophical

issue, a pervasive historical concept, and a postmodern linguistic paradox that is

manifest in public administration. In the administrative context, authority comprises

a set of challenges for justification, legitimacy, and warrants for activity.

The problem from the administrative perspective lies in the span that Frank Goodnow (1900) described between the expression of public will and the execution of that will.   The span is often characterized by the politics-administration dichotomy; politics is positioned as a normative discipline while administration is characterized to the polity as a positivist practice.   The span is measured by constructs of representation that cannot be avoided or negotiated without appeals to further constructs of representation. The units of measurement for the span include the construct of representation between the actual will of the people and the ability of politics to redescribe that will as policy, then followed by the construct between the political redescription into policy and the interpretation of that policy as governance for public administrators to enact. These are the broadest conceptions of representation; the jumps from the polity to the politics to public administration may be atomized into smaller relationships of representation that allow the process to work. Yet all these moments of representation incur a cost to authority that is realized in the layers of abstractions between what the people want and what the people get. The probability that public administrators can maintain authority as a derivative of representation is quite low if the dichotomy is an accurate description of our governance process: "authority is grounded in the presumptive capacity, if not givenness, to articulate the will of a We, to formulate a sovereign will. Post-traditional conditions, however, present formidable obstacles to this We, not simply to articulating it but accepting it as such" (Catlaw, 2006, p. 264).

The effort to get from the problem of authority to its reconciliation in democratic practice is fraught with the aforementioned abstractions that are,

appropriately, often bureaucratic in nature. Public administration conducts

governance on behalf of the polity at the behest of the policy makers, negotiating the

relationship under the mantle of representation. If the political process is intended to

capture the expression of the public will and the purpose of the legislative system is

to reformulate that expression into policy, then we have a bureaucracy of linguistic

issues to negotiate as well. This has not been ignored by public administration

scholars, but it has yet to be resolved (Miller & Fox, 2006; Harmon, 2006).

The polity's deference to administrators for governance is in a state of flux as

we, "rankle at the onerous burden of authority in our daily lives even though political

spin meisters assure us…that laws…have set us free" (Abel, 2007, p. 58). The

condition of a free society conferring powers of governance to public administration

is especially troubling when the methods of justification are misaligned to the

objectives of the political process, thus producing what Arendt observed to be a

"crisis of authority" (2000, p. 462). She attributes the crisis to be "political in origin

and nature" – political movements have upended the traditions of authority that were

formed in the basic instances of human behavior, i.e. the relationship between adults

and children built on obedience to established practice (p. 463). Schaar (1984) also

targets the weakening of traditional bases of authority, noting that, "it is becoming

clear that the decline of legitimate authority is the product of the ideal and material

forces that have been the defining attributes of modern authority itself" (p. 107).

Caught between the principles and the practices of democratic society, public

administration suffers from the lack of coherency between the theory and the use of

authority. Prevailing metanarratives of democratic public administration and

4

governing authority further confound how administrators can provide sufficient accountability for their actions. By looking to political theory to situate the warrants of authority, public administration may find the support it requires to forge a concept of authority that is a product of consensus, reconcilable to the principles of our liberal-constitutional context, and operationalized into a practice that is more consistently accountable to the democratic polity in commensurable language.

This dissertation addresses such issues pertaining to administrative authority by advancing the philosophy of neopragmatism. Neopragmatism offers a justification for authority beyond metanarratives; it provides accountability outside of fixed contexts by appealing to a politically dynamic idea of solidarity formed by the polity. It confronts the linguistic issues of authority in bureaucracy by embracing discourse as the administrative practice of forming consensus. The application of "the neopragmatist's hammer" tempers authority for postmodern governance without relying on tenuous correspondence theories of objective knowledge. The rough edges of classical public administration that are the remnants of connections to positivist ideals are pounded out by this postmodern approach. Whereas governance has shown dependence on normative principles posturing as objective ideals for its guidance in the liberal state, neopragmatism offers to restructure that relationship and stabilize administrative authority without the multitude of frayed guidelines it has used to maintain its perilous balance of tensions. Instead of holding a nervous position as the arbiter of political neutrality – defending administrative action by the power of rational empiricism and the manipulation of methodologies to illuminate causal relationships – public administration can be predicated on a contextual notion of

progress, solidarity, and non-exclusionary practices for mediating consensus that more aptly suit the democratic polity.

The objectives of this dissertation research are to: 1) outline the traditional public administration metanarrative around authority in the democratic polity; 2) provide an understanding of neopragmatism as a philosophy with a meaningful application to governance; 3) redevelop the concept of authority in the neopragmatist perspective; and, 4) offer a model of neopragmatist public administration and its approach to authority in the liberal state. These objectives correspond to the chapters following this introduction.

1.1 Statement of Problem

Public administration is challenged to establish its authority in the democratic state.

What is the nature of administrative authority in the liberal, constitutional democracy of America? How can public administrators maintain effective authority for governance today? Are the traditional tenets of technical expertise, representation, and administrative practice sufficiently enduring for the progress of our state? Does the influence of rational empiricism and institutional memory overshadow creative efforts at social progress? How can the need for governance and its requisite exercise of authority over the public be reconciled with the origin of such authority being rooted in the democratic polity itself? As Orion White asserts, "the authority problem is central to the field of Public Administration, or at least has held visibility as a central issue since the 1960s," and "authority, rather than power, is endemic to the question of social organization" (in Wamsley, et al., 1990, pp. 182-3).

Policy makers have no ground to claim that their policy contents are ideal or immutable as evidenced by the continual revisions of policy. Consequently, they have no claim that their bureaucratic structures and implementation schemes are the one best way warranted from a metaphysical standard of governance. These shortcomings, especially when aggravated by the unimagined contingencies that can never be accounted for in even the most detailed planning, lead to the recognition that public administration is not an exact science. It cannot rely on rules and standards that are created by humans and yet also held to transcend the limits of human knowledge. In other words, governance does not exist in the ether as some set of processes and bureaucracy that any form of human inquiry can approach as an objective for practice.

Plain logic then dictates that the absence of foundational guidance from a perfect model of governance has a correlated absence of foundational authority to carry out governance. This is the heart of the matter: the authority that public administration needs to implement policy and address what it is told are the public problems – the latitude to develop practices and strive for efficiency and effectiveness – cannot appeal to a higher power than the people themselves. Administrative authority depends on justification; this relationship is rife with inconsistencies, incoherencies, and incommensurability.

At the most basic philosophical level, authority requires the responsibility of accurate representation insofar as an appeal to authority is an appeal to a concept that stands behind the office or person in an authoritative position. Authority is not a thing that can be held in the hand – the pen and sword may be instruments of

authority, but they are not authority themselves – and therefore authority is a label or representation of something else. Arendt (2000, p. 463-464) discusses authority from the hierarchy of Plato's sense of political society, calling it the "dominant" concept of our history. The hierarchy implies relationships between people while the political society suggests governance through representational structures. Any instance of authority then works through the relationship between two or more parties wherein one is chartered to act with a responsibility that is an extension of powers via representation. Representation is a concession by the polity to allow for a small governing body to serve its interests. The responsibility of public administration is then concentrated in the idea of accurate representation, meaning that the polity's concession for governance is carried out in accordance with how the polity envisions its interests to be served.

The problem becomes obvious from an enlightened contemporary (as well as a postmodern) view of how the world operates: what is the standard for accurate representation in the democratic state? How can public administration strive to act in accordance with the polity's interests? This transitive exercise from the Statement of Problem (above) puts authority, as the embodiment of accurate representation, squarely in the sights of those who contend that we, as individuals or public administrators, do not and cannot have access to reality and big "T" truths. Not only is this elite access denied to the general public, but the facility for representation as a neutral practice is tarnished. Here is where the criticism of authority by neopragmatism comes in most forcefully: the who, what, when, where, why and how of authority are all up for debate if the notions of an objective truth and representation

are rejected. As developed in the later chapters of this research, neopragmatism

provides a reconciliatory perspective to the problem when set in the context of a

liberal democratic community.

This dissertation is interested in the dynamics of authority that occur between

public administrators and the polity, probing the relationships and difficulties that

exist between the agents of governance and the citizens who are served by that

activity. At the most basic level, theorists have contended that public administration

needs some warrant for its actions that satisfies the question of its right to do such

things in a democratic state (Abel, 2007; Catlaw, 2006; Friedrich, 1958, 1963;

Sementelli, 2007; Simon, 1997). Spanning the whole of the issue is a traditional

understanding of administrative authority in democracy, a metanarrative that has been

constructed on generalized notions of social behavior from the earliest moments of

human settlements. Undergirding this metanarrative are the traditions of public

administration that have served as the elementary justification for the metanarrative in

American society: the technical expertise attributed to administrative offices, the

notion of public administration as democratic representation, and practice as the

episteme of governance. These metanarratives are set in the context of the liberal

constitutional state as manifest in the policy that public administration upholds (Rohr,

1998). The dissertation will unpack this metanarrative and the traditions to illuminate

how they have contributed to the functional problems of administrative authority in

the current state.

1.2 Statement of Major Thesis

Neopragmatism can be used to develop a conception of authority for public

administration that is coherent in the modern democratic state.

In the face of recent administrative failures, such as the recovery operations

from Hurricane Katrina or the oversight mismanagement of contractors in Iraq, there

is every right to question administrative authority. If mishaps of governance are

attributed to administration, then the underlying expertise that warrants public

administrators' discretion, the political representation granted for governance, and the

catalog of past practices are culprits in the erosion of its authority. To avoid

challenges to its authority from both legislators and citizens, public administration

may need to move away from its defining constraints. Authority needs to be situated

beyond inflexible principles based on Truths in a redevelopment that incorporates

context and consensus. We must reconsider the nature of administrative authority to

be organic to the polity, not derived from principles held to be corresponding to

constitutionally delineated ideals. Such an approach is justified by a theory that

balances both the constitutional with the democratic and the expert with the layman.

Neopragmatism informs such a theory, as Miller (2004, p. 245) presents the

philosophy: "Freed from foundationalism, new pragmatism raises new possibilities.

Public administrators are not in service to the rulers or even to the laws made by the

rulers; rather, they are in service to the problems that are placed on their doorstep."

The focus of public administration on solving public problems is fundamental

to the approach and the proposed conception of authority. The idea of public

problems being "placed on their doorstep" may be considered more democratically as

the problems that the polity and public administrators determine through discourse, much as Follett's (1924, p. 4) pursuit of integrative processes suggested that, "we seek a method by which the full integrity of the individual shall be one with social progress."

Reflecting on the work of his forerunner in American philosophy, Richard Rorty stated that, "As Dewey saw it, whole-hearted pursuit of the democratic ideal requires us to set aside any authority save that of a consensus of our fellow humans" (2006, p. 257). Rorty shares a goal with Dewey in ridding society of its misbegotten attempts to establish a correspondence with authoritative realities and instead live in a democracy of free cooperation, although they differ in their mechanics. This idea of consensus, also expressed as the shared goals of a community, is a fundamental connection for authority and the democratic state. Yet it took decades to advance from the positivist attitude of early public administration and acknowledge that the governing of a state may not be as straightforward as the rational-empirical practices previously held as administrative ideals: "Between the time of Dewey and Rorty, something happened: the postmodern assault on foundations" (Miller, 2004, p. 243).

From the vantage of a contemporary scholar of public administration and pragmatism, Hildebrand (2005) posits governance as involving,

> The application of general and fixed concepts (policies, laws, standards) to particular and fluid practicalities (situations, circumstances, persons), [requiring that] the agency will need to have strategies ready to deal with unusual or problematic cases…Postmodern parlance might call this rethinking hermeneutics or deconstruction. Pragmatists simply call it inquiry. (p. 355).

This picture invites inquiry into the nature and extent of administrative authority, as well as the activity carried out under such warrants. Too much authority

leads to authoritarianism, while too little leaves the state lame. Establishing the optimal authority for public administration at any point in time and practice is thus a central challenge to maintaining efficient and effective governance for American society. It has been a perennial topic in the public administration discourse: "Authority as a concept has occupied a central, almost hallowed place in studies of the administrative state, of philosophy, and of the public sector" (Sementelli, 2007, p. 115).

In the same way that Rorty (1979, 1982) debunked truth as correspondence to reality in his development of neopragmatism from classical pragmatism, this dissertation looks to disassociate authority from any accountability to objective principles, fixed standards, or metanarratives that are not plausibly supported in democratic discourse with the public. The parallels between the components of the philosophical argument and this dissertation's effort are readily correlated; however, the process is not. The philosophical argument rejecting metaphysical appeals to a true reality is more easily accessed than the political rejection of administrative standards that have formed the popular collective conception of governance. The polity is wont to adhere to ideals that justify the state and is comfortable with the constraints of the Constitution when those constraints are promoted to hold the value of objective truth. Thus, the goal of this thesis is similar to Rorty's goal in challenging foundationalism: to contest the traditions of authority as a power granted by parchment and political procedure heretofore regarded as having exclusive access to a set of ideal principles embodied in some notion of the public will (or the Constitution), and instead look to more contextually and linguistically coherent

notions of authority that are formulated by public discourse and a nuanced notion of solidarity. It is helpful to place the goal within the concept of the state, "not as a structure of government but rather as the manner in which individuals understand their actions to be related to each other and to those of their government in a political community" (Spicer, 1997, p. 91). This begs the need for greater consciousness of an epistemic community and enhancing the relationship between the public and public administrators.

Indeed, public administration scholars foresee the need for such an "upgrade" (Miller, 2005; Hoch, 2006). Sementelli observed that, "authority in contemporary society has shifted from its roots in positivism, logic, and rationalism, toward one grounded in symbols and language games leading to a number of consequences for the administrative state" (2007, p. 117). Catlaw (2006) warns of some of these consequences, stating that, "government, both in its formulative and executive moments, comes to be experienced as a mechanism of exclusion and imposition" (p. 265). This thesis promotes neopragmatism as an alternative approach to administrative authority and duly explores the consequences that result from the "upgrade" of governance. Furthermore, the idea of the epistemic community (Miller & Fox, 2001, 2007; Misak, 2007, 2008; Pierson, 1994) will be presented to support the neopragmatist approach.

The primary task is developing an understanding of neopragmatism from its major proponent. Building on his acquaintance with Dewey's pragmatism, Rorty advanced the progressive idea past the analytical school and into the throes of post-modernity. The equating of truth to utility is upgraded by neopragmatism to consider

the socio-political, linguistic, and contextual influences on the definition of usefulness. Whereas classical pragmatism advanced an agenda of discovery and revision in its search for utility, neopragmatism questions whether utility can ever be pinned down without holding out some fixed meanings that will divide society around its definition. The "utility" agenda is not abandoned out of nihilistic frustration for neopragmatists, however, as there is still the thrill of the chase for democratic societies that seek to make things better.

A public relations problem for neopragmatism lies in the perception that it closely resembles anarchy. It is thought to be differentiated from relativism only by the passing acquaintance with consensus and democracy as actual practices. It is also charged with deconstructing ideas into meaninglessness and that its epistemological claims are nothing more than temporary fixes to language problems that are just a distraction from our experiences (Webb, 2004; Hildebrand, 2005; Shields, 2005). The resolution to this is that neopragmatism does not deny the raw materials of meaning, regardless of what we may call them (thus putting up a road sign to warn of the linguistic turns ahead), but cautions against making decisions that are only reasonable when justified through a particular final vocabulary. A final vocabulary is necessarily recidivist, retarding progress, insofar as there is an end to the permutations of the language that can be contrived. For rational empiricists, the end state of the permutations is the achievement of an ideal. For neopragmatists, an end state is nonsense; perfecting a final vocabulary is not progress, it is totalitarianism.

There is a recurring notion of "progress" in Rorty's work that cannot be separated from his philosophy. His use of the term is flexible but consistent in theme:

"The end of human activity is not rest, but rather richer and better human activity" (Rorty, 1991, p. 39). He is continually looking to things that make our existence more interesting, open, and inclusive; yet if an idea comes to a dead end, then that is still alright for Rorty: "Social progress is not a matter of discovering the essential nature of the state or of one's nation or of one's society; it's a matter of becoming a more rich, interesting society than in the past" (interview in McReynolds, 2007). His view is purposive to the extent that humans should pursue these broad goals while moving away from the conventions that have previously served to marginalize ideas and created opportunities for exclusionary practices in society (1999, pp. 23-46). Philosophy, according to Rorty, "makes progress not by becoming more rigorous but by becoming more imaginative" (1998a, p. 8), and neopragmatism is an approach to solving problems, not discovering objective truths (1998a, p. 184). Rorty maintains an idea of progress while still being a postmodernist; he confronts this apparent conflict repeatedly, armed with feel-good proposals for "community" that would be so much pabulum if not for his sincere hope for a better, more just human existence.

The aggregate of Rorty's work seems directed to address the very problem of contemporary discourse, succinctly stated by Spicer (1997):

> …the barriers to any meaningful sort of broad agreement on the substantive ends of the state and how best to accomplish them would seem daunting if not insurmountable. Indeed, the postmodern condition and its plethora of incommensurable language games call into question the very meaningfulness of any talk about the substantive ends or purposes of a community. (p. 94).

Rorty is not daunted by this challenge; in fact, he finds such problems interesting and worthwhile of human activity.

1.3 Scope of Research

The focus of this dissertation requires a clear picture of the development of administrative authority and the ongoing discussion in the field. The major topics within the discussion, public administration's authority as a product of traditions, have not been analyzed exhaustively in the discussion and thus present the opportunity for this research. I propose to explore the relationships of the topics under the heading of "authority" and then offer up the neopragmatist perspective on the discussion. The evolutionary advancement of the American philosophy is due for a more detailed application to administrative authority.

This research will seek evidence for its argument from two primary camps: the neopragmatism developed from three decades of Richard Rorty's work and the public administration discourse on authority (Abel, 2007; Box, 2001; Catlaw, 2006; Eagan, 2007; Friedrich, 1958; Marshall, 2007; Raadschelders & Stillman, 2007; Sementelli, 2007). The focus of this research is not to convince administrators that neopragmatism is all around us and just waiting to be acknowledged, but rather that a greater awareness of what it can offer may contribute to more effective governance.

Drawing on the literature of epistemic authority for public administration (Abel, 2007; Catlaw, 2006; Marshall, 2007; Miller & Fox, 2001; Raadschelders & Stillman, 2007; Sundstrom, 2007), a thorough review of the place and implications of authority in democratic governance will be presented. This research will provide fodder for the more philosophical facets of neopragmatism from Rorty to be transformed by the neopragmatist's hammer into the epistemic qualities for governance (Miller & Fox, 2001; Pierson, 1994; Stivers, 2008a).

As previously mentioned, the chapters of the dissertation will align with the objectives of the research. Chapter 2, Public Administration and Authority, sets out to define metanarratives and describe the liberal constitutional context of American public administration. It then presents the problematic traditions of administrative authority as technical expertise, representation, and practice before talking about how the problems of administrative authority are manifest today. The third chapter, Neopragmatism and the Postmodern Forgery, uses the history of ideas approach to introduce the thesis's philosophy, starting from the roots in classical pragmatism and progressing through postmodern linguistic concerns to Richard Rorty's philosophy. Neopragmatism is discussed as being anti-authoritarianism and a method for facilitating social progress. Chapter 4, Reshaping Authority for Neopragmatist Governance, begins to formulate the process of neopragmatism that is applied to the context and defining characteristics of authority. The task is set to reconstruct public administration to integrate consensus and context into practice. Finally, Chapter 5, The Neopragmatist Administrator, resets the context of governance in the epistemic community and offers a model of administrative authority with implications of the neopragmatists approach for governance.

The implications of this research are treated as two inquiries that can be contrasted under the old metanarratives in light of the neopragmatist's conception of administrative authority. What is the effect on public administration practice? What is the effect on the polity vis-à-vis governance and public interaction with bureaucracy? To these ends, the contribution for public administration is a conception of neopragmatism as a process. The process is open-ended and serves to

17

facilitate conversation between administrators and the public as they work toward outcomes for social progress. When the context is right – meaning that the policy guidance is open to reaching consensus – neopragmatism can be applied.

A note on terminology is in order to clarify usage: "pragmatic" is used to denote practical utility, whereas "pragmatist" indicates a modifier or agent of the philosophy of pragmatism. "Neopragmatic" is rarely used to avoid confusion, as "neopragmatist" will suffice for the descriptor or agent of the philosophy of neopragmatism. Two key terms – solidarity and consensus – require preemptive operational definitions that are consistent with the argument. Solidarity, in contrast to consensus, is the recognition of participatory and inclusive conversation as the first philosophy of democracy; agreement for discourse toward progress but not actual consensus on truth. Consensus is actual agreement, perhaps temporary, as a community comes to conclusions about their objectives and goals after establishing solidarity about the process as a means to progress.

1.4 Method of Research

The dissertation design sets up a philosophical argument in support of a neopragmatist approach to administrative authority. To establish the premises requires a method that is appropriate to integrating neopragmatism with the theoretical objective of a coherent understanding of authority.   The methodology for this research follows the model of political theory, taken as a line of inquiry that is interested in examining and shaping the structures of governance. The inquiry may be considered as a series of literature reviews that recount the multitude of

discussions stemming from the issue of administrative authority. Political theory

works well with neopragmatism in that it is open to integrating the broad context of a

theory's formulation in order to open up new possibilities, in contrast to the effort of

scientific theory that seeks to fit the circumstances into the positivist mold (Wolin,

1969, 2004). The method of political theory is a generator of new and interesting

ideas – it does not purport neutrality or correspondence to the objective – through a

critical method that is intended to reflect the subject of inquiry. As such, political

theory can serve as the anvil upon which the neopragmatist's hammer will forge the

model of administrative authority.

As Berlin indicated, "Among the problems which form the core of traditional

political theory are those, for instance, of the nature of equality, of rights, law,

authority, rules" (1961, p. 11); these problems are shared by public administration

theorists, especially those who do not ascribe to the politics/administration

dichotomoy. He continues to advance political theory to be,

> Committed not only to the analysis of, but to the conclusions about the
> validity of, ideas of the good and the bad, the permitted and the forbidden, the
> harmonious and the discordant problems which any discussion of liberty or
> justice or authority or political morality is sooner or later bound to encounter
> (Berlin, 1961, p. 17).

Waldo contended that public administration is inherently a topic for political

theory (1984, p. x); as he saw it, political theory seeks to create "solutions to

problems judged to be important and urgent. Political theory is in a sense a by-

product; it is, on the whole a judgment of history, a label subsequently affixed"

(1984, p. xxxiii). Waldo's perspective is certainly pragmatic in that the utility of the

theory comes after its realization. His perspective invites the joining of

neopragmatism by recognizing that problems and outcomes are continually judged

and earn the mantle of political theory subsequent to their practice. Similarly and

appropriate to the combination of the philosophy with the approach, neopragmatism

does not promote fixed solutions but rather the continual practice that is perpetually

open for reevaluation. Neopragmatism as a supporting approach to the method of

political theory propels the latter into the postmodern realm, suspending the force of

metanarratives that may falsely lead efforts at solving problems into a tangle of pre-

existing constructs.

