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A Qualitative Approach  
to First-Year College Composition  
in the American Upper South from 1930 to 1945

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

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Gina Smith Claywell

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### Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to  
Gerald, Charlton, and Catherine  
and the time together we can now enjoy.



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## Abstract

This examination of college composition instruction at three Kentucky and Tennessee schools in the 1930-1945 era gives the field of rhetoric and composition a richer insight into the type of instruction offered as experienced by both students and teachers. It strives, in short, to merge the academic with the personal. A qualitative methodology, while certainly not unique in composition instruction research, is herein uniquely applied to history, and the resultant product benefits from the simultaneously-broadened data base and focused vignettes. Most historians in the field tell us only what was studied (by examining the textbook used). If they do examine who taught (after generally ignoring who studied), they only tell us about famous scholars at major institutions. This project purposefully ignores famous institutions and famous historical figures of composition instruction.

The study situates not only what was studied--as evidenced by lesson plans, handouts, diaries, and personal recollections--but also who taught and who studied at schools typically ignored by historians. Oral history interviews from former students and professors help to complete the picture of college composition in the mid-twentieth century.

No other studies have examined schools in the Upper South, so what this study adds to the histories we already have is another perspective--a geographic one with abundant socioeconomic and cultural underpinnings in light of the impoverished conditions and

poor educational systems in Kentucky and Tennessee in the 1930-1945 period.

The study reveals that trend-setting pedagogies and techniques were not relegated to the more elite schools in this country. Furthermore, this dissertation serves to dispel the either/or fallacies which many other histories in the field offer. The resultant portrait is one of students rushing to class with milk jars in their car trunks and of teachers staying up late to grade papers after playing with their children. Though parts of the picture are blurry or even missing, it is a portrait much more reflective of the ambiguities life offers than existing histories provide. It is a portrait of real people holding "the seams of life" together.

## Table of Contents

| Chapter                                                                                              | Page |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Chapter One Review of Existing Histories and Methods . . . . .                                       | 1    |
| Existing Histories . . . . .                                                                         | 3    |
| Shortage of Histories . . . . .                                                                      | 4    |
| Selection of Sites . . . . .                                                                         | 7    |
| Dependence on Textbooks . . . . .                                                                    | 9    |
| Historiographical Methods . . . . .                                                                  | 11   |
| Traditional Histories . . . . .                                                                      | 15   |
| Revisionist Histories . . . . .                                                                      | 18   |
| Qualitative Research . . . . .                                                                       | 26   |
| Present Study . . . . .                                                                              | 35   |
| Study Overview . . . . .                                                                             | 37   |
| Chapter Two Description of the Methodology . . . . .                                                 | 39   |
| Research Questions . . . . .                                                                         | 40   |
| Methodology . . . . .                                                                                | 41   |
| Researcher Bias. . . . .                                                                             | 42   |
| Case History Approach . . . . .                                                                      | 43   |
| Data Collection . . . . .                                                                            | 47   |
| Case History Protocol . . . . .                                                                      | 48   |
| Site access. . . . .                                                                                 | 49   |
| Participant access. . . . .                                                                          | 54   |
| Triangulation . . . . .                                                                              | 58   |
| Text analysis. . . . .                                                                               | 59   |
| Interviews. . . . .                                                                                  | 61   |
| Data Analysis. . . . .                                                                               | 66   |
| Analysis Strategy . . . . .                                                                          | 66   |
| Assessment of Procedures . . . . .                                                                   | 69   |
| Review of Assumptions . . . . .                                                                      | 70   |
| Reliability, Validity, and Ethics . . . . .                                                          | 73   |
| Reliability. . . . .                                                                                 | 73   |
| Internal validity. . . . .                                                                           | 74   |
| External validity. . . . .                                                                           | 74   |
| Ethics. . . . .                                                                                      | 78   |
| Summary . . . . .                                                                                    | 79   |
| Chapter Three Bethel Woman's College: A Private School in<br>Hopkinsville, Kentucky. . . . .         | 81   |
| Primary and Secondary Education in Kentucky in the<br>1930s and 1940s--College Preparation . . . . . | 81   |

|                                                                  |     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Bethel Woman's College .....                                     | 87  |
| School History .....                                             | 89  |
| School Atmosphere .....                                          | 91  |
| Student life.....                                                | 92  |
| Faculty life.....                                                | 95  |
| English at Bethel Woman's College .....                          | 96  |
| First-Year Composition Course Description .....                  | 96  |
| Students .....                                                   | 98  |
| Faculty .....                                                    | 102 |
| Faculty's Outside Interests .....                                | 102 |
| Evaluation of Writing .....                                      | 103 |
| Writing Topics .....                                             | 103 |
| Textbooks .....                                                  | 104 |
| External Forces Acting on Composition .....                      | 104 |
| Summary .....                                                    | 109 |
| Chapter Four Western Kentucky: A State Teachers College in       |     |
| Bowling Green .....                                              | 112 |
| Higher Education in Kentucky in the 1930s and 1940s--            |     |
| Teacher Training .....                                           | 113 |
| Western Kentucky State Teachers College .....                    | 117 |
| School History .....                                             | 118 |
| Pleasant J. Potter College for Young Ladies .....                | 119 |
| Ogden College .....                                              | 121 |
| Bowling Green Business University .....                          | 122 |
| Southern Normal School .....                                     | 124 |
| School Atmosphere .....                                          | 126 |
| Student life.....                                                | 127 |
| Faculty life.....                                                | 128 |
| English at Western Kentucky State Teachers College .....         | 130 |
| First-Year Composition Course Description .....                  | 130 |
| Students .....                                                   | 133 |
| Faculty .....                                                    | 135 |
| Faculty's Outside Interests .....                                | 143 |
| Evaluation of Writing .....                                      | 146 |
| Writing Topics .....                                             | 150 |
| Textbooks .....                                                  | 154 |
| External Forces Acting on Composition .....                      | 155 |
| Influence of H. H. Cherry.....                                   | 155 |
| Influence of world events.....                                   | 158 |
| Summary .....                                                    | 161 |
| Chapter Five The University of Tennessee: A Research Institution |     |
| in Knoxville .....                                               | 164 |

|                                                                                          |     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Education in Tennessee in the 1930s and 1940s--From<br>Primary to Higher Education ..... | 164 |
| The University of Tennessee .....                                                        | 171 |
| School History .....                                                                     | 175 |
| School Atmosphere .....                                                                  | 178 |
| Student life. ....                                                                       | 179 |
| Faculty life. ....                                                                       | 182 |
| English at The University of Tennessee .....                                             | 185 |
| First-Year Composition Course Description .....                                          | 186 |
| Students .....                                                                           | 191 |
| Faculty .....                                                                            | 194 |
| Faculty's Outside Interests .....                                                        | 199 |
| Evaluation of Writing .....                                                              | 200 |
| Writing Topics .....                                                                     | 205 |
| Textbooks .....                                                                          | 209 |
| External Forces Acting on Composition .....                                              | 212 |
| Influence of student preparation. ....                                                   | 213 |
| Influence of the administration. ....                                                    | 215 |
| Influence of world events. ....                                                          | 220 |
| Summary .....                                                                            | 229 |
| Chapter Six Analysis of the Case Studies .....                                           | 233 |
| Upper South Composition Classroom Experiences in the<br>1930s and 1940s .....            | 233 |
| Composition Instruction Themes .....                                                     | 234 |
| Institutional Themes .....                                                               | 235 |
| Economic Themes .....                                                                    | 238 |
| Social and Feminist Themes .....                                                         | 239 |
| Archival Remains and Participant Memories of<br>Composition Classrooms .....             | 241 |
| Modern Approaches to Teaching Composition at the<br>Three Case Study Schools .....       | 244 |
| Additional Considerations about the Case Studies .....                                   | 249 |
| Summary .....                                                                            | 252 |
| Chapter Seven Significance of the Study .....                                            | 255 |
| Placement of the Study .....                                                             | 256 |
| Implications for Further Research .....                                                  | 260 |
| Summary .....                                                                            | 263 |
| List of References .....                                                                 | 269 |
| Appendices .....                                                                         | 287 |
| A--Types of Documents Gathered and Sources .....                                         | 288 |
| B--Participants Interviewed and Schools They Represent ..                                | 293 |
| C--Questions Asked of Participants During Interviews .....                               | 294 |

|                                             |     |
|---------------------------------------------|-----|
|                                             | x   |
| D--Sample Participant Interviews .....      | 295 |
| E--Codes Developed from Data Analysis ..... | 310 |
| F--Informed Consent Form .....              | 311 |
| G--Brown's Handouts at Western .....        | 312 |
| H--Hodges' Comp. 1 Notecards at UT .....    | 315 |
| Vita .....                                  | 319 |

## Chapter One Review of Existing Histories and Methods

No textbook should be swallowed whole: least of all a textbook in English composition. (F. N. Scott, 1908, p. iii)

In most histories of the field of composition instruction, textbooks emerge as the primary comparison point in discussing pedagogies of the past, especially as they compare with pedagogies of today. Historians generally ignore Scott's warning from almost a century ago which suggests that at least some instructors from the past did not glorify textbooks in their classroom instruction. Indeed, composition histories that look only at the textbooks used might be misguided. In a March 1994 presentation at the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in Nashville, Tennessee, Gary Tate calls for a change in the way we write the histories of our field:

. . . a number of recent historical studies argue that our view of the past has been too much based on the study of textbooks--an old complaint really--and that an examination of material other than textbooks--student papers, lecture notes, etc.--might suggest that earlier teaching was much more varied, much more 'enlightened' than the current-traditional myth has led us to believe. (p. 4)

That such a point was made suggests that composition historians too often swallow the comparatively easy meal which textbooks offer. Many of our histories, Tate says, conveniently denounce "current-traditional rhetoric" as something our teaching ancestors engaged in



but we as enlightened, post-1960s process revolution compositionists disdain. Current-traditional rhetoric, as Tate defines it, suggests an emphasis of product over process, a use of the modes of writing instruction—narration, cause and effect, etc.—rather than letting the purpose of an essay drive the form, and an extreme concern with the superficial aspects of student writing to the exclusion of content, among other things. The approach began to be challenged in the 1960s, but Tate warns that "Historians of our discipline" have been "buying into this story of our past sins without a moment's hesitation" (p. 2). Marilyn Harris' comments at the 1995 CCCC echo Tate's warning: "Without verification, without records of teachers' practices, without student writing and comment, all we have is an idealized record of what should have been" (p. 1).

Like these two presentations, this dissertation questions the historians' decisions of "buying into" any history based solely on the examination of textbooks. It also questions the tendency of studying only elite schools. Chapter One examines what traditional histories tell us about composition instruction. A discussion of historiographical methods and of revisionist histories follows. The chapter then explores how qualitative research can assist composition historiography in discovering those things we do not know about composition instruction's history. This study's overall intentions are next presented, and the chapter concludes with an overview of the entire dissertation.

### Existing Histories

Common to all writers is severely limited evidence about what teachers have done in classrooms. (Cuban, 1984, p. 2)

Many histories of American college composition instruction in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries examine primarily the textbooks used in those courses, then draw conclusions based on the content of those textbooks about the activities and attitudes expressed in the classroom. Many of the studies also focus on some of the most prestigious schools in American education--Harvard, Yale, the University of Michigan--without giving much, if any, attention to other schools. These other schools, despite being less prestigious and being geographically distant from the North and Northeast, may be much more representative of the typical American college experience. As a result, the popular late 20th century perception of college composition during the 19th and early 20th centuries is that very little change occurred in composition--with the exception of Harvard's activities during the 1890s and the turn of the century--until the process movement of the 1960s. Without taking into account personal histories of instructors and students that might invalidate such condemnations, the notion prevails that composition instruction in the early to middle part of this century was deadlocked within the current-traditional paradigm.

Furthermore, the broad, generalizing sweeps of major figures and trends which many of the existing histories present seem devoid of personality, offering cold, hard "facts" while denying a voice to the living, breathing teachers and students of first-year composition across the country. First-year composition courses have played a

vital role in our field's history--politically, financially, and pedagogically; to sell short its rich history, a history which perhaps includes more innovative and effective instruction than we realize, is to continue to deny academic prestige to the field and its practitioners. This section, then, examines some of the problems of traditional histories of composition, including a) the relative shortage of such histories, b) the reliance on elite schools which those few histories exhibit, and c) the dependence many of them have on textbooks as the only primary source, as well as possible determining factors behind such limiting research in all these areas.

### Shortage of Histories

In 1991, J. Smith noted that the field of composition is "woefully lacking" in histories (p. 4). Apparently, composition instruction is not the only discipline suffering from a scarcity of histories. The field of education in general has suffered from a lack of adequate histories over the years: "the story of education has long been neglected by the student of history" (Vassar, 1959, p. ii). Frederick Rudolph (1962), an educational historian, reiterates Vassar's claim: "For some time now the general reader and the professional historian have had greater access to the history of almost any skirmish of the Civil War than they have had to the history of education in the United States" (p. vii).

Though more general histories of education have developed over the past three decades, J. Smith, Crowley, and others have

pointed out that the lack of histories in the field of composition continues to be a pressing problem. Crowley (1991) warns,

There are so few histories of rhetoric and composition studies in print that those which have been written and published so far have become much more authoritative than. . .their authors ever thought they might be. . . .When the potential for multiplicity of interpretation gets coupled with the dearth of histories of rhetoric that now exists, the responsibility laid on the first--or second--generation historian become[sic] heavy indeed. (p. 39)

As J. Smith notes in a 1991 dissertation, reliance on the few histories that do exist can perhaps lead to "ineffective and backward approaches to pedagogy" (p. 7). Furthermore, we may not have a complete picture of what the first-year composition course experience actually was like if we rely solely on those few histories that do exist.

The reception of the work of Fries, whose dissertation was published in 1925, dramatically shows how some histories can and have affected the entire discipline over the course of this century. According to Moody (1972), "Fries skewed his assessment of nineteenth-century scholarship" concerning the use of *shall* and *will* because "he greatly amplified his earlier tentative hypotheses, thereby nurturing a general image of traditional grammars as uniformly arbitrary, Latinate, and prescriptive" (p. vii). The result, Moody claims, is that "the unfavorable attitude toward previous English grammatical study which Fries' work encouraged is an

unfortunate heritage with serious implications for the historical study of English grammar, for pedagogy, and not the less for the history of ideas" (p. 190). Other early-20th-century histories include the works of Good, Nietz, Lyman, and Hall-Quest, among others, who used old textbooks as primary sources (Huston, 1954). According to Huston, these early scholars thought of textbooks "as having been an essential tool in classroom instruction from the beginnings of public education in the United States down to the present time" (p. 2). Identifying textbooks used in a course was generally easy, especially for the 19th century, because many schools then listed the textbooks for each course in their catalogs. More recent trends in historical research methods such as oral histories would not have been considered as an option for histories written in the early part of this century.

Such rationales for using a textbook-based focus apply to Kitzhaber's 1953 dissertation, *Rhetoric in American Colleges, 1850-1900*, which became *the* history of the composition field. Finally published in 1990, the study in photocopied form served as the mainstay of composition historiography. Now that historians use more sophisticated historiographical methods, criticisms of Kitzhaber's work arise. First, as Weidner (1991) points out, he limited his site selection to large universities. Second, Nelms (1990) complains that Kitzhaber overlooked opportunities such as interviews, although Kitzhaber's work admittedly was done before oral history was considered an appropriate research tool. Crowley (1991) also suggests Kitzhaber relied too heavily on textbooks, and,

while she defends his "presentation of matters of historical fact: he was a master of accurate documentation and quotation," she also admits, "his interpretations of trends or his readings of historical materials" might leave room for contention "because of new historical evidence or because they use a different historiographical approach" (p. 515).

Kitzhaber's later work, *Themes, Theories, and Therapy* (1963), provides a description of courses actually taught in college, revealing a "wide variation in content and procedures" (Larsen, 1983, p. 8), and as such moves closer in terms of its approach and its findings to recent revisionist histories. Some other studies seem less concerned with classroom events and methods of writing instruction than with the political, ideological, or historical impact of the field. For instance, Applebee's *Tradition and Reform in the Teaching of English* (1974) is a history of English as it developed into a discipline in the United States. Neel (1984) examines composition's political position within college English departments. Histories exist, but few examine the actual composition classroom and its activities.

### Selection of Sites

Many of the histories that do exist in the field of composition instruction rely on large Northeastern institutions as their focus of study. For example, in 1959, R. F. Reid devoted a lengthy study to Harvard's Boylston Professorship of Rhetoric and Oratory. Guthrie's influential work, "The Development of Rhetorical Theory in America, 1635-1850" (1948), focuses primarily on the use of texts at Yale and

Harvard, although he does mention other schools (still, most are prestigious schools of the Northeast). Parker answers his rhetorical question "Where Do English Departments Come From?" (1967) by examining the broad discipline of English studies in England, Scotland, and the United States. Admittedly, Harvard and Yale deserve consideration because of their lengthy traditions and precedent-setting actions, but virtually no attention is given to other lesser-known schools. Thus, as Weidner (1991) notes, it becomes clear that the field "needs to widen its institutional and evidential base" (p. iii).

Kitzhaber (1990) likewise studies Harvard, Michigan, and Yale, but these were, as Weidner (1991) points out, "the large universities whose contexts and educational[sic] purposes were often different from those of smaller institutions or institutions in other locations and of different make-up" (p. 313). Several reasons why such sites are chosen include the large archives at many of those schools and, in turn, the ready availability of important data such as student essays and notes (beneficial, of course, only if they are used). Furthermore, such schools have been, as Weidner admits, "leader[s] in higher education": "Because of their size and financial power, Harvard and such large institutions as Michigan were able to attract the best instructors and thus become instrumental in new educational developments" (p. 307). Nevertheless, to assume that all educational developments occurred at just these major institutions seems fallacious--not that composition historians have boldly made such claims, though such assumptions seem implicit by virtue of their site

selection. In fact, developments did occur elsewhere, as Weidner's study reveals:

Several developments in college instruction ascribed later to the influence of Harvard may have occurred earlier in Midwestern institutions, not the least of which was Butler's coeducation. . . .In addition, frequent writing practice and peer evaluation were also part of Notre Dame's instructional practice. (1991, pp. 307-308)

Without examining schools of varying sizes and locations, our examination of American composition instruction is "woefully incomplete" according to McLachlan (as cited in Weidner, 1991, p. 313). We run the risk of ignoring developments--among individual instructors, if not within entire departments--if we fail to examine many types of teaching and learning situations. "Schools like Harvard served students who, for the most part, came from families that had always attended college" (Hofstadter and Hardy, as cited in Weidner, 1991, p. 3). So, to study only such schools limits the portrait that we receive of the students attending school. Nelms (1990) suggests, "Clearly, much more research is needed in every period of composition history, but it needs to be research that first accommodates the diversity of thought and experience in composition studies" (p. 313).

### Dependence on Textbooks

The present study does not mean to suggest that textbooks have not been influential in the history of composition instruction.



Salter (1955) notes that "It has been generally recognized that textbooks have played a major role in influencing the teaching done"; nevertheless, "textbooks have not necessarily determined what has been taught, nor how" (p. 8). Histories which treat textbooks as the only influence or even the most influential factor in composition instruction potentially present what Nelms (1990) calls "an overly simplistic picture of the history of composition studies" (p. 2). Old textbooks do, as Huston (1954) notes, "constitute important primary sources as historical data" (p. 1), but other sources of data can be more reliable (Nelms). Huston suggests that some leaps in logic are often made concerning textbook selections as data, citing the "assumption that in American schools up to 1850 the content of the course was largely determined by the content of the textbook. This has been claimed by prior investigators but is largely unproven" (p. 3).

Some advancements in research concerning textbooks are being made. For example, Donsky's 1984 doctoral study of elementary composition textbooks from 1900 to 1959, while traditional in terms of source, is nevertheless progressive because it conducts content and trend analyses of those texts. In a study of Texas college and university writing program textbook selections conducted in Fall 1989, Yeilding (1990) discovered that "diversity is a more common characteristic than conformity" (abstract). Likewise, diversity of actual usage of those texts among individual instructors may have occurred in the past much as it does today.

Nelms (1990) points out that

. . .textbooks do merit our attention as indicators of the pedagogy and theory of a period. But. . .we need to be careful about the strength of the claim we make for their influence. . . . Any claim that textbooks are the major shaping influence on composition studies assumes a stronger connection between the printed words and the classroom activities than we as teachers may want to make. (pp. 10-11) (See also Gottschalk, 1969, pp. 258-259.)

Finally, we can and perhaps should separate instructors and students from the textbooks which were sometimes institutionally selected. Cuban (1984) suggests that teachers did not use "an all-or-nothing embrace of an entire approach" in most cases. Instead, "teachers incorporated into their repertoires particular practices they found useful" (p. 4).

So, rather than correct or critique those few histories that do exist for their choice of site selection and/or limited evidence and thus for their presentation of information which is necessary but not complete, we should enrich those works. New materials and a broader perspective toward the historiography of composition will serve "not so much to displace or refute as to complicate and supplement the dominant narrative" (Weidner, 1991, p. 57).

### Historiographical Methods

Making a history is different from making history. (Davis, 1989, p. 104)

Perhaps the reason researchers are beginning to find difficulties with existing composition histories, the sites selected and

the data compiled, is that the era in which we live values "multiple layers of reality" (Burns, 1989, p. 45) in reasoning about our lives. Thus, any historical methods that seem too narrowly focused become suspect as trying to represent "The Truth," not a truth or even a *possible* truth. Seeking the many truths to be found in the past becomes important because, as Crusius (1989) notes, "We define ourselves by reference to the past" (p. 106). And, as Morgan (1990) points out, we should not remove that past from its context:

Part of a more self-conscious recovery of English studies, therefore, would mean recognizing the importance of curricular history. In an important sense "subjects are their histories," . . . In this light we need to understand present English pedagogy as littered/layered with the contradictory discursive forms of the past. (p. 230)

Furthermore, as Barzun and Graff (1977) suggest, "history is not simply an academic subject among others but one of the ways in which we think" (p. 7). Thus, the impact of history on a discipline can become tremendous, leading, as it did in Moody's 1972 study of grammatical history, to "insights into where we have been, where we went wrong, and why" (p. v). But if multiple realities exist and "reality changes across time" as Burns asserts (1989, p. 45), then actually pinpointing a precise historical path may be difficult, if not impossible.

Compounding this is the complex nature of both the learning situation and the content matter of composition itself: "The teaching of composition today is so inextricably interwoven with other phases

of English work that one might question whether instruction in English composition can be sufficiently isolated to permit the preparation of a history of its teaching" (Besig, 1935, p. iv). That scholars attempt to do so and especially that they do so using only one primary data source--textbooks--seem to be sufficient grounds for Weidner's (1991) call: "we must reexamine methods and evidence of historiography" (p. 313).

Denzin (1977) defines historiography by expanding on Gottschalk's explanations: "Any method that attempts to collect, record and analyze documents from the past and to weave these documents into a meaningful set of explanations is historical. The reconstruction of the past from such data is termed *historiography* (Gottschalk, 1945, pp. 8-9). The terms "weaving" and "reconstructing" are necessarily active ones because, as Barzun and Graff (1977) say, "*no piece of evidence can be used for historiography in the state in which it is found*. It is necessarily subjected to the action of the researcher's mind" (p. 127). Thus, the researcher's interpretation of the data becomes central to the historical study, and the results have only as much credence as the scholar manages to earn. Another possible problem with historiography is its generalizability, as Borg and Gall (1989) note:

Teachers who were interested in making a written description of their work may not have been typical of teachers in general. One way to determine generalizability is to look for consistency across teachers in different circumstances. For example, did teachers who wrote about their work for

publication describe similar conditions as did teachers who wrote about their work in private diaries and correspondence? Another problem of generalizability in historical research occurs in interpretation of historical evidence relating to a single individual. . . across time. (p. 829)

A problem unique to American historians, according to Barzun and Graff (1977), is the abundance of written data we have, an "incalculable" amount (p. 179). This may seem counter to what traditional histories imply, but it is completely corroborated by revisionist studies such as Weidner's; an abundance of unpublished documents does exist in addition to textbooks.

Due to the bulk of data that potentially exists, the danger is real that a missing piece of evidence might corroborate or contradict any given history; thus, composition historians are beginning "to acknowledge the historiographic methodology guiding--and necessarily limiting--their essays" according to Simmons (1991, p. 518). Often, an "uneasy yet nowadays necessary disclaimer of objectivity" is provided, according to Halloran: "What I have to say throughout should be regarded as provisional. History is of course always subject to revision, since it is always written from the perspective of a particular moment in history" (cited in Simmons, p. 518). Such disclaimers echo the necessity for multiple histories in the field.

### Traditional Histories

We then must have histories of rhetoric, multiple versions of the past, each version acting as a check, a corrective to the others. (Berlin, 1988, p. 12)

Berlin's comment calling for multiple histories was made during a 1988 CCCC panel entitled and published later that year as "The Politics of Historiography" (Murphy); at that panel, additional scholars such as Susan Jarratt and Robert Connors, names often synonymous with histories in the discipline, discussed their own historiographic ideologies, most of which would clearly align them with revisionist historians. Their published material, however, does not always allow such an alignment, as exemplified by Berlin's work.

*Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985* (1987) builds on Berlin's earlier work, *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges* (1984), which itself admits indebtedness to such text-bound works as Kitzhaber's. The two works consider the epistemological frameworks within which composition instruction operated during the past two centuries. In them, he considers the intellectual background as it influenced instruction, which suggests a revisionist approach. However, his work, specifically Chapter 4 of *Rhetoric and Reality* which deals with the era I am studying, obviously draws heavily from very traditional evidence--catalog descriptions, surveys, and articles from *English Journal*. While his overview can be helpful in detecting widescale trends at larger schools, his tone about the period as one espousing current-traditional rhetoric seems especially condemnatory. This tone sounds particularly inappropriate because the courses he describes seem similar to many composition courses

being taught in the United States today. His Chapter 4 suggests that teachers were incorporating conferences, rhetoric readers, writing about literature, and revising; faculty then taught course loads comparable to faculty loads today, and graduate students frequently served as instructors.

Another historian, Robert Connors, is perhaps best known for his award-winning article, "The Rise and Fall of the Modes of Discourse" (1981), but his historical research has also extended to examinations of mechanical correctness (1985a), textbooks (1986), explanatory rhetoric (1985b), and general histories of the discipline (1986, 1991). His placement between revisionist and traditional history has been seen as troublesome even by him:

I've written a number of histories of certain problems in composition studies, and bizarrely enough, I'm down here at the far end of the table with the "establishment historians." In my own mind, all the historical pieces that I've written have been meant to be profoundly anti-systematic. (Murphy, 1988, p. 13)

In Connors' discussion of the modes, the section dealing with the 1920s through the 1940s focuses on textbooks of the time--both "single-mode textbooks" and "thesis texts"--and on how the textbooks reflected the General Semantics and general education movements. Connors does not address how closely teachers followed those textbooks in the classroom nor the sites where teachers used those textbooks. Connors himself admits that, even though "Rise and Fall" is his "oftenest-cited essay," it nevertheless was an early work

which failed to examine "larger questions" concerning culture and teacher needs and demands (1989, p. 238). His "Writing the History of Our Discipline" (1991) certainly admits the difficulties associated with primary sources in composition—the "ephemeral" quality of syllabi and class exercises and the relative lack of oral histories and biographies. Still, he defends the notion that textbooks, especially in contrast with journals, "show [what] was actually being done in classrooms" (pp. 58, 60-61).

Placing individual authors into either the traditional or the revisionist category can be tricky. For instance, Donald Stewart's "Some History Lessons for Composition Teachers" (1985) adopts a revisionist premise in its assertions of the "importance of historical knowledge for modern composition teachers" (134). Nevertheless, Stewart calls upon quite traditional sources which both focus on actions at schools such as Harvard and imply that current-traditional instruction necessarily occurred in most places where composition was taught.

In many cases, having a history of textbooks and specific colleges may be better than having no histories at all. Though we could further position the work of other historians, the goals of their various projects and of this study differ, so categorizing becomes difficult, even futile. That a dilemma exists perhaps indicates the need for scholars not only to espouse a belief in the importance of revisionist histories but also to engage actively in first-hand, primary source research.



### Revisionist Histories

. . . a sign of our new-found maturity is that we are beginning to take a new look at our past and at our use of current-traditional rhetoric as a term of condemnation. (Tate, 1994, p. 2)

Revisionist histories expand the types of sources used for composition historiography as well as the locales studied. Revisionists consider the political, institutional, economic and/or social issues as they impacted the composition classroom; the results often show that early-twentieth-century (and earlier) classes included many of the activities that we associate with the process movement and very recent innovations in the composition field. This section examines these various new approaches, most often found in dissertation format which unfortunately limits their dissemination and ultimately their findings.

Revision historians question not only why private and public documents remain, but also why such data were stored (and even produced) in the first place. Larsen (1983) follows such a line of questioning in her history of the composing process, demanding, "We must know what elements they considered important enough to record" (p. 16). J. A. L. Campbell, in a 1989 study of Vassar, found that,

Unlike Harvard's archive, which Jolliffe records "holds literally thousands of graded themes, examinations, theses, and student notebooks for Harvard literature and composition classes" (166), the Vassar archives hold few student papers or notebooks, no assignments or examinations. Jolliffe reminds us that "the collection comprises only those papers that alumni

have chosen to donate to it" (166), and the difference in the two schools' archives is instructive; apparently the students of Harvard assumed their work would be examined and important to the history of the institution and culture, while the women students of Vassar College did not. (pp. 127-128)

That such data survives suggests, as Welch (1990) notes, "a belief that the material is worth saving" (p. 4). However, a vast array of unsorted data often awaits. For example, Simmons (1991) seems pleased with "the wide variety of primary sources used" in Murphy's 1990 collection, *A Short History of Writing Instruction: From Ancient Greece to Twentieth-Century America*. Data therein includes "not only textbooks, but also college catalogs and calendars, lecture notes, student papers, and diaries" including "a late sixteenth-century English grammar-school timetable indicating what materials would be taught and practiced on which days of the week" (p. 517). The *Short History* includes revisionist works by Welch, who expresses the desire to "create alternative historical descriptions" (p. 5), and Horner, who examines "the social, political, and religious influences" on 18th- and 19th-century British schooling (p. 121). Even Berlin's chapter, which deals specifically with 20th-century writing instruction in American schools, focuses less attention on textbooks and elite schools and more on social and educational trends.

In addition to the review of *A Short History*, Simmons published a 1995 article in *CCC*, "Constructing Writers: Barrett Wendell's Pedagogy at Harvard," which examines Wendell's personal correspondence, lecture notes, journal, and gradebooks. Simmons

discovers that examining such pedagogical evidence results in "fruitful insights" and reveals that "many pedagogical techniques associated with modern writing pedagogy are ones we used at Harvard one hundred years ago" (pp. 327-328).

Works from early in this century also look at non-traditional sources and sites. As early as 1935, Besig's study of secondary composition instruction before 1900 examined "Information relating to the introduction and spread of composition teaching [which] was found mainly in state archives, documentary histories, and state education reports, supplemented by material found in education periodicals. [Published] Reminiscences of school days. . .were an invaluable aid"; however, "Evidence as to method was gathered partially from the foregoing sources, but mainly from composition texts in use before 1900" (p. v).

McPhail's MA thesis in 1956, which focused on composition instruction from 1930 to 1956, used "magazine articles pertaining to that subject" as a data source (p. 2). Three years later, Vassar's study of elementary and Latin grammar school education in the seventeenth century included official records, contemporary histories of New England colonies, personal accounts, and ecclesiastical records (1959). Bernhardt's 1963 study of secondary composition instruction between 1900 and 1960 included findings from "professional committee reports, research studies, reports on experiments, proposals of authorities, and discussions by English associations" as well as textbook trends (p. 3).

The use of textbooks in Fournier's 1989 study of composition in a North Dakota Benedictine Monastic school during the first three decades of this century serves merely as an introduction to the school's atmosphere. For instance, Fournier found the instructors to be

. . . dedicated to the task of teaching their students to use the English language effectively. The constant search for more suitable textbooks, as indicated by the textbook changes recorded in the school catalogues, is an indication of this, just as it is an indication of the lack of focus and the absence of any long-range planning in the school's English programs during its first two decades. (p. 82)

Fournier's work examines much more than just textbooks. The choice of the North Dakota site justifies the study as revisionist; he admits the isolated locale affected teaching and text selection. More importantly, though, Fournier also examines such institutional concerns as the frequent turnover and backgrounds of the faculty, as well as student needs, since most of the students at the school were "first generation Americans or recent immigrants from Russia or Hungary" (p. 2). Approaches like Fournier's are applauded by Hamilton (1982), who notes that histories which contained statistical data from institutional sources alone often

. . . did not reveal in any sense what the impact of university had been on the individual, either man or woman, nor the motivations for going, nor the aims and aspirations which the

individual might have obtained as a result of his or her university experience. (p. 60)

J. A. L. Campbell's 1989 study examines Vassar, "an institution that has not been included in other historical studies" (p. 10). In addition to Vassar textbooks, Campbell uses "annual departmental reports and correspondence" (p. 17) to conclude:

From roughly 1880 to 1930 there was something distinctly different taking place in the community of women students and teachers at Vassar College than at Harvard, the school most often cited as the norm for composition and rhetoric instruction at this time. (p. 14).

Vassar's course more closely resembled a process approach than Harvard's preoccupation with surface errors could. Campbell finds Vassar's program to be more interactive than male institutions' (p. 126), with Gertrude Buck's course having included "assembling writing samples, assignments, in-class exercises, and advice to prospective writers to engage students in the act of writing" (p. 127).