The political theory does not stand alone, however, as the thesis requires a

grounding of the transition from philosophy to practical theory. The history of ideas

– a research approach that considers the context of an idea as integral to the facets of

the idea itself – supplements the theoretical endeavor. The history of ideas will be

employed to develop neopragmatism, more specifically the version accredited to

Richard Rorty. The history of ideas builds a thick description of political and social

thought that public administration, as a field of inquiry, can utilize to position itself in

the broader process of governance (Spicer, 2004). This method is especially

appropriate for this research in that ideas, when formulated for widespread

dissemination to the public, are wholly embodied in language. Neopragmatism's

concern with the role of language in our knowledge implies a deep contextual

framework, confirming Spicer's (2004) contention that,

> No matter how carefully we try to separate the political and social ideas that
> have been and continue to be expressed in our culture from our views on
> public administration, the task is close to impossible. Indeed, much of the
> vocabulary we use in public administration acquires meaning only in the
> context of the particular mental frameworks or categories of thought that we

have come to use over time in thinking about and making sense of government actions (p. 354).

Neopragmatism, as the guiding philosophy for the political theorizing conducted herein, proposes administrative authority to be one of these structures of governance that prompts continual inquiry and new approaches that are coherent with the context of its activity. The methodologies may be considered as intrinsic to the philosophy; the unique relationship of neopragmatism, political theory, and the history of ideas will be played out both explicitly and implicitly in the dissertation.

Finally, several key terms will be developed and established for the philosophical argument. The process of explication, a measured method for defining the nature and stipulations of a term's usage (Carnap, 1950), is employed for those moments. The root of the term comes from notions of unfolding a message, revealing the implicit, and "reading between the lines". Explication also refers to the outcome (meaning of the term) that has been explicated, i.e. an explication of neopragmatism will yield an explication just as defining neopragmatism will yield a definition. For a philosophical explication, in contrast to the scientific process of Carnap, explication makes the subtext explicit; it serves as a heuristic tool (Moustakas, 1990). The rationale behind explication is suitably pragmatic in that the outcome is the contextual utility of the term with a bounded value. It works similarly, but on a smaller scale, as the history of ideas and political theory work to provide understandings of big ideas and political theories, respectively. Thus, the gestalt of this research's methods is of a singular vector aimed at providing interpretive understandings in context.

CHAPTER II

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND AUTHORITY

The source of authority of regimes is the founding act itself. (Rohr, 1986, p. 179).

An extravagant belief in human reason is apt to lead (as it has led in the past) to extravagant claims on behalf of authority. But the reach of authority is forever confined to the reach of reasoning. There can be no absolute, no total authority, because there does not exist any absolute truth or total reason. (Friedrich, 1958, p. 47).

Authority has been defined as: "the capacity to evoke compliance in others" (Presthus, 1960, p. 86) and "the power to make decisions which guide the actions of another" (Simon, 1997, p. 179). Spiro works out the administrative relationship by positing authority as "the reasons why policy is accepted" (1958, p. 49). From the vantage of democratic philosophy, Singer (1999) calls authority, "legitimacy and deserving to be taken seriously" (p. 158) and extends the idea to communal authority as, "the entitlement of every community engaged in interaction with others (thus joined with them in a more inclusive community) to have a voice in determining the way their joint activities and interactions are to be governed" (p. 160). Authority connotes "the communications of a person possessing it [to] exhibit a very particular kind of relationship to reason and reasoning. Such communications… possess the

potentiality of reasoned elaboration – they are 'worthy of acceptance'" (Friedrich,

1958, p. 35, italics in original). Raadschelders and Stillman (2007) capture some of

the history of authority:

> In Antiquity authority is regarded both as an individual *property* (in terms of individual possession) and as something that manifests itself in a specifically designated *place*. To this is added in early modern Europe the understanding that authority is an impersonal property of an officeholder…In the course of the eighteenth century and especially under the influence of Rousseau, authority is conceptualized as invested in and emanating from the *people*. Finally, in the course of the twentieth century attention turns more and more to authority as *process*. (p. 16, italics in original).

In the pragmatist school, Peirce analyzed the "method of authority" in his

1877 essay, "The Fixation of Belief" (in Menand, 1997, pp. 7-25). He discussed how

authority "functions as an institutional expression of thought" (Diggins, 1994, p. 186)

that can add force to the convictions of factions in a society. Authority then denotes

the subjection of some to those who protect the doctrines that codified their shared

interests.

Yet these definitions of authority – all of which rely upon those exercising

such authority to have epistemic access to a higher source – are rightfully challenged

by Rorty: "All attempts to name an authority which is superior to that of society are

disguised moves in the game of cultural politics" (2007a, p. 8). In the effort to

position authority as the product of inter-subjective agreement, rather than reasoned

persuasion, Rorty charges that, "The so-called 'authority' of anything other than the

community (or some person or thing or expert culture authorized by the community

to make decisions in its name) can only be more table-thumping" (2007a, p. 9).

This chapter sets out the problem of authority when viewed as a tradition

within the metanarrative of public administration. Harmon (2006) provides a

precedent for this analysis with his efforts to blur the pervasive dichotomies in the traditional public administration narrative which he hoped would, "remove the conceptual impediments to imagining an alternative – and more authentically mature – approach to governance" (p. 2). Yet whereas Harmon worked to dissolve dualisms within the narrative, the problem at hand is to deflate the metanarrative of authority that has shaped public administration in the American state.

There are pervasive traditions within the metanarrative that have shaped administrative authority in American governance: expertise as the warrant of authority, public administration as a form of democratic representation, and the idea of public administration as a practice. These traditions and the methods of their justifications for practice are boundaries to social progress. There is significant overlap in the traditions and their inter-dependence when put in the context of the American liberal constitutional state. Any attempt to deflate one requires a challenge to the other, as well as a rethinking of how our administrative context is considered. Thus, when the incoherencies of public administration in contemporary society are laid out, they will have been developed from a chain of logic that makes the conclusions imminent from the public problems. The existence of the metanarratives is not pernicious in itself, but the adherence to grand paradigms in contexts that rightfully challenge their utility does require inquiry that is separate from the methods contained within those metanarratives. In other words, there is a need to examine the metanarrative from beyond its own boundaries, employing an approach that is not revisionary or reformative but altogether revolutionary.

An explication of metanarratives is provided to situate the problem of

authority as an untenable idea when it is broadly utilized in the liberal constitutional

state. The conversation about metanarratives starts with Hannah Arendt (2000) and

Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984); they describe the threats to democratic society posed

by the grand traditions that have endured up to this time. Looking specifically at the

metanarrative of public administration, the conversation then focuses on figures in the

discipline who have discussed authority, from Carl Friedrich (1958; 1963) and

Herbert Simon (1997) to McSwite (1997) and a host of contemporary scholars. The

context of the metanarrative as the liberal constitutional state is supported from the

conversation that started with the Founders and continues through the classical

pragmatists and on to public administration scholars such as John Rohr (1986; 1998)

and Michael Spicer (2003; 2007a; 2007b).

Before parsing metanarratives and traditions of administrative authority, some

attention to "authority in general" (Arendt, 2000, p. 463) is in order. Authority

carries connotations of power relations and organizational behavior in any context.

People respect authority as a concept as well as those who hold, exercise, or

otherwise wield authority over them. Authority can be rightful, usurped, assigned, or

misappropriated. The root word – author – suggests that authority rests in the one

who creates it, i.e. the first claims to power are legitimate in their originality. From

the humanistic perspective, we need authority; religion, social organization, and

political structures are constructs of authority that provide meaning and purpose in

our lives. "Authority, resting on a foundation in the past as its unshaken cornerstone,

gave the world permanence and durability which human beings needs precisely

because they are mortals," writes Arendt (2000, p. 465). Authority is thus given substance by historical legacy and buttressed by traditional knowledge structures that resist questioning its foundations. Rational empiricism, the use of past experience and reason to prove causality, serves to support these notions of authority. As the final chapters will show, however, this scheme is suspect under postmodern critique and untenable in contemporary public administration.

Administrative authority is a concept that includes the elements of justification and accountability. It stands above and before justification because without an agent to carry out governance, there is no need for authority. It is dependent on accountability in the sense that authority depends on consent which, in turn, requires commensurability between what is expected and what is delivered. The issue in a free society is the justification for the activity carried out under our consent of governance. "Authority implies an obedience in which men retain their freedom," writes Arendt (2000, p. 474). Raadschelders and Stillman (2007) note that, "In the study of public administration, administrative authority is a non-subject, although implicit attention for it is widespread" (p. 15). This is different from administrative accountability, which is the correspondence of practices to the agreed upon guidelines of behavior and the chain of events that can testify between the acts and the orders.

Justification, on the other hand, speaks to the reasoning for the actual content of the policy and how that content is interpreted for the practice. Misak (2008) discusses the "culture of justification" in the pragmatist conception of democracy, meaning that we have come to expect that all actions should have reasonable, commensurable explanations that are provided upon demand. American public

administration finds its justification in the discourse that occurs between the

Constitution and the polity. Accountability exists after that discourse transpires, as

the agencies act to support the ideas that emerged and maintain the relevancy of those

acts to the ideas.

Looking back to the first iterations of American government, Hendel

describes it as a virtual "successor authority" to British rule and that, "those first

Americans still regarded authority with a jealous eye, wary and fearful of it in any

guise" (1958, p. 4). The Founders' ideas were reactive responses to British authority

and thus their conception of authority was to carefully situate it as a documented and

specialized instance for power and control. As Stivers (2008a) sees it,

> The system the founders set up had the effect of a self-fulfilling prophecy: By
> creating government with its centers of power remote and inaccessible to most
> citizens, they made sure that people would remain relatively uninvolved in
> governance, therefore ignorant about issues, unpredictable, and mistrustful of
> public authority. (p. 4).

Thomas Gordon, writing Cato's Letter #38 (1721), presents a perspective on

authority as a qualified factor of trust: "What is government, but a trust committed by

all, or the most, to one, or a few, who are to attend upon the affairs of all, that every

one may, with the more security, attend upon his own?" This early view offers that

governance is activity carried out with the trust of citizens, equal to a deferential

granting of authority to handle those affairs that allow us to conduct our own

business. Until the 20th century ushered in the field of public administration, the

authority of government remained fixed in this liberal constitutional construct. Spiro

(1958, p. 54) observed that, "In western political systems, a shift of emphasis from

substantive to procedural sources of authority seems often to have occurred in the course of time." Catlaw (2007a) affirms this observation:

> With the Enlightenment the ground of authority shifted from a positional, personal, and "embodied" authority to an essentially "representational" form in which authoritative speech found its force not in its connection with the past, tradition, or divine origins, but in the representation of either natural or scientific processes or a presumptive social consensus that justified the imposition of an overarching normative framework for decision and exclusion. (p. 102).

In the recent history of public administration discourse, Friedrich (1958, 1963) credits the classical Roman usage and develops authority from ideas of tradition, legitimacy, and community by hearkening back to the political theories of the modernists like Rousseau, Hume, and Locke. He raises the analogy with the parent-child relationship and prescribes "replacing subjection by understanding" by the wise parent who "will respond to the questions 'why?' and 'wherefore?' and seek to develop in the child an understanding of, a participation in, the *reasons* which animate the parent in asking for obedience as well as for agreement" (Friedrich, 1958, p. 34). He appeals to reason as the warrant of authority and suggests that the sharing of the rationalization for authority can make it acceptable (Friedrich, 1963, p. 218), continuing to propose the idea of authority as consensual – the result of reasoned elaborations and a "*quality* of communications" (p. 224, italics in original) that are coherent with, "the opinions, values, beliefs, interests and needs of the community within which the authority operates" (p. 226). Friedrich (1958) is decidedly rationalist in his approach, proposing that:

> …When we say X possesses authority, we thereby propose to suggest that the communications which X addresses to A, B, and C are based upon reasoning that has meaning not only to X, but also to A, B, and C, in the sense of being

related to knowledge which they all possess, or to opinions, beliefs, and values which they all share. (p. 36).

Despite the clarity of Friedrich's explanations, his conception of authority is still dependent on measures of correspondence. The reasoning process he lauds is, at the final logical operation, coming to a "correct" representation of reality for administrators to show to the public and satisfy the requirements of accountability. Yet he does credit that authority is effective when used in a context of shared knowledge as evidenced on the qualification that the members understand the communications.

The traditional concepts of authority ultimately embody less democratic participation and more of a public spectacle of coercion and persuasion performed on a common ground. Catlaw (2007a, p. 102) says that the tradition of authority "served a number of critical social functions" that were "past-oriented and concerned with preservation." He asserts that, "Traditional authority was self-referential: tradition grounded authority and, in turn, authority was grounded in tradition. The problem of what grounds authority was answered by its very existence" (p. 103). This is the very point at which Arendt sees the crisis: "If authority is to be defined at all, then, it must be in contradistinction to both coercion by force and persuasion through arguments" (2000, p. 463). Her prescription is a hammer blow to the cornerstone of the metanarrative by noting that the modern world no longer holds external foundations, such as religion and traditions, above question. Subsequently, the warrants for authority resting on that cornerstone are chipped loose.

Shifting to the public administration perspective, authority is often ascribed in the Weberian model (1984) that provided legitimacy through developments of

bureaucratic science and structure. Weber saw legitimate modern authority as the culmination of a process that began with charismatic authority (i.e. a leader) being transformed into traditional authority (a lineage) over time and usage before the imputing of scientific approaches to achieve the apotheosis of rational-legal authority as a foundational product (Weber, 1984, pp. 33-34). Furthermore, Weber imputes organizational structure with an element of authority, as noted by Raadschelders and Stillman (2007): "Weber defines authority as accepted and thus legitimate power exercised by identifiable individuals. Hence, authority is a type, a species, or manifestation of power, the exercise of which is believed to be accepted" (p. 7). The very existence of a formal bureaucracy is an edifice for authority, and a formal authority is often ensconced in a bureaucratic structure. This perspective then forces any challenge of the particular use of authority as a challenge to the whole structure that houses the authority. The task is akin to disputing governance as a whole when the issue is only with a particular policy. This wagon-circling defense of authority as a structural characteristic of bureaucracy makes it much harder to break it up and revise the use of authority on a case-by-case basis; Weber's notion of authority can only be challenged with a full-fledged revolt against bureaucracy itself.

Using authority as a mechanism for legitimacy in the modern state maintains governance as something above those who are subject to agents of authority, as well as beyond the agents themselves. In other words, public administrators are not active participants in the formation of authority but, instead, they are temporary wielders of the authority that comes from ethereal origins in reality that allow momentary utilization when the office requires such legitimacy. Schaar (1984) states that

"natural human authority has been overwhelmed by the combined impact of the very forces, structures, and intellectual and moral orientations that we identify with modernity" (p. 124).

Although the divisive dichotomies in public administration are targets of this critique, Weber's conflation of authority and power is not wholly appropriate in this work. Most definitions of authority include power as the operationalizing element, but the emphasis here is on public administration's legitimacy as distinct from the tautological conception that puts authority and power as interchangeable warrants. As Oakeshott (1975) divides it, "A modern state…had three distinct features that it has never lost: an office of authority, an apparatus of power, and a mode of association" that supports the distinction proposed: "And by the acknowledgement of authority I do not mean approval of what is prescribed or the recognition of power to enforce prescriptions; I mean the recognition of an antecedent right to prescribe" (p. 1346). Oakeshott considers the modern state as a product of discourse, "a history of a succession of beliefs about authority" (p. 1347). His perspective is appropriated here to keep the conversation about administrative authority separate from the politics of power and concentrated more on the process of authority (Raadschelders & Stillman, 2007) needed for governance to proceed at an epistemic level in our "culture of justification" (Misak, 2008).

2.1 Metanarratives

Public administration's standard narrative is the "governance chapter" of modernity's metanarrative…The modern metanarrative's tale of progress ends unhappily with the twentieth century's unremitting succession of cataclysms and disasters… (Harmon, 2006, pp. 145-146).

Metanarratives are the overarching, axiomatic foundations for explaining behavior that are the focus of postmodern critique. They inform current practices by virtue of their assumed gravity and permanence in a community. An institutional, organizational, or systemic metanarrative is the collection of traditions and practices that have developed over time from continued reliance on foundations that are tested in the world. As a paradigmatic, a metanarrative is followed to the extent that it is able to justify what we do within a system. The timeline of its development and the content of its explanations are both the artifacts and the catalysts of its content. In other words, a metanarrative has a starting point in some foundations (whether that is a conscious embarkation or not is immaterial) which are themselves contextually formed. From that point, the causal order between the content of the metanarrative and the context of its use becomes blurred.

Arendt (2005) explored the confluence of practical traditions and political authority, writing that, "it lies in the nature of a tradition to be accepted and absorbed, as it were, by common sense, which fits the particular and idiosyncratic data of our other senses into a world we inhabit together and share in common" (p. 41). The traditions – repeated common sense practice in response to a context of familiar or shared experiences – that form from these relationships between context and activity feed into what becomes a metanarrative that expands to the limits of its sound justifications for continued adherence to its traditions. Yet there are terminals whereby the traditions cannot serve our interests and those practices become weak points of the metanarrative. Old practices based on common sense can lead to moments of incoherency: "when traditional standards cease to make sense and no

longer serve as general rules under which all or most particular instances can be subsumed, common sense unavoidably atrophies" (Arendt, 2005, p. 42).

Thus a world dominated by metanarratives offers limited practices that eventually enforce a set of conservative values – in this case meaning the desire for the predictability of a tradition and resistance to change – that may not hold up as the world changes in ways not explained by the grand story. Bacon (2006), discussing social criticism as "an interpretive activity…focusing attention on the ways in which a society's practices fail to live up to its self image" (p. 863) notes that "Rorty argues that the attempt to provide foundations can be a conservative desire" (p. 875). He charges that the desire "threatens to become the attempt to shore up the views of the day by assuming a fixed set of questions to be discussed in a language that is already available" (Bacon, 2006, p. 875). Rorty supports the view that, "investigations of the foundations of knowledge or morality or language or society may be simply apologetics, attempts to eternalize a certain contemporary language-game, social practice, or self image" (1979, p. 9-10).

We may not be able to step outside the metanarrative to critique its foundations if everything known up to now has been a product of the system; there is no point from which we can deflate the metanarrative without borrowing some of its own terms. Rorty said as much in promoting a postmodern perspective:

> The view that every tradition is as rational or as moral as every other could be held only by a god, someone who had no need to use (but only to mention) the terms 'rational' or 'moral,' because she had no need to inquire or deliberate. Such a being would have escaped from history and conversation into contemplation and metanarrative. (1991, p. 202).

The effort is nonetheless necessary due to the shortsightedness of our behavior and the confluence of external factors that are not part of the scheme to which we are accustomed. Just as Kuhn (1996) advised as a workaround to the impossibility of the Archimedean vantage, we may wish to "adopt new instruments and look in new places" as well as "see new and different things when looking with familiar instruments in places [we] have looked before" (p. 111). Kuhn's notion of the revolutionary paradigm shift may not wholly reverse or reject a set of values derived from a metanarrative, but it may open up a new description (or redescription) that still reaches back to some part of the foundation. As the theme of postmodernism posits, the mistrust of rationality is not answered by more rationality.

Lyotard (1984) drew attention to metanarratives as a misleading source of legitimating with particular "incredulity" to the adequacy of any knowledge claims based on such schemes of categorizing and institutionalizing knowledge (pp. xxiii-xxv). Spicer (1997) observed that, "central to postmodern thinking is the idea that there has been a decline in the credibility or legitimating power of the grand narratives or stories, which we are used to telling each other" (p. 90). There may be nothing inherently insidious about a metanarrative, yet an unchallenged appeal to tradition in the face of contemporary issues should always raise questions of appropriateness.

The challenge to metanarratives in public administration is no less than balking at bureaucratic inertia and expressing concern with the maxim of "that's the way we've always done it." Knowing full well that contexts and circumstances change, the probability that a long-held tradition or provincial justification for some

34

administrative behavior is eminently valid in the face of progress is duly at risk.

Arendt (2005) saw the hazards of forcing traditions into incommensurable

experiences – i.e. using a hammer to pound everything down regardless if it is a nail

or a screw – such that, "the mere tendency to exclude everything that was not

consistent developed into a great power of exclusion, which kept the tradition intact

against all new, contradictory, and conflicting experiences" (p. 47). The protectors of

tradition were upholding an authority that sought to discount the validity of others

experiences because those experiences would not correspond to the tradition's notion

of the way things should be. In other words, public administration does not occur in a

vacuum; the changing political, economic, and social environments cannot be

addressed by the public sector if it is itself a century-old product of the traditions of

practice, representation, and expertise that rely on an unyielding metanarrative for

authority.

Metanarratives have been the target of postmodern discourse, as Miller and

Fox (2007) observe:

> The thinning of superstructural metanarratives has been the main work of
> philosophy in the last half of the twentieth century. As Rome was battered
> and finally destroyed by successive waves of barbarians, so has the
> Foundationalist/modern metanarratives canon been battered by Nietzsche,
> pragmatists, existentialists, phenomenologists, semioticians, poststructuralists,
> deconstructionists, hermeneuticists, and more. (p. 60).

It is interesting to note that Miller and Fox, like Arendt (2000; 2005), aim their lens

back to the Roman Empire to open the critique of metanarratives. Her analysis of the

ancient regime as a consolidation of authority from religious, traditional, and political

foundations accuses that, "It preserved and handed down authority, which was based

on the testimony of the ancestors who had witnessed the sacred foundation" and

conveyed "the sacred binding force of an authoritative beginning to which one remained bound through the strength of tradition" (pp. 49-50). History shows that the record of human accomplishment under the mantle of rationality rises and falls, just as the drama of Rome unfolded under the massive inertia of the empire and its codification.

The import of the Roman analogue to the preeminence of rational thought is not lost in the critique of public administration; the discipline of governance can be paralleled with enough reference points to argue that the critique of the grand metanarrative of modern rationality may be applied to a critique of the overarching metanarratives of public administration. This critique has already started (Bogason, 2001; Farmer, 1995; Hummel, 2007; Miller & Fox, 2007; McSwite, 1997; Spicer 1997, 2003, 2007b) with scholars who see the need to examine the roots of administrative behavior apart from the modern rationalist system that has prevailed in studies of the discipline.