As head of the writing program at Vassar, Buck was often challenged by the president for her innovative ideas. Such infighting helps to substantiate Campbell's findings, which concur with many of the newer studies: "The first-year English course was a battleground for ideological, pedagogical, and political struggles between the English faculty and the administration" (pp. 125-126). Gender was at issue, too:

Women and others without political power often choose strategies of resistance other than out and out battle, and in the

case of Buck and her colleagues at Vassar, their emphasis was on harmony and cooperation to create an alternative environment for themselves and their students. (Campbell, 1989, p. 11)

Many revisionist histories of composition reveal that several of our composition ancestors, like Buck, engaged in quite innovative practices--practices which we either never knew about or forgot. Gaillet (1991) warns,

Many costly mistakes and setbacks in the development of writing instruction perhaps could have been avoided if scholars in our field had put more emphasis on. . .the study of these figures and their responses to changing social and political conditions. (p. 5)

Capps' 1973 study examines methods of teaching composition from 1886 to 1926 with a focus on teacher training and the initial acknowledgment that the study might "indicate that some effective methods were used for training teachers during that landmark period which have been neglected because recent educators do not know they exist" (p. 4). Capps finds that "from 1900 many educators advocated a more concrete approach based on experience, expression, and a real purpose for writing" (p. 300). Even at sites where the received narratives suggest that teachers stressed product over process, such as at Harvard, Larsen (1983) finds that instructors like Channing,

. . .himself a writer and editor, suggested that students should write as thoughts came to them, without immediate corrections.

This advice, given in the nineteenth century, foreshadows current practice in composing. Such details are easily lost unless they are specifically presented as part of a larger picture. (p. 19)

J. A. L. Campbell's 1989 study of Vassar reveals that Buck's assignments took into consideration student interests "to help students produce something they cared about" (p. 130). Campbell cites page 30 of the 1919-20 Vassar *Catalogue* as stating, "In order that the student be incited to a genuine rather than a merely perfunctory act of communication, it is necessary that she recognize in every case some real purpose and specific occasion for her writing" (p. 145). Vassar furthermore instituted a "Princeton Plan" group and individual interviews before Princeton itself became known for them (Campbell, 1989, p. 147).

Gaillet's study of a nineteenth-century rhetorician, George Jardine, indicates that even then instructors involved students in peer editing, writing across the curriculum, writing as process, and writing as discovery (1991, p. 1). Both Jardine and F. N. Scott, Gaillet says, gave "current writing assignments that interest the students rather than simply adhering to textbooks and lectures," thus revealing a belief "that the teacher can engage the students more readily" than through typical assignments (p. 104). They both advised students to "abandon the textbook" in order to be more creative and warned that it is harmful to neglect audience (p. 107).

J. Smith, in a 1991 dissertation on the individual voice in writing, reminds us,

Methods, the classroom atmosphere, and the democratization of genius are not new in the teaching of writing, for many of them were discovered in earlier decades of the twentieth century, usually in conjunction with those who espoused sound principles of composition. They were often found to work by trial and error, and in some cases, had to be rediscovered by instructors in later decades because they were used so infrequently. (p. 40)

Finally, the two composition histories that most closely resemble the current study are the doctoral dissertations by Nelms (1990) and Weidner (1991). Nelms, who adopts a case history approach to the composition legacy of Edward P. J. Corbett and Janet Emig, believes that oral interviews offer reliable insight into the past. Weidner believes "that much evidence remains buried in college and university archives. In particular, to establish the narrative of rhetoric and composition instruction, we need to include student records, for without students a history of teaching does not exist" (pp. 6-7). And, just as other scholars have done, Weidner finds that "contextual forces influenced rhetorical education" at the schools she studied, and, within the classroom, the innovative practices which were taking place "may have to be seen in a continuum rather than as 20th-century discoveries"; such practices include writing across the curriculum and peer responses (p. 7).

To consider history from a variety of angles--such as these revisionists seem to be doing, considering as they do the sites selected, the political/institutional contexts, the teaching



environment, and the teachers' and institution's pedagogical practices--appears to be a very telling approach to a recounting of composition history. Salter's 1955 comment remains cogent: "any single approach would be incomplete and perhaps somewhat inaccurate in its portrayal of what actually existed in the 'typical' English classroom" (p. 3).

### Qualitative Research

The researcher must attempt to perceive the big picture or the total situation rather than focusing upon a few elements within a complex situation as is usually done in quantitative educational research. (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 389)

A combination of Weidner's study with Nelms' would indeed seem to be productive because each adopts a qualitative stance, and Nelms uses qualitative methods. Of course, oral interviews were impossible with Weidner's study because of the time period studied and of the virtual impossibility of finding surviving participants. We can, however, generate more complete historical descriptions of past composition instruction by triangulating data sources, conducting oral interviews, and selecting schools removed geographically, economically and/or politically from those traditionally studied. This section explores what appears to be missing from the histories that exist and how qualitative research can help fill in the gaps.

We do not know much about various eras of collegiate composition instruction; we lack histories of a variety of school sizes, school types and school locales across the country. We also lack studies that reveal the actual classroom experiences of teachers and students. We need more actual interviews of the participants.

Surprisingly few student essays remain, just as few lesson plans and syllabi exist, all of which could reflect the classroom experience perhaps more clearly than what we do have--descriptions of the textbooks officially used.

Few histories exist which take into consideration the political, social, and institutional milieu of the period. Also, many historians since the 1960s' process revolution seem to assume that current-traditional instruction techniques prevailed in most schools, classes, and instruction of the time; only a handful focus on individual locales and instructors to examine innovative approaches. A great deal, then, remains to be known.

A qualitative stance can help fill in these gaps. Taylor and Bogdan define the phrase "qualitative methodology" as "research that produces descriptive data: people's own written or spoken words and observable behavior" (5). "Qualitative inquiry" is especially noted "for capturing the surprise, disorder, and contradictions of a phenomenon" (Peshkin, 1993, p. 5). Qualitative studies that examine educational settings look both within and beyond the classroom to reveal the "big picture" of instruction and learning; Wolcott (1988) says educational research should "attend to a broad cultural context" (p. 202). This is necessary, according to Spradley (1980), because of the complexity of society: "It has become increasingly clear that our culture is not homogeneous, that people who live in modern, complex societies actually live by many different cultural codes. . . .Our schools have their own cultural systems, and even within the same institution people see things differently" (p. 15).

Heath's (1983) often-quoted publication--*Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*, a case study of Roadville and Trackton and the education of children in those towns--suggests, "Economic and political forces which originated outside the region greatly influenced the urgency and dedication of the teachers described here" (p. 10). Furthermore, Heath's qualitative approach reveals the very real activities all "parents, children, teachers, and students" undertake: "meeting daily needs and sustaining their self-identities" (p. 8).

Qualitative research involves, according to Firestone's (1987) definition, an understanding of "the social phenomenon from the actors' perspectives through participation in the life of those actors" (pp. 16-17). Firestone further explains that qualitative methods reveal an underlying phenomenological assumption "that there are multiple realities that are socially defined. Rich description persuades by showing that the researcher was immersed in the setting and giving the reader enough detail to 'make sense' of the situation" (p. 16). In each case, Firestone explicitly juxtaposes qualitative research with the more positivistically oriented quantitative research.

The two approaches can result in very different findings when educational settings are being studied because, again, the dynamics of the classroom are not always suited to the somewhat rigid approach traditionally associated with quantitative research. Thus, as Fetterman (1988) notes, "a qualitative paradigm offers a new set of explanations of our educational system. It also enables researchers to

ask new questions, answer different kinds of questions, and readdress old questions" (p. 18). One reason this is possible, as Salomon (1991) points out, is that "classroom studies are concerned with a holistic setting of interdependent events" (p. 13).

Arriving at an understanding of that setting is possible, according to Borg and Gall (1989), because qualitative research can help provide the "total environment in which education takes place," an environment perhaps best examined on a one-on-one basis: "Often an in-depth study of one individual using observation and interview will give a far better understanding than will a shallow survey of 100 subjects" (p. 408).

Furthermore, Borg and Gall state that the unsatisfactory histories to date of composition instruction are due perhaps to the fact that "we still know very little about the impact of different teacher behavior patterns and strategies upon student outcomes such as achievement even though quantitative researchers have given this area a great deal of attention over the past 20 years" (p. 408). Goodson (1984) asserts that our lack of knowledge is due in part to our failure "to establish the 'gradual and continuous' nature of curriculum change and do so in ways which examine negotiation and action" (p. 27). Too often, Goodson says, we examine "the macro level theories of curriculum without related empirical studies of how the curriculum has been negotiated at micro level over time" (p. 27). Qualitative research should also help scholars, Borg and Gall say, to look outside the classroom as well:

These [qualitative] methods are also well suited to discover the relationship between a given educational setting and its immediate social context. For example, teacher behavior in the classroom is affected by what happens in the broader social systems such as the school, the district, and the community, and these systems must be taken into account when studying the local scene. (p. 407)

Furthermore, qualitative research can perhaps help researchers avoid the automatic assumptions that because factors appear to be the same in different situations, then the situations themselves and individual responses to those situations must necessarily be the same, as has been done with textbook-based histories of composition instruction. Borg and Gall warn,

. . .the most obvious aspects of everyday life in educational settings tend to become invisible because they are so habitual. These need to be rediscovered in order to understand the educational setting. . . .In much educational research we overlook the fact that events that appear the same may have distinctly different local meanings. (p. 407)

Soltis (1989) suggests that the "interpersonal-social-cultural contexts of education" are what qualitative research best examines in arriving at an informed "deep understanding of educational institutions and processes" (p. 125).

Qualitative research is inductive and intuitive, and it enables the subject being studied to be involved in the interpretation of the outcome (Borg & Gall p. 386), just as the process of educating does.

Kantor (1984) states that, because "composition teaching is a multi-dimensional phenomenon," it necessarily "requires a research methodology which will account for its complexity" (p. 72). Lauer and Asher (1988) note of qualitative research, "It is often the most feasible and useful kind of research for composition instructors because it is closest to the teacher's experience and can be done in the classroom" (pp. 45-46). They further state that informal qualitative research is routinely done in composition classrooms and merely needs coding and quantifying to become formal descriptive study (p. 19). Researchers studying past educational events have additional problems to address, but history and qualitative research techniques work well together:

Taken together, the techniques of history and ethnography can provide us with the tools to examine and interrogate school subjects empirically and may also lay the groundwork for the development of theories which capture and explain the processes of change (or absence of change) in school subjects. (Goodson & Ball, 1984, p. 3)

Ethnography, which as Thomas (1983) points out is often limited to participant observation, is here assumed to mean Thomas' other definition of the term--realism. As such, it takes on the broader characteristics of qualitative research and results in rich description.

Despite the compatibility of history and qualitative research/ethnography, there are potential problems with research in either area. Borg and Gall (1989) warn, "Qualitative research is much more difficult to do well than quantitative research because the data

collected are usually subjective and the main measurement tool for collecting data is the investigator himself[sic]" (p. 380). Indeed, "the centrality of the individual researcher as instrument" poses problems for qualitative research (Wolcott, 1975, p. 115). And, because research usually focuses on humans and their culture, the "human dimension" requires restraint on the part of the researcher:

"Qualitative educational research cannot be value free; it must be ethically conducted and ethically concerned" (Soltis, 1989, p. 121). Thus, Soltis explains, the researcher must ensure "privacy, deception, and confidentiality" (p. 126) of informant material.

Borg and Gall (1989) say the subjective nature of qualitative research and the reduced possibility of interrater reliability may allow "the observers' biases" to "seriously distort the findings" (p. 391). Lauer and Asher (1988) warn that interpreting data can create problems, citing Sadler's (1981) list of potential dangers which includes misinterpretation, novelty of information, staying power of first impressions, and the availability of, uneven reliability of, or absence of information, among others.

Generalization of data constitutes one of the biggest problems confronting qualitative researchers and historians. Borg and Gall note, "Since the total setting in which the phenomenon occurs is never the same, it is unlikely that prediction or control will ever be achieved although some level of understanding may be reached" (p. 383). Goodson (1984) reiterates, "the specificity of curriculum histories often acts against their capacity for generalization" (p. 42). Barzun and Graff (1977) further add, "Historical truth, ancient or

recent, is always complex and always difficult to ascertain" (p. 12).

To "underestimate the wealth of confusion inherent in the complexity of any event" is as dangerous, Bledstein (1976) says, as "telescoping developments in time for the sake of a false clarity" or as overlooking "the coherent cultural values" such as "self-importance, status and dignity" that subjects use to make meaning within their complex situations (p. xi).

McCalman (1990) implies that subject selection can be vital: "There is usually a clutch of ex-students who 'hated the place' and they are as important to the story as those who 'loved every minute'" (p. 303). W. Reid (1984) also warns that interrogating only the participants directly involved may bias results:

Especially, we should be on our guard against drawing our evidence about how [student] subjects behave mainly from the activities and statements of teachers. . . .preferably we should look for evidence also from the carriers of categorical ideologies, parents, employers, scholars, politicians, administrators, and others. (p. 74)

A consideration of context helps us examine past instructional approaches, though many researchers are so well-acquainted with the academic context that "we face the problem of trying to conduct observations as though we were in a strange new setting" despite familiarity with classrooms "since about the age of six" (Wolcott, 1988, p. 190).

For all the problems associated with qualitative research in educational history, however, advantages can be clearly seen. For



instance, Wolcott (1987) concludes that being an insider "may be more than compensated for by the understanding a perceptive insider can bring" (p. 52). Furthermore, the pendulum-swing approach of qualitative research--from data to hypotheses back to data--is especially useful in rhetorical and/or composition studies:

Rhetorical inquiry suggests behaviors, environments, or populations for empirical study. It prompts coding schemes, survey categories, and evaluative criteria. It provides hypotheses for experimental research. In return, empirical [qualitative] research refines rhetorical theory, helps verify or repudiate it, and identifies important variables that contribute to new theory formation. . . .The use of these two types of inquiry, as well as historical, linguistic, and philosophical studies, presents the field of composition studies with a mixed blessing. (Lauer and Asher, 1988, p. 6)

Indeed, Lauer and Asher say, "Right now in composition studies, a number of researchers like Emig argue for a high priority for [qualitative] descriptive research" (p. 17). Composition studies and the "social-rhetorical view of language" emphasize contexts; thus, qualitative, holistic, and ethnographic methodology potentially "yields a rich picture of writing in particular contexts" (Chan, 1989, p. 28).

Past composition research suffers from not being rigorous enough, according to Burnham (1984). Increasingly, sophisticated and demanding qualitative methodologies provide results within the composition field which are not only valuable but also reliable.

Fortunately, in general "more people in the field of education today are probably doing more research, and more relevant research, than ever before" (Wolcott, 1992, p. 2), and fortunately for composition research, increasing numbers of studies adopting qualitative methodologies reflect a beneficial trend.

### Present Study

...there are so few studies that have captured what teachers have done in classrooms over time. (Cuban, 1984, p. 4)

Several scholars realize the need for more comprehensive histories in composition instruction, including Medway (1990) who says,

Little direct evidence is available of what English consisted of in practice in the diversity of settings in which it took place: gaining reliable knowledge of that would require a major research study employing such methods as the collection of school syllabuses, stock lists and surviving pupil work, interviews with former teachers and pupils and a study of textbook sales. (p. 4)

Donsky (1984) further calls for several needed studies, including ...oral histories related to composition instruction, particularly those taken from teachers, or persons having played roles in national associations for teachers; such interviews are of inestimable value, adding color, charm, substance, and perspective to any body of raw data and can be particularly useful for presenting balanced pictures of classroom instruction. (pp. 240-241)

Since these needs exist, this study seeks to fill in a small part of the gap remaining to be filled by composition histories by employing a qualitative methodology, as detailed in Chapter Two. Ultimately, I hope this presents a larger and more complete picture of what was happening in American first-year composition courses during the 1930 to 1945 period than has previously been presented. A case study/qualitative approach allowed me to detect possible trends in the cultural, social, and political arenas as they influenced the teaching of composition; I also explore how such devastating events as the Depression and World War II affected composition instruction. I examine changes within the academic setting itself to see if they serve as influences on first-year composition in specific cases--changes in such areas as literary studies, linguistics, and speech and communication. I also explore the influence which individual instructors and their teaching strategies may have had on student writing, contexts which textbook-based histories generally do not consider.

The significance of the study derives from its potential to increase the knowledge base of the rapidly growing composition historiography field. Likewise, it has increased my own knowledge as a composition instructor. As a teacher/scholar actively engaged today in the same processes being described in this history, my own instruction methods, indeed entire being, altered during the course of the study; Young-Bruehl (1983) warns,

Memory cannot be contrived and it cannot be commanded. We do not learn by placing ourselves in archives, and we do not

learn by being required to receive information about past events. To learn one must actively participate--one cannot just receive. (p. 426)

### Study Overview

Chapter Two presents the study's research questions and also provides an explanation of my methodology; furthermore, the chapter defines my qualitative approach and explains its appropriateness. The chapter also describes the settings and populations of the three case studies, including a explanation of why I chose those schools and of why a case study approach is appropriate for studying them. The chapter details and critiques the methods used to triangulate data--which include published work, text analysis, interviews, etc.--as well as the problems of access to and availability of materials. The chapter concludes with a discussion of data analysis methods and ethical concerns.