As the specter was placed on these grand traditions and systems of thought by Arendt after World War II, Lyotard's (1984) explication of metanarratives in the realm of human knowledge showed them to be difficult targets. Our very existence – indeed, the first conscious thought that we have – is already ensconced in the modern rationalist scheme. This involuntary condition is explained by the dichotomous nature of rationalism itself; to declare oneself as anti-rationalist is a concession to rationalism's prevalence. The aforementioned postmodern public administration critics view governance to be similarly protected; public administration was created out of modern rationalism and is conducted within the system that it serves, despite a

36

"decline in the credibility or in the legitimating power of the grand narratives" (Spicer, 2001, p. 89). For example, McSwite's (1997) review of the "misfounding" of public administration concludes that, "No point of view, such as pragmatism, that went outside the assumptions of the founding Federalist worldview could be incorporated into the theory of public administration" (p. 150). Public administration is mired in an intellectual tradition defended by the "Man of Reason" (McSwite, 1997) who repels "alterity" (Farmer, 1995, p. 227) and has heretofore maintained boundaries to any encroachment by "otherness" (p. 273). The insulated logic of administrative activity is thus self-justified at the outset of any policy proposal and any limits to the extension of logic, such as Simon's observation of "bounded rationality" (1997), are gamely accepted.

The system has been unable to deal with the issues that appear outside the system but are nonetheless demanded of public service, such as creating financial regulations to address creative financing instruments that sought to work outside the banking constructs of the 1990s. These moments of incoherency – the point where the tools do not resemble the material or people manage to "cheat the system" – require a large step back to reconsider the obstacle. If modern rationalist public administration cannot solve today's problems, then the institution needs to be revised, opened, and otherwise reconsidered from the foundations and metanarratives to which it has been bound.

Administrative authority is a pragmatic issue in democracy; it characterizes the relationship between the sovereign and the state and "It is authority that gives an organization its formal structure" (Simon, 1997, p. 177). It is impossible to imagine

the practice of governance without immediately hypothesizing how things could be practically accomplished, which necessarily requires contemplation on the means of governance as "real world" applications and relationships between administration and society. "We are born into a world where relationships of authority exist everywhere and are taken for granted," says Abel (2007), "Rather than being understood as transient makeshifts, they are clung to as either natural or necessary" (p. 58).

2.2 A Context of Liberal Constitutionalism

In a word, there is a need for a normative theory of public administration that is grounded in the Constitution…The administrative state must not forfeit its administrative character in order to achieve constitutional legitimacy. (Rohr, 1998, p. 87).

The strict sense of public administration in the liberal constitutional state is that its authority lies in the document; the power and right to implement policy is described by the Constitution insofar as the polity requires some regulation over its freedoms. Such authority is a constrained power given to administrators from the lawmakers and it is justifiable via transitive operations under the instruction of the political masters. Whether public administration finds its authority through a textual, originalist, or public values approach to the Constitution (Spicer & Terry, 1996), the context of the liberal constitutional state has informed public administration from the outset.

"American public administration is based on the proposition that government decisions and activities should follow the rule of law… [which] is the basis of liberty" (Rosenbloom, Carroll, & Carroll, 2000, p. xv). This proposition has been satisfying to the polity because the written policies and regulations are the result of its

democratic mechanisms (vagaries of the accuracy of representation aside) that the public administrators are carrying out. Administrators are well-versed in regulation and, content of the regulations or policies withstanding, they are expected to be experts in the context of the liberal constitutional state in which they function. Knowledge of the regulations and parameters of governance is a form of authority in the sense of being able to accurately refer to the documents that lay out the form and functions of public administration. This form of administrative authority is essentially the concept of constitutional authority trickled down to street-level practice. This is a pragmatic authority so long as the activity is producing outcomes that are useful without violating the sensibilities of the polity. All of the grounding factors that allow for administrative authority in this portrayal assume correspondence between governance and the constitutional principles. Rohr (1998) puts it together as follows:

> For public administrators, the Constitution is the cause above causes. In exercising discretionary authority to support this policy or that one, their judgment should be informed by the constitutional needs of the time, as well as by the… myriad other matters that clamor for the attention of the public administration. The link between subordination to constitutional masters and the freedom to choose among them preserves both the instrumental character of public administration and the autonomy necessary for professionalism. (p. 89).

The realization of authority is not so clear in practice, however, as the contingencies of each application of a regulation or a policy broaden the interpretation of authority that is required. The public administrator is not always granted the license to utilize lengthy derivations of practice from constitutional foundations, nor is such an approach appropriate in many situations. The closed relationship between administrators and the rule of law is exclusionary, as well, thus

stifling the, "process of collaborative inquiry and learning [from which] proper warrants of authority arise" (Abel, 2007, p. 73).

The implementation of policies and regulations with consideration to influences (i.e. prevailing contingencies) beyond constitutional principles requires discretion – akin to the judicial prerogative of review and interpretation – which emphasizes interaction with the situation and requires a modicum of independent authority for justification and accountability. The discretion of administrators is another facet of their expertise and thus a support of their authority when agreeably applied. Not only are they supposed to be experts (and possessing authority) in matters of constitutional principles and the policies that are rooted in such principles (Rohr, 1986; Rosenbloom, Carroll & Carroll, 2000), but they are also granted expertise (and the authority) to apply the principles as they see fit. In other words, the context and contingency upset the correspondence theory that linked the practice of governance to documents when the problem requires an approach other than regulatory means. Again, if the purpose of public administration is posed to be the confrontation of public problems, then unless the constitutional framework is expansive enough to anticipate all conceivable problems (which it is evidently not, considering the number of amendments), public administration must have a more flexible and open charter. Miller and Fox (2007) regard constitutional grounding to be, "the sort of universalizing claim or grand narrative that postmodernism posits as incredulous. Foundationalist claims are but strategically crafted metanarratives" (p. 78). This is the challenge: to deny the legitimacy of correspondence to objective reality, remove ideas of Truth from practice, dissolve elite epistemes, debunk the

empirical approach to representation, and bypass the metanarrative in the pursuit of a real and satisfying democracy.

2.3 Traditions of Administrative Authority

As the problem is centered on the expiration of traditional understandings of administrative authority, the critique must begin with the discussion of authority from the traditional public administration vein, the metanarrative that must be deflated. "Attention given to administrative authority *at large* in the study of public administration in the past four decades has dwindled to nothing," comment Raadschelders and Stillman (2007, p. 5, italics in original). This section describes three prevailing concepts of administrative authority as the major traditions of the metanarrative.

Authority has been included in any notion of governance – from both liberal and conservative perspectives – for as long as societies have existed. White (in Wamsley et al., 1990, p. 184) attacks the classical conservative notion as an obedience to "defer to the set of traditions, and the stable institutions through which they are expressed, that define the social order" and the classical liberal notion of authority as honoring the, "rational, conscious contract as the basis for banding together into society so as to create order and the security that flows for it." Intoning the pessimistic, if not misanthropic, Hobbesian view of communities, he continues, "Hence, authority is seen as a necessary evil. Danger is seen as inherent in the act of granting authority to government and every precaution must be taken in doing so" (1990, p. 184). Abel (2007, pp. 62-63) echoes these criticisms, noting that the classical liberal notion of authority from Locke's political philosophy is the

counterbalance to the Hobbesian view; authority is warranted as a protection of liberties. This hearkens back to the main problem stated earlier: administrative authority and democratic society are at incoherent odds. From either perspective, the call for a careful examination of administrative authority is prescient on the grounds that neither approach gives sufficient service to hopes of individual freedom and democratic participation.

Analyzing authority in the tradition is a grand task that may be attempted by replicating the prevailing categories used in public administration theory, which tends to concentrate on three strains: representation, expertise, and practice. The order of the traditions reflects their respective prominence in public administration's history, rather than a cardinal order of relative influence on the metanarrative of authority. Expertise is construed as the dominant tradition that sometimes overlaps and encompasses some of the aspects of the traditions of public administration as representation or practice. Representation is a tenuous tradition in light of the perpetual changing of administrations and elected legislators (in contradistinction to the tenure of civil servants). On the other hand, viewing public administration as practice is more professional but less democratic. The drawbacks to both of these traditions are discussed more fully in the following, but suffice it to say that they both ultimately draw on the tradition of administrative authority as expertise, which will receive the most attention. This analysis does not exhaust all variances for the seat of administrative authority, but it certainly confronts the problem at its sturdiest foundations. Furthermore, these three views of administrative authority follow the history of the discipline in accordance with this research's methodology.

The problem of public administration as representation is found in the conflict between a liberal society and the need for government to provide services and protection to the public. Wilson (1887) ventured the first iteration of public administration as the neutral implementation of the needs of the republic. The provisions of government cannot be carried out under an idealistic notion of democracy; however, as practical considerations to performing the activities require encroachment on liberties to some degree: "the American representative system of government has set limits on how far direct citizen involvement can extend in practice" (Stivers, 2008b, p. 2). From the very beginning, American democracy has been constrained by republican constructs formed in the interests of expediency. Representation itself, as discussed in the Federalist papers (Wootton, 2003), was a concession that marginalized citizen participation at many levels. In "The Agency Perspective" Wamsley (in Wamsley et al., 1990, p. 117) portrays public administration as the agent of the people, citing the dictionary definition of agent and reinforcing that administrators are empowered to act for the people by the people's authority to do so. This gives rise to the problem of understanding public administration as the execution of the public will. "Faith and trust in institutions and representatives of their authority have served not simply the function of providing social order but also in generating and sustaining identity itself," writes Catlaw (2006, p. 268) in his exposition on post-traditional governance. He discusses how authority is a pragmatic reference point for public administrators, yet it cannot be founded in claims of representation that necessarily imply fixed meanings of "We the People."

The second type of justification for administrative authority is the technical expertise that administrators are credited with bringing to governance. Some types of expertise are unique to the role of public administrators and warrant authority by virtue of specialization, such as environmental regulatory enforcement, military contract management, or election processes. These types of expertise can also be seen as vested in the office (Raadschelders and Stillman, 2007, p. 19) insofar as the bureaucrat holds a position because her qualifications are sufficient to the requirements of the office. Yet there are pitfalls to the cold technicality of expertise:

> To the degree that the rational, expert administrative leader achieves the objectivity and expertise which are the badges of his competence, he loses the ability to enter a relationship of mutual understanding with those who rely on him for counsel and encouragement. (Schaar, 1984, p. 126).

From the perspective of political economy, public administration performs these things because no other entity (i.e. private enterprise) can or will provide the requisite public good that they provide. In these cases, public administration has "earned" authority because it is performing activities that are the singular purview of government and developing such technical expertise can only result from practice and training within the agency. The authority from such expertise is related to the public needs and response by public administration to service those needs. The authority to provide public service is functionally inherent in the idea of governance itself as the corollary to addressing public problems. In this sense, administrative authority stems from the unique position and responsibility of the offices that enables the development of technical expertise and the accompanying episteme of the profession. We must defer authority to these matters because we have no referent for challenging

the activity that public administration does when, for example, it comes to matters of national defense or environmental protection.

Harmon (2006) classifies the skill of the administrator as an instrumental relation between theory and practice that "underwrites the notion of professional – and therefore politically neutral – expertise upon which the rationalists of public administration's standard metanarrative ground the field's claim to legitimacy" (p. 107). He continues by describing the instrumentalism of expertise as distinct from the political side of governance, much as Oakeshott (1975) separated the two:

> It may indeed be sensible to demand a high degree of certainty about the consequences of applying technical knowledge; but it is altogether another matter when that same demand is made of knowledge about social processes such as administration and policy making. (p. 111).

The other prevalent argument for authority as expertise is found in the scientific character of public administration. At the end of the 19th century, public administration theorists and practitioners adopted a self-fulfilling posture of being the arbiters of social rationality, meaning that the field defined itself as being the pinnacle of scientific methods – i.e. rational empiricism – applied to social issues. This posture came from the work of efficiency and management experts like Frederick Taylor (1998), who believed that human behavior could be controlled and manipulated through the observation of causal relationships and strict procedural guidelines. Taylor promoted the idea that authority came from one's natural dispositions and training, shaped into technical aptitude or expertise for each position in an organization, then exercised by virtue of the administrator being "better fitted" for such work (p. 15). This attitude toward dealing with the public supported the tradition of authority as expertise, as the rationality and methods of natural science

were unduly imposed on social contexts. The alignment of public administration's ascent as a discipline and the popularity of scientific management fertilized the roots of social rationality for the next one hundred years.

Simon (1997) confirmed and formalized this understanding of administrative authority in the profession, focusing on the relationship between the superior and the subordinate as the defining characteristic. His work affirmed some of Weber's ideas and, although divisive to some theorists, was nonetheless the acme of public administration as a scientific discipline in the traditional conception. Although Simon was primarily concerned with the exercise of authority within an organization, his contribution to the discussion in terms of the importance of expertise extends beyond the analysis of bureaucracy: "An extremely important function of authority is to secure decisions of a high quality of rationality and effectiveness" (1997, p. 188).

His interest was in the performance of administration and the need for authority within the institution, yet the consequences affect the public as administration performs its duties in context. As a public service, the structure of the institution has real implications on its ability to interact with the polity and therefore is influential on the discourse between citizens and public administration. Thus, when Simon promotes specialization and technical expertise with emphasis on the placement of such administrators in offices where their talents will be effective, we must extend the position with inquiry as to how specialization and technical expertise affect the polity. This is the relevance of Simon's position to the argument: what goes on inside public administration in terms of authority needs to cohere with what goes on outside the bureaucracy, as well. His positivist perspective reminds us that

administrative authority exists in order to get things done; the more enlightened

approaches to authority that support notions of community must not forget that the

imposition of governance should be predicated with an idea of progress, if not

purpose. Again, the political-economic vantage would posit that if government must

provide a service for the public good, then the delivery should be efficient and

effective.

An appeal to expertise implies a shared context that makes the expert's

experience relevant, useful, and effective. Evaluating what works requires some

other input; Pierson states, "So we defer to the opinions of others, in hopes of

learning from their experience and thereby supplementing the limited scope of our

own" (1994, p. 398). His position is based on the idea that we cannot practically have

a broad enough scope to know what to do with all of the situations that may come our

way. The contexts must be commensurable at some point, which thus requires that

the authority and the public be commensurable as well. Abel (2007), in discussing

the pragmatic implications of Carl Friedrich's conception of authority, finds support

for such an idea in the public administration discourse:

> People and institutions should only be recognized as legitimate authorities
> when they demonstrate the ability to generate directives founded upon reasons
> that derive from collaborative problem-solving, a process whereby knowledge
> gained through praxis of many and placed, through a wide-ranging and open
> discourse, in reflexive equilibrium with values, traditions, and goals that have
> themselves been collaboratively devised through the same process. (p. 57).

Combining the ideas of Pierson and Abel make it clear that expertise as a form

or characteristic of authority is a pragmatic concession by citizens when their interests

lie beyond their rational capabilities. If we consider some aspects of governance to

be in that category, such as manufacturing regulations or interstate commerce, then

Pierson's warrant of authority in expertise for the "relatively closed system" (1994, p. 404) is reasonable. Furthermore, the potential contributions of expertise in the "open system" – meaning that administrators play an advisory role from their vantage of authority – is still valid, especially with regard to the Agential perspective that preserves participatory interaction of the polity with bureaucracy (Wamsley et al., 1990, pp. 114-162).

Rohr's (1998) vision of public administration as constitutional gatekeeper is, at root, a practice focused on using, "discretionary powers in order to maintain the constitutional balance of powers in support of individual rights" (p. 88). He views administrators as the politically neutral arbiters of competition between the branches of government and their practice is embodied in policy implementation answerable only to the constitutional principles in the oath of office. Yet he cautions that practice "must not collapse into managerial utilitarianism" (p. 91), but rather that public administration is part of the constitutional order that serves to protect individual rights.

Snider (2000b) contends that public administration practice as rooted in pragmatism "has come to mean mere practicality or expedience. As a consequence, many in public administration may believe that they have a heritage in pragmatism and that this heritage means simply 'doing what works'" (p. 125). "Practices are those embodied ideographs that are well established and give action its sense of appropriateness. Current practice has been authorized in the archives" (Miller & Fox, 2007, p. 115).

2.4 The Problem Manifest Today

The warrants of administrative authority have been protected by a common tradition that cannot withstand challenges from contemporary (much less post-modern) notions of democratic society. Public administration is still obligated to conduct governance, but the nagging objections to its authority and the continual aggregation of rules and regulations appear anathema to the principles of liberal democracy. Indeed, some recent administrative "red tape" activities appear to be practices in enforcing authority for its own sake, as Sementelli (2007) observes: "Governmental actors, implicitly or explicitly seeking to maintain the authority of their position have begun to seek opportunities to exercise control using conceptions of authority most often seen in the realm of familial or religious contexts" (p. 123), much as a parent avoids articulating a full explanation when asserting authority with the commanding finality of "Because I said so."

Governance is bounded by institutional contingencies that dictate what is and is not allowed in the pursuit and protection of liberty, rather than the contingencies of our being and circumstances. Miller and Fox (2007) criticize the accountability feed-back loop model of governance as ignoring the effects of contingencies on practice, such effects leading to actual feedback – like the incoherent noise of an instrument in front of its amplifier – in the sense of meaninglessness. Citing a case where pressures for an organization to meet reporting standards lead to manipulation of the feedback, they surmise that, "Reality, it turns out, is exceedingly difficult to measure or represent. In public administration, the drive for empirical evidence mostly generates pressure for a good show amidst the atmospherics of accountability" (p. 15).

Eagan (2007) is particularly suspicious of the value of authority altogether, especially when the actions of the state are predicated on exceptions to the rule of law (p. 86) and that such inversions of authority allows public administrators to, "lose sight of what the people want and are in positions where they [administrators] can do damage" (p. 87). The result is a more constrained administrative practice that seeks to correspond to ideal (and realistically impossible) situations while slowly eroding democratic principles. In other words, the foundations of administrative authority are vulnerable to contemporary and postmodern assaults. Yet governance must carry on.

Authority must then be situated in an appropriate theoretical position that allows for the traditional administrative goals of efficiency, effectiveness and economy, as well as accommodating the need for appropriateness. Eagan proposes that, "authority as a concept is no longer desirable unless we can develop a notion of authority that is contingent and not absolute" (2007, p. 98). Marshall adds that the evolution of society is demanding traditional authority structures to shift to "diffused structures that emphasize particularity" (2007, p. 112). Thus, authority is ripe for reconsideration and realignment under the neopragmatist's hammer.

The current public administration discourse on authority is wrapped up in questions of accountability and legitimacy. Recently, the discussion has been held at the 2008 Minnowbrook III conference; in an ongoing debate in *Administration & Society*; and in a symposium in *Administrative Theory & Practice* which has devoted considerable pages on the topic. Some scholars suggest that progress toward an understanding of authority requires that we step back to discuss the framework in which authority will be placed (Marshall, 2007; Raadschelders & Stillman, 2007;

Sementelli, 2007; Stivers, 2008b). We will take these current views into

consideration as it primes the discussion for the introduction of a neopragmatist

model, including a review of the yet-to-be resolved status of (neo)pragmatism, in

general, for public administration (Hildebrand, 2005, 2008; Hoch, 2006; Miller, 2004,

2005; Shields, 2003, 2005, 2008; Webb, 2004).

Metanarratives are shattered in the face of incommensurability, requiring a

paradigm shift to explain that which does not fit in with dominant traditions (Kuhn,

1996). To illustrate how administrative authority is rooted in metanarratives,

consider the oft-appealed-to bureaucratic axiom: "that is the way we have always

done it." Those who wield authority without a comprehensive understanding of its

origins and legitimacy in context use such justification to mask the shortfall. Worse

than the lack of knowledge about the authority being exercised is the acceptance of

authority by the same justification; history does not prescribe the correct application

for future contexts. Spiro (1958) shows this by reflecting on how a policy is right for

the polity:

> The acceptance of policy as "right" by those who will be affected by its
> consequences may also be the result of a decision. But in most cases, once a
> method of making policy or a maker of policy is accepted as right, the
> attachment of authority is likely to continue. (p. 50).

This attachment to past practice and procedures, sometimes known as

bureaucratic inertia, is an obvious target of reform theories and serves as an obvious

embodiment of the negative qualities of a metanarrative. Yet some of the traditions

within metanarratives have positive contributions to public administration,

particularly in terms of efficiency and the ability of agencies to be responsive in

emergencies. The traditions need to have a sense of temporary authority in the sense

51

that they are merely historical examples of best practices that can guide contemporary discourse about how we go about solving problems. Institutionalized practices avoid unnecessary review if they are applied carefully and can save effort in justification in the absence of specific challenges, but these are benefits that can only be realized in hindsight.

Spicer (2005, p. 670) argues that, "the postmodern condition, by severely fragmenting our political culture, increases the incidence, as well as the visibility, of conflict between incompatible and incommensurable human ends or values." He adds that the condition – which is accredited to Lyotard (1984, p. xxiv) as an "incredulity towards metanarratives" – then, "places significant limits on the role that conventional social science can play in providing guidance to public administration." The end state is a public administration that certainly takes advantages of the strengths of empirical rational methods but does not assume them as the default approach to issues.

CHAPTER III

NEOPRAGMATISM AND THE POSTMODERN FORGERY

This chapter explores Richard Rorty's worldview, from the influence of the classical pragmatists to the development of his postmodern amendments for philosophy and what his legacy means for society. One reason that Rorty is a worthy thinker for application is for the character of his tenure in philosophy and fields beyond. His work spanned many of the schools of thought before coming to neopragmatism; he had a mastery of seeing multiple sides of an argument while remaining optimistic for a notion of fairness (Festenstein, 2001). Indeed it was his ability to carefully pick apart continental and analytic philosophy that led to his fusion of thought that seemed to be both in and of philosophy. He is a uniquely American philosopher; after establishing his credentials within the mainstream of the discipline, he then picked up where John Dewey's pragmatism left off, realizing that there was more to offer from there. While American philosophy had been largely ignored, Rorty (1979, 1982) melded Quine's critique of analytics and Kuhn's insight of incommensurability into the alloy to advance a new pragmatism (Hilary Putnam as interviewed in McReynolds, 2007).

The history of ideas method will be worked over the broader philosophy as well as Rorty's particular ideas. Taking a note from Rorty's notion of progress as a series of interesting conversations, the following sections can be considered smaller conversations about neopragmatism. The featured participants include John Dewey, Thomas Kuhn, and Jean-Francois Lyotard among Rorty and a sampling of other contributors. The discussion includes topics such as: the community of inquiry; postmodernism and the linguistic turn; authoritarianism; and social progress. The concluding explication of neopragmatism will then be prepared for a pairing with the metanarrative of public administration and authority that is worked out in Chapter 4.

3.1 Roots in Pragmatism

As I see the history of pragmatism, there are two great differences between the classical pragmatists and the neopragmatists. The first I have already mentioned: it is the difference between talking about 'experience', as James and Dewey did, and talking about 'language', as Quine and Davidson do. The second is the difference between assuming that there is something called 'the scientific method', whose employment increases the likelihood of one's beliefs being true, and tacitly abandoning this assumption. (Rorty, 1999, p. 35).

Rorty (2007b) credits that pragmatism "abandoned positivism's attempt to elevate science above the rest of culture" and would "substitute the question 'which descriptions of the human situation are most useful for which human purposes?' for the question 'which description tells us what that situation really is?'" (pp. 916-917). Rorty rejected very few of pragmatism's ideas; however, he added a number of qualifiers and tangential streams that explained how to deal with issues in the postmodern "neo" perspective that is described farther on in this chapter. To avoid unnecessary tedium, the classical pragmatism of William James, Charles Peirce, and

John Dewey are treated lightly here. Several exceptional volumes cover this ground (Diggins, 1994; McReynolds, 2007; Menand, 1997, 2002; Misak, 2007), while Rorty has his own history of the philosophy (1979, 1982), which will serve as the primary source to characterize classical pragmatism here as it is merely a reference point for the development of neopragmatism.

Peirce offered "A Definition of Pragmatism" (ca. 1904 in Menand, 1997) to set out what he and his fellow "Metaphysical Club" members (Menand, 2002) had construed as the new American philosophy:

> The word *pragmatism* was invented to express a certain maxim of logic…
> intended to furnish a method for the analysis of concepts…The method
> prescribed in the maxim is to trace out in the imagination the conceivable
> practical consequences… (Menand, 1997, p. 56)

A chapter entitled "What Pragmatism Means" in James's 1907 volume, *Pragmatism* (in Menand, 1997, pp. 93-111) framed pragmatism as "primarily a method of settling metaphysical disputes that otherwise might be interminable…to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences" (p. 94). Rorty (1979) glommed on to the philosophy's distaste for the interminable metaphysical disputes. The advance from classical pragmatism is seen in an early characterization of pragmatism that Rorty (1982) provides, beginning with the premise that,

> "Pragmatism" is a vague, ambiguous, and overworked word. Nevertheless, it
> names the chief glory of our country's intellectual tradition. No other
> American writers have offered so radical a suggestion for making our future
> different from our past, as have James and Dewey. (p. 160).

Rorty then gives a three-part description of pragmatism that provides a departure point for his own amendments and alterations. He offers, "My first characterization of pragmatism is that it is simply anti-essentialism applied to notions

like "truth," "knowledge," "language," "morality," and similar objects of philosophical theorizing" (1982, p. 162). He pairs this with the statement that, "There is no wholesale, epistemo-logical way to direct, or criticize, or underwrite, the course of inquiry" for the pragmatists who prefer, "the vocabulary of practice rather than of theory, of action rather than contemplation" (p. 162).

That position then leads to a salvo against efforts to decisively represent the world through language. Rorty works through the problem of theory trying to capture observation, stating that, "When the contemplative mind, isolated from the stimuli of the moment, takes large views, its activity is more like deciding what to do than deciding that a representation is accurate" (1982, p. 163). He then continues:

> So a second characterization of pragmatism might go like this: there is no epistemological difference between truth about what ought to be and truth about what is, nor any metaphysical difference between facts and values, nor any methodological difference between morality and science. (p. 163).

The follow-up blow to Platonism is that, "For the pragmatists, the pattern of all inquiry – scientific as well as moral – is deliberation concerning the relative attractions of various concrete alternatives" (p. 164). Rorty continues to deconstruct the futility of "Platonic, epistemologically-centered philosophy" as programmed methodology in pursuit of ahistorical knowledge, as "the search for a way in which one can avoid the need for conversation and deliberation and simply tick off the way things are" (p. 164).

Rorty then looks to those who challenge the Western philosophical tradition, calling on James and Dewey as they extended the reach of Nietzsche and Heidegger, to separate the idea of truth from any method and deflate the

56

elitism of those who claim to accurately represent anything more than their own contributions to discourse.

> Let me sum up by offering a third and final characterization of pragmatism: it is the doctrine that there are no constraints on inquiry save conversational ones – no wholesale constraints derived from the nature of objects, or of the mind, or of language, but only those retail constraints provided by the remarks of our fellow inquirers. (p. 165).

Rorty prefers the final wording in that it focuses "on a fundamental choice that confronts the reflective mind: that between accepting the contingent character of starting-points, and attempting to evade this contingency" (1982, p. 166). It is clear that pragmatism favors the first option; a contingent situation demands conversation to determine the course. Grasping the nature of the conversation is where neopragmatism ascends; we must be conscious of the difficulties in using language that is beholden to the metanarratives for its meaning and burdened by "wholesale constraints". Neopragmatism asks for reflection on how the linguistic institutions have foundations that may betray attempts to have an open conversation. The terms we use are loaded with signs and indicators that shape the conversation, whether the participants are aware of them or not. For example, consider a game of word-association that poses "bureaucracy" and incites the response of "waste". Thus a term that has carried a causal relationship in the past may be used to the benefit (or detriment) of the speaker. These constraints are the problem that Rorty wishes to eradicate.

One of the enduring aspects of classical pragmatism that Rorty calls into play is the idea of community. John Dewey (1927; 1930) popularized the idea of the "community of inquiry", meaning the shared effort at finding practical meaning from

our experiences to guide progress. His notion included high levels of democratic participation for both the creation of ideas and decisions about how to pursue them. The community is determined as a group with similar interests and agreement on how to work toward their desired outcomes. George Herbert Mead proposed that, "If men are capable of recognizing rights as well as of claiming them, then they are capable of forming a community, of establishing institutions whose authority will lie within the community itself" (1936, p. 13).

Rorty was inspired by the work of anti-rationalists – those who refused to accept human order as the nature of the world – such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Thomas Kuhn. Yet Rorty (1999) took most of his philosophical material from Dewey, recognizing that there was an element of postmodern anti-foundationalism in his work:

> The core of Dewey's thought was an insistence that nothing – not the will of God, not the Intrinsic Nature of Reality, not the Moral Law – can take precedence over the result of agreement freely reached by members of a democratic community. The pragmatist claim that truth is not correspondence to the intrinsic nature of something that exists independently of our choice of linguistic descriptions is another expression of this insistence. (pp. 237-238).

Hegel contributed to Rorty's pursuit of social justice and harmony in a methodological sense by emphasizing the historicity of our notions of truth and morality, while also confirming that objective certainty was an illusory impediment to philosophy, as witnessed by Hegel's "cheerful commitment to irreducible temporality" and "specifically anti-Platonic element in [his] work" (Rorty, 1999, p. 11). He took parts from Hegel's dialectical approach and lessons "about how to eschew certainty and eternity" as they informed Dewey's theme of finding consequential solutions that Rorty then integrated into his adaptation of pragmatism,

in the sense that he saw that dualisms could be grappled with (Rorty, 1991, p. 12).

Meanwhile, Rorty passed over the metaphysical issues that were distracting to such

an approach, choosing instead to recruit from Nietzsche's epistemology that was

oriented toward understanding reality and truth more as matters of solidarity: "The

best argument we partisans of solidarity have against the realistic partisans of

objectivity is Nietzsche's argument that the traditional Western metaphysico-

epistemelogical way of firming up our habits simply isn't working anymore" (1991,

p. 33).

Rorty debated many of the labels assigned to him by critics and admirers

alike; he was particularly opposed to being called a "relativist". He is resolute that

"the subordination of truth to edification", that is to say that agreement through

continued inquiry and discourse for pragmatic practices, does not a relativist make

(1979, p. 373). Rorty pointed out that incommensurability between cultures obviates

the potential for relativism, a particularly sophomoric position that is at odds with his

fundamental opposition to a knowable objective reality (1991, 1998a). Rorty made

special mention of the oft-mistaken view of postmodernism as just a form of

relativism, affirming that, "there is a difference between saying that every community

is as good as every other and saying that we have to work out from the networks we

are, from the communities with which we currently identify" (1991, p. 202). To this,

added, "To accuse postmodernism of relativism is to try to put a metanarrative in the

postmodernist's mouth" (p. 202). He noted that, "Philosophers who, like myself,

eschew this distinction [between the way things are and human cognition of them]

must abandon the traditional philosophical project of finding something stable which

will serve as a criterion for judging the transitory products of our transitory needs and interests" resulting in the need to "give up on the idea that there are unconditional, transcultural moral obligations, obligations rooted in an unchanging, ahistorical human nature" (1999, p. xvi).

While Rorty rejected association with relativism, he also identified with descriptives such as "anti-essentialism" and "anti-foundationalism"; these terms can also be linked to "post-structuralism" in respect to the skepticism of authority that they imply. Approaching from a critique of objectivity (as a general concept), he deconstructs the concept because it "should be seen as conformity to the norms of justification (for assertions and actions) we find about us" (1979, p. 361). The thought continues as it ties to the metanarrative of authority:

> Such conformity becomes dubious and self-deceptive only when seen as some-thing more than this – namely, as a way of obtaining access to something which "grounds" current practices of justification in something else. Such a "ground" is thought to need no justification, because it has become so clearly and distinctly perceived as to count as a "philosophical foundation." (Rorty, 1979, p. 361).

Rorty was resolute in arguing that we cannot be bound to notions of external reality, objectivity, or traditional positivist conceptions of causal relations. This begins to look like relativism except for the rejection of a comparative standard, which is the crucial distinction that serves to separate Rorty further from relativism than this single qualification suggests. The addition of his postmodern attitude toward language amplifies the difference, while he is careful to avoid confusing the issues with undue theories of linguistics that tangle us in a cat's cradle. Miller (2004, p. 248) defends Rorty's posture in the wake of the "epistemological rupture of anti-foundationalism, which came in the wake of Kuhn and Derrida" by noting that

60

neopragmatism is always ultimately concerned with the "the problems that arise from

the situation and developing the capacity and competence to deal with them" while

skirting general theories of representation and misleading notions of correspondence

to reality (Miller, 2005).

> What the empirical philosophers saw as the achievements of natural science in
> discovering the nature of Reality, the transcendental philosophers saw as
> banausic, as true but irrelevant to Truth.
>   Pragmatism cuts across this transcendental/empirical distinction by
> questioning the common presupposition that there is an invidious distinction
> to be drawn between kinds of truths. For the pragmatist, true sentences are
> not true because they correspond to reality, and so there is no need to worry
> what sort of reality, if any, a given sentence corresponds to – no need to worry
> about what "makes" it true. (Rorty, 1982, p. xvi).

The quote above illuminates Rorty's development of neopragmatism in that it

recognizes the focus on utility as a reasonable place to start any inquiry, in contrast to

attempts to establish practical usefulness from a higher reality than our actual needs

and applications. He went to great pains to move beyond – if not avoid – the enigmas

of our postmodern epistemological problems by consistently framing the questions in

terms of practice. If the argument never got beyond the abstract, there would be no

progress, as Harmon (2006) explains:

> To pragmatists like Rorty, the question of whether truth does or can exist…is
> inseparable from the question of whether knowledge precedes or,
> alternatively, is produced by action. Preferring the latter view, Rorty…makes
> his point that the word [truth] could well be dispensed with so that we might
> move on to more edifying subjects. (p. 103).

3.2 Postmodernism and the Linguistic Turn

> *…the world does not provide us with any criterion of choice between
> alternative metaphors, that we can only compare language or metaphors with
> one another, not with something beyond language called "fact".* (Rorty,
> 1989, p. 20).

"The linguistic turn" refers to the postmodern perspective that holds language itself as the object of inquiry rather than classical pragmatism's fixation on experience. This is the condition that follows the movement away from rational empiricism as the means to understand our world. The methods of rational empiricism were tied up in explaining what we have experienced. Rorty (1989) concedes how Davidson and other postmodernists built the case against representational language, that we "not view language as a medium for either expression or representation" (p. 11) and "we treat *everything* – our language, our conscience, our community – as a product of time and chance" (p. 22), but he refused to accept the existential nihilism that came from the extension of such arguments. He moved past many language problems by bounding them in their own constructs; any philosophical problems resulting from rhetoric can only result in rhetorical solutions and, conversely, "The idea that language has a purpose goes once the idea of language as medium goes" (1989, p. 16). For Rorty, non-linguistic context gave importance to language that could override its contingent structure in the interest of getting on with our lives.

The first problem of rational empiricism for neopragmatism stems from the issue of language as a medium, i.e. the representation of our experiences with words, closely followed by the issues involved with fitting our descriptions of experiences into the variable positions in the methods of the rational empirical systems. The ability to express an experience in language requires an immediate distillation of that experience into the vocabulary at hand, regardless of whether or not that vocabulary is adequate to redescribe the experience for further reaction.

Hannah Arendt, in a 1964 interview recorded and entitled "What Remains? The Language Remains" (2000) pointed out how language carries a weight of meaning through her own experience of changing languages during her career. Her relationship with German is tinged with the memories of the languages use and past contingencies; i.e. a German word spoken in a tender context that was once part of a barked order from a storm trooper cannot shake the fearful association and is thus never neutral in a community that has varied experiences. Her claim that language can be forgotten through psychological repression (p. 13) is an example of incoherency between the rational-empirical linguistic aspect of our lives and the unsystematic reality of behavior.

A simple explanation of the problem of language is seen in the practice of making meaning of a word through context. Consider the sensation of an electrical shock: by calling it a "shock" we have classified it according to some common notion of what a shock is. We must then (re-)describe the shock in a way that effectively conveys our experience, which requires that we attempt to assess similarity or dissimilarity of the experience to others' experiences of shocks, adding modifiers or comparative terminology that tries to represent our feelings in another's mind. Yet the shock of 110 volts on a child feels different than for an electrician because of the child's inexperience and surprise at the sensation, despite there being a standard of measurement. It is the same voltage, measured according to a method of rational empiricism by the scientific instruments. This example highlights the futility in putting all our faith in experience and our ability to redescribe it; for the neopragmatist, it is much more practical and much less a practice of exclusivity to

operate at the linguistic level, keeping in mind that there is no final vocabulary just as there is neither an objective Truth, nor a Platonic reality, nor a common denominator for the experience of a 110 volt electric shock.

Of course, arguments that posit accuracy are dependent on a standard of comparison and an objective ideal. This has been soundly rejected in Rorty's work and thus leaves us with the question of the value of any knowledge when there is no scale to calibrate truth claims. Before slipping into relativism, Rorty takes the pragmatic angle and holds, "that we understand knowledge when we understand the social justification of belief, and thus have no need to view it as accuracy of representation" (1979, p. 170). His pragmatism then resembles a form of epistemological behaviorism; what we come to believe through past practice (as useful) informs our current practices in a kind of "common sense" (p. 176). Orthodoxy, taken as the bureaucratic cop-out of 'that's how we have always done it' is displaced by challenges from this epistemological behaviorism because it asks, "whether authority can attach to assertions by virtue of relations of 'acquaintance' between persons and, for example, thoughts, impressions, universals, and propositions" (p. 177). The metanarratives that undergird axiomatic practice are then susceptible to revision because their orthodoxies are potentially incoherent if they continue to be built upon the debatable notion of "fact." That incoherency is often a byproduct of the prevailing usage of words in new contexts or the revision of word usage for practice in prevailing contexts.

The illumination of this confusion is intentional; it points to the problems of language dependency for enduring relevance. As Miller and Fox (2001) put it, "The

64

context of daily life contains habit and routine…Daily practices, in turn, generate

linguistic customs that constitute participants' meaning making. So…we argue that

word usage is not about reality definition so much as sense making within a context"

(p. 669). Harmon (2006, p. 102) supports this view by posing, "social phenomena as

products of language rather than as existing independently of language. From an

interpretivist standpoint, organizations are languages no less than are theories."

3.3 Rorty's World – The Object of Inquiry

If there is anything distinctive about pragmatism it is that it substitutes the
notion of a better human future for the notions of 'reality', 'reason' and
'nature'. (Rorty, 1999, p. 27).

Inquiry is directed at solving problems, not revealing Truths, for

neopragmatism. This is lifted, for the most part, from classical pragmatism's focus of

inquiry as the means to finding effective outcomes regardless of their accuracy in

representing reality. Outcomes – what we want – are the logical conclusions of what

we have to work with in terms of redescriptions and expressed desires. As Lyotard

(1984, pp. 24-25) prescribes, the approach should favor the dialectic over didactic; we

will host conversations that are an exercise in discovery rather than forcing the

acceptance of a "truth-value" statement.

Rorty, when ruminating on the possibility of a social democratic utopia,

attributed to Dewey the recognition that, "the West is better than any other known

culture at referring questions of social policy to the results of future experimentation

rather than to principles and traditions taken over from the past" (1998a, p. 196).

This appropriation of Dewey is strong evidence of our propensity to find authority

outside metanarratives. Rorty (1979) goes to great lengths by portraying a secular

context free from ideas of a teleological order to open a broader horizon for inquiry.

His characterization of Western societies and hope to "peel apart Enlightenment

liberalism from Enlightenment rationalism" speaks to his idea that we (the Western

societies) can "get rid of the notion of universal moral obligations created by

membership in the species, and substitute the idea of building a community of trust

between ourselves and others" (2007, p. 55). Rorty does not propose that the West

abandon reason and ignore history, but rather that we shape a discourse community

using "the kind of historical narrative which segues into a utopian scenario about how

we can get from the present to a better future" (1999, p. 231). His position, like

Dewey's attitude toward experimentation, drives a community of experimentation

that flows from the polity to public administration.

Heretofore, the community of experimentation has been dominated by

scientism; the rational-empirical method has been the last word for justification in the

hard sciences as well as social science inquiry. Yet we know this is not satisfying

from a worldview that denies Truth and an ability to represent reality beyond our

singular experiences.

Rorty's view on science is derived from his feelings about truth; it is a method

of building consensus for localized utility (1991, pp. 35-45). He acknowledges that

there is the possibility for a system-specific type of accurate prediction through

scientific method and it is useful for our existence in some circumstances (i.e. those

circumstances described by that system), but it is still not a window to (or mirror of)

an objective reality, nor can it provide universal principles. He criticizes natural

science's claims to reaching objective grounds as the, "concrete absurdity of thinking that the vocabulary used by present science, morality, or whatever has some privileged attachment to reality which makes it more than just a further set of descriptions" (1979, p. 361) and denies that science is a more realistic account of the world "in virtue of the fact that (at the moment) there is more consensus in the sciences than in the arts" (p. 362). He takes on science's purported elite rationality by dividing it into "method" and "reason", crediting science with the former and attributes the latter to moral civilization (1991, p. 37).

Rorty then goes on to use Kuhn's (1996, p. 171) question that dissolves science's effort: "Does it really help to imagine that there is some one full, objective, true account of nature and that the proper measure of scientific achievement is the extent to which it brings us closer to that ultimate goal?" Science is a human construct that must always keep its origins in sight, rather than harboring false notions of being a method with exclusive claims to truth empowered by the ability to transcend the eventual limitations of human fallibility. Recalling his affinity for the epiphany of paradigm shifts, Rorty states, "Kuhn was one of the best things that ever happened to pragmatism, for his work helped us accept Dewey's suggestion that reasoning in morals is no different from reasoning in science" (2007b, p. 922). The potential contributions of the social sciences are considered similarly: "It is a mistake to think that when we know how to deal justly and honorably with a person or a society we *thereby* know how to predict and control him or her or it, and a mistake to think that ability to predict and control is *necessarily* an aid to such dealing" (Rorty, 1982, p. 198, italics in original). From his perspective, Rorty says that "the desire for

objectivity is not the desire to escape the limitations of one's community, but simply the desire for as much inter-subjective agreement as possible" (1991, p. 23), foreshadowing the idea of consensus under solidarity, as the next section will explain.

The truthfulness that science can provide is actually a measure of consensus, derived through repeated practice and acceptance. Science and scientific methodology "is a model of human solidarity" (Rorty, 1991, p. 39); any greater attribution is beyond reason. Rorty does praise some of the institutions of science, however, and suggests that there are useful models for the rest of culture from these institutions that can "give concreteness and detail to the idea of 'unforced agreement'." Science can be a way to enable "free and open encounters" because we all have equal access to its methods and that can serve to facilitate the position that, "the best way to find out what to believe is to listen to as many suggestions and arguments as you can" (p. 39).

If one considers the qualifying accuracy that accompanies any scientific claim – i.e. the probability of the causal relationship being explained by the operations in an experiment – then it is akin to a poll of belief. Again, Rorty makes no claim that science can reflect 95% of the truth or that the scientific efforts have anything at all to do with objective reality. Scientific endeavors can firm up our beliefs as "consensus", label such beliefs as "knowledge", and then establish "solidarity" for future progress. Rorty illuminates the transition point of that progression: "Insofar as pragmatists make a distinction between knowledge and opinion, it is simply the distinction between topics on which such agreement is relatively easy to get and topics on which agreement is relatively hard to get" (1991, p. 23). It is important to

emphasize that Rorty does not criticize science for its methods, which he sees as a means to unforced agreement in the proper context and an institution that "gives concreteness and detail to the idea of 'unforced agreement'" (1991, p. 39), but he does object to claims that science is the ultimate embodiment of reason and a key to knowledge of Truths. The potential for science to uphold such exclusivity is objectionable when it is considered "a model of human solidarity" (1991, p. 39).

Neopragmatism deflates the value of science because the goal of scientific inquiry has been postured as an ability to reveal something (Truth) that is beyond its capabilities and has led to untenable claims with sometimes disastrous outcomes. Whether the shakiness of science is due to conflicts in values behind the methods or unknown effects that erupt after acting on limited tests, science is not the final vocabulary for many lines of inquiry, especially in the realm of public problems. Rorty expresses the trouble in the following: "But though objectivity is a useful goal when one is trying to calculate means to ends by predicting the consequences of action, it is of little relevance when one is trying to decide what sort of person or nation to be" (1998b, p. 11).

Rorty discredited epistemology as a philosophical pursuit, as it often deteriorated into arguments over one language scheme's ability to accurately represent knowledge as being superior to another. He prescribed getting rid of the 'copy theory' of knowledge" in favor of Pierce's position that "the ability to use signs is essential to thought" – a notion that ushered in the linguistic turn (2006, p. 259). Early in his campaign for the preeminence of democratic consensus over the old guards of knowledge, Rorty stated that, "To construct an epistemology is to find the

maximum amount of common ground with others" (1979, p. 316). This leads to the

need for consideration of contingency, as the "others" with whom we find consensus

at any moment in time always changes as human populations ebb, flow, and evolve.

More broadly, epistemology is a language scheme and language is localized in time

and place.

3.4 Progress through Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity

> *There is a growing willingness to neglect the question 'What is our nature?' and
> to substitute the question 'What can we make of ourselves?'* (Rorty, 1998a, p.
> 169).

When Gadamer (1976) said "It is true of every conversation that through it

something different has come to be" (p. xxii), he provided the seed of Rorty's notion

of progress as making life more interesting. For Rorty, progress "substitutes the

notion of a better human future for the notions of 'reality', 'reason', and 'nature'.

One may say of pragmatism what Novalis said of Romanticism, that it is 'the

apotheosis of the future'." (1999, p. 27). Progress is an especially crucial component

of neopragmatism; it is the ultimate justification that is shared by every community

however they each may define it.