Chapters Three, Four And Five serve as the actual case studies of the individual schools in the study. They include, respectively, Bethel Woman's College, Western Kentucky State Teachers College (now Western Kentucky University), and The University of Tennessee. Each chapter considers, where possible, pertinent historical information about the school itself, the historical milieu of the English composition course at the school, the teachers who taught it, the textbooks they used and any indications of how faithfully those texts were followed, the pedagogy adopted for the course, and student and teacher reactions to the course.

Chapter Six discusses my findings about the schools and traces patterns across the three schools that seem consistent regardless of the school size or type. Chapter Seven serves as the conclusion to the study and links my findings to the gaps detected in the current literature, as revealed in Chapter One. Chapter Seven also enters my study in a discussion about what, if anything, should be generalized about the typical American college composition experience based on these three case studies and on what we already know about college composition history.

## Chapter Two

### Description of the Methodology

In case studies, a prime objective is to be certain that if another investigator followed exactly the same procedures as those described by an earlier investigator and conducted the same case study all over again, the same findings and conclusions would occur. (R. Smith, 1988, pp. 9-10)

Qualitative research guides stress the need for providing data trails which reveal to future researchers the exact steps taken in the research process; such information allows for replication of studies and/or responses to and verification of the conclusions drawn from a given study. Floud (1973), a quantitative historian, complains that "qualitative impressionistic history" requires its researchers to "see into the mind of the historian, or follow his thought processes, to understand" qualitative history (p. 4). However, qualitative researchers can counteract this by explicitly revealing methods, thoughts, biases, data analysis codes, and data collection strategies.

This chapter attempts to provide a carefully detailed data trail, providing insight into the questions asked, the methodology adopted, the case study settings selected, and the triangulation methods used. Throughout, I try to help guide future researchers interested in challenging, furthering, or replicating this study—through either a literal replication involving the same or similar case studies or a theoretical replication showing different results and explaining why they occurred (Yin, 1984).

### Research Questions

The research questions this study sought to answer include

- 1) What were the classroom experiences of students/teachers in the 1930s and 1940s in American college composition in the Upper South section of the United States?
- 2) What can be learned about those classroom experiences using materials other than the traditionally represented textbook?
- 3) What evidence is there for or against the period as one of stagnation in the composition field?

In addition to these questions, the questions posed by Weidner's 1991 dissertation, which examines composition instruction at two 19th-century institutions, served as supplemental considerations:

- 1) How might the educational goals of these two institutions --goals resulting from their specific geographical locations and political, cultural, economical, and social contexts--have shaped rhetoric and composition instruction differently from that at colleges and universities already studied by other researchers?
- 2) Will archival holdings about the teaching of rhetoric and composition at these midwestern universities parallel the narrative established by earlier composition historians for older and eastern institutions?
- 3) What will analysis of archival material add to our information? In particular, what will it add to our limited knowledge of actual classroom practices? (p. 6)

## Methodology

Making an introspective record of fieldwork enables a person to take into account personal biases and feelings, to understand their influences on the research. (Spradley, 1980, pp. 71-72)

Because of the nature of qualitative research, the researcher often becomes "a human studying fellow humans" (Denzin, 1977, p. 341), and thus he or she necessarily becomes a part of the study. The interpretation of data, and even the initial selection and inclusion of data, depends to a great extent on the researcher's own world view, biases, and values. Denzin encourages us to question those values, asking, "What ideologies does he[sic] hold? What are his personal preferences for one type of method as opposed to another?" (p. 342).

Spradley's comment above suggests a further step--self examination. The researcher should acknowledge his or her own biases: "The researcher should identify assumptions, preconceptions, and presuppositions early in the report" (Knaack as cited in Burns, 1989, p. 46). Coming to terms with one's attitudes about a subject also allows the researcher to maintain an objectivity about existing theories, "to avoid prior commitment to any theoretical model" (Yin, 1984, p. 25), which is important when one attempts qualitative research with a goal of either objectively validating those theories or of generating new theory. My very blunt acknowledgment of personal bias toward the subject and my avoidance of theoretical allegiance offer an atypical approach to composition studies; researchers in this field filter information in and out as we write our histories, deciding what is important enough to be included, but in



that filtering process, our own mindsets are inextricably involved while past theoretical stances may be found insufficient. Indeed, as Wolcott says, "Bias is essential to the conduct of research" and *can* be "productive" because it can help the researcher develop a stance for engaging in fruitful dialogue (1992, p. 6). Watson (1976) calls this "awareness of our own preconceptions" about what we study our "preunderstanding" (p. 103).

### Researcher Bias

My own "preunderstanding" of this study included one-and-one-half-years of research for a Master's thesis on the history of grammar instruction, during which I concluded that textbooks used at select schools created the driving paradigms for most composition instruction histories. A needed doctoral study seemed to be a look at materials other than textbooks to get a closer idea of what had actually been occurring in composition classrooms than mere textbooks alone reveal. Also, I felt a study of schools distanced from Harvard, Yale, and Michigan, both physically and in terms of relative prestige, might give composition history a better idea of the typical writing instruction experience of the vast numbers of students who did not attend "prestigious" or large schools.

As the study developed, an inherent bias revealed itself in my assertion that individuals both adhere to and influence their pedagogical contexts. Oftentimes, instructors are limited by political and economic factors, including predetermined textbook selection and course loads, but what teachers do within their individual

teaching settings can in turn serve to mitigate such external pressures. Consequently, I made efforts to seek data that revealed such individual flexibility, but because I realized my "preunderstanding" might be biased in that direction, I also consciously sought information that validated the traditional great textbook or great school histories (which often ignore individual teaching methods) as well.

Other biases I carried into the study included the notions 1) that I could recreate a classroom's activities from the documents and eyewitness accounts that survive; 2) that most teachers do not follow a textbook verbatim, hence the incompatibility of using a textbook as a guide to course content; and 3) that teachers of the past made innovative attempts to reach their students. These biases operated not only as I determined an appropriate approach to studying composition--case history--but also as I actually conducted the research within the three case histories and wrote the results of this study.

### Case History Approach

In *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Yin (1984) differentiates between a case study and a case history; both approaches examine a "phenomenon within its real-life context," yet "the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" and both use "multiple sources of evidence" (p. 23). However, the case history deals with non-contemporary events, according to Yin. Part of the case study's appeal (and, in this study, a

case history's) is that it "captures an instant in time and space which can then be held against a moving, changing reality" (Walker, 1983, p. 163).

But the photographic lens that captures that moment is necessarily subjective. As Walker (1983) suggests, "case studies tell a truth but not *the* truth"; case studies/histories "may offer certain claims to truth, depending on the nature of the evidence they provide, but they are always partial accounts; constructions of reality; representations" (p. 165); see also Chapter One of this study, R. Smith (1988, p. 1), and Yin (1984, p. 21). Nelms (1990) warns, "the case historian must expect loose ends" (p. 17). Thus, the experiences of the students and teachers in this study may not be universal. However, such a very individualized history is exactly what this study aims for; too many composition histories have provided broad histories of trends but few have provided assessments of what actually occurred in past individual composition classrooms across the United States. This study attempts that by trying to recreate the atmosphere as it might have been experienced by some students and teachers. As Walker (1983) points out, a "selective bias" is "the very power of the case study" (p. 163).

R. Smith (1988) further assesses the strengths of a case study/history approach:

First, they allow for the study of rare or noteworthy phenomena that, by definition, are not available in sufficient numbers at any one time to be evaluated in other types of research designs. Second, case studies have traditionally served

as a rich source of ideas and hypotheses about behavior, its causes, and processes of change. . . .Moreover, case studies often provide dramatic or persuasive demonstrations of some phenomenon that can stimulate theory development and future systematic research. Finally, in evaluation research, case studies can be used to explore possible causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for survey or experimental strategies. (p. 1)

For all of these reasons, and most notably the first, case histories have much to offer composition instruction research.

Despite such promising returns, however, few composition histories utilize the case study/history approach. Janet Emig's *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*, a case study examination of a handful of writers, is now quite famous as one of the first case studies in the field, but the study's aim is not historical. At least two case studies in composition instruction do adopt a case history approach: Nelms (1990) and Weidner (1991). Indeed, one of Nelms' aims is "to introduce the field to the case history approach" (p. 2).

The broader field of education, however, is much more accustomed to case study/history than the composition discipline. As Walker (1983) notes, case studies have a "long history" in educational research and "a particular attraction for those with an interest in curriculum for, in curriculum research, case studies offer a means of integration across the disciplines of the social sciences" (p. 155). Case studies/histories also offer the opportunity to examine curriculum, textbook selection, and instruction, etc., within the

context of the dynamic classroom, the larger institution, and even the world. In fact, Walker (1983), a British scholar, suggests that too often we focus on the

. . .vulnerable areas of the system: innovations, teachers, classrooms, and schools. Where are the really penetrating case-studies. . .of local authorities, of examination boards, or of influential academics? The only ones I can find have been suppressed, remain unpublished, or are awaiting transformation into history. (p. 163)

Some composition studies *have*, however, examined the influence of the institution and its leaders on the composition *program* (Eliot at Harvard, for example; see Kitzhaber, Halloran, and Berlin's *Writing Instruction*), yet they often fail to detail the influence on individual teaching practices and the dynamics of the classroom. This study will not focus on the larger institution, but the influence both of school-wide decisions and of school leaders will be considered, while bearing in mind, as Walker (1983) suggests, that some of those external influences are necessary "in order to make the management of schooling possible" (p. 157). This study then is paradoxically broad and narrow: broad in the sense that by identifying sites far removed socially, politically, and geographically from the more elite schools of the Northeast, an educational experience perhaps more typical of that experienced by the bulk of Americans attending college is revealed; and narrow in that it only examines three schools and their classrooms, and the individualized approaches taken by the teachers cannot be universalized to other

schools, nor indeed to other teachers. Borg and Gall (1989) warn, "there is no way of knowing how typical the selected case really is, and it is therefore rather hazardous to draw any general conclusions from a single case study" (p. 402).

### Data Collection

Case studies have previously been defined as studies of events within their real-life contexts. (Yin, 1984, p. 67)

Case histories seek to describe past events, which compounds problems of data collection. Needed information often is unavailable--either it was never generated, never recorded, or never stored, or perhaps it simply never survived. I expected textbooks to survive longer than student writings and teacher lesson plans, though I knew some of those other documents--as well as student recollections of their experiences--exist at all schools, just not as retrievably as textbooks; however, I found fewer textbooks in this study than other documents. This study relies heavily, then, on materials in school and archival and special collection libraries, on private collections, and on interviews with former students. Using such materials and interviews follows the first of Yin's (1984) "principles of data collection": Use "multiple, not just single, sources of evidence" (p. 79).

The second principle Yin suggests is to create a "case study data base" including a case study protocol, which contains the overall initial plan for data collection and is especially helpful in multiple case designs such as this one; the protocol includes field procedures, case study questions, and a projected overview (pp. 64, 69-70). The case study data base further contains the actual "raw data" collected

and is available from me for those scholars interested in replicating the study. Other researchers are able to make sense of the material through the third principle Yin advocates: Maintain a "chain of evidence" (p. 79). The following section of the study provides such a chain by detailing both exact data-gathering techniques and data-collection choices.

### Case History Protocol

My collection process for this study included examining and copying or transcribing documents that pertained to college composition and/or grammar courses at several institutions and private collections. The scope of this dissertation eventually broadened from just how grammar was taught in first-year college composition courses (which was the original intent of the doctoral study) to include all aspects of the first-year composition course. I examined materials from both the 19th century and the 20th century. I initially wanted to examine 19th-century composition history; however, fires and early moves had destroyed relevant archival materials, and personal interviews from that period were, of course, impossible.

This qualitative doctoral study, then, offers a historical examination of the composition classrooms in the 1930s and 1940s at three schools in two Upper South states--Kentucky and Tennessee. I reveal my approach to this study based on Taylor and Bogdan's (1984) advice about the initial informing of readers about a study's methodological techniques (p. 151). The methodology used included

an analysis of published histories and of archival documents and the interviewing of instructors and students from these three case study schools. The guide followed in presenting the chain of evidence is Nancy Burn's (1989) suggestion for description of the data-gathering strategy, including "gaining access to the site, gaining access to subjects [participants], method of gathering data,. . .the length of time spent gathering data, and the amount of data gathered" (p. 47).

Site access. I chose the three sites for three reasons: their sizes and types, ranging from a small private women's college (Bethel Woman's College, Hopkinsville, Kentucky) to a normal school (Western Kentucky State Teachers College, Bowling Green) to a state land-grant university (The University of Tennessee, Knoxville); their geographic location, since the Upper South is geographically, and perhaps politically, removed from the schools traditionally studied in composition histories; and, their geographical proximity to me.

Gaining access to the sites was, with one exception, relatively easy. Bethel Woman's College no longer exists, nor do its original buildings. As a result, few official archival records survive. Some official student records exist at Campbellsville College, Campbellsville, Kentucky. I conducted most of my research for Bethel Woman's College at my undergraduate alma mater, Western Kentucky University; that campus stores archival educational materials in its Kentucky Museum and Library, housed in the Kentucky Building, a repository for historical artifacts of all kinds and all ages from across the state of Kentucky. There, I examined yearbooks, student publications, newspaper clippings, school catalogs,



etc. (See Appendix A.) The schools for which I found varying amounts of material included Bethel Woman's College, Bethel College [male] in Russellville, Kentucky, Cedar Bluff College, and Logan College, as well as the collections' host school, Western Kentucky University (and its predecessors--Ogden College, Potter College, and Western State Teachers College). To access this information, I employed traditional library research methods at the Kentucky Building and found the staff there extremely helpful in my search.

I also found archival data about and from Bethel Woman's College in the personal library of Mr. William Turner, Historian of Hopkinsville Community College. I became aware of his collection through the Christian County (Hopkinsville) public librarian; I merely placed a phone call to him to arrange access.

The Kentucky Museum and Library contains substantially more information, naturally, about Western Kentucky State Teachers College (Western), although periodic fires throughout Western's history resulted in limited collections of some eras. I found duplicate and new materials documenting the various stages of Western's development, including evidence that, as consolidation of the various smaller schools occurred, many of the English instructors at those schools became Western's faculty. Although abbreviated office hours limited my time at the Archives,<sup>1</sup> the Archives staff led me to school catalogs, transcribed interviews with former Western English

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<sup>1</sup>I later sent a letter to the President of Western Kentucky University addressing this problem for outside scholars. The result was an acknowledgment stating the university's willingness to overcome such basic obstacles to research.

instructors, and mimeographed course exams and materials. (See Appendix A.)

Western's University Archives holds an abundance of transcribed interviews with former English faculty made by the Research Office there for an ongoing Oral History Project, as well as catalogs and various other official documents and publications. Western's University Archives did not open until the 1960s, which handicaps efforts at establishing a complete collection of materials from preceding years; furthermore, Western's Archives depends on volunteer donations of materials from faculty and staff, so substantial collections of earlier materials do not exist.

This last problem also exists at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UT), where University Archives stores official English department documents. University Historian Dr. Milton Klein, whose office supplied me with citations for published university and departmental histories, says, "Faculty today don't even give us their syllabi!" Archivist Sue Lynn McGuire reiterates this lament. The UT Special Collections Library, however, seems especially blessed with donated materials from many long-term English faculty members, many of whom taught during the era being studied, the most notable being John C. Hodges of *Hodges' Harbrace Handbook* fame. I found a plethora of material by Hodges, including all the types of materials I had originally hoped to find--letters, class lecture notes, text marginalia, original student essays, etc., though not all from the 1930s and 1940s. The other UT English professors' collections which I examined included that of Drs. Knickerbocker, Thaler, and Curry. I

found a set of diaries from various years that seemed especially fruitful. (See Appendix A.)

Data collection for this study lasted one year, and after sorting through the gathered materials, I determined which era seemed to have the most material and seemed most pertinent to a composition history. In doing so, I discovered quite a bit of material about two periods: the turn of the century and the 1930s and 1940s. I had slightly more of the latter (approximately one 8 1/2" X 11" letterhead box full of copied and transcribed documents), and I knew interviews from the earlier time period would be nearly impossible; the later era also seemed to be the more interesting because of the social, political, and cultural changes of the time, especially since I was adopting a qualitative approach.

On the other hand, the era of the 1930s and 1940s represents a period of stability according to many composition histories--a time just before dramatic changes in linguistics began changing the picture of American college composition content (Connors, 1991). Many existing histories and/or our perceptions of those histories suggest that this era in composition instruction represents conformity, even stagnation, when current-traditional paradigms reigned supreme. The present negative image of the current-traditional rhetoric movement often leads to denial that any innovation could occur when that paradigm reigned; some studies seem to assume that students of that time wrote staid essays, devoid of any connection to the outside world, if they wrote at all. My

findings--both in this study and in my earlier research--suggest that these assumptions are not always accurate.