Rorty proposes several important concepts that serve as the stepping stones to

employing neopragmatism for progress. He establishes that we do not need to have

"foundations of knowledge" that set "truths which are certain because of their causes

rather than because of the arguments given for them" (1979, p. 157). He agrees that

there is a pragmatic use of "necessary truth" only so far as we take it to mean,

> The idea of a proposition which is believed because the 'grip' of the object
> upon us is ineluctable. Such a truth is necessary in the sense in which it is

sometimes necessary to believe that what is before our eyes looks red – there is a power, not ourselves, which compels us. (pp. 157-8).

Rorty then embellishes how we might proceed without accounts of practice that are justified by authoritative traditions. He disputes that philosophy has anything to offer liberal society and deflates the metanarrative that philosophy is the arbiter of truth claims:

> Edifying philosophy is not only abnormal but reactive, having sense only as a protest against attempts to close off conversation by proposals for universal com-mensuration through the hypostatization of some privileged set of descriptions. The danger which edifying discourse tries to avert is that some given vocabulary, some way in which people might come to think of themselves, will deceive them into thinking that from now on all discourse could be, or should be, normal discourse. (1979, p. 377).

Before revisiting the possibility that he is just a relativist, the Kuhnian perspective comes back into play to show how the desire for progress shapes activity in meaningful, interesting ways. Remaining faithful to Rorty's idea that progress is not assessed by whether we have approached Truth or accurately represented Reality means that we eschew the objective of neutral descriptions and justificatory standard languages (i.e. positivist science) in favor of the conception of progress as continual conversation that "will tempt the rising generation to adopt it, thereby causing them to look for appropriate new forms of nonlinguistic behavior, for example, the adoption of new scientific equipment or new social institutions" (Rorty, 1989, p. 9).

Contingency has been discussed already to some extent; it is closely related to the consideration of context. Contingency refers to the conditions that affect the discursive side to our progress, while context – with all due respect to the problems of dichotomous arrangements – refers to the applied side of progress. Contingency is manifest in language, on which Rorty (1989) elaborates to hammer home the point

71

that there is no "final vocabulary" that we should pursue because there is no final

situation. In other words, if the idea that Reality is out there and we merely need to

figure out how to represent it, then there are no such things as real contingencies (if a

contingency is thought of as some anomaly from the normal situation), only

shortcomings in our ability to describe all the aspects of the Reality. Yet we know

that, practically, there will always be some context with contingencies that cannot be

handled by our limited language and capacity for representation; either the literal

words or methods available to describe a system will not provide a coherent notion of

progress in that situation. Yet all is not lost, as Hoch (2006) assures in his application

of Rorty to public administration and planning:

> Recognizing contingency does not mean accepting or yielding to arbitrary or
> unfair circumstances. We may not know beyond a shadow of a doubt what
> the future holds, but this does not mean we cannot know what it means to
> successfully resist or reform destructive conditions. (p. 397).

As the world is a dynamic place and things are constantly changing – thus

presenting contingencies to the normal situation that current language can

satisfactorily represent – we must have the awareness of that dynamism and

continually adapt our vocabulary to keep pace. Rorty argues that, "the vocabulary of

Enlightenment rationalism, although it was essential to the beginnings of liberal

democracy, has become an impediment to the preservation and progress of

democratic societies" (1989, p. 44) because the old vocabulary was made to set the

world in a fixed place where things did not change and therefore there was no such

thing as a contingency. To complicate it a bit further, Rorty adds that contingency

can reflect the internal commitment of humans (p. 61) insofar as the community has

to deal with the contingency of its members' behavior and adherence to the language that is shared for redescription.

From contingency we move to irony, perhaps less obvious but nonetheless pivotal to the connection between neopragmatism and liberal democracy. Rorty calls the "ironist" somebody "who faces up to the contingency of his or her most central beliefs and desires" (1989, p. xv) and outlines how those liberals who avoids adherence to notions of the "final vocabulary" come to realize:

> That anything can be made to look good or bad by being redescribed, and their renunciation of the attempt to formulate criteria between final vocabularies puts them in a position which Sartre called 'meta-stable': never quite able to take themselves seriously because they are always aware that the terms in which they describe themselves are subject to change, always aware of the contingency and fragility of their final vocabularies, and thus of their selves. (1989, pp. 73-4).

The liberal ironist who heeds the contingencies of language is then left to grapple with what progress can conceivably be. At first blush, "Liberal ironists are people who include among these ungroundable desires their own hope that suffering will be diminished, that the humiliation of human beings by other human beings may cease" (1989, p. xv). Rorty does not leave the liberal ironist on her own, however, as the redescriptions and management of contingencies are treated in the community. The community can be those who share a fence line between properties, those who share a common dialect, a nation, or even the planet. Rorty wishes to continually expand the community – "coming to see other human beings as 'one of us' rather than as 'them'" (1989, p. xvi) – because, as Chapter 4 will detail, the ability to recognize others as more similar than dissimilar can lead to peaceful agreement on the terms that we use to discuss progress and (hopefully) the actions we take from there.

The similarity between people is the basis of solidarity, which Rorty equates with the recognition of community. Although he urges that, "we try *not* to want something that stands beyond history and institutions" (1989, p. 189), he does want us to feel some moral obligation to extend the boundaries of those with whom we can identify: "feelings of solidarity are necessarily a matter of which similarities and dissimilarities strike us as salient, and that such salience is a function of a historically contingent final vocabulary" (p. 192). He would like people to have,

> the ability to see more and more traditional differences (of tribe, religion, race, customs, and the like) as unimportant when compared with similarities with respect to pain and humiliation – the ability to think of people wildly different from ourselves as included in the range of "us." (p. 192).

From that point we can work toward consensus (agreement about a decision) in a democratic manner. Solidarity can be seen as the citizen who understands her role as a democratic participant in the polity, the same role that her neighbor plays, despite any deep-rooted differences in opinion that they may hold. Rorty wants to "distinguish human solidarity as the identification with 'humanity as such' and as the self-doubt which has gradually, over the last few centuries, been inculcated into inhabitants of the democratic states" (1989, p. 198). If consensus refers to the conviction, then solidarity is regarded as the right to hold such conviction, a right that we all share. The *modus vivendi* commonly attributed to Voltaire illustrates the interplay of consensus and solidarity: "I may not agree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

Progress is important to Rorty, but it is different from Dewey's idea of progress at a fundamental level. While as Dewey and common traditions portray progress as change *toward* an objective, such as equity or justice, Rorty turns the

notion around to avoid Truths as grand objectives and instead views progress as change *from* a state that is dissatisfactory. This inversion is actually more truthful in the sense that we have the experience of the past conditions and can make logically valid justification about responding to those conditions. Progress *toward* is very uncertain and can lead to a worsening of conditions. We may argue that Rorty's version is the more hopeful type of progress only if it is qualified as an effort to alleviate a situation that has been determined by democratic consensus to be unsatisfactory, such as inequity or injustice: "progress is indeed in the direction of greater human solidarity…as the ability to see more and more traditional differences as unimportant" (1989, p. 192). Yet it is also associated with rational-empiricism and the reactionary behavior of conservativism because any notions of progress require reflection on where we are and have been as the catalyst of change for something else. This apparent conflict in ideology does not interest Rorty, as postmodern contortions explain that the labels are insufficient, if not meaningless when applied to notions of progress that may fall beyond the restrictions of the final vocabularies in which they reside. Progress must be expressed in terms of past experience but it is not likewise restricted to the past vocabulary. Rorty does not abide an eschatological perspective, preferring that we consider historians, "as people who help us understand how we tricked ourselves in the past rather than as people who tell us the right thing to do in the future" (1998a, p. 242).

We can now approach a major piece of Rorty's philosophy of liberalism, in juxtaposition to the aforementioned conservatism as adherence to bounded traditions in a metanarrative. For Rorty, liberalism is directly related to justice, which is

arguably his first and only foundation (1989, 1991, 1998, 2007). The defining

characteristic of the liberal is one who view cruelty as the worst thing that we can do

(1989, pp. 73-95) and more specifically, that rational behavior by liberals in society is

"to suggest that somewhere among their shared beliefs and desires there may be

enough resources to permit agreement on how to coexist without violence" (2007, p.

53). Rorty describes,

> A liberal society is one whose ideals can be fulfilled by persuasion rather than
> force, by reform rather than revolution, by the free and open encounters of
> present linguistic and other practices with suggestions for new practices… [It]
> has no purpose except freedom, no goal except a willingness to see how such
> encounters go and to abide by the outcome (1989, p. 60).

Rorty links the rejection of the correspondence account of truth with the

utopian notion of liberalism that classical pragmatism developed from Mills' *On*

Liberty: "nothing remains sacred save the freedom to lead your life by your own

lights" and that the "romantic utilitarians [as he calls James and Dewey] certainly

want to disenchant the past" (1999. p. 271). The idea is developed further:

> For any non-utilitarian definition of 'right' and any non pragmatist definition
> of 'true' will lend aid and comfort to the idea that there is an authority – for
> example, the eternal moral law, or the intrinsic structure of reality – which
> takes precedence over agreement between free human beings about what to do
> or what to believe. (1999, pp. 271-2).

When fully assembled, Rorty's idea of progress is a sort of hierarchy of

the neopragmatist concepts. Whereas contingency, irony, and solidarity refer to

characteristics of society, consensus and community are the products of the

characteristics' interplay in the context of liberalism. When these concepts are

realized – which in Rorty's parlance would mean they are part of the democratic

conversation – societies can make social progress. The authority that enables the

linkages between these concepts is found in the utility function that guides progress. That is to say that the pursuit of justice and less cruelty holds the warrant of authority to assemble the contingency, irony, and solidarity for consensus in the liberal community. The good-Samaritan is only hindered by those who benefit from injustice; the authority to stop cruelty is a *de facto* property of Rorty's liberal citizen and flows throughout the hierarchy of social progress.

Justice is the perennially unrealized end-state of liberal society – in contrast to the Rawlsian approach that puts it first – that we have yet to achieve but hold as the to-be-determined (by consensus) contrast to things that we currently determine (by consensus) as unjust. Justice requires determination based on contingencies, but following the scheme described above, we are aware of the tenuous nature of the redescriptions of the contingencies that inform our justification of an assessment of something as unjust. Furthermore, we can be aware of the justification and of the assessment as themselves being redescriptions in a context. We have now become "liberal ironists" (Rorty, 1989, p. 60) by virtue of our doubt about the efficacy of the vocabularies used for the redescriptions, the ambiguity of their tenacity, and the probability that there are other redescriptions that may move us away from injustice in a different way.

CHAPTER IV

RESHAPING AUTHORITY FOR NEOPRAGMATIST GOVERNANCE

Cultural relativism is associated with irrationalism because it denies the existence of morally relevant transcultural facts…But one need not be irrationalist in the sense of ceasing to make one's web of belief as coherent, and as perspicuously structured, as possible. Philosophers like myself, who think of rationality as simply the attempt at such coherence, agree… that Foundationalist projects are outmoded. (Rorty, 1998a, p. 171).

This chapter develops the more abstract theoretical alternative understanding of authority in a democracy. As the Statement of Problem (Chapter 1.1) puts it, the contemporary American society has been challenged to uphold the metanarrative of administrative authority as described by the traditions of administrative expertise, representation, and practice. That metanarrative has relied on rationality to such a degree that the coherence its traditions promise has been overextended, as Rorty highlights in the above quote. He does not propose to do away with reason or attempts to verify causality, but neopragmatism does ask that we not force experience into molds that have been cast from foundations. When it comes to governance, this entails a rethinking of the relationship between the polity and public administration, a relationship that involves authority at every juncture but does not require the same old rationality to forge an effective alloy.

The task now is to bring together the metanarrative of public administration described in Chapter 2 with the ideas of neopragmatism presented in Chapter 3 to illuminate where the former has issues that the latter may address. The idea of "neopragmatizing" is offered as the mechanism, as Miller (2004, 2005) prescribed, to "upgrade" public administration. This entails a thorough and constant awareness of "the linguistic turn" that then begs the need for the epistemic community, which is the core theme of Chapter 5.

The offerings of neopragmatism for governance have been sparsely treated in the literature, although contemporary works from Fox & Miller (2001, 2007), Hildebrand (2005, 2008), and Stivers (2008a, 2008b) have discussed the potentialities for public administration. The notion of reviving classical pragmatism for governance has had more popularity in recent years (Alford & Hughes, 2008; Box, 2001; Shields, 2004, 2008; Snider, 2000b); however, when placed against the compelling doubts posed by postmodernism, the limitations of the earlier philosophy are hereby bypassed by using a neopragmatist approach to public administration.

4.1 Process: The Neopragmatist's Hammer

For as long as we think there is an ahistorical power that makes for righteousness – a power called truth or rationality – we will not be able to put foundationalism behind us. (Rorty, 1998a, p. 176).

When Lyotard (1984) contemplated technological advancements in society and said, "The nature of knowledge cannot survive unchanged within this context of general transformation" (p. 4), he awoke a need to expand the development of practices to incorporate the contemporary into the timeline of learning. That is to say

that, as we consider what we do with an eye to the successful or useful actions, our current and future activity demands that we not only look around us for information that will affect how we continue to address issues, but that we think about whether our thinking itself is up to date. Although postmodernism can throw us headlong into black holes of revision that challenge the legitimacy of the smallest step toward an idea of progress, a more optimistic outlook suggests that the problems we face may not be so much as problems with the systems of processes we have at hand as they are problems in even referring to the systems for contexts and contingencies that we have never faced before. It is too easy to say that new circumstances require new ways of thinking without factoring in the qualities of human nature that are formed by our desires for security and predictability.

Humans tend be empirical when looking for answers because we do not want to feel adrift. The past is our intrinsic default authority; public administration is built on the past because it is a comfortable and fixed system that is easily justifiable and does not need continual explaining. Those who work from an empirically legitimated vantage are the agents of this authority, recalling the very things that made us feel secure and promise success based on past success (or lessons learned from failure). This is not a set-up to suggest that living the empirical life and submitting to such authority is a naïve or conservative way to go about the world, but it is fairly clear to see that with a dabbling of postmodernism even the best practices and most reliable authority have to be reconsidered in the inevitably dynamic contexts of life. We demand the types of progress that are life altering (improving the conditions of cruelty that we wish to move away from), yet we overlook the need to upgrade the

80

foundations that even lead to the ideas that come from the march of progress. It is at this juncture between empiricism and postmodernism that we find problems of authority.

Whereas Lyotard (1984) deflates the nature of knowledge and the authority that relies on epistemology, neopragmatism allows for some of the security and predictability to carry forward with the caution that discourse needs to be aware of the world of abstractions in which we operate. An authority of empirical epistemology, as found in the public administration metanarrative discussed in Chapter 2, is an ideal subject for neopragmatizing, herein proposed as a process for progress. As the research problem was presented, the metanarratives need to be "deflated". For neopragmatism, this means distancing any truth claims from metaphysical notions and instead linking such claims to our experiences and thus making clear that truth claims are not independent of the individual's perceptions. Rorty takes exception to the legitimacy of vocabularies as having metaphysical transcendence; truth claims within such vocabularies should be eradicated because, "the intellectual tradition to which they belong has not paid off, is more trouble than it is worth, has become an incubus" (1982, p. xxxvii). Even a consensus for the truth of a claim does not remove it from inquiry, for in Rorty's view democratically achieved consensus does not elevate a claim to a big "T" truth. More important to him than majority rule is the justice afforded by solidarity in the democratic process itself, placing consensus as a dynamic characteristic of those things we do in a democratically-minded solidarity. That solidarity of democracy is the trump of metanarratives that fall below it in ontological terms; the utility of a particular consensus is always dependent on its

agreement with the greater good of social progress (which is always "more democracy").

If we look at progress as the drive toward better life, then neopragmatism offers a process that incorporates the utility of actions predicated on empiricism with a reflective stance toward the contingency of conditions that face us and consideration of how we even think about utility, action, context, and inquiry itself. If the extreme image of a public administrator waxing postmodern at a city council meeting is unrealistic, then the idea that we should dutifully adhere to authority rooted in a static metanarrative should be equally preposterous. Using Miller's (2004) paraphrasing of Rorty's cheerful outlook, neopragmatists concentrate on "what is useful rather than what is true" and "are not pining for a blissful utopia; they just want tomorrow to be a great day, and they do not want to spend all their time fashioning elaborate ethical blueprints for how tomorrow should conduct itself" (p. 247).

The most effective swipe at the metanarratives that offend neopragmatism is to portray them as self-contained, self-referential, and self-supporting schemes of language. Using the supreme paradox of first philosophies – that we cannot think about the world without language – then it follows that a conversation about the world is using the set of words that are available by the language scheme. Thus the world is constantly being described, categorized, and otherwise reframed from our perception of it to the re-described, re-categorized, and re-reframed expression of it from our minds to the language that we know. Suffice it to say that some people have more interesting language abilities than others as proven by their ability to garner support and consensus about a particular re-description, re-categorization, or re-

reframing of their observations and conjectures. We can easily see how this leads to claims of expertise and authority; the most appealing orator is central to such a society's progress.

Given the development of Rorty's ideas into the process of neopragmatizing, the thrust of this effort must now turn to applying the process for public administration and authority. The connection between the philosophical concept and the discipline at issue – what makes it an appropriate theoretical endeavor – is that Rorty had strong views on social justice and democracy that neatly overlie the themes of good governance as we see in public administration literature and practice. By clearly defining social justice and democracy from his work, they can be presented with the ideas of contemporary public administration theorists to show a level of commensurability. This is the invitation to the public administration discourse for Rorty's ideas that then leads to the contributions forthwith. The conversation on administrative authority is open for the idea of neopragmatizing.

Consensus is the justification of authority in democratic practice. It is, "closely tied to reason-giving in both origin and outcome. Like any social practice, reason-giving proceeds from an intersubjective acceptance of a set of norms, and it tends toward agreement on claims that have been justified by practice" (Gutting, in Guignon and Hiley, 2003, p. 49). Note that this definition of consensus is predicated on an "intersubjective acceptance of a set of norms" – a fairly good facsimile of the operational definition of solidarity, which was previously presented as the antecedent to reaching consensus in a community. Consensus is a process of developing objectives for progress through democratic discourse without abusing authority,

assuming the consensus reached is not an asymmetrical policy that favors one faction

at the expense of other factions. Consensus is a part of authority; it is the catalyst to

its development (i.e. we need to do something and some agency needs justification

for the legitimate power to implement the resultant policy), it is the reaffirmation of

its scope, and it is the assignation of responsibility that makes it a necessary part of

governance.

Consideration of context is primary concern for neopragmatizing. As

presented earlier, American public administration is a product of the liberal

constitutional state. This setting requires examination through the neopragmatist's

lens before applying the process to governance and the traditions of the administrative

authority metanarrative. Rorty (1989) sets the scene by describing the polity of the

neopragmatized liberal constitutional state:

> The citizens of my liberal utopia would be people who had a sense of the
> contingency of their language and moral deliberation, and thus of their
> consciences, and thus of their community. They would be liberal ironists –
> people who…combined commitment with a sense of the contingency of their
> own commitment. (p. 61).

He also offers the broader idea of a neopragmatist national perspective:

> The advantage of postmodernist liberalism is that it recognizes that in
> recommending that ideal one is not recommending a philosophical outlook, a
> conception of human nature or the meaning of human life, to representatives
> of other cultures. All we should do is point out the practical advantages of
> liberal institutions in allowing individuals and cultures to get along together
> without intruding on each other's privacy, without meddling with each other's
> conceptions of the good. (Rorty, 1991, p. 209).

There is much to be appreciated here for neopragmatism. "New pragmatism can

serve the hands-off 'negative liberty' function that old pragmatism does not serve,"

states Miller (2004), "New pragmatism sees liberty not as an abstract political belief

but as a practice that enables the discourse to be democratic. The practice of liberty is nothing less than competence in the art of governance" (p. 247).

Rorty provides a neat trick to reconcile the American brand of individualistic liberalism with the precepts we need for a just society. In the essay, "Justice as a Larger Loyalty" (2007, pp. 42-55), he illustrates through hypothetical scenarios how dividing lines between members of a community are eventually shown to be arbitrary and we must therefore extend our conceptions of equity and justice to all. This Rawlsian perspective is played out through economic, political, and social vectors to illustrate the point that justice has a quality of relevance.

For example, our sense of fairness in terms of a minimum wage is certainly extended to all our fellow citizens – nobody should toil for less than a certain hourly rate in our country. Yet we have little objection to a third world laborer earning far less than the American worker for the same output if it benefits our immediate community and does not strike us as unfair to the extent of our knowledge of the third-world labor market. This notion of regional or community justice can be applied across infinite issues of society, reinforcing the idea that particular contingencies demand unique approaches (i.e. the higher cost of living in the US requires a greater earnings and cheaper products from overseas labor). On a more familiar plane, we understand and accept that renting an apartment in New York City carries a different set of contingencies than renting an apartment in Cleveland, yet the exorbitant cost of the former does not make it unjust to a migrant from the latter.

Rorty moves the argument to the broader problems of reason and authority, begging the question as to whether those ideas have to be considered in terms of their

relevance for a particular situation or community. The answer is highly qualified: reason is not universal and therefore authority that is grounded in a reasoned process is similarly provincial to a degree. That is to say that upon encountering someone who does not share our view, we should hesitate to label them as irrational or antiauthoritarian and instead entertain the possibility that "she does not seem to share enough relevant beliefs and desires with us to make possible fruitful conversation about the issue in dispute" (Rorty, 2007, p. 54).   This does not mean that we need to dispense with all notions of reason and authority, yet it does suggest the need for recognizing that a sphere of influence is bounded by a context that is determined by those who share recognition of the influence. In other words, the social contract is functional only to the extent that members of the society explicitly understand and agree to it.

The relation of Rorty's argument to constitutional liberalism is found in the American community. Our national community is situated in the context of constitutional liberalism, yet there are regional, local, and even individual conceptions of what this means. Constitutional liberalism in Idaho is different for all intents and purposes than constitutional liberalism in Massachusetts. Likewise, the authority for governance that a citizen recognizes in California differs from that of a Texan; consider the issue of medical marijuana between the two states (legal in the former, far from acceptable in the latter). The disconnect between individuals who reject an instance of authority is often seen as irrational behavior – the Oklahoma City bombing serves as an example – because the citizens who perpetrated this horrid act did not share enough relevant beliefs and desires to discuss their problems with the

86

greater community. The point is that the American context is highly subjective and this erodes the sphere of influence for authority as the particular issues of governance become more focused to a smaller community, just as Rorty showed that justice for a family member who works for minimum wage in a factory is different than justice for the Chinese worker (2007, p. 43). Thus, even the basic neopragmatist desire for less cruelty in the world means different policy implications for different states, despite the states starting from some level of commonly shared ideals (being part of the United States).