As I pinpointed a time frame using available primary documents, I also gathered literature about composition and its history in the 1930s and 1940s, about historical methods, and about qualitative methods. I used computerized data base searches including the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), where descriptors included English, Writing Instruction, Composition, Grammar, History, Syllabus/Course Outline/Course Descriptions/Course Organization, Teaching/Education, English Departments, and a combined entry of Writing Instruction and Composition and Syllabi. UT Librarian Marie Garrett also performed an on-line database search of the Modern Language Association (MLA), Dissertation Abstracts International (DAI), and Arts and Humanities, using these descriptors: The History of Writing Instruction, Freshman Composition, English Education, English, and Syllabi. A lengthy perusal of texts at the libraries of The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Western Kentucky University, and East Central University (Ada, Oklahoma) added significant books, MA theses, and Ph.D. dissertations to my sources (see Works Cited).

While getting access to historical documents may be relatively easy, the collections one encounters are often catch as catch can. McCalman (1990), in reviews of two texts about the Australian educational system, reveals problems often associated with archival collections:

After the wealth of archival material that awaits the historian of most private schools, the historian of state schools finds pitifully little. Public records rarely go beyond correspondence about buildings and staff transfers. Individual student records are like hen's teeth below high school level. Few teachers stayed for years and remained in contact with old students, and not many state schools sustain an ex-students' association. (p. 304)

A crucial factor is the mindset the original faculty members had toward keeping records in the first place and furthermore of keeping the particular kinds of documents a future researcher might seek. Consequently, I accessed records quite easily, but I could not have predicted the variety, usefulness, or even the existence of potentially helpful documents.

Participant access. Borg and Gall (1989) in *Educational research: An introduction* state,

Information sources for an intensive case study include *public archival records*. . . *private archival records* . . . and direct response data such as. . . interviews that are usually administered by the researcher in order to obtain specific information, perceptions, and opinions that are relevant to the study. (p. 402)

Borg and Gall further suggest that a case study which incorporates oral histories "could be used to help understand an educational phenomenon like the one-room school" (p. 402). A related ethnographic approach, the "life history or biographical approach,"

allows researchers to "convey how the social context that is of such importance to the ethnographer gets played out in the lives of specific individuals" and simultaneously "provides focus on somebody rather than on everybody" (Wolcott, 1975, pp. 195-96).

The rationales behind the use of these three approaches--case study, oral history, and life history--influence the interview segments of this case history; the personal opinions and recollections of the subjects, the first-person narratives that result from such recollections, and the contextual evidence on a very personal level which those narratives bring to the history of composition at these schools are crucial aspects of this study. Because of its reliance on oral history interviews in addition to texts, the case history "forces the historian to give up full control of the historiographical process, to examine more closely the particulars of the subject's thought and career in order to find viable, if limited, generalizations, and to relinquish notions of thematic unity" (Nelms, 1900, p. 17).

The dangers of interviewing as a qualitative technique include "relying too heavily on interview data, from the problem of who you select to interview, to what they select to tell you, to how you select what to write" (Walker, 1983, p. 160). Despite the problems of generalizability and the dangers of biased interview selection, oral interviews within the case history approach offer many advantages: 1) they allow the researcher "to cover a lot of ground at speed and, given modern recording technology, to emerge with a lot of data from a short field visit" (Walker, p. 160); 2) their validity is increasing: "With the growing use of tape recordings, oral testimony

may once more regain its prehistoriographic prominence" (Barzun and Graff, 1977, p. 126); 3) they can be highly informative: "A careful transcription of an interview, provided it does not intermix the interviewer's own interpretations, is as much a form of life history data as is a personal diary" (Denzin, 1977, p. 220); 4) they offer a sense of collective history:

What enriches the individual's life is to the group a necessity.

For a whole society to lose its sense of history would be tantamount to giving up its civilization. We live and are moved by historical ideas and images, and our national existence goes on by reproducing them. (Barzun and Graff, 1977, p. 9);

and, 5) they provide yet another means of triangulating data: "A single witness may be quite accurate, but two witnesses, if independent, increase the chances of eliminating human fallibility" (Barzun and Graff, p. 126).

Interviewing, then, can play a major role in gathering data for case histories and did so in this particular study. Interviews added a thick description to this study which ethnographic research values as providing the personal context behind the overall experience.

Approval from Ms. Edith Szathmary, from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Research Administration office, was granted to conduct interviews with human subjects for the study. Such approval assured the study of falling within the guidelines of the Belmont Report concerning the use of human subjects for study (National Commission, 1978); it also validated my personal commitment to upholding ethical standards of research. I interviewed seven

students (two each from Western and UT and three from Bethel Woman's College) as well as two former professors from UT. (See Appendix B). Interviews lasted an average of one hour, and I conducted follow-up questions by phone. I allowed participants to review audiotapes of their interviews if they so desired and to review my findings before submission of the dissertation.

I selected the participants in this study randomly, since I desired a personal, not necessarily representative, perspective. Some of the interviewees (former first-year college students in the 1930s and 1940s) were of advanced age, and this fact alone influenced which original class members I selected. In most cases, mutual acquaintances introduced me to the informants; in a few instances, I knew the individuals personally, and in fewer cases, I made a "cold call" to get permission to interview someone I did not know. My experience in seeking permission for the interviews mirrored that of Hamilton's (1982):

Often in approaching possible contacts, I was greeted with comments like, 'Why do you wish to speak to me? I'm atypical', or 'I really do not think I have much to tell you. You should speak to those women who did something with their lives.' The introductory frame of reference I used was to ask them for their recollections of university days. The lack of confidence and inhibitions expressed in the 'why me?' response is revealing in itself because it reflects not only the reaction of the individual to the interview situation, but also their attitude to their experience at the university. (p. 61)



Despite the facts that I approached and interviewed the participants separately and that, in most cases, they did not know each other, the resultant data were surprisingly consistent--with stories from each school corroborating both each other and the data gathered from other sources via triangulation.

### Triangulation

The triangulation of data serves "to provide a richer and at the same time a more valid picture" of the research setting, thereby allowing "researchers to approach a writing context from various angles, with the weaknesses of one data collection method being compensated for by the strengths of another" (Chan, 1989, p. 40). This study incorporates, just as Nelms' (1990) study does, triangulated materials "of documentary analysis, oral history interviews, and a focus on individuals" (p. 2), which results in a qualitative study much more complex than previous textbook-bound histories. Denzin (1977) suggests that "'multiple triangulation'--a framework for combining multiple theories, observers, data sources, and methods in single investigations" gives researchers the freedom to "move beyond single-method, 'atheoretical' investigations; sociological reality is such that no single method, theory, or observer can ever capture all that is relevant and important" (p. xii). Lauer and Asher (1988) likewise offer a social/contextual validation for triangulation: "Undergirding triangulation is a conception of knowledge as a social construction, a collaborative search, interpretation, and reinterpretation of complex acts in context"

(p. 40; see also R. Smith, 1988, p. 5). A further reason for utilizing triangulation which Denzin (1977) suggests seems especially appropriate for the field of rhetoric and composition: "The necessity of considering theoretical triangulation as an integral feature of the research process is shown in those areas characterized by a high degree of theoretical incoherence" (p. 303); the field is relatively new, and historiography within the field is struggling to develop theories and indeed to canonize the primary texts that define it.

Denzin suggests there are "four basic types of triangulation": investigator, theory, methodology, and data (p. 301). Committee members for this dissertation indirectly served as multiple *investigators* of the data, as did the participants in the interviews who chose to examine the interview tapes and resulting documents. I attempted *theory* triangulation within the case studies and between them as I adopted various viewpoints from which to analyze patterns and to test the emerging theory against those traditionally adopted. *Methodological* triangulation incorporated not only triangulating material within a given method (for instance, text analysis), but also between that method and other methods (for instance, text analysis with interviews). The following two sections are devoted to revealing how the *data* for the study were triangulated.

Text analysis. For this study, I drew inferences based on examinations of teacher syllabi, lecture notes, teacher comments from student papers, textbook marginalia, and catalog course descriptions (see Appendix A). Some of the most enlightening

material came in the form of personal diaries and correspondence. Such materials were especially helpful in reconstructing the past, since "the diary represents the immediate recording of experiences, unimpaired by reconstructions and distortions of memory" (Denzin, 1977, p. 228); see also Taylor and Bogdan (1984).

Throughout the study I felt it necessary to re-examine the history which studies of published materials, especially textbooks, reveal about composition instruction. I examined some published work, such as university catalogs and a few textbooks, but I maintained Denzin's (1977) perspective toward such institutionally produced material:

The reality of any archival producing agency is a reality representing that agency's interpretations of what has occurred, what is to be reported, and what is to be saved for future generations; . . . any public archival document represents the imprint of the organization that produced it, and thus bias arises simultaneously from both the author and from his organization. (p. 246)

I also questioned the contextual decisions that not only produced the work but that allowed it to survive:

What would be the expected flow of events? What kinds of records would have been created? What would be the life history of the documents, from their creation through current use, filing, temporary storage, and eventual repository where he can consult them? What kinds of materials would one

expect to be kept rather than discarded? (P. C. Brooks as cited in Borg and Gall, 1989, p. 815)

I continually kept such considerations in mind throughout the data gathering and analysis stages.

Interviews . Each participant interview in this study represents what Denzin (1977) calls a "topical life history" in that "only one phase of the subject's life is presented" (p. 222). The format of the interviews resembled Denzin's "nonschedule standardized interview" during which "certain types of information are desired from all respondents but the particular phrasing of questions and their order is redefined to fit the characteristics of each respondent" (p. 124). Chan (1989) says that, in addition to providing flexibility when interviewing various individuals, this approach also "allows for issues to be raised that may not have been taken into account during the planning" (p. 53). Such interviewing techniques are, as Taylor and Bogdan (1984) suggest, indicative of the qualitative approach: "Qualitative interviewing has been referred to as nondirective, unstructured, nonstandardized, and open-ended interviewing" with the interviewer herself becoming "the research tool" (p. 77).

While open-ended, the interviews were also focused, in the sense that Yin (1984) uses the term to suggest a concentrated time period in which the interview takes place (about an hour each). Follow-up interviews occurred in those instances where, as I coded and analyzed data, additional terms needed defining or key issues needed further exploring.

In the interviews, I wanted to find out the students' and teachers' experiences at the schools, starting with broad questions about the schools and the students' stints there, then narrowing to their experiences in their English courses. I asked generally open-ended questions, with these typical questions for former students:

Tell me a little about your educational background. How would you describe your experience at (school)? What do you remember about your first year at school? Tell me about your experience in your English courses. What sorts of classroom activities did your freshman English class engage in?

(See Appendix B for additional questions and for questions asked of former professors.)

I attempted to combine both descriptive questions and evaluative ones (Whyte, 1984).

I received permission from most of the informants to record the interview; in those situations where the informant preferred not to use the tape recorder or seemed overly uncomfortable with it, I abandoned it and only took notes. Tape-recording interviews, according to Borg and Gall (1989), provides the ability to play back the data and therefore to study the interview in greater detail than if done from memory, with the disadvantage of tape-recording being that "the presence of the tape recorder changes the interview situation to some degree" (pp. 827, 456). In every case, I tried not to sacrifice alertness to body and facial nuances to note-taking.

Some researchers question interviewing as a valid research tool for various reasons. For instance, Taylor and Bogdan (1984) suggest,

Interviews are subject to the same fabrications, deceptions, exaggerations, and distortions that characterize talk between any persons. Although people's verbal accounts may lend insight into how they think about the world and how they act, there can be a great discrepancy between what they say and what they actually do. (p. 81)

Hamilton (1982) suggests that the presence of tape recording devices can affect some informants to the point that they develop reticence in answering some questions; an alternative explanation--one applicable to the interviews in this study--which she offers for such informant hesitancy in her interviews with former university students is that the period of time being studied in such cases represents only a minor part of the subjects' life:

The university years are short compared to family life and schooldays. Often there was more warmth and talk about family and childhood matters. By contrast, quite frequently recollections of their time at university seemed to take the form of a summary or edited account. (p. 61)

Yin (1984), Denzin (1977), and Watson (1976) offer additional potential problems with interview data.

Ardener (1989) argues that the informant's process of remembering serves to restructure events from the past; "they have been turned into narrative, and obey the structuring processes of narrative" (p. 24). What can such personalized stories of past events offer composition research? Watson (1976) argues that

The only purpose to which the life history lends itself directly, that is, where it is not used as a basis for inferences tied heavily to external constructs, theories, or measures, is as a commentary of the individual's very personal view of his own experience as he understands it. (p. 97)

Such an account, however, is all too absent from composition histories. Too many offer only major-period or major-figure focuses, as Stephen North (1987) points out, without the "micro" approach that can offer "a clearer understanding" of actual classroom practices (pp. 78-81). Too, interviews alone necessarily are not as valid, or even informative, as some of the material triangulated alongside them; the layered data--consisting of the individual remembrances corroborated with public or private documents--result in a picture capable of producing or challenging current theory.

As I interviewed the participants and as I analyzed the data, I kept in mind the extended amount of time between the remembered events and the participants' recollections. The informants' own humble comments, such as "I don't know what you want," further reminded me of the tendency for informants of any age to want to accommodate the interviewer. Most of the informants wanted me to structure the interview, but occasionally, some of the informants preferred leading off the interview session with some thoughts which they had, no doubt, "rehearsed" or opinions and reflections which they did not want to omit or forget. In such cases, I played what Whyte calls a "nondirective role" (1984, p. 98).

I found myself continually adapting the interviews as I went along, depending on the needs of the informants and their apparent memory capacities and their "understanding of questions" and "reactions to the interview" (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 453). Often, I did as Whyte recommends: "Rephrase and reflect back to informants what they seem to be expressing" (1984, p. 98). (Appendix D contains examples of interviews with both a former student and a former professor, each from UT.)

I triangulated the data from each informant interview with other data from the same school and then coded each individual case study; I then examined the three case studies to detect patterns, following Yin's (1984) "multiple-case design" (p. 47). Yin states that "each individual case may still be holistic or embedded" (p. 52); this study follows an embedded design so that the three individual cases were studied independently as multi-faceted investigation sites before the data from all three sources were juxtaposed into a final study. The advantage for such a design, as opposed to a holistic study, according to R. Smith (1988), is that, "the investigator might also choose to assess changes in performance in various subunits" (p. 4). For this study, such a design allowed the independent study of teachers and students being interviewed, as well as the different classrooms examined, just as those variables operated independently within individual courses.



### Data Analysis

I have come to regard data analysis and interpretation as the critical processes in qualitative inquiry. (Wolcott, 1992, p. 3)

Lauer and Asher (1988) define content analysis as "a major measurement procedure, allowing researchers to claim that materials and observations are ultimately quantifiable" (pp. 26-7). Indeed, Pollock and Vierra (1988) report, "Frequently, qualitative researchers incorporate quantifications in their reports in order to strengthen the credibility of their results" (p. 224). Just as in quantitative research, how data are manipulated once received in qualitative research can make tremendous differences in the interpretation of that data. This section will discuss the data analysis strategy I used, the relative success of that strategy in generating the data desired, the biases I discovered as I analyzed the data and wrote the results of the study, and the attempts I made to ensure reliability, validity, and proper ethical treatment of the participants and the data.

### Analysis Strategy

A close analysis of data via patterned coding results in what Taylor and Bogdan (1984) call "the grounded theory approach": it is "a method for discovering theories, concepts, hypotheses, and propositions directly from data, rather than from a priori assumptions, other research, or existing theoretical frameworks" (pp. 125-6). Grounded theory is more concerned with developing theories than verifying past ones, and in the very act of describing or analyzing the data, Lauer and Asher say, theory development is

enhanced "because researchers are trying to isolate and explain important variables" (p. 15).

My analysis began with several readings of the data as I simultaneously developed thematic patterns and finally "codes" to further categorize the material. "But where," as Lauer and Asher ask, "does a coding system come from? It does not spring directly from the data. Rather it arises from an interplay between the data and the researcher's knowledge of theory" (pp. 15-17). So, rather than starting with theory and forcing the data to fit its requirements, the grounded theory approach to data analysis "grounds" the theory within the data itself, so that a knowledge of theory *is* important. I examined the data for its contents and then applied my own knowledge of composition history to the patterns which developed from the data. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) suggest, "A good qualitative study combines an in-depth understanding of the particular setting studied and general theoretical insights that transcend that particular type of setting" (p. 17). Such an understanding helped me "to discount" my findings according to the method developed by Taylor and Bogdan: "that is, to understand the data in the context in which they were collected" by examining the findings for exaggeration or bias when viewed in light of the original setting (p. 130).

The analysis strategy I used followed Yin's (1984) "Explanation-Building Analysis" where "the goal is to analyze the case study data by building an explanation about the case" with the best studies being "the ones in which the explanations have reflected

some theoretically significant propositions. For example, the causal links may reflect critical insights into public policy process or into social science theory" (p. 106). This case history followed a multiple-case, embedded strategy, having three schools as I examined several classrooms, students, and teachers at each school. I attempted to achieve theoretical replication between cases (and literal replication in those situations where duplicate documents or evidence existed). I examined each school, or case, using "within-case analysis," which involves, as Eisenhardt (1989) suggests, case write-ups that "are often simply pure descriptions, but they are central to the generation of insight" because such an approach "allows the unique patterns of each case to emerge before investigators push to generalize patterns across cases. In addition, it gives investigators a rich familiarity with each case which, in turn, accelerates cross-case comparison" (p. 540).