Richard Posner provides a poignant entry for neopragmatism (although he does not add the "upgrade" in terminology from classical pragmatism to neopragmatism) when promoting the idea of the "living constitution" (2003). This approach is a form of neopragmatizing insofar that Posner considers context in the interpretation of the Constitutional text and utilization of precedents. Text is not objective Truth, but rather a representation of principles that then require interpretation for the circumstances of the case. As he builds his case for pragmatism in judicial practice, Posner adds thoughts that echo Rorty's idea about pragmatic authority being rooted in the problem at hand:

> [Pragmatism] may encourage the thought that judges should reconceive their mission as that of helping society to cope with its problems, and therefore that the rules that judges create as a byproduct of adjudication should be appraised by a "what works" criterion rather than by their correspondence to truth, natural law, or some other abstract validating principle. (Posner, 2003, p. 47).

Blanket application of the static text or the forced alignment of precedents becomes an exercise in interpretation, rather than a process of understanding and eventual consensus about the desired outcomes of judicial practices. Precedent holds a place

like the empirical record and evaluation of past practice, but when positioned between the fixed text and the current situation – which however similar to the precedent's circumstances, it is nonetheless always different if for no other reason than the fact that we are aware of the existence of the precedent and the possibility of its application is tainting our assessment of its applicability – a precedent's value in the method of inquiry and to the desired outcome must be tempered with the due consideration of the enlightened experience of our contemporary being. Posner states that, "Precedents that are squarely on the point do have authority in a court of law, but their authority is political – that is, ultimately rooted in force – rather than epistemic in character" (1990, p. 420). In other words, we may take some guidance from a precedent for neopragmatic governance but it must be suspect as an artifact of the public administration metanarrative. In a neopragmatist perspective, Posner indicates that authority exercised as experiential knowledge from analogous contexts is not shared or neopragmatically consensual authority from a position of epistemic solidarity.

4.2 Neopragmatizing Authority

And it is an error of the authoritarian trend in political thought to believe that authority can survive the decline of institutional religion and the break in the continuity of tradition. (Arendt, 2005, p. 51).

Raadschelders and Stillman (2007) define "old" authority as: "the accepted or legitimate use of power, formally invested in an individual officeholder…the use of which is constrained by explicit rules" (p. 12). They constructed this definition to allow further study of authority for public administration and it serves as solid and

88

reliable for traditional administrative practice, yet the neopragmatist perspective takes

issue with some of its implicit elements. The operational definition requires an

upgrade for more current use; it is coherent only within the traditional system from

which it emerged. Indeed, the authors provide a revision that hints at what

neopragmatists would like to see, defining administrative authority as:

> The property (not possession) or characteristic of a civil servant to make
> binding decisions and take legitimate action, within a specified institutional
> arrangement, either upon explicit expression of or implicit delegation by the
> legislature or political executive or upon autonomous understanding of the
> common interest, provided that such action (i.e., making binding decisions) is
> taken on the basis of constant interaction with other stakeholders
> (representatives of interest groups, citizens). (Raadschelders & Stillman, 2007,
> p. 14).

Armed with this well-qualified understanding of authority, the process of

neopragmatizing will impute a sense of perpetual uncertainty to authority. The force

of its doubt is realized in the manifestation of incoherencies that erode authority;

those moments when those who take the action or make decisions by virtue of their

knowledge find that the warrants are groundless in light of the current contingencies

on their practice. Rorty deconstructs warrants in a debate with another philosopher

over relativism (1998a, pp. 43-62), viewing the idea of a justification or warrant "as a

sociological matter" (p. 50). He emphasizes that so much of warranted assertibility –

that which is proclaimed by virtue of authority – is dependent on norms and standards

that are historical products. Furthermore, the norms and standards are historical

products that are mutable; they evolve and can be reformed, thus making warrants

into dynamic reasons. The dynamism may be determined by majority rule, although

Rorty is quick to note that Nazi fascism ran on this principle (p. 51), or just simple

ethnocentrism (p. 167), which Rorty repeatedly accepts as a reasonable enough approach to figuring out what works.

At various points in Rorty's work there is a definite anti-authoritarian slant, including outright statements that pragmatism is at odds with claims of authority (2006, pp. 257-266). Rorty builds this position by enumerating the problems of representation that he has already rebuked in numerous ways (1979) and offering instead a kind of instrumental epistemology (in contradistinction to traditional philosophical epistemology that constructs schemes of facts and truths) to get around the authoritarianism that representation fosters. He wished to avoid making appeals to authority (1982); for Rorty, "An appeal to truth and rationality is just as dangerous as an appeal to a God or a dictator" (Misak, 2008, p. 100). Although a strong commitment to a viewpoint is fair game, Bacon (2006) reads Rorty's (2006) anti-authoritarianism as holding that an argument "cannot claim an authority for those views beyond that which can be gained for them in conversation" (Bacon, 2006, p. 865).

Instead of "humbling ourselves" before representations that are imposed in the authoritative texts (such as the Constitution, the Koran, or *The Republic*) that guide our actions (Rorty, 2006, p. 257), there is the alternative of challenging the interpretation by combining, "a refusal of the text's *political* authority over us with a denial that interpretations can have any *epistemic* authority" (Cohn, 2006, p. 25). Thus texts, which are merely representations with the oft perceived additional sense of authority because they are fixed on the page, must be regarded as having neither intrinsic meaning nor authority. Cohn goes on to apply Rorty's position to the

misappropriation of authority through representation (in texts, specifically, as they are used to produce meanings) as particularly insidious to democratic society: "It is *because* there is no real meaning to be represented that the text cannot claim any legitimate authority over us, and it is for the same reason that any claim to represent the meaning of a text constitutes a covert exercise of power" (Cohn, 2006, p. 25). It is obvious here that the traditions of bureaucratic authority, from queuing procedures at the local social services office to defense contracting in Iraq, are not adequately justified for all contingencies at all times. Rorty (2006) argues that we do not have to sign on to the epistemology that demands obedience to overconfident representations.

The resultant notion of authority lay somewhere between the pragmatic need for a locus of justification for an action and a self-awareness of the contingency (and irony and solidarity) of the actual reasoning process that works from the initial precept of the justification. That is to say that a neopragmatist authority needs be apologetic, democratic, and liberal at the same time. To avoid lapsing into relativism (i.e. basing authority from a Platonic ideal or standard), authority must be equally accessible to all members of the community that recognize that authority. It must be egalitarian in quality and, with certain skill qualifications, easily transferred from those who wield authority to those who respect it.

The neopragmatist society would resemble the Athenian *polis* in that all citizens would have a rightful place in the council because authority is not an elite quality (excepting that only certain Athenians were qualified to be on the level of "equal" citizens). Perhaps more appropriately, neopragmatic authority can be seen in Vonnegut's (1998) dystopia of *Harrison Bergeron* where all citizens are equally –

91

albeit artificially – qualified to hold authority because the idea that one citizen knows better than another is incoherent. Rorty would appreciate this backhanded insult to relativism while noting that the real lesson is that authority is best understood as the democratic agreement that it can exist; neopragmatist authority resides in consensus that comes from a community.

4.3 Neopragmatizing American Public Administration

Truth viewed in the Platonic way, as the grasp of what Rawls calls "an order antecedent to and given to us", is simply not relevant to democratic politics.
(Rorty, 1991, p. 191).

Snider (2000b) situates pragmatism as concurrent to, although not readily recognizable as a strong influence on, the development of public administration. He summarized that, "pragmatism collapsed the distinction between thought and action and thus also the distinctions between ends and means, facts and values" (p. 137). Talking about what is most effective, efficient, economical, or even what may be most practical for public administration is a misguided effort for neopragmatism. By deflating the traditions of the metanarrative and essentially erasing the past record of governance as the standard of assessment, neopragmatism leaves only two elements for public administration to hold in the discipline: experience and discourse. As discussed earlier, the methods of public administration must be suspect in the face of contingencies. Even the coping mechanisms, such as the consideration of precedents or utilizing expertise for discretionary decisions, are not free from scrutiny in the neopragmatist's approach despite their proximity to the ideas of pragmatism.

Looking at the beginnings of American public administration, we may ask if there is evidence that the Founders had any neopragmatist inclinations. It is an anachronistic enquiry, but in the History of Ideas method it can be an informative pursuit to trace the lineage of influences by illuminating when they first appeared and analyzing the idea reflectively (Spicer, 2004, 2007a, 2007b). The Founders had ideas that can be posthumously categorized as neopragmatist. Arendt (2000) viewed the Constitution as a dispersing authority among so many competing offices as to remove it as a foundational element of the American liberal state. Spicer (1995, p. 35) points out that there were inklings of anti-rationalism in the constitutional design, suggesting that the Founders were aware that their paradigm might not answer all questions of governance. Much the way that the Federal system was designed to accommodate competition between factions and branches of government (Rohr, 1998; Spicer, 2003, 2007a), a neopragmatist approach positions public administration as the facilitator of discourse and with an eye to coherency with the Constitution. Public administration is positioned to "serve as a mediator of political conflict within our civil association," says Spicer (2001, p. 137) as he recalls Rohr's (1986) notion of public administration as the constitutional "balance wheel." This is a pragmatic application of public administrators' discretion – a necessary but acceptable concession for the democratic republic to affirm solidarity for the governance process and building consensus on public problems. From the other side of the debate, the Anti-Federalists pure liberalism and *ad hoc* approach to governance serves the pragmatists' interest in outcome-oriented organization in that erecting a fixed government to address future problems would be an effort in futility, if not tyranny (or authoritarianism).

The Founders were undeniably principled as the Federalist/Anti-Federalist debates raged over their respective tenets (Wootton, 2003), however, and their propensity to posit rationalist ideals and Enlightenment political philosophy for sturdy foundations go against the grain of neopragmatism. They sought to establish traditions from the outset by grounding their Constitution in values and ideas that were already fixed in colonial society, essentially repurposing the metanarrative of governance from British goals to American objectives (Spicer, 1995). So although we can look to the Founders for some inspiration in neopragmatism, we also know that the Constitution is the root text of the American public administration metanarrative. There is no argument to be made here; this look back is merely to suggest that administrative authority has evolved from ideas that were developed with openings for continual redescription.

Neopragmatizing the context of liberal constitutionalism is not such a stretch. Rorty does not critique the U.S. Constitution as a document in a political treatise, but his understanding of America as a citizen, as a philosopher of the national strain, and as a champion of bourgeois liberalism (1991, pp. 197-202) illuminates how to redescribe the document for the purposes of social progress. He looked to Thomas Jefferson to support his argument that democracy has priority of philosophy, that America is its own idea without pretense to a higher Truth, and that "the question of whether justifiability to the community with which we identify entails truth is simply irrelevant" (Rorty, 1991, p. 177). Although he notes that, "The so-called neopragmatists do not… see themselves as representing anything distinctively American" (1999, p. 25), Rorty himself had much to be admire about American

liberalism. He applauds the democratic spirit of inquiry that Dewey expressed with

the romanticized notion of the national experiment that looks "to the substance of

things hoped for" (1999, p. 27). Neopragmatizing the constitution means using the

document as an enduring American tradition – a small-t, localized truth – on which to

base discourse about what public problems are hindering our social progress. The

constitution as the defining document of the American conception of social progress

is the metaphor to Rorty's definition of liberalism as the avoidance of cruelty and

injustice. The existence of dozens of constitutional amendments speak to reconciling

its semi-permanence with the neopragmatist need for continual conversation about

whether what we are doing to advance social progress is relevant to our current

context and shared understandings of justice.

The redescription of liberal constitutionalism allows the process to be brought

forward into the relationship between public administration and the polity for the

three traditions of administrative authority as treated in Chapter 2. Box (2002) admits

that pragmatism – and by extension neopragmatism, since he is discussing it in the

context of postmodern discourse theory – "presents an especially strong argument

against objectivity, certainty, and traditional perspectives on public policy

formulation and implementation" (p. 26) in the effort to legitimize administrative

authority.

The major reshaping of public administration by the neopragmatist's hammer

deflates the idea that the traditional practices of public administration always have

something useful to say about what public administration should do now.

Discounting the authority of the discipline's faith in rational empiricism to address

public problems, Spicer (2005) argues that, "the postmodern condition limits the role of conventional social science in public administration because it increases the incidence, as well as the visibility, of conflicts between incompatible and incommensurable human ends or values" (p. 669). In other words, there can neither be a universal normative sentience of public administration (that kind of stuff belongs in our values debates and the realm of politics), nor can the authority of public administration be determined by a transcendent metaphysical knowledge of what is best for the polity.

Furthermore, a public administration that finds purpose in current public problems and must adjust to the contingencies of those problems' contexts must reflect that purpose to some extent in its organizational structure. Neopragmatizing the context of public administration means that the realm of practice for governance is rightly situated in policies and practices that are useful to the outcomes we would like to see. The context is a matter of appropriateness – the right tool for the job – that extends to the structure of administrative organizations. When the authority of governance is understood as problem-specific, contingent, and democratically formed, then the activity and form of public administration must reflect that perspective as well. In fact, the organization must have less structure than the traditional Weberian model of bureaucracy in order to avoid hinging authority on the office, a structure that forces occasional incoherencies between an authority that must address problems that extend beyond the intended scope of that office. In Rorty's world of ad hoc associations for the problems we face today – a result of anti-foundationalism – an over-formalized administrative body cannot embody enough

democratic flexibility to satisfy his liberalism and produce nondiscriminatory

practices. The hierarchical organizational form with its "one best way" of

management (Taylor, 1998) is not nearly flexible enough to allow the adaptations

necessary to implement governance that is responsive to the dynamic context and

public problems that drive public administration. Alford and Hughes (2008) point out

the shortcomings of the traditional model of bureaucracy and the New Public

Management:

> [They] constituted "one size fits all" views of the world. Each embodied a
> characteristic set of arrangements that were seen as applicable to all
> governmental organizations. Now, scholars are beginning to characterize the
> post-NPM world as one based on assumptions that one or another model is the
> answer to most of the deficiencies of the public sector. However, these too
> suffer from their own assumptions that there is one best way. (p. 131).

Although it may be inconceivable for public administration to abandon its

traditional bureaucracy when so many arguments for its efficiency and effectiveness

have been predicated on the old structures, the forms of authority that are reshaped by

neopragmatism require a supporting organizational scheme. In keeping with the

theme of neopragmatism, that scheme must be shaped by the problem it addresses,

peopled by the community of inquiry surrounding the problem, and ultimately used to

advance social progress through democratic discourse. Suffice it to say, we have not

seen too many examples of this idea in modern American public administration.

4.3.1 Neopragmatizing Representation

*[L]aw, for example, derives its force from what lies "beneath" or "above" it
– that is, from a higher truth, principle, or some underlying foundational
process or logic. I call this disembodied form of authority representation
because the artifacts of authority and those that speak in its name are
distanced from the origin of their authority. They do not embody.* (Catlaw,
2007a, p. 105).

The traditional notion of public administration as representation, involving administrators as the faithful implementers of the democratic will, does not withstand the neopragmatist's hammer blows. Representation in the new approach makes governance the act of mediation over language between epistemic communities. As Rorty (1979) shattered the potential of mirroring reality, especially given the issues of competing redescriptions, the possibility of public administration having legitimate authority to represent anything beyond its own interests is similarly rejected. A public administration that purports to represent anything is actually dealing in redescriptions of experience and layers of abstraction, from the neopragmatists perspective.

Catlaw (2007a) argues that public administration actually constructs its authority as representation through exclusionary discursive practices. He asks, "What formal institutional arrangements grow around the dominant mode of deciding?" holding that such questions "basically turn on the question of authority" because, "What authority does, on one level, is to ground and legitimate a decision on the exclusion" (p. 100). Viewing authority as the arbiter of exclusion speaks to the neopragmatist's objection to legitimating knowledge at the expense of others (i.e. as a form of cruelty) and coercing consensus for representation by claiming Truth in the redescriptions used for decision making. Catlaw portrays administrative authority as a drawing of boundaries; those excluded by what public administration is representing are removed from the discourse that determines public problems, a discourse that is, "constitutive of what is visible, thinkable, and possible" (p. 100). Thus, he comes to the position that, "decision making is first and foremost a decision

98

on this exclusion, a decision on what shall be left out. This is fundamentally a

discursive (authoritative) practice" (p. 104).

Harmon (2006) makes the argument that representation invokes the

dichotomy of knowing/doing and bifurcates governance, "leaving the false

impression that objective, and therefore authoritative, knowledge precedes and may

even determine the content of action" (p. 130). This in turn raises issues of

justification for administrative action, necessitating that action corresponds to an ideal

and removing opportunity for discretion to tailor policy for contingencies and context.

Harmon continues:

> Political representation further presupposes that the objects to be represented –
> either the will of the People or their particular interests – already exist in
> preconstituted form.   If this were true, it might indeed be sensible to think of
> politics and administration as mutually compatible means for, first, identifying
> what those objects "really" are and then achieving them efficiently and
> effectively. Such a suggestion, however, immediately encounters the
> objection that the category of the People itself, abetted by authoritative
> judgments based on the presupposition of homogeneity, shapes the
> constitution of interests in particular ways and prohibits their constitution in
> other ways. The presumed givenness of those interests would obviate the
> need for, and would in fact prevent, acts of collaboration through which
> citizens constitute and continually reconstitute them. (p. 131).

Wamsley's view (in Wamsley et al., 1990) of the role of administrators as

agents, although it shares many traits of the model criticized by Harmon and Catlaw,

provides support for crafting the neopragmatist idea of public administration as

representation. He speaks of the need for a "consensual process" that "relies on a

creative synergism that results in an agreed-upon solution transcending the sum of the

parts, that is, the self-interests brought by the participants" (p. 119). The public

administrator as agent, "may provide the key impetus and painfully lacking

communitarian moral authority for our government of fractionated power and our

culture of individualism" (p. 120). We can then imagine representation for the public administrator as a catalyst of the "public interest dialogue" that seeks consensus away from the political machinations of representative politics and as the means to pursue the outcomes through consensus separate from the democratic deliberations of conflicting self-interests that are debated in terms of inputs and outputs to be eventually played out in the polls.

Catlaw's critique of authority as representation for public administration gives an entrance for neopragmatism, however: "The breakdown of representational authority and the failure to produce a positive determination of the origin and the capacity for collective action under the terms of the order of things (e.g., the People) means that decisions will no longer simply be made for us on our behalf" (2007a, p. 112). He looks to the individual as the decentralized sovereign, which the neopragmatist would enlist as the ironic liberal who, sharing the aversion to cruelty held by all other individuals, would join in the broadest community to allow representation only to the extent of that philanthropic agenda. In other words, administrative authority as representation is legitimated by the administrator signing on to the Rortian hope of a world free from injustice as expressed in discourse with the community of individual liberal ironists. Indeed, Catlaw (2006) recognizes the irony that is needed to reconcile authority as representation and public administration. "We might simply accept the rhetorical contradiction between the universality of the rhetoric of representation and the empirical fact of exclusion," yet "we are asked to carry on as if politics really does (or could) represent the whole People's will, knowing that it does not and cannot" and thus "we must adopt consciously a position

that we know full well to be false" (p. 265). Catlaw then offers a view of "representation as an aesthetic, generative process rather than a mirroring, mimetic one" (p. 265) that means "representation now becomes necessary, because the People does not exist but must be articulated" (p. 266). The articulation that public administration forges into authority is found in the democratic discourse with liberal ironists.

4.3.2 Neopragmatizing Expertise

For the people, it is assumed, will gladly agree to become automata when we show them all the things – nice, solid, objective things – they can have by abandoning their own experience in favor of a superior race of men called experts. (Follett, 1924, p. 3).

The problem of equating authority with expertise for the neopragmatist is the epistemological elitism that such a position entails, leading to a noticeable separation between the polity and public administration. The exclusive access to the knowledge of its practice positions public administration in conflict with the transparency expected in a democracy. The image of bureaucrats operating behind the wizard's curtain is unsatisfying to the public, especially when the practice fails to produce the expected outcomes. The division between the public and government fosters exclusionary practices that diminish interaction with the community. Furthermore, issues of trust arise if authority is derived from expertise that is inaccessible to the polity, which then can ripple into a semblance of authoritarianism as Eagan (2007) depicts through her analyses of authority under the auspices of Orwell, Adorno, and Foucault.

Rorty (1998a, p. 192) admits that there are experts with valuable skill, but "good ideas might come from anywhere, that they are not the prerogative of an elite and not associated with any particular locus of authority." He credits that, "the rise of technology helped break down the traditional distinction between the 'high' wisdom of priests and theorists and the 'low' cleverness of artisans – thus contributing to the plausibility of a democratic system of government" (p. 192). Rorty characterizes authoritative expertise, in the traditional sense, as having "a greater degree [of some form] of rationality" (p.193). Such a view, if disconnected from social progress, can foster a division that leads to asymmetrical policy, injustice, and cruelty. Expertise functions with an agenda and agendas are the result of goals set by belief in Truths and ideals.

Snider (2000a) notes that pursuing administrative expertise *qua* expertise has issues as well: "The field's focus on the pursuit of administrative *expertise* – that is, on knowing what to do – apparently precluded significant attention to pragmatism's more open and contextual approach to administrative action as *experimenting*" (p. 330, italics in original). In her call for more democratic knowledge in public administration, Stivers (2008b) criticizes governance's special episteme:

> From its earliest days, public administration defined knowledge as the result of systematic study pursued by experts (scientists) and applied by experts (trained administrators). Not only was knowledge not democratic, its logic and processes were a necessary counterweight to democracy's inherent instability. (p. 5).

"Unfortunately, many philosophers… are still trying to hold on to the Platonic insistence that the principal duty of human beings is to *know*" (Rorty, 1998a, p. 184). This position is similar to that held by the citizenry in respect to public

administrators' authority and deference to their expertise. The most disconcerting

disruption of governance is a helpless shrug from the agency responsible. A citizen's

disappointment with governance is especially concentrated when the agency did not

know the situation, such as the Security and Exchange Commission's failure to

understand how bad collateralized mortgage options would cascade through the

economy or the Federal Emergency Management Agency's miscalculation of

Hurricane Katrina's destruction.

Neopragmatizing expertise is especially tricky, however, as expertise is

closely linked, epistemologically, to notions of objective truth. Being an expert on a

subject means knowing as much as there is to know, having access to the truth, and

being able to objectively access that knowledge. Thus an expert in a mechanical

subject will be able to manipulate the material objects to produce the desired outcome

more efficiently and effectively than the lay person (the normative nature of the

desire withstanding); "on some occasions, at least, it is more rational to defer to the

authority of the relevant expert than it is to think for oneself" (Pierson, 1994, p. 399).

This seems both cynical (in contemporary contexts) but also pragmatic insofar as it

recognizes efficient utility.

For public administration, expertise is not as simple and requires a different

analogy for most circumstances. More apropos of public administration's context

would be a comparison to an expert litigator. The attorney argues a position

regardless for the innocence of the client in some cases and that is precisely the

expertise that is necessary to achieve the desired outcome (i.e. the guilty thief still

wants to be thought innocent and set free). So it is with neopragmatizing the

expertise of public administrators; we want to secularize their role, leaving the political process to determine the desired outcome and having the issue addressed in the most expedient manner.

Yet there is a problem is assigning this kind of agency to public administration in that we expect public administrators to represent the political will through policy implementation. There are myriad pitfalls in this arrangement; the postmodern take on representation essentially denies that it is a feasible, much less noble, endeavor. Representation is fraught with instances of authority and thus authority is suspect, as well. As discussed previously, the conflict of representation and authority is epistemological. The agent who knows something and proceeds to act as a representative based on that knowledge in a democracy is affirming that they are representing the public's interests and the authority they exercise based on the knowledge is no more than a transitive step between what we want and receiving the desired outcome. The perversion in the process is holding the authority as a warrant above the public based on the agent's representational role. Public administrators do not have elite access to the knowledge from which they act but rather use once, twice, or thrice-removed abstractions from the "raw" consensus of the polity and are, in fact, necessarily misrepresenting as they tout the knowledge at the base of their action (just as the last in line in a game of "telephone" receives and transmits a distortion of the original message).

The postmodernists have long argued this problem of representation and use it to form the basis of critique against authority; the aggregation of abstractions between an experience and the administrative reaction produce bureaucratic incoherency.

Public administration is squarely in the sights of this argument as a functionary of representative democracy. Cohn (2006) summarizes it neatly: "…if you no longer accept 'the notion of knowledge as accurate representation,' then you will oppose practices that appeal to the authority of such knowledge as erroneous or malicious" (pp. 11-12).

Rorty (1998a) discusses technical expertise as an evolved type of rationality, calling it an ability "that language-using human beings have" that enable them to, "cope with the environment by adjusting one's reactions to environmental stimuli in complex and difficult ways. This is sometimes called 'technical reason'…" (p. 186). In the same essay he also attributes a form of rationality as having enlightened tolerance, "the ability not to be overly disconcerted by differences from oneself" and,

> It goes along with a reliance on persuasion rather than force, an inclination to talk things over rather than to fight, burn, or banish. It is a virtue that enables individuals and communities to coexist peacefully with other individuals and communities, living and letting live, and to put together new, syncretic, compromise ways of life. So rationality in this sense is sometimes thought of, as by Hegel, as quasi-synonymous with freedom. (p. 187).

This description of rationality aligns neatly with the metanarratives that have formed administrative authority. Rorty would prefer to see rationality as a means to have conversation, "To appeal to interests rather than beliefs is to urge a *modus vivendi*" that would "suggest that what makes you loyal to a smaller group may give you reason to cooperate in constructing a larger group" because you have shared epistemic ground rules that allow for unforced agreement and, "with luck, achieves the formulation and utilization of an overlapping consensus" (2007, p. 52). He continues, "any unforced agreement between individuals and groups about what to do creates a form of community, and will, with luck, be the initial stage in expanding the

circles of those whom each party to the agreement had previously taken to be 'people like ourselves'" (p. 53). In the grander picture of neopragmatism's idea of social progress, rationality can serve as the communal rules of engagement "to permit agreement on how to coexist without violence" (p. 54). The connection of rationality and authority is then predicated on public administrators being technocrats of rationality; experts in the language of rationality for the purposes of reaching agreement.

Where Rorty is critical of rationality for being susceptible to abuse as an exclusionary practice (a deviation of rationality that deems one to be "more rational" than another for not exhibiting the higher forms of technical reason or tolerance), so too would his view critique authority as being vulnerable to asymmetrical abuse. Wielding rationality as expertise is recognized as exerting authority in administrative practice, the authority to govern is grounded in the administrator's knowledge of what can be done. "Superiority is, for a pragmatist, always relative to the purpose something is being asked to serve," Rorty writes (1998a, p. 195). Public administrators' expertise is the exercise of authority in assessing superior means to the desired outcomes. Pierson supports this by noting that, "A layperson defers to the authority of experts, not because in so doing one is guaranteed the truth-of-the-matter, but because one lacks the means to determine the issue oneself. In deferring to experts, one is not deferring simply to particular knowledge claims, but to a process for making those claims" (1994, p. 402). Although the neopragmatist would like us all to have commensurable vocabularies in the episteme of governance, practical limitations – e.g. the limitations of sensitive national defense information or ability to

process air quality data – mean that there will be experts who do hold "higher" access and have a form of authority based on such; "the expert has epistemic authority over the layperson when the former is better situated to sort the true from the false" (Pierson, 1994, p. 404).

The characteristic of tolerance that Rorty also prescribes to rationality may be considered an advanced form of authority – the openness to other ideas as objectives. This twist of authority away from dictatorial notions and toward a facilitator role is a higher level of rationality that seeks to apply technical expertise to its fullest extent for any consensual, "syncretic, compromise ways of life" that do not have limited options. Rorty makes the technical expert into an enabler of possibility who offers service to the community by conversation, looking for utility aligned with the context. In this sense, the neopragmatist administrator, as technical expert, is not carrying a hammer and treating every problem as a nail but rather is offering the hammer (their expertise) as an option to work with other tools as possible.

4.3.3 Neopragmatizing Practice

The restoration of an understanding of governance as the exercise of practical wisdom, then, involves moving away from the idea that most administrative decision making can be made definitive and comprehensive, toward greater reliance on tentative strategies that self-correct…Practical wisdom implies, as well, the exercise of judgment within the context of a process that renders it accountable to citizens… (Stivers, in Wamsley et al., 1990, p. 260).

For pragmatism, there is no such thing as an idea that is good in theory but doesn't work in practice. (Stivers, 2008a, p. 126).

The problem with viewing administrative authority as practice is that it promotes an undemocratic sense of elitism for governance; only those who have the

requisite practical experience are qualified to govern. This approach can be

understood as defining an exclusive community of inquiry for administrators to wield

authority because they alone have the bank of experience and opportunity to practice

governance. The Athenian model avoided this problem by rotating all citizens into

public office, yet this idea is obviously impractical today. The result is a self-

supporting method of categorizing practice within the discipline that is applied to

contexts and contingencies beyond the halls of bureaucracy. Unfortunately, the

concessions required for rooting authority in practice lead to postmodern problems of

administrators utilizing a final vocabulary, which is the keystone of the failing

metanarrative. Proposing that public administration's authority rests in a specialized

episteme – a knowledge of governance that is only accessed by being in the business

of governance – runs contrary to the deepest democratic convictions of equity.

Rorty proposed that, "It does not matter whether we can get consensus on

moral principles as long as we can get it on practices" (2007b, p. 921). This is not

equated to the notion of a convention, however, as this would be considered

"something more fixed and stable than the settled (for the moment) habits and

practices of particular human communities" (Bacon, 2006, p. 868). Consensus as a

practice is a:

> Summary of current agreement, not a foundation to be appealed to in order to
> secure an agreement. Any consensus is itself a reflection of the state of
> conversation, not something that participants in that conversation can appeal
> to against their conversational partners. (p. 868).

It is likely that Rorty would have targeted institutional memory as the first

referent for administrative practice. As the record of past practice that has been

habituated into a form of tradition in the metanarrative of public administration,

institutional memory has served as the "go to" justification for much activity. The tradition of public administration as practice relies too much on outputs as a justification (seen as performance measurement) in contrast to the creativity of an outcome-focused approach. The output-centric type of governance is an empirical authority that repeatedly sees its past practices as fixed methods that can be tweaked to achieve the desired performance measures.

Recursive practices in public administration must be reframed; policy implementation processes that jam regulations into current contexts despite contingencies must be supplanted with a more contemplative application of policy. Recursive practices are strains of tradition that happen "within determinable limits" that "are formed by the expectations of others and cocreated by competent selves grasping, accepting, and performing within the limits of those expectations," according to Miller and Fox (2007, p. 84). They argue that the limits "become structures of varying strength and duration" which a neopragmatist can accept as long as the structures are not overly habitualized. Someplace between the expectation of predictability and the need to update approaches, public administration must frame recursive practices as a form of guidance when contingencies do not overstep the "determinable limits" and as less than the rule of thumb when the context of a public problem is unique.

Bogason (2001) summarizes the postmodern push in public administration by calling for more situational analysis, seeing pragmatism's pairing of problem with practice as the reasonable approach. "Habitual convention is what institutions are made of," according to Miller and Fox (2001, p. 679), and "recursive practices are

carried out habitually, passively, and ordinarily without reflection or discourse."

Stivers (2008b) provides another take on practice: "Experience is *contingent* on the

circumstances of particular situations and no situation comes around twice.

Therefore, learning from experience is not a matter of replicating findings from one

situation to the next" (pp. 8-10, italics in original).

Neopragmatism values the lessons learned from practice, but contends that

these lessons are continually aggregated to contribute to the next set of contingencies

that face us and cannot be empirically cataloged for applications that meet certain

qualifications at the expense of the particularities that predicate every unique decision

point for administrators. In other words, Rorty would not agree that administrators'

discretion be limited to deciding how similar a current situation is to a past event in

order to select the institutionalized practice that informs their decision. This is an

insufficient justification in democracy; it conflicts with the need for appropriateness

by avoiding the conversation that leads to consensus. It also implies that there are

Truths insofar as some past problem was dealt with in an ideal way that should be

repeated. Institutional memory has been justified as a concession to efficiency for

public administration, but for neopragmatism it is a lazy behavior that can doom us to

repeating the mistakes of the past while erecting barriers between the polity and the

government. This is not to say that the record of practice should be discarded or that

precedents be ignored, but that their use should be more subtly imputed as elements

that can inform the current conversation as we strive for social progress.

In the logic of neopragmatism, using old tools on new materials can only

produce poor simulacra of the same outcomes that we wish to improve. The update

of material (as the metaphor for contingency) requires new approaches that may

resemble the older techniques but are nonetheless more purposively shaped by the

free dialogue between those who wield the tools (administrators) and those who will

enjoy the outcomes (the polity).

CHAPTER V

THE NEOPRAGMATIST ADMINISTRATOR

The best, and probably the only, argument for putting foundationalism behind us is…[that] it would be more efficient to do so, because it would let us concentrate our energies on manipulating sentiments, on sentimental education. That sort of education gets people of different kinds sufficiently well acquainted with one another that they are less tempted to think of those different from themselves as only quasi-human. (Rorty, 1998, p. 176).

This chapter will take the ideas of neopragmatist authority from the last chapter a bit further by postulating what tools administrators can use from the neopragmatist's forgery to overcome issues of authority in governance for contemporary American society. In keeping with the notion that the methods of inquiry are part and parcel of the actual philosophy, the outcome of this effort offers neither principles in a final vocabulary nor foundations for a new metanarrative of authority that will lead to governance as a different set of traditions. Such a result would negate the main thrust of this thesis.

As unsettling as an "anti-theory" may be – meaning a scheme that does not follow rational-empiricism or even dialectic models – the most solid premises of neopragmatism remain a liberal aversion to cruelty and the alleviation of injustice. Rorty worked from his (then) contemporary vantage in the essay "Looking Backwards from the Year 2096" (1996, pp. 243-251) to predict an optimistic re-

enlightenment for society that had indeed held those ideals a century in the future.

Imputing those premises into the idea of the epistemic community – the portrayal of a

society that is defined by shared language, interests, redescriptions, and practices of

democratic consensus – gives the potential for approaching governance in a way that

brings the polity and the public administration closer together. This objective is the

closest that the neopragmatist argument gets to voicing a universal goal, yet it is an

admirable goal for society.

The neopragmatist approach to public administration envisions its role as a

facilitator of social progress, or "midwife" (Catlaw, 2006, p. 274). Stivers (2008a)

holds that the, "administrator accepts the inevitability of ambiguity and celebrates

small wins" and that, "Administrative action is creative, not predictive" (p. 138).

Hoch (2006) sees neopragmatism's contribution to public administrators as a better

perspective on how to approach policy implementation: "Rorty basically helps us to

grasp the hubris of claiming epistemic trump and to beware the quest for certainty in

the service of the powerful" (p. 389). This humbling of the administrator's place is

followed by balancing the polity's part that dictates "public expectations be shaped by

practical alternatives sensitive to compromise and consensus" (Hoch, 2006, p. 389).

Harmon (2006, p. 144) offers the idea of neopragmatist governance as a

unitary conception, featuring the concepts of collaborative experimentation, practical

theorizing, embracing uncertainty, facilitating the process of social interaction,

legitimacy of individual differences, rationality as the intelligent vetoing, and distrust

of any and all conceptual dualisms. Looking to then meld Rorty's liberalism into the

terms between administrators and the public, Hoch (2006, p. 396) concludes that new

pragmatism, "reminds us what we might lose if we sacrifice freedom for a more encompassing rational order that promises to deliver us from uncertainty and ambiguity" and that, "We should focus less on the questions about the creation of ideals and more on fostering administrative schemes or urban plans that reduce human suffering while offering new domains for private self-perfection." From Rorty, that implies governance in the liberal constitutional state is focused on making policy that alleviates injustice and cruelty through nondiscriminatory practices.

A broad minded public administrator should consider public criticism of the agency to be a better outcome than bewilderment about what the agency does. The former indicates the opportunity for discourse whereas the latter suggests that the agency is performing governance without the consent, knowledge, or authority from the public, even if the activity is productive by some measures. In other words, the hidden or underpublicized agencies are not working toward progress because their undisclosed (or under-promoted) mission is obviously not in the public purview. Lacking the conversation with the public, the agency can be nothing more than an adherent to traditional practices established from outdated contexts and, therefore, is providing stagnant, if not regressive, public service. Governance must be continually evaluated in terms of its contribution toward the outcomes that are needed for social progress and not being provided from other sources. Under that rubric, the needs themselves must also be evaluated for currency, although that is usually in the purview of the political process.

The civic-minded, postmodern bourgeois liberal can accept administrative authority with justifications of expertise and political warrant (representation) in

democratic society. This is predicated on there being an epistemic community that has agreed that social justice and progress – interpreted here as reaching consensus under pragmatic teleology – are understood in the conversation (implying linguistic equity) between public administration and the polity. That type of epistemic community is derived from a shared sense of contingency, irony, and solidarity in our social practices.

5.1 The Epistemic Community as Context

A democratic understanding of knowledge makes it possible for the citizen role to broaden beyond voting to participation in constructing and interpreting the information and understandings that guide public decision-making. In this way, it tempers representation, which otherwise cuts most citizens off from any direct share in governing. Participation in the development of knowledge empowers citizens even though they may never serve as legislators, judges, or administrators. (Stivers, 2008b, p. 2).

At task is the reconciliation of the use of authority in the democratic state while avoiding incoherencies between the will of the people and its fulfillment through governance. This reconciliation can be approached through an understanding of community. For classical pragmatists such as Dewey and his adherents, it is a "community of inquiry," while those who identify more closely with neopragmatism may refer to the "epistemic community." There is one significant material difference between the two appellations as the latter term reaches further into the linguistic aspects of a community, i.e. the language of the community is integral to its recognized purposes. This aspect is played out in the debate over the nature of experience; the neopragmatist's do not share classical pragmatists' value of experience before being put into language. Indeed, the neopragmatists are not sure that experience can

115

be part of our epistemology without language (i.e. The Linguistic Turn). Language's purpose – communication in a community – then implicates experience as a social construct with temporal qualities (Koopman, 2007 p. 710-713), necessitating the advance from the community of inquiry to the idea of the epistemic community, hereby appropriated as the neopragmatist context of administrative authority and developed in the following.

Shields (2003) refers to the community of inquiry as an organizing principle for addressing a problematic situation that "encourages better method, better theory, and democracy" (p. 512). Her position is supported by Hildebrand (2008), who explains that, "If the background of democratic life is rooted in *community*, its complementary foreground is *inquiry*, the epistemic actions with which communities solve problems and improve conditions", to which he adds, "Inquiry assumes a *social* character when we appreciate that most major problems engage *groups*, not just individuals" (p. 224).

From Miller and Fox (2001, p. 682) we get confirmation that, "Norms of inquiry are socially mediated within epistemic communities," which they define as "a group of inquirers who have knowledge problems to solve. An epistemic community produces small-t local truth and not big-T universal Truth" (p. 669). Translating epistemic community as "knowledge-society", Sundstrom (2000) describes it pur- posively as "a network of professionals with expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue area" (p. 1). This understanding of the epistemic community provides a basis for its role in the neopragmatist approach as the center of conversation; the epistemic

116

community is the discursive site where the polity and public administration work out problems and decide on the authority to implement solutions for social progress.

The epistemic community is similar to the community of inquiry except that its functional boundaries are determined by the agreement of participants as to the language that they use (i.e. science, metaphysics, astrology, etc.). The boundaries of a community expand or contract to comprise the polity that has similar interests and ideas about how to go about making social progress. Thus, an epistemic community may be a gated community whose interests are privacy and security, a religious group whose interests are moral behavior, a county that has interests in economic development, or an entire nation's perspective on taxes. The possible epistemic communities may be considered alternative movements, competing paradigms, or even factions in pluralistic societies. It is Rorty's hope that these communities can be as large as possible as humans come together in the "contingency, irony, and solidarity" scheme to achieve a level of global agreement (1989). This hinges on the classical pragmatist tenet that knowledge is justified true belief being aggrandized by Rorty's (1979) position that the pursuit of knowledge and the pursuit of agreement are one and the same: "The application of such honorifics as 'objective' and 'cognitive' is never anything more than an expression of the presence of, or the hope for, agreement among inquirers" (p. 335). This is most clear as Rorty tries to expand the idea of justice to a near-universal consensus – as the broadest exemplar of localized truth:

> If we Westerners could get rid of the notion of universal moral obligations
> created by membership in the species, and substitute the idea of building a
> community of trust between ourselves and others, we might be in a better

position to persuade non-Westerners of the advantages of joining in that community. (2007, p. 55).

Each epistemic community is regarded as equitable among its members in the Rawlsian sense, meaning that there is no outright discrimination or asymmetrical preferences in the community. Because they have shared interests, the members pursue those interests from a common starting point. By extension, all epistemic communities are equally valid as they pursue inquiry into making the world less cruel and more just. This notion feeds the neopragmatist nature; a world without Truths means that we all have a fair claim to ideas. When an idea is accepted by a group that then builds consensus to make it an objective of progress, an epistemic community emerges. Consider a set of equations to explain how neopragmatism and the epistemic community are related:

f (Neopragmatism) = Epistemic Community + Social Progress

Epistemic Community = Community of Inquiry + (Postmodernism + The Linguistic Turn)

This scheme posits that neopragmatism's function (*f)* is the outcome of an epistemic community and social progress. As Chapter 3 discussed, social progress is defined as moving away from cruelty and injustice through the liberalism circumscribed by contingency, irony, and solidarity. The idea of the epistemic community is then broken down into the pragmatist idea of the community of inquiry and the addition of the postmodern skepticism of metanarratives plus the linguistic turn that repositions our experiences into matters of language (Koopman, 2007).

The common denominator of any epistemic community is the shared language and that its members are coherently governed if their public administration shares the language. This is realized already in the United States to a certain degree as English is the official language, but the contention here is that there just is not enough of a connection between public administration and the possibility of all the various communities (e.g. certain southwestern states have repeatedly had movements for bi-lingual policies). The authority of public administration has to be commensurable to the epistemic community at some common level or it will result in incoherent policy implementation. Is there a Spanish term for collateralized mortgage obligation?

This last point may be examined in greater detail in terms of justice. Recalling that justice (and avoiding cruelty) are Rorty's only principles for liberal society, it follows that the most restrictive epistemic community – i.e. a group whose interests and language result in specific curtails to personal freedom – is at the lower end of the spectrum of liberalism. This group's interests are so specific that to overlay its boundaries to another community that did not share its interests, the competing paradigms and incommensurability would surely lead to injustice and cruelty between members of the "original" epistemic community and those who were encompassed in its expansion. Conversely, the least restrictive epistemic community that enjoys the greatest personal freedom under with shared interests and language would be the entire Earth's population. We may only imagine that the shared interests and language are the most elementary: food, shelter, and simple gestures determine the global epistemic community. This scheme reflects the American federal system – correlating the various levels of epistemic community to the

119

Founder's concerns with factions and political parties – and ties the epistemic community to the context in which it operates much as the northeastern states had a different set of contingencies as the southern states.

Epistemic authority, therefore, comes from the use of knowledge that is justified by the community. Just as Rorty allows localized truths (as determined by communities of inquiry) to serve in the pursuit of social progress, so too do we allow localized authority (as determined by epistemic communities) to serve in the interest of administration's pursuit of solving public problems based on those localized truths. It is a relative of relativism, although it has purpose beyond explaining a perspective, in that the determinant of knowledge is in the interests of the community's pursuit of progress and meaningful outcomes. "Thus it seem that Rorty analyzes both truth and justice in terms of a practice of justification that takes place within a particular community of inquiry, and in accordance with local norms" (Thompson, 2001, p. 36). This take on Rorty means that the practice of justification is the whole of administrative authority; public administration has authority by its ability to justify governance as the treatment of public problems. The epistemic community is the discourse framework for public administration and the polity to come to agreement in a common language for (re-)descriptions of those problems.

5.2 Forging Administrative Authority

Public administration exists to solve public problems…The most stable and deeply rooted public trust is produced by methods that are objective and democratic…Objectivity is not the assurance that an inquiry or judgment has been completed from a completely ahistorical or apersonal point of view;

rather, it is the assurance that the inquiry or judgment has been done in a way that allows open access, testability, and public verifiability of the process. (Hildebrand, 2008, p. 226).

Authority is a necessary and enduring element of the relationship between public administration and the polity as they come together to solve problems. The acceptance of governance, as evidenced by the existence of a fairly stable American society, includes an implicit acceptance of the requisite authority that administration needs to implement policy. The greater the problem, the greater authority as determined by the consensus over how cruel or unjust it is. Miller (2004) credits "both old and new pragmatists" as understanding that governing in a democracy "does not rest upon the idea that life must be subjected to some universal standard or preemptory authority that takes priority over every lived moment" (p. 248). From this, we can begin to understand that neopragmatism can come to terms with authority by blurring the locus of authority – it is forged by the polity and public administration hammering away at problems in discourse. It is the task of public administration to enable the conversation by fostering inquiry by the epistemic community.

Stivers (2008a, p. 130) recalls Ralph Waldo Emerson's idea of "onwardness" as a relation of progress in the neopragmatist's vein. She notes that inquiry is propelled by "the task of onwardness" that "entails the willingness to live with ambiguity", a condition that runs counter to administrators' inherent hope for definitive solutions to problems. Although "onwardness" as a poetic term captures the contingency and dynamism of governance, it also hearkens back to the idea of authority as problem-driven. He who rallies the troops to carry forth in the pursuit of progress – whatever that may end up being – is the leader that recognizes that current

121

conditions may be better further along. This leader is the authority only to the extent

of encouraging a pace just as the authority of public administration is now seen as

encouraging conversation to continue.