As the data generated patterns within each case, I developed and coded categories; the codes were necessary to handle the volume of data generated (Burns, 1989). The source of the categories was, as Lauer and Asher (1988) recommend, me: "researchers impose them [categories] on the data or develop them from the data, identifying dimensions, aspects, or categories that seem important for understanding writing" (p. 29). Revealing how, why, and by whom those categories were developed and given specific identifying characteristics is important for future replication (Lauer and Asher; see also Burns, 1989).

As the only observer for this study, I developed broad categorical themes such as Composition Instruction Themes,

Institutional Themes, Social Themes, and Economic Themes (see Appendix E), by generally considering the overall subject of each element of the triangulated data after careful reading and re-reading of the data. Then, more narrow codes within those broader patterns were developed: "Patterns develop progressively as categorization becomes increasingly complex" (Pollock and Vierra, 1988, p. 218). Some specific codes included Conferencing, Correctness, Administrative Influence, Physical Conditions, and Feminist Issues. (See Appendix E). The particular identifying names which I used developed from my desire to clearly identify data deriving from given theoretical perspectives, as Borg & Gall (1989) suggest: "consider at least two interpretive frameworks for explaining the phenomena" (p. 827). I followed Yin's (1984) suggestion to code data according to various analytic techniques by tabulating the frequency of events as well as developing the matrix of categories (p. 100). As I collected and coded new data, new patterns and areas needing research became apparent. I will supply the complete body of coded material for this study upon request (See Lauer and Asher, p. 26-29 and Burns, 1989, p. 46).

### Assessment of Procedures

In the course of researching this project, I found no actual student writing and only a few teacher syllabi and relevant course materials, and the participants retain few vivid memories; thus, the procedures employed in data collection are inadequate in some respects. Choosing courses from the not-so-distant past could

uncover more of the types of data undetectable in this study, but the very notion that all traces of these courses from distant years are slipping away reinforces the need to preserve what we do have. For example, Julia Neal, an especially significant participant in that her academic career extended to two of the schools in this study, died in July of 1995, as I wrote the final version of this project.

As I wrote, I struggled between adopting an objective writing stance--as a dispassionate analyst looking afresh at the situations which the data revealed--and adopting a wholeheartedly subjective stance by admitting my own predispositions and realizing their role in my understanding of the situation I researched. Such vacillating is what Schilb (1987) calls "determined oscillations"; these determined oscillations are necessary, he says, in arriving at a revisionist history.

### Review of Assumptions

Preconceived notions held by the researcher can influence the results, as Jack (1990) notes: "How do we listen to interviews without immediately leaping to interpretations suggested by prevailing theories? Content analysis provides the first step: it tells us what is there, what themes dominate the interviews" (p. 103). Following analysis of the data, I discovered biases not evident at the beginning of the study about the three schools, about the geographical area the schools are situated in, and about what comprises good teaching, good learning, and good writing. After investing so much time and energy into this project--indeed, so much of myself--I found I wanted the students and teachers who were a part of composition

instruction at these three schools in the 1930s and 1940s to "succeed," to be success stories which serve as counter examples in the evolving histories of composition instruction.

Another bias I became aware of in writing this dissertation is my insistence that the world must have entered the composition classroom directly, via discussion or assignments. The era I chose, from 1930 to 1945, was a period of emotional distress and financial hardship for much of America, and, as so often happens, world events worked to shape events at the homefront and workplace.

In writing about all three schools, I also found myself championing the problems faced by instructors in the Upper South as causes for any ineffective pedagogies they may have used. These instructors were swamped with students who, although they may be verbally eloquent today, were in many cases sadly unprepared for college then. I discovered another predisposition in the writing stage of this project: a tendency to generalize, to forget that one incidence is just that; it is significant in and of itself, without lumping it with other occurrences or extending its importance beyond its appropriate scope. Eisenhardt (1989) and Pollock and Vierra (1988) express similar concerns about reaching false conclusions in data analysis.

A problem often associated with qualitative data analysis is the potential to change the material in the act of moving words from the data collection stage through analysis to the printed text of the study; Walker (1983) warns of the dangers of committing

all kinds of methodological violence on the data which was difficult for the subjects to control. Simply in translating from

the spoken to the written word, in editing out sections and in rearranging the text, it is possible to arrive at meanings that go beyond what the speaker intended. (p. 158)

I made conscious efforts as I wrote the results to remain true to the intentions of the participants, as much as I was able to discern them, and to interpret the data reasonably, being cautious not to impose meaning on texts and documents that would not be clearly evident to other scholars.

I also realized during the study how strongly the writing and analysis are situated within a relativistic epistemological framework. Adopting a true relativist position would, of course, make a qualitative (or any) approach meaningless because no depiction of the past, no matter how richly layered by evidence, would be seen as sufficient, and the very openness to varied possibilities which relativism asserts would become useless. Still, relativist tendencies are herein evident because of the firm assertion throughout that few truths can ever be complete.

Finally, Eisenhardt discusses the problem of knowing how much analysis is enough: "Two issues are important in reaching closure: when to stop adding cases, and when to stop iterating between theory and data" (p. 545). Practical issues such as "time and money" often solve this problem. With this study, as with several according to Eisenhardt (p. 545), I chose the cases (school sites) soon after I began because they represented three types of schools that geographically and demographically fulfilled the goals of the study. The iteration between theory and data occurred within cases and

between cases until a saturation point of theoretical possibilities seemed apparent.

### Reliability, Validity, and Ethics

As with any research project, issues of reliability and validity affect this study, because the lack of those two elements results in a diminished potential for replicated studies, a decrease in the study's ability to contribute knowledge to the field, and a less-than-desirable scholarly reputation. This section addresses how the study aimed at achieving reliability and validity, and indeed what constitutes those elements in such a study as this, as well as my handling of the study's ethical concerns.

Reliability. According to Yin (1984), "the goal of reliability is to minimize the errors and biases in a study" (p. 40). Therefore, to allow other investigators to repeat the study, researchers must "document the procedures followed in the earlier case" (Yin, p. 40); doing so reveals the errors, biases, and decisions of the study. Yin further suggests the best way to document the procedures of a study and therein "increase the *reliability* of the information in a case study" is to "maintain a chain of evidence" (p. 96). I took the following steps to ensure reliability: 1) acknowledged biases before data collection and during data analysis, 2) triangulated data, 3) adopted multiple perspectives in analyzing data, and 4) conscientiously informed readers of the procedures taken and made available additional materials, including the data collected itself, on request.



One of the factors that can lead to an unreliable study, according to Taylor and Bogdan (1984), is the failure "to record the nature of decisions, data upon which they were based, and reasoning that entered into decisions" (p. 49), which is why I endeavored to record virtually every decision made about this study: why I chose these three specific schools, which informants I chose and why, why I altered questions to fit the interview, etc.

Internal validity. Yin (1984) suggests that "internal validity is a concern only for causal or explanatory studies, where an investigator is trying to determine whether event x led to event y" (p. 38), so that internal validity is of less consequence to this overall study because it is not a causal study so much as a descriptive one. However, it is of issue in relation to the individual studies: "Important comparisons to rival propositions and threats to internal validity should be made within each individual case" (Yin, p. 119). To achieve this, I examined the institutional, public, and economic factors that led to individual decisions within courses. Because I had adopted these varying theoretical frameworks, I could begin to determine "which alternative causal explanations of the phenomenon" seemed less plausible (Smith, R., 1988, p. 6).

External validity. Smith defines external validity as referring only "to the extent to which the results of an investigation can be generalized to the population as a whole and to other populations, settings, measurement devices, and so on" (p. 9). Yin (1984) argues, however, that this criticism applies only to statistical generalization and not to analytical generalization, in which the investigator tries to

generalize a particular result to some broader theory (p. 9). This suggests that we should note "the relationship of individual case to theory rather than the relationship of individual case to a population" (Smith, R., p. 9). This can be done, according to Yin (1984), by using replication logic (p. 40). To do this, R. Smith says, "investigators either predict similar results when they are exposed to the intervention (a literal replication) or different results for theoretically specified reasons (a theoretical replication)" (3-4).

Such an approach is appropriate for histories in composition research because factors contributing to the environment of any given classroom differ according to teacher, time period, institution, and even the individual perspectives held by the students within that same classroom. Borg and Gall (1989) say that population validity, or the "degree to which the sample is representative of the population from which the sample was drawn" is another aspect of external validity; they warn, "If population validity cannot be established, as is often the case in qualitative research, then the investigator must be very cautious in generalizing his results" (p. 404). While I am cautious to generalize results based on such very individualized accounts, the corollary warning to composition historians should perhaps be that generalizations based on broad pictures of daily instruction may not be wise or particularly correct either.

Some issues concerning the maintenance of reliability and validity frequently surfaced in the course of conducting this study. Reliability and validity are of crucial importance in the conducting of

interviews, where, as Denzin (1977) notes, "The investigator must show the extent to which his questions measure what is intended, as well as demonstrate the reliability of his instrument" (p. 132). Borg and Gall (1989) mention just a few of the areas where problems can occur:

Eagerness of the respondent to please the interviewer, a vague antagonism that sometimes arises between interviewer and respondent, or the tendency of interviewers to seek out answers that support their preconceived notions are but a few of the factors that may contribute to biasing of data obtained from the interview. (p. 448)

Taylor and Bogdan (1984) cite several "threats to procedural rigor" often found in interviews, with one being that the "Informant did not observe the details requested or was not able to recall the event and substitutes instead what he or she supposed happened" (p. 49).

This particular threat did not seem to be at issue in this study, because most of the participants bluntly said they remembered very little and that it had been such a long time (60 years) since their school days. When they were unable to remember anything I asked about, they simply shrugged their shoulders and said "I'm sorry" or "I wish I could help you more!" While the fact that I did not get a great deal of information from some of them may in some cases pose another threat to validity, perhaps it nevertheless makes the material that I *did* get disproportionately salient.

These areas of concern point to two other threats Taylor and Bogdan (1984) mention about data gathering. The first, that an

"Insufficient amount of data is gathered" (p. 49), has been one of concern throughout the study, but also a point I want to make. We as composition instructors save very little of what we do, and the archival libraries in many instances beg for more materials about our activities. Archivists from Western and UT emphasized the fact that they have to depend on volunteer materials for their collections.

The second point, that an "Insufficient amount of time is spent in data gathering" (Taylor and Bogdan, p. 49), did not seem pertinent to this study. Only so much archival material exists, and since the lag of years between the actual events studied and the current project is so long, interviewing more students and teachers did not seem profitable; furthermore, getting names of those still living who fit the educational criteria became increasingly difficult. Another issue of concern was that similar materials were not always available for each of the case studies. Denzin (1977), however, notes that this threat to internal validity is typical: "Because the life history variously rests on public and private archival data. . .certain pieces of information may never be validated in a triangulated sense" (pp. 241-2).

I was also concerned during the study about the frequent alteration of questions--the questions I asked informants, the questions I asked as I examined documents, the questions I asked as I coded, interpreted, and wrote results. Eisenhardt (1989), however, alleviates those concerns: "A key feature of theory-building case research is the freedom to make adjustments during the data collection process" (p. 539). Eisenhardt continues, "Is it legitimate to

alter and even add data collection methods during a study? For theory-building research, the answer is 'yes,' because investigators are trying to understand each case individually and in as much depth as is feasible" (p. 539). Finally, one of the significant observations made by many of the scholars examined in the course of this study was that data and results should be corroborated by multiple observers and/or reviewers (See Lauer and Asher, 1988, p. 31; Smith, R., 1988, p. 11; and Yin, 1984, p. 137). To accommodate this suggestion, I made rough and finished materials available to participants and the dissertation director to verify my results.

Ethics. Borg and Gall (1989) stress the importance of revealing the "precautions" taken to maintain ethical and legal standards while conducting research (p. 83). Because the study involved humans, I secured approval for the interview aspect of this study from the Research Administration's Coordinator of Compliances at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. That office approved the report I filed in June of 1993; the report contained an Identification of Project, Objective of Project, Description of Subjects, Methods, Specific Risks and Protection Measures, Benefits vs. Risks, and the Method of Obtaining "Informed Consent" from Subjects, among other things. I provided these items to fulfill the Belmont Report's desire that "there should first be a determination of the validity of the presuppositions of the research; then the nature, probability and magnitude of risk should be distinguished with as much clarity as possible" (National Commission, 1978, p. 7; see also Denzin, 1977, p. 47).

The participants in this study experienced minimal risk; the most significant potentially harmful aspects were the informants' being named in the final research report and the fact that they were taped as they were interviewed. Concerning the former, Yin (1984) says that disclosure of names is desirable in cases such as this because readers can identify with the person or place being studied and may add relevant information to that acquired in the study (p.136). Furthermore, the possibility of incriminating problems associated with disclosure of participants' names had diminished by the sheer amount of time elapsed since the occurrence of events recalled. On an Informed Consent form (See Appendix F), I secured permission to hold each interview and to use each informant's name. I ensured the three elements which the Belmont Report stresses-- "information, comprehension, and voluntariness" (National Commission, 1978, p. 5)--in securing permission to interview and in maintaining rapport with the informants.

### Summary

This study exists because of my dissatisfaction with composition histories which look at one aspect of past instruction and unhesitatingly report, "This is our history." Too often, it seems, those histories fail to adopt challenging perspectives, which can be found "in alternative cultural views, different theories, variations among the people or decision makers who are part of the case study" (Yin, 1984, p. 143). Too often, historians engage in "the practice of looking for favoring evidence without at the same time looking for contrary

evidence" (Barzun and Graff, 1977, p. 203). This study seeks to avoid such "one-sided induction" as Barzun and Graff have named it (p. 203). The examination of challenging evidence via triangulated data, interviews, public and private documents, and the adoption of multiple theoretical perspectives present a more well-rounded approach than currently exists of what some of the courses in first-year composition were like in the 1930s and 1940s in American colleges and universities.

### Chapter Three

#### Bethel Woman's College: A Private School in Hopkinsville, Kentucky

The political leaders of ante-bellum Kentucky were not thinking of a whole state peopled by a vigorous and industrious race armed with the power that knowledge gives. An excellent Anglo-Saxon stock thus largely lost, as far as public education is concerned, the first century of its history.

(Kentucky General Education Board, 1922, pp. 4-5)

A history of composition instruction at Kentucky colleges and universities would seem incomplete without first examining the educational backgrounds of the first-year students entering those schools. The above quote hints at the lack of political and public support for public education that existed in Kentucky in the era preceding the 1930s and 1940s. Higher education, the Board report further states, was "well-nigh ignored by the state" through the 1920s. The colleges that did exist were "invaluable to the students attending them," but were "entirely inadequate to meet the situation" (pp. 4-5). This chapter briefly examines the educational climate of the period, then discusses Bethel Woman's College, which appears in many ways to be a bright contrast to the otherwise gloomy educational scene. The chapter then includes a portrait of the first-year composition course at Bethel during the 1930s and '40s.

#### Primary and Secondary Education in Kentucky in the 1930s and 1940s--College Preparation

In the earliest days of common schools, teachers wrote the letters on crude blackboards for pupils to imitate. Rough writing desks were built along the walls of log schoolhouses for use by pupils. . . . pupils worked with bottles of ink (often homemade) and quill pens. (Hartford, 1977, p. 43)

Crude tools, along with uncomfortable physical conditions, an agrarian setting, and the lack of teacher training (discussed in



Chapter Four) all served to create an educational climate that was less than inviting for Kentucky youth in the early part of this century. Attitudes among the citizenry no less worked against the system--attitudes long ingrained:

The early settlers of Kentucky were Virginians, and, consequently, chiefly of British stock. This had its effect upon the development of an educational program in Kentucky because these people took the attitude that public education, except for higher education, was for the poor classes of people. As was practiced in England, the upper classes of people could and did send their children to private schools or employed private tutors for them. (The Project Staff, 1937, p. 1)

With such a setting, it is perhaps no wonder that Kentucky consistently ranked near the bottom in both state-by-state educational rankings and literacy rates (Kentucky General Education Board, 1922). In 1900, Harrison (1987) reports, "...16.5 percent of all Kentuckians over ten years of age admitted illiteracy. Had tests been required, the number would have been higher" (p. 5). By 1930, the number had dropped to 6.6 percent of the population (McVey, 1949).