Referring to Hildebrand's (2008, p. 226) statement of purposive governance

above – "public administration exists to solve public problems" – the public problem

is situated as the source and ultimate authority. This is in contrast to Raadschelders

and Stillman's (2007, p. 26) perspective that situates the people as the final repository

of authority; they posit that, "whatever is regarded as authoritative…is subject to

negotiation" and the result is decided by majority rule. Putting the problem as the

authoritative entity is a much more pragmatist contention, as it removes the variety of

individuals' redescriptions of their experiences from getting in the way of the pursuit

of outcomes. That is to say that if authority is found in the people, then the people

make the justification as to what is a problem. What is a problem for some may not

be a problem for others. The arbitrariness of such delineations leaves public

administration open for opportunities to practice discriminatory, cruel and unjust

governance. Seeing the problem as the impetus for assignations of authority is more

appropriate for public administration in two ways. First, it is more likely to bring

those with expertise and interest to bear on the problem. Second, the use of authority

will be contained for the set of contingencies that accompanied the problem rather

than calling on a more general authority from a preexisting context that will bluntly

address the problem.

The logical progression from there is quite simple: if the problem is the source

of authority, then the conversation between the polity and public administration

determines the use of that authority. This makes neopragmatic sense because it appeals to the context of the administration/polity conversation as the impetus for assigning authority on a case-by-case basis. Neopragmatism's application is further supported as an approach when we concede that the problem at the center of the activity and assignation of authority is always a product of our experiences, which are necessarily a description (or redescription) when discussed with others, and thus the problem becomes a linguistic issue. As Rorty (1979) illustrates in the confusion of such a perspective, "We might just be *saying something* – participating in a conversation rather than contributing to an inquiry. Perhaps saying things is not always saying how things are. Perhaps saying *that* is itself not a case of saying how things are" (p. 371). The competing re-/descriptions of the problem are language issues that must be reconciled between the polity and administration and thus an approach that recognizes this contingency to the situation is an appropriate means.

Although we must be careful promoting a communitarian view of society where it is not warranted, a neopragmatist approach to public administration from such a perspective is easily reconciled. The communitarian version of authority works on the reassurance that the public administrator is just like you, the citizen. This can be seen when the bureaucrat empathizes with the citizen, they connect through conversation, and understand that the authority to implement the policy comes from the acceptance of the community that the policy is justified by the democratic process. This reinforces the element of solidarity in neopragmatism, although not necessarily the element of consensus if either the administrator or the citizen does not share the values of the policy. Yet it is a democratic conflict of

values that resulted in the eventual consensus and that conflict, practiced through conversation between administrators and the polity, is always a sign of social progress for the neopragmatist.

The major challenge for public administration is signing on to the idea that the discipline can survive without the metanarrative of authority. Governance may be seen as set adrift if it is not tied to the anchors of rational empiricism. Moreover, public administration would be in a difficult spot if it took the first steps toward neopragmatism – meaning that it shook off the shackles of the tradition that were founded in the Cartesian enlightenment, developed by the Founders into the Constitution, and affirmed through years of practice – and did not offer an equally succinct method for governance. It is neopragmatism's contention that doing away with the metanarrative does not necessitate the offering of a replacement metanarrative and that the abandonment of one theory does not require a successor theory, even if it holds a tenuous position until a third theory is brought into practice. Stivers (2008a) points out that administrators must come to terms with the lack of fixtures and finality; they realize that solutions are more often than not temporary, that, "the situations they find themselves in are seldom resolved, only dealt with in some way that enables them to move on…they will find a measurement and a method they can live with for the time being" (p. 125). She sees administrators as already being functionally pragmatists, especially in terms using theory, experience, and practice together, yet governance is still tethered to foundationalism:

> Pragmatism seems to be a rather slippery, shifting basis for public sector practice. Despite the central place of life experience, there is something frustrating about a guide to public life that so roundly resists being solidified. Downplaying abstractions and theories has undeniable appeal to people

struggling to cope with conflicting demands and multiple accountabilities. Still, those same demands and accountabilities give rise to a certain longing to know that there is something underneath it all that can serve as a reference point, a ground – if not to stand firmly on, at least to move forward from. Pragmatism does offer a ground of sorts, though it is more of a process than a structure. (p. 133).

A final argument is now assembled to forge administrative authority from the neopragmatist forgery. Calling upon the more general, inoffensive, and digestible concepts discussed up to this point, this logic portrays the gist of the effort:

1. Justice is the equitable administration of democratically determined outcomes (a combination of consensus and the contingency/irony/solidarity idea from Rorty).

2. The pursuit of justice and its corollary, the effort to realize consequences (outcome experiences) that are less cruel and unjust than our experiences in present contexts, defines social progress.

3. Authority is guidance in the redescription of experiences that inform our assessment of present contexts vis-à-vis justice.

4. Administrative authority is the agent of progress.

Public administrators who view their position as the warranted exercise of authority in the pursuit of justice will see governance as a mechanism for social progress.

5.3 Implications of the Approach

It was amusing to learn that recent translations of Nietzsche's The Gay Science *are being published as* The Joyous Science…*The meaning of a word obtains only in each particular usage of it. Even then, there is no law that says it has to indicate anything at all* (Miller & Fox, 2001, p. 674).

The contribution of this thesis is an approach for governance that raises the necessary doubt when an administrative practice does not fit the context because it is steeped in regressive traditions. Box (2002) supports the idea of pragmatic discourse as legitimating public administration, seeing the discourse as having, "the potential to

release new understandings of social conditions and possibilities for collective action"

that "may give citizens opportunities to take public will formation in new and

different directions that challenge the status quo" (p. 21). The approach requires that

the implementation of policy is developed through discursive means, not based upon

the positivism of universal Truths or incrementally altered by the feedback loop that

"generates immanent irrationalities" (Miller & Fox, 2007, p. 25). Harmon (2006)

offers the alternative to the prevailing metanarrative:

> If reverting to modernity's assumptions and solutions is no longer possible,
> the realistic alternative appears to lie in inventing strategies and encouraging
> social practices for making the best of those social, political, and economic
> conditions now classified under the heading of globalization. (p. 147).

> The question of how to promote a form of democracy reconceived as
> collaborative interaction should be acknowledged as [public administration's]
> central challenge. A public administration no longer obliged to defend
> collaboration's legitimacy as a philosophical proposition is therefore free to
> confront that challenge on practical terms. (p. 149).

Selling pragmatism to the polity as a guiding philosophy of public

administration is straightforward; we practice what is useful in producing desired

outcomes. The rules that govern those practices are in the Constitution and under its

guidance we should endeavor to remain fair participants in democracy. Adding in the

context of liberalism, we support an individualistic, bootstrap-yanking attitude and

when we recognize that governance is the necessary and practical means for a public

problem, it will be provided with efficiency and effectiveness to the extent of the

community's desired progress. This compilation of American philosophy is a smooth

blending of traditional public administration theory that then allows discretionary

authority to account for contingencies as long as justifications are aligned with the

outcomes. Pragmatism would not have it otherwise, although the classical notion still

126

clings to the metanarrative insofar as methods and precedents hold significant sway over policy implementation.

Advancing neopragmatism, in contrast to the above, requires a paradigm shift that is undoubtedly frightening because we would be asking the polity to accept the dissolution of the predictable in pursuit of the possible. Institutional memory must no longer serve as the default mode for informing practice. The effort required to gather consensus will undoubtedly slow the pace of governance as it is currently arranged, although this is not a bad thing if the value of social progress increases at the expense of practices that are cruel and unjust.

There are incoherencies in the Federal system, realized as conflicts between state and federal courts, which carry over to the notion of multiple echelons of epistemic communities. The incoherencies are traced to the adherence to traditions that have outlasted the contingencies that shaped them in their original contexts, just as interests and language change in the face of a dynamic existence. Public administration's awareness of incoherent policies demands a substantial reaction that will bring social progress; it is responsible for bringing the incoherency to light, which would entail practices that work around the problem between the policy and social progress. This idea sounds a call for discretionary authority at a level beyond the granting or withholding of policy benefits. The discretionary authority of administrators to guide governance toward social progress entails the reconstruction of feedback loops that do not rely on the rational empirical processes that harbor the incoherency among the contingencies of the context. It is difficult to envision how this may work, but it

is no less difficult than accepting institutionalized asymmetrical benefits that result from the extension of traditional methods beyond their justified boundaries.

We are left with the acknowledgement that, despite the postmodern flexibility of neopragmatism, it is still a philosophy, it is a theory, it is a process, and it is hereby proposed as a practice for public administration. The distinguishing characteristic of neopragmatism that sets it apart from a metanarrative is that it does not propose a method for solutions beyond identifying the object of inquiry as social progress and hoping that the method used toward that goal is just, democratic, and appropriate as we come to consensus on the context of the issue at hand.

In the final analysis, neopragmatism has to offer something to public administration that is attractive to practitioners and acceptable by the polity. Yet the potential contribution for practice is tied to public administrators first forging a different role for themselves than the metanarratives have dictated and then selling it to the community (more appropriately, the forging would itself be a community process). Just as the reinventing government movement in the early 1990's prescribed "steering, not rowing", a neopragmatist approach to governance has a normative stance that is rooted in liberal democratic society; namely, public administrators should be steering under the influence of conversations and consensus. If this idea appears to invite constant debate over our direction, then that perceived problem is soundly put down by the neopragmatist who would then suggest that our direction *is* debate and there is nothing lost by having endless discourse. If the idea sparks objections about inefficiency and bureaucratic inertia in the form of continued discussions at the expense of material action, then those objections are *also*

meaningful conversation and a contribution to social progress. And if all these postmodern loops appear to be wasteful exercises that do not advance any agendas, then those agendas themselves must be suspect because they have not garnered the consensus (majority) to end the discussion – the objective of any rational empirical enquiry – and the objectors have unwittingly acceded that solidarity is not in hand. This is liberal democracy; the ongoing opportunity to discuss and continue conversation over issues without needing to make the world look like one faction's ideal.

REFERENCES

Abel, C. F. (2007). Friedrich, pragmatism, and the warrants of authority. *Administrative*

   Theory & Praxis, 29 (1), 57-82.

Alford, J. & Hughes, O. (2008). Public value pragmatism as the next phase of public

   management. *American Review of Public Administration*, *38* (2), 130-148.

Arendt, H. (2000). *The portable Hannah Arendt* (P. Baehr, Ed.). New York, NY:

   Penguin Books.

Arendt, H. (2005). *The promise of politics*. New York, NY: Schocken Books.

Bacon, M. (2006). Rorty and pragmatic social criticism. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*,

   32 (7), 863-880.

Berlin, I. (1961). Does political theory still exist? In Laslett, P. & Runciman, W. G.

   (Eds) (1962). *Philosophy, politics and society*. New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc.

Bogason, P. (2001). Postmodernism and American public administration in the 1990s.

   Administration & Society, 33 (2), 165-193.

Box, R. C. (2001). Pragmatic discourse and administrative legitimacy. *American Review*

   of Public Administration, 32 (1), 20-39.

Carnap, R. (1950). *Logical foundations of probability*. Chicago, IL: University of

   Chicago Press.

Catlaw, T. (2007a). Discourse, decision, and the doublet: An essay on the crisis of

   modern authority. In Morcol, G. (Ed). *Handbook of Decision Making,* pp. 99-118.

   Boca Raton, FL: Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.

Catlaw, T. (2007b). *Fabricating the people: Politics and administration in the*

   biopolitical state. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.

130

Catlaw, T. (2006). Authority, representation, and the contradictions of post-traditional
governing. *American Review of Public Administration, 36* (3), 261-287

Cohn, J. S. (2006). *Anarchism and the crisis of representation.* Selinsgrove, PA:
Susquehanna University Press.

Dewey, J. (1927). *The public and its problems.* Denver, CO: Alan Swallow.

Dewey, J. (1930). *The quest for certainty.* London, UK: George Allen & Unwin.

Diggins, John P. (1994). *The promise of pragmatism.* Chicago, IL: University of
Chicago Press.

Eagan, J. L. (2007). Is authority in public administration separable from
authoritarianism? Personalities, institutions, and resistance. *Administrative Theory &
Praxis, 29* (1), 83-101.

Farmer, D. J. (1995). *The language of public administration.* Tuscaloosa, AL: The
University of Alabama Press.

Festenstein, M. (2001). Richard Rorty: Pragmatism, irony and liberalism. In Festenstein,
M. & Thompson, S. (Eds). *Richard Rorty: Critical Dialogues,* pp. 1-14. Cambridge,
UK: Polity Press.

Follett, M. P. (1924). *Creative experience.* New York, NY: Longman, Green and Co.

Friedrich, C. J. (Ed) (1958). *Authority.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Friedrich, C. J. (1963). *Man and his government: An empirical theory of politics.* New
York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Gadamer, H. G. (1976). *Philosophical hermeneutics* (D. E. Linge, Trans.). Berkeley,
CA: University of California Press.

Guignon, C. & Hiley, D. R. (Eds) (2003). *Richard Rorty*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge
University Press.

Gutting, G. (2003). Rorty's critique of epistemology. In Guignon, C. & Hiley, D. R.
(Eds). *Richard Rorty*, pp. 41-60. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Harmon, M. M. (2006). *Public administration's final exam*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University
of Alabama Press.

Hendel, C. W. (1958). An explanation of the nature of authority. In Friedrich, C. J. (Ed),
Authority, pp. 3-27. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hildebrand, D. L. (2003). The neopragmatist turn. *Southwest Philosophy Review, 19* (1).

Hildebrand, D. L. (2005). Pragmatism, neopragmatism, and public administration.
Administration & Society, 37 (3), 345-359.

Hildebrand, D. L. (2008). Public administration as pragmatic, democratic, and objective.
Public Administration Review, 68 (2), 222-229.

Hoch, C. (2006). What can Rorty teach an old pragmatist doing public administration or
planning? *Administration & Society*, *38* (3), 389-398.

Hummel, R. P. (2007). *The bureaucratic experience: The post-modern challenge* (5th
ed.). Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharp, Inc.

Koopman, C. (2007). Language is a form of experience: Reconciling classical
pragmatism and neopragmatism. *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society, 43*
(4), 694-727.

Kuhn, T. S. (1996). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (3rd ed.). Chicago, IL: The
University of Chicago Press.

Lyotard, J-F. (1984). *The postmodern condition*. Minneapolis, MN: University of

    Minnesota Press.

Marshall, G. S. (2007). Commanded to enjoy: The waning of traditional authority and its

    implications for public administration. *Administrative Theory & Praxis, 29* (1), 102-

    114.

McReynolds, P. (2007). *American Philosopher.* Video excerpt posted to:

    http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTw65nvMPgc

McSwite, O. C. (1997). *Legitimacy in public administration: A discourse analysis*.

    Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

McSwite, O. C. (2003). Now more than ever: Refusal as redemption. *Administrative*

    Theory and Praxis, 25 (2), 185-204.

Mead, G. H. (1936). *Movements of thought in the nineteenth century*. Chicago, IL:

    University of Chicago Press.

Menand, L. (Ed) (1997). *Pragmatism: A reader*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Menand, L. (2002). *The metaphysical club*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Miller, H. T. (2004). Why old pragmatism needs an upgrade. *Administration & Society*,

    36 (2), 243-249.

Miller, H. T. (2005). Residues of foundationalism in classic pragmatism. *Administration*

    & Society, 37 (3), 360-374.

Miller, H. T. & Fox, C. J. (2001). The epistemic community. *Administration & Society*,

    32 (6), 668-685.

Miller, H. T. & Fox, C. J. (2007). *Postmodern public administration, revised edition*.

    Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc.

Misak, C. (Ed.) (2007). *New pragmatists*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Misak, C. (2008). A culture of justification: The pragmatist's epistemic argument for

    democracy. *Episteme*, 94-105.

Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic research: Design, methodology, and applications*.

    Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Oakeshott, M. (1975). Talking politics. *National Review, 27* (47), 1345-1428.

Pierson, R. (1994). The epistemic authority of expertise. *PSA, 1*, 398-405.

Posner, R. A. (2002). Pragmatism versus purposivism in first amendment analysis.

    Stanford Law Review, 54, 737-752.

Posner, R. A. (1990). A pragmatist manifesto. In Menand, L. (Ed) (1997). *Pragmatism:*

    A reader, pp. 418-435. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Posner, R. A. (2003). *Law, pragmatism, and democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard

    University Press.

Raadschelders, J. & Stillman II, R. J. (2007). Towards a new conceptual framework for

    studying administrative authority. *Administrative Theory & Praxis, 29* (1), 4-40.

Rohr, J. A. (1998). *Public service, ethics, and constitutional practice.* Lawrence, KS:

    University of Kansas Press.

Rohr, J. A. (1986). *To run a constitution*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press.

Rorty, R. (1979). *Philosophy and the mirror of nature*. Princeton, NY: Princeton

    University Press.

Rorty, R. (1982). *Consequences of pragmatism.* Minneapolis, MN: University of

    Minnesota Press.

Rorty, R. (1989). *Contingency, irony, and solidarity.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge

    University Press.

Rorty, R. (1991). *Objectivity, relativism, and truth: Philosophical papers, volume 1.*

    Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Rorty, R. (1998a). *Truth and progress: Philosophical papers, volume 3.* Cambridge,

    UK: Cambridge University Press.

Rorty, R. (1998b). *Achieving our country.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Rorty, R. (1999). *Philosophy and social hope.* New York, NY: Penguin Books.

Rorty, R. (2006). Pragmatism as anti-authoritarianism. In Shook, J. R. & Margolis, J.

    (Eds). *A companion to pragmatism*, pp. 257-266. Malden, MA: Blackwell

    Publishing.

Rorty, R. (2007a). *Philosophy as cultural politics.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge

    University Press.

Rorty, R. (2007b). Dewey and Posner on pragmatism and moral progress. *The*

    University of Chicago Law Review, 74, 915-927.

Rosenbloom, D. H, Carroll James. D. & Carroll, Jonathan D. (2000). *Constitutional*

    competence for public managers: Cases and commentary. Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock

    Publishers, Inc.

Schaar, J. H. (1984). Legitimacy in the modern state. In W. Connolly (Ed.), *Legitimacy*

    and the state (pp. 104-133). New York, NY: New York University Press.

Sementelli, A. J. (2007). Authority, domination, and the administrative state.

    Administrative Theory & Praxis, 29 (1), 115-131.

Shields, P. M. (1996). Pragmatism: Exploring public administration's policy imprint. *Administration and Society, 28* (3), 390-411.

Shields, P. M. (2003). The community of inquiry: Classical pragmatism and public administration. *Administration and Society, 35* (5), 510-538.

Shields, P. M. (2005). Classical pragmatism does not need an upgrade: Lessons for public administration. *Administration and Society, 37* (4), 504-518.

Shields, P. M. (2008). Rediscovering the taproot: Is classical pragmatism the route to renew public administration? *Public Administration Review, 68* (2), 205-221.

Simon, H. A. (1997). *Administrative behavior* (4th ed). New York, NY: The Free Press.

Singer, B. J. (1999). *Pragmatism, rights, and democracy*. New York, NY: Fordham University Press.

Snider, K. F. (2000a). Expertise or experimenting? Pragmatism and American public administration, 1920-1950. *Administration & Society, 32* (3), 329-354.

Snider, K. F. (2000b). Rethinking public administration's roots in pragmatism: The case of Charles A. Beard. *American Review of Public Administration, 30* (2), 123-145.

Spicer, M. W. (1995). *The Founders, the Constitution and public administration: A conflict in world views*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Spicer, M. W. (1997). Public administration, the state, and the postmodern condition. *American Behavioral Scientist, 41* (1), 90-102.

Spicer, M. W. (2003). *Public administration and the state.* Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.

Spicer, M. W. (2004). Public administration, the history of ideas, and the reinventing government movement. *Public Administration Review, 64* (3), 353-362.

Spicer, M. W. (2005). Public administration enquiry and social science in the postmodern

    condition: Some implications of value pluralism. *Administrative Theory & Praxis, 27*

    (4), 669-688.

Spicer, M. W. (2007a). Some reflections on democracy and their implications for

    American public administration. *Public Administration Review*, *67* (2), 343-350.

Spicer, M. W. (2007b). "Reconciling postmodern public administration and

    constitutionalism: Some reflections on the ideas of Stuart Hampshire." Prepared for

    the Public Administration Theory Network Conference, Harrisburg, PA, May 26-28,

    2007.

 Spicer, M. W. & Terry, L. D. (1996). Administrative interpretation of statutes: A

    constitutional view on the "New World Order" of public administration. *Public*

    Administration Review, *56* (1), 38-47.

Spiro, H. J. (1958). Authority, values, and policy. In Friedrich, C. J. (Ed), *Authority,* pp.

    49-57. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Stivers, C. M. (1998). Deciding the undecidable: A few things postmodernism might

    have to offer public administration. In Farmer, D. J. (Ed). *Papers on the art of anti-*

    administration, pp. 87-92. Burke, VA: Chatelaine Press.

Stivers, C. M. (2000). *Bureau men, settlement women*. Lawrence, KS: University Press

    of Kansas.

Stivers, C. M. (2008a). *Governance in dark times*. Tuscaloosa, AL: Univ. of Alabama

    Press.

Stivers, C. M. (2008b). Democratic knowledge – the task before us. Prepared for the

    Minnowbrook III Conference, Lake Placid, NY, September 5-7, 2008.

Sundström, M. (2000). *A brief introduction: What is an epistemic community?* Retrieved

    March 31, 2009, from http://www.svet.lu.se/joluschema/epistcomm.pdf

Taylor, F. W. (1998). *The principles of scientific management*. Mineola, NY: Dover

    Publications, Inc.

Thompson, S. (2001). Richard Rorty on truth, justification and justice. In Festenstein,

    M. & Thompson, S. (Eds). *Richard Rorty: Critical Dialogues,* pp. 33-50.

    Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Vonnegut, Kurt Jr. (1998). *Welcome to the Monkey House*. New York, NY: Delta Trade.

Waldo, D. (1984). *The administrative state.* New York, NY: Holmes and Meier.

G. L. Wamsley, R. N. Bacher, C. T. Goodsell, P. S. Kronenberg, J. A. Rohr, C. M.

    Stivers, O. F. White, & J. F. Wolf (1990). *Refounding public administration*.

    Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Webb, J. L. (2004). Comment on Hugh T. Miller's "Why old pragmatism needs and

    upgrade." *Administration & Society, 36* (4), 479-495.

Weber, M. (1984). Legitimacy, politics and the state. In W. Connolly (Ed.), *Legitimacy*

    and the state (pp. 32-62). New York, NY: New York University Press.

Wilson, W. (1887). The study of administration. *Political Science Quarterly, 2*, 197-222.

Wolin, S. S. (1969). Political theory as a vocation. *The American Political Science*

    Review, 63 (4), 1062-1082.

Wolin, S. S. (2004). *Politics and vision: Continuity and innovation in western political*

    thought. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Wootton, D. (Ed) (2003). *The essential Federalist and Anti-Federalist papers.*

    Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co., Inc.