One-room schools served as the mainstay of education across the state, and the public resisted efforts at consolidation. Because of the lack of fundamental equipment such as blackboards and slates in the years preceding the 1930s, subjects such as writing and arithmetic were hard to do (McVey, 1949, p. 64). Conditions had not

improved greatly by 1943, even in the largest city in the state. The *Survey Report of the Louisville Public Schools* reports:

The equipment of many rooms is inadequate. There is usually sufficient blackboard space, but rarely more than a few feet of bulletin board. . . .In general it can be said that the English classroom of Louisville could be cleaner, brighter, and more attractively decorated. (Works, 1943, p. 348)

The same report further decries the lack of modern equipment such as phonographs and movie projectors in Louisville classrooms. Rural schools very likely offered students even fewer physical comforts and technological innovations than city schools.<sup>2</sup>

Physical environment aside, textbooks represented a primary concern of educators, administrators, and parents alike, due not only to their cost but also to the degree of and control of uniformity across the state (McVey, 1949, p. 71). Hartford (1977) suggests that the issue of textbooks is an important one because, in this case, they determined curriculum:

What came out of the hours of study and recitation was what was conveyed by William Holmes McGuffey, Noah Webster, Joseph Ray, Noble Butler, or other authors of popular textbooks.

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<sup>2</sup>Personal knowledge of the one-room rural schools that operated at the time suggests that comfort may have been a more pressing concern than modern equipment. A church I attended as a child had years earlier been a district one-room school in southern Kentucky (in the early 1940s, when my father attended), and the pot belly stove did little to warm the furthestmost regions of the room in the winter. In hot weather, propping the windows up with a stick allowed for little circulation. That students maintained a positive outlook toward education and continued their studies at all seems somewhat miraculous given the physical conditions they must have endured at that school and at the many others like it dotting the Kentucky landscape.

Since the education based on these limited sources proved quite successful, it suggests that the rural agrarian culture, the little white schoolhouse, the schoolmasters as local products of these institutions, most patrons, and the language and values of the textbooks put together by articulate spokesmen of that same culture all supported and reinforced one another. (p. 40)

What exactly was supported? The 3 Rs: reading, writing, arithmetic. What constituted writing? In some schools, penmanship; such an emphasis is quite understandable considering the lack of sufficient (and efficient) writing implements. "Parents on the frontier who knew the need for literacy from firsthand experience always respected the ability to 'write with a good hand'" (Hartford, 1977, p. 43). Schoolmasters and students alike who excelled at the art of penmanship were duly rewarded. A combination of penmanship and modeling later developed: "As textbooks came into common use, various publishers offered copy books that provided model letters, words, and sentences to be copied by students on blank pages" (Hartford, 1977, p. 43).

At other schools, writing equaled grammar. Texts by grammarians Thomas W. Harvey and Louisvillian Noble Butler were especially popular in the early 1900s:

Many scholars testified to their struggles with the twenty-two rules that had to be mastered. They studied parts of speech, declension, and conjugation, and drew elaborate diagrams on the blackboard. . . .To be known as a grammarian was a mark of distinction. (Hartford, 1977, p. 46)

At yet other schools, especially rural schools without blackboards, teachers emphasized spelling since it could be taught orally: "Much emphasis was placed upon the mastery of words; indeed the ability to spell was accepted as evidence of scholarship" (McVey, 1949, p. 64).

Reform movements brought changes in both physical conditions and attitudes to Kentucky education by the 1930s. A 1937 *Study of Local School Units in Kentucky* notes, "The changing civilization which our country has witnessed during the past several years has taught the people that they need to know more than merely how to read, write, and spell" (The Project Staff, p. 16), although it is difficult to ascertain whether or not "write" in this passage suggests penmanship, grammatical knowledge, or actual composition. Composition had become a part of the public school curriculum by a legislative mandate in 1884 (Hartford, 1977, p. 39). Louisville (and perhaps other school systems) was beginning to acknowledge the importance of writing in its 1943 *Survey Report*:

Every effort should be made to increase the quantity and the quality of the writing in the English course. Composition is not only practice in the use of English, important as that practice is; it is also the chief means of developing orderly thinking and expanding the powers of observation, reflection, and imagination. . . .in the senior high school not less than two compositions of approximately two hundred words each should

be required. While a few teachers of Louisville are meeting or passing this standard, they appear to be in the minority.

(p. 346)

The Report also deplores staid recitation and memorized responses (especially in grammar instruction), encouraging instead creative thinking; it stresses the need for students to understand concepts in grammar rather than to memorize those concepts. It recommends creating in students a life long love of reading.

Knowledge, it implies, should be applied and not merely a means of passing exams. The Report also calls for developing individualized instruction able to meet the students' needs (pp. 344-45).

Other progressive movements took place across the state during this period. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Kentucky General Assembly passed laws requiring uniform textbook adoption and free textbooks (Hartford, 1977, p. 42). This period also signaled an overall improvement in the school system, despite the Depression, due to Federal aid:

Many new buildings replaced old and inadequate schoolhouses; luncheon programs helped to build up the children's health; and teachers, not yet tempted by the monetary rewards in industry and government employment that were to be opened to them in the 1940s, continued in service. (McVey, 1949, p. 271)

By the end of the period under study, then, the physical conditions students experienced, the tools they used, and, at least in some areas,

the writing instruction they received theoretically resulted in better-prepared students entering Kentucky colleges.

### Bethel Woman's College

To grant to all the great privilege of thinking and to reserve the same right for myself. . . . (Bethel Girl's Creed, postcard, n.d.)

The students who entered Bethel Woman's College in the 1930s and 1940s may have found there a sharp contrast to the somewhat dismal scene found elsewhere in Kentucky education. Instead of gloomy surroundings, the young women attending Bethel encountered "one of the finest examples of Grecian architecture in the South" upon first seeing the main building of the school (Higgins, 1932, quoted in Turner). A swimming pool, donated in 1930, graced the basement of the main building, and departments such as home economics received upgrades in their equipment during the period (Bethel Woman's College *Bulletin*, April 1938). The students themselves and their activities also set Bethel apart.

Several of the alumni are former employees of the Kentucky Library on the campus of Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Kentucky. A current librarian there, Nancy Baird, provided names of former co-workers who had attended Bethel in the appropriate era for this study, and she contacted the individuals, arranged interviews, and, with the exception of the phone interview, provided directions to their homes. The Bethel alumni interviewed share several characteristics; they are articulate, intelligent women, eager to assist the researcher.

Julia Neal lives alone in Bowling Green, Kentucky after a long career of teaching English in Alabama and at Western Kentucky University, the subject of Chapter Four. She attended Bethel in the mid-1920s, just before the era being studied, but the perspective she provides as a student at one school and an instructor at another is a valuable one. She also offers the opportunity to compare the pre-1930s Bethel with the school as it was when the other participants attended. After her teaching stint, Neal also directed the Kentucky Library and Museum on Western's campus in Bowling Green. She is known nationally for her research and publications concerning the Shakers, a religious group with a settlement quite close to her hometown of Auburn in Logan County, Kentucky. She leaves the impression that, regardless of her self-effacing comments to the contrary, she must have been an engaging, spirited scholar as she made presentations to women's clubs, as well as a very tangible presence in her graduate classes at the University of Michigan.<sup>3</sup>

Self-effacement is an attribute shared by Jeanette Wilson Farley, who was a librarian at the Kentucky Museum and lives in Bowling Green, Kentucky. In addition to her Bethel career, Farley took courses at Campbellsville College, The University of Kentucky, and Indiana State University, before graduating from Western Kentucky University. She was a public school teacher and librarian at various county school systems across the state; she was known among her co-workers as an ace editor.

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<sup>3</sup>Julia Neal died July 22, 1995, less than a month away from her ninetieth birthday.

The final Bethel alumna is June Duncan Faxon, whom I interviewed by phone and by follow-up letter. She also lives in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Like the other participants, she expressed concern that her fading memories would not be helpful, though they serve to resurrect a school that no longer exists.

Meager holdings at the Kentucky Museum preserve bits and pieces about the school, and the private collection of William Turner in Hopkinsville, Kentucky offers additional materials. The actual building that housed the school no longer stands, and without conscious efforts in the near future at preserving its history, very little will remain to confirm the school's actual existence.

### School History

Bethel Woman's College sat on a 5-6 acre lot on Boyd's Landing Road, in southwest Hopkinsville, Kentucky, on what is now West 15th Street and the site of an eye doctor's office. The Bethel Baptist Association chartered and opened the school in 1856 (Turner). The brick Greek Revival main building was built that year for \$30,000 (Lewis, 1899, p. 240). The school granted its first Associate's degrees in 1890, and in 1928, Bethel became the first junior college in the state to be accredited by SACSS (the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Southern States) (Turner; Bethel Woman's College *Bulletin*, May 1934). The school also offered a four year high school diploma to younger female students at what was called "The Academy" (Bethel Woman's College *Catalog*, May 1934).



Enrollment at Bethel consistently wavered around 100, with "excellence of scholarship rather than numbers" being the desire (Lewis, p. 242). The school year 1949-50 saw one of the largest enrollments in several years--116. Curiously, only 25 of those students were from Hopkinsville and the surrounding area (Turner). A flyer advertising the school reveals that students hailed from 16 states and 2 foreign countries, which, if such are typical statistics, would have probably made the student body less homogenous than student bodies at other schools of higher education in the state, especially the normal teaching schools which traditionally attract local students.

The trustees' original goals for the two-year private college included the desire to make it "equal to any female college in the Southeast" (Lewis, p. 240). The school mirrored developments in private education elsewhere: "In the county towns little academies and 'elegant' female seminaries were springing up for those who could pay tuition fees" (Kennedy and Harlow, 1940, p. 9). Later, as administrators developed Bethel's curriculum, they followed the University of Virginia's course of instruction; since its inception, the University of Virginia had been dedicated to preparing citizens for public service and practical affairs, and the curriculum there innovatively offered a broad range of courses (Rectors, 1995). Bethel administrators modeled this system, with the aim being "to make it equal to that of any of the male colleges in the State" (Lewis, p. 242).

### School Atmosphere

While the curriculum at Bethel Woman's College might have mimicked male schools, the social environment certainly did not. With a history of being "one of the oldest colleges for women in America" (Bethel Woman's College *Catalog*, n.d.), the activities the female students engaged in were steeped in tradition and moral overtones. The school had developed at a time when girls' schools were not entirely popular: "The difficult task of overcoming the ridicule and hostility that confronted the movement for women's education even as late as the middle of the nineteenth century was willingly undertaken by a competent board of trustees" (Turner). Because the school reflected a strong Baptist orientation, the local public may have been more willing to overcome its anti-feminist bias. Indeed, the school became known as a place "where the Baptist girls of the country might have cheap board and tuition, but the finest of training in Christian virtues and the fine arts" (Higgins in Turner, 1932).

The distinctly feminine nature of many of the social activities made Bethel Woman's College an unlikely candidate to become co-educational, but the school indeed did in 1951 (Turner). Julia Neal, a 1925 graduate of Bethel, recalls her surprise upon attending the annual alumni luncheon as guest speaker, when she encountered male students at Bethel Woman's College:

I'd been receiving the *Bulletin* all that time, and I knew there were men there, but, you know, when I was thinking about what I'd talk about, I was thinking about the Bethel that I

knew. When I walked into that dining room that day and saw those men, I was thrown for a complete loss! (1993)

Due to increasing financial difficulties and lack of patron support, the move to a co-educational school was perhaps economically motivated. Undoubtedly, it led to a different experience for the females attending during that period, to a different Bethel than they would know and remember in the following years. Yet even the Bethel Girl's Creed would suggest that intellect, friendship, and a love of the outdoors, among other things, were top priorities at the school, traits which transcend gender:

To grant to all the great privilege of thinking and to reserve the same right for myself.

To seek out and hug close to my heart a few real friends who understand, rather than to play for popularity.

To spend as much time as is possible, each day in God's great out-of-doors, and to endeavor to read life's lessons from the pages of nature. (Bethel Post Card, n. d. )

Student life. Incoming first-year students ("Juniors") were greeted at the opening of each fall semester with a Friendship Ceremony, where they dressed in white evening dresses, carried flowers, and were given a key to the college by the "Seniors" dressed as ladies of 1854 (Turner; Bethel Woman's College *Bulletin*, 1940).

Clothing seemed to become an important symbol of both the appropriate demeanor students should adopt and the school's ever-impending financial problems. At the school's inception, the description of the required attire sounds quite romantic: "The

wearing of modest clothes was stressed. In spring and summer, dresses of pink, blue and white; straw bonnets trimmed with pink ribbon. In the fall and winter, dresses of maroon and blue, with bonnets trimmed in crimson ribbon" (Turner). Nearly fifty years later, the descriptions sound pinched, even somber: "All pupils are required to wear. . .a prescribed uniform. . .to discourage extravagance"; the uniform consisted of a dark blue cloth suit and Oxford cap in the winter and an "inexpensive" white waist and straw hat in the spring term (Turner). June Duncan Faxon, who attended Bethel Woman's College (BWC) from 1937 to 1939, recalls the appropriate attire when she was there: "Well, we were required to wear hats and gloves and hose each time we went to town. We dressed formally for dinner on Friday night, went to teas, receptions, and so forth, and were taught to be ladies."

Throughout the school year, other routine activities included buffet suppers and treasure hunts with the local Baptist church, abundant musical recitals, and dramatic productions of Dickens and the Arthurian legend, among others (Bethel Woman's College *Bulletin*, 1939 and 1940; BWC Play Programs, 1932, 1935 and 1938). Christmas brought a flurry of activities, including a Cantata, an Annual Tea complete with receiving line, a Christmas Party, and Christmas Caroling around Hopkinsville (BWC *Bulletin*, 1942). The annual Girls Auxiliary House Party in March promised to be religious in nature and fun (BWC Invitation, 1938).

May and Graduation ushered in further activities: the Greek Dance and May Pageant, including the crowning of the May Queen,

the Senior Play (in 1937, Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*), an Annual Luncheon to which Alumni were also invited and at which the Physical Education classes conducted a "pageant," Class Day exercises, and a Lawn Fete (BWC *Bulletin*, 1938; BWC Play Program, 1937; BWC Luncheon program, 1938). Finally, graduation activities included a Baccalaureate Address, a Baccalaureate Sermon and, of course, Commencement (BWC *Bulletin*, 1938; BWC Commencement Program, 1940).

Bethel's students did not depend entirely on themselves, however, for their entertainment and extracurricular activities; the school regularly hosted guests, and the students often took trips. For example, the head of the University of Kentucky Home Economics Department conducted a lecture on Fashions in 1938, the year when Bethel received new cabinets, sinks, electric stove, and electric sewing machines. Mrs. J. O. Williams of Nashville gave a series of spiritual addresses and chalk talks (lectures with visual aids) that same year (BWC *Bulletin*, April 1938). The Western Glee Club performed at Bethel's Auditorium in 1935 (BWC Program).

In 1938, sixty students and faculty chartered buses to see *King Richard II* and *Victoria Regina* (with Helen Hayes in the leading role) at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville; they toured the city for a day, including visiting the Parthenon, the Hermitage, and enjoying dinner (BWC *Bulletin*, April 1938). Twenty-six students went to the state Baptist Student Union convention in Murray in 1939 (BWC *Bulletin*). The purchase of a 1934-model station wagon in 1940 made excursions even easier (BWC *Bulletin*, Oct. 1940).

Faculty life. As the outings which Bethel students enjoyed suggest, faculty members had ample opportunity to enjoy the same enlightening experiences which their students sampled. Indeed, chaperoning at the abundant activities might very well have encouraged more participation than the faculty members had time for or inclination toward. In the absence of abundant information about the faculty's existence at Bethel, some assumptions can nevertheless be safely made. The college's ongoing financial problems in a period traditionally known for economic difficulty would suggest that the teachers were not highly paid for their efforts.

Hopkinsville, Kentucky could offer much, though, in terms of cheap entertainment by way of outdoor/nature excursions, with Mammoth Cave and several rivers within a day's outing, a Shaker settlement just two counties over, and abundant farming and natural scenery just outside the city's borders. The closest cultural and literary center for purposes of entertainment, enlightenment, or research, however, would have been Nashville, Tennessee to the southeast (and to a lesser extent, Louisville, Kentucky to the northeast). We know that the faculty traveled to Nashville on school outings; however, we do not have further documentation about their daily existence and the possible impact it had on their instruction in the composition classroom.

### English at Bethel Woman's College

In addition to extracurricular activities, Bethel offered a strong academic training. Internal and external factors impacted the actual composition course, and the traces I found of the variations as they existed at Bethel are enlightening. These variations can be seen by examining individual students and faculty, methods of evaluation and assignments used by teachers, and the external forces on instruction themselves. First, though, this section examines the official course description depicting the ideal composition course at Bethel.

#### First-Year Composition Course Description

Bethel's official course descriptions reveal some modern trends in English studies. The course of study at the Academy (high school) suggests that the administration understood the need to move from writing to polishing that writing, rather than beginning with mechanical skills and then moving to the written essay. On the high school level, English I involved "practice in both written and oral composition, with a review of English grammar" in order for the student to arrive at "correct, clear, effective English." English II extolled the development of "a style" on the sentence and paragraph level. English III promised "development in the use of language" since "speaking, writing, and reading are reciprocal processes which should be practiced together." Finally, English IV offered an "adequate review in the fundamentals of English" which included

exercise on work sheets at an individual pace (Bethel Woman's College *Catalog*, n.d., p. 51).

Students needed three high school English units, not including spelling or penmanship, for entrance to college work at Bethel (Bethel Woman's College *Bulletin*, May 1934). This suggests a departmental recognition that writing involves much more than mechanical fluency. College students needed English I and English II, each a two-semester course, to receive either the college diploma or the teacher training diploma. Some students first had to take a drill-intensive course, English X, "A sub-freshman course," if their work exhibited "deficiency in English rudiments." The course description threatened "Repeated drills" to develop "sentence sense" and for "eradicating gross errors," although the aim was purported to be "practical rather than technical" (*Catalog*, May 1934, p. 27).

English I College Composition is described as "A general introduction to the effective writing and speaking of the English language." The class consisted of "Constant practice. . .in written and oral themes, which are used as the bases of careful class criticism and individual conferences." Instructors also guided students' reading, "with a view to sharpening their perception of the life about them and to stimulating their thought and expression" (*Catalog*, May 1934, p. 27).

For those students pursuing an English major or simply looking for interesting electives, Bethel Woman's College offered a variety of electives. The school seemed quite proud of its offerings, because the "good literary course" was listed as one of several "Reasons for



Patronizing Bethel Woman's College" in an undated catalog advertisement. The electives included only one writing course--an Advanced Composition course offered in alternate semesters only, where students "who have given evidence of their ability in this field" completed daily creative writing assignments. June Duncan Faxon's friend, Juanita Roundtree, took Advanced Composition. I discovered little else about the course.

"English II. Development of English Literature from Beowulf to Hardy" apparently was a two-semester, second-year literature survey course, with little required writing, according to the course description. Julia Neal remembers the course as it was taught in the 1924-25 school year:

In Sophomore English it was the routine--one book with everything in it--poetry, fiction, short stories, and I guess we read an outside book or two, but I can't remember anything except she would make an assignment, a page assignment, and we were supposed to read it before we came to class and discuss it with her.

### Students

If the statistics cited earlier are any indication, then some of the Kentucky students attending Bethel may have found themselves ill-prepared for rigorous college training as they joined with students from other states and counties. Some students, however, felt their work in college to be less demanding than their high school instruction had been. Jeanette Farley (1993) recalls: "Where I

learned most of my English was at high school. . . .I had a good English teacher in high school. Sentence diagramming was included. It was boring, but we learned something." Her high school class also included oral, individual verb conjugations. Farley furthermore credits her father--a teacher, principal and school superintendent--for instilling correct English in his children by modeling it himself.

The school's social setting and abundant activities and its small size most certainly encouraged interaction and likely resulted in cultured students. Bethel was a private school, and many students were from well-to-do families, yet some, like Farley, recognized that their attendance at Bethel created a financial hardship for their families. Though interested, Farley did not join the English literary society because of the cost:

I just didn't believe I could write my father and ask him for the money to join, because at the time, there were five of us in college at one time. I don't know if that was the year or not, but some of us were in at the time. And I wish I had done it now. But then I just couldn't.

Farley's memories as a composition student extend to the first day of class, when Ms. Parrish asked for introductions and a mnemonic device from each student:

I remember the first class that we had. I went to class and she had us tell who we were and then tell something or connect ourselves with something she would remember us by. And I can remember. . . .I said, "Well, Woodrow Wilson is President of

the United States," and she said, "That's a good thing to remember!"

Ms. Parrish apparently took to heart the class descriptions concerning oral themes and stimulation of expression, to Farley's chagrin. She remembers her class presentations:

I remember the first time that we had to get up in front of the class. We were to think of some object or picture . . .and to speak on it. And we could illustrate it in a way. She didn't give us any topic.

Farley discussed a napkin, giving names to the boy and the stream depicted on the napkin; Ms. Parrish complimented her creativity. Farley's dislike for calling attention to herself remains to this day, and such a class activity must have created some nervousness for her, though it potentially served to help develop the poise she now exhibits.

Many students likely attended Bethel for such polish, to ensure they would become an acceptable member of fashionable society. Others used it as a stepping stone for furthering their education and became teachers themselves. Bethel may not deserve total credit, but some of its graduates retain a quest for knowledge and a disapproval of the misuse/abuse of the English language they see with increasing frequency. Julia Neal's graduate work in English at the University of Michigan and her national reputation as a scholar on the Shakers suggest her desire to excel in the field. Jeanette Wilson Farley, who graduated from Western Kentucky University and served as a public librarian, maintains a love of reading: "You know, the two greatest

inventions are electricity and books! Light to read by and books to read!"

Issues of correctness continue to concern these two graduates; Neal deplores misspelling:

I think spelling is almost a lost art. You know you pick up your magazine, the daily paper. There are misspelled words everywhere, and the thing, the one thing America will never learn is how to use "i-t-apostrophe-s". . . .I blame TV. But I think kids--and now not just kids, kids that have grown up--still are not acquainted with the written word, and still they can't spell it.

Farley has two pet peeves concerning English usage:

This is one of the biggest mistakes I hear people make. I hear it on television; I hear it in the pulpit; I hear it in the classrooms. To him and I, or to he and I, or to Jean and I; it just rubs me the wrong way, but so many people use that.

Farley also argues that research style sheets inappropriately place periods within quotations at the end of a sentence. Both MLA and APA style manuals dictate such placement, but Farley's insistence--that inserting anything, even a period, into a quote changes it--is credible. While these complaints may seem minor, they nevertheless suggest an attention to such types of details that Bethel may have encouraged.

### Faculty

Julia Neal attended Bethel in 1924-25 when Mrs. Egar was "the sole English teacher of the school." Her memories of Mrs. Egar and the class in general are limited. June Duncan Faxon remembers her Composition I teacher: "I was in awe of her [Ms. Parrish] and of course, she was ancient (but she was really just in her thirties!)." At that time, Annie Catherine Parrish was "a petite blonde with hair drawn up in a knot; she was strict, always in command, and critical but fair."

Jeanette Wilson Farley, who attended Bethel between 1938 and 1940, also remembers Ms. Parrish, who evidently understood and empathized with Farley's economic plight concerning membership into the literary honor society. In a personal note in Farley's yearbook, Parrish acknowledged: "If Jeanette Wilson's name does not appear here [under the group picture of *Chi Delta Phi*] it is not because she didn't richly deserve the honor."

### Faculty's Outside Interests

Parrish had a graduate degree from Tulane University and had taken doctoral coursework at the University of Chicago and Columbia University. Today, Parrish is Mrs. Markham, ninety and a lifelong lover of learning who has helped start libraries around the world (Faxon). Because of Bethel's insistence on attending and sponsoring cultural events and on engaging with nature, such interests, one would expect, appealed to Parrish.

### Evaluation of Writing

Farley characterizes the first year of English as being filled with writing: "It was English composition, and that's what we did most of the time was write. And we kept notebooks; we could put anything in them we wanted, stories, poems, autobiographies, and we would turn these in ever so often." Farley says the class discussed individual student essays: "I'm sure mine weren't that good. . . Well, they were good enough, I guess, to get invited to the literary club."

In later years, Farley would be appreciated by her co-workers as a "crackerjack" proofreader, but she doesn't recall such skills as being emphasized in Parrish's class: "I don't remember her teaching grammar as such. I'm sure she marked it on our papers." While Farley also suggests that Parrish may have "pounded into us sentence structure" and other subjects, she does not recall learning such material in her first-year composition classes: "I really don't know that I learned that much about the structure of a sentence, punctuation, things like that, in her class. I really don't." In general, few documents remain to ascertain the instructors' grading systems or their methods of responding to student papers.

### Writing Topics

Again, in the course of this study, I found no documents such as student papers that would reveal paper topics and how such topics were derived and eventually evaluated. The instructors may have given students free choice of paper topics; the evident freedom

of choice in initial oral presentations which Farley recalls in Parrish's class substantiates that possibility.

### Textbooks

The 1934 course description for the first-year composition course at Bethel does not list textbook selections, but it provides some clues as to the types of textbooks used in the classroom. The emphasis on student reading and the students' resultant sharpened perceptions and stimulated thought strongly suggest the use of a reader, while the inclusion of class criticism suggests that some application of rhetorical knowledge may have occurred, though no other evidence supports the use of a rhetoric in the course. Handbooks traditionally find their way into composition courses, but, again, no documentary evidence and no participant recollections support such a presence at Bethel. The only textbook recalled by any of the informants for this study was a literature anthology used in Sophomore English.

### External Forces Acting on Composition

Bethel Woman's College experienced turbulence in the 1930s and 1940s for several reasons. First, the college constantly found itself "hindered" by a persistent "lack of funds" as it had in its early years (Lewis, 1899, p.240). Second, administrators changed frequently during the last five years of the period. The President of 21 years, Dr. Gaines, retired in 1940. He was succeeded by Kenneth Patterson (who held only a Master's degree from the University of

Kentucky). Patterson resigned in March of 1944, when Miss Helen Royalty was appointed as college manager. Then, in spring 1945, Dr. James Powhatan Wright, with both Master's and Doctorate degrees in Theology, became president. How this may have impacted Bethel's composition program is conjectural; indeed, actual course content may not have changed at all. But, such a dizzying turnover in administration must certainly have affected faculty roles and morale.

The final, and perhaps most pressing, reason the era was traumatic for Bethel Woman's College was World War II. The school actually closed classes from July 1942 to September 12, 1945, due to both the declining enrollment from the war and a \$67,000 debt. That debt became liquidated in March of 1943, however, when Army officers from nearby Ft. Campbell (in Clarksville, Tennessee) rented campus buildings. Both military personnel and their families stayed in Bethel's dormitory rooms (Turner).

I found no evidence that the War created changes within the composition classroom as it does in the other two schools in this study (English instructors at Western Kentucky and at The University of Tennessee actually taught composition to military candidates on campus). Supplies in the composition course at Bethel may have been limited due to shortages and rationing, and while formal instruction may not have been impacted, such devastating world events most certainly would have been a topic of informal discussion among students, if not faculty.

Yet another change for Bethel Woman's College would occur in the 1950s when the school became co-educational. The September



12, 1951, issue of the *Kentucky New Era* reports that nine male students had enrolled at Bethel Woman's College. The school finally closed down after its May 1964 commencement (Turner). The problems Lewis had noted in 1899 at the school--a lack of patron support and of needed endowments and the persistent lack of funds--may have been a factor in the school's demise.

Another contribution to the closing of Bethel Woman's College might have been the increasing dichotomy between teaching women "to be ladies" (Faxon) and preparing them for the realities of the workforce and the hostility they might often face on the job or in future endeavors. For instance, 1925 graduate Julia Neal later completed both Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Western Kentucky University, then for personal reasons attended graduate school at the University of Michigan with no intent whatsoever of getting a Doctorate:

Well, first of all I had eye problems, but I didn't think it would be worth my time as a woman to put myself through a Ph.D. . . . The University of Michigan was a lot like Harvard--women weren't to be tolerated. But I got along fairly well. I just went to learn, and so I was recognized as not having much to contribute.

Such revelations seem harsh but more realistic than the optimistic Bethel Girl's Creed of granting "to all the great privilege of thinking." The realization that women's roles in society were beginning to change may have altered the tenor of writing instruction within the composition course. If the instructors foresaw the necessity of

preparing women to write in the workforce, then the composition course may have developed into something resembling technical writing. However, I found no documents to verify such a development.

An additional external factor which may have affected the curriculum at Bethel Woman's College was its link to several southwestern and south-central Kentucky schools throughout its history. The most obvious connection which Bethel Woman's College had to another nearby school was to Bethel College, a men's school just east in nearby Russellville, Kentucky. In addition to the shared name--a headache for researchers--the two schools also shared a president, Professor J. Rust, who served at the women's school between 1857-1863 and 1868-1890, and at the men's school in the intermediate years (Lewis, 1899, p. 241). Both were Baptist Junior Colleges that prepared students to attend Georgetown College in Georgetown, Kentucky (Neal).

Bethel College (men's) was in operation from at least 1856 to 1934. In its early years, the school expected entering students to have a "good knowledge" of English grammar and writing from dictation (Bethel College *Catalogue*, 1890-91). The school's description implies that a diploma from there was "a passport to the best society" (Bethel College *Catalogue*, 1890-91, p. 37). However, the school also had moral instruction as its goal, so that one prominent objective was "to furnish to young men who are called to preach the gospel" an inexpensive education (Bethel College *Catalogue*, 1890-91).

Bethel College (men's) became a leader nationally in English studies for men: "In 1869, there was established a Chair of English, so that Bethel was the first American College thus to recognize the importance of this department" (Bethel College *Bulletin*, 1932, p. 8). The best students in Junior and Senior English were presented annually with the John P. Fruit Medal and the Harrison Medal, respectively, each with monetary rewards (Bethel College *Catalogue*, 1896). In 1932, the goal of the first (Junior) year of English was to "insure correct use and form in writing and speaking, sentence structure, grammatical functions, vocabulary building, mechanics of written composition" (Bethel College *Bulletin*, June 1932, p. 37). The school had literary societies, and one 1928 student essay from the *Bethel Collegian* calls for attendance at such societies because they helped students learn literature, express themselves, improve their public speaking abilities, and establish "life-long friendships" (pp. 6-7). The essay, incidentally, closely follows a five-paragraph format.

Bethel Woman's College was also linked to Liberty College in Glasgow, Kentucky by the sharing of yet another president, T. S. McCall (Lewis, 1899). The administration at Bethel Woman's College apparently held some of the same philosophies as that held by the administration of Cedar Bluff Female College in Woodburn, Kentucky. Cedar Bluff emphasized exercise, morality "thorough rather than superficial education," as it endeavored to produce "well bred and well informed ladies" who were entitled "to the respect of refined and cultivated society" (Reprint from *Bowling Green Gazette*, 18 August 1866, p. 1). Cedar Bluff's public records suggest a much more

restrictive atmosphere in its early years than Bethel's. Students were highly chaperoned, and contact with men was not permitted. A similar approach was taken at Bowling Green's Potter College, with which Cedar Bluff shared a president, Mr. B. F. Cabell (Tyler, 1933, p. 1). Potter College, and several others in the area, eventually consolidated to become what is today known as Western Kentucky University, the subject of Chapter Four.

How, and if, the connections Bethel Woman's College had with these other schools affected Bethel is unclear. Certainly, the sharing of administrators may have likewise encouraged the sharing of successful curriculum practices. In general, Bethel Woman's College emulated men's programs both within the state and across the country. Perhaps, then, the legacy of a successful English program at Bethel College (men's) may have positively impacted the composition program at Bethel Woman's College. With the available remaining data, though, I cannot attribute a direct influence by Bethel College (men's) or by the other nearby schools on the teaching of writing at Bethel Woman's College.

### Summary

The lack of evidence documenting composition instruction at Bethel Woman's College is problematic for researchers and indicative of the urgent need for gathering histories before such schools fade entirely from our collective memories. A great many schools like Bethel Woman's College existed in Kentucky in and before the 1930s and 1940s, and all instructed, over time, a large number of students.

How were they taught? As in the case of Bethel Woman's College, if we do not soon conduct oral histories and seek and preserve documents, we can never know. And, even when such measures have been taken, as in this study, the results can be sketchy. Without an actual building left to corroborate its past, the history of Bethel Woman's College must be pieced together like a puzzle with so many missing parts. We can make educated guesses about the freedom of paper topics given to the students and about what teachers may have privileged as they evaluated, for example, but with the documents that survive, we simply cannot know these things conclusively.

What we do know is likewise limited by the fading memories of interview participants and the scarcity of remaining documents. Those who wrote the course description at Bethel evidently saw the need for oral expression of themes as a companion to written essays; an informant corroborates that her instructor did require speaking in front of the class. Former students actually remember their composition course as requiring a lot of writing--and not as a dreaded usage or grammar class. The one instructor mentioned by several sources commanded respect and continues to be admired for her endeavor to create libraries around the world.

The students, all of whom completed the first-year composition course, graduated from Bethel, and served many years later as participants for this study, certainly typify the Southern belle image that the school seemed to encourage. They are genteel women, with slight Southern drawls but impeccably correct speech. Their dismay

at the abuses of language they see and hear in the world around them does not, in their opinion, derive from rote instruction of grammar rules in their first year of college. In fact, few aspects of their lives seem to have been deeply affected by their composition courses with the exception of the personal attention and kindness exhibited by an instructor. And that may well be an excellent lesson from the past for all composition instructors.

## Chapter Four

### Western Kentucky: A State Teachers College in Bowling Green

Bowling Green has always been  
an educational center. (Vance, 1936, p. 59)

Long before the period under study, the administrators of one of the schools that would become Western Kentucky State Teachers College made very clear their perceptions concerning the dual nature of education and morality. In 1901, a story carried in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* about Potter College for Young Ladies vividly portrays the seriousness with which the school's directors perceived its mission. On Easter Sunday of 1901, five young men "stole" five of the Potter women by climbing onto ladders and escorting the women to dinner. Administrators promptly asked the women to leave the school and charged the men with assault with attempt to kill and with committing a riot. Two of the men were grandsons of the school's namesake, Pleasant J. Potter (Tyler, 1933, p. 8).

The serious response to the incident anticipates the administration of the 1930s and 1940s at the school which Potter College would eventually become. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Bowling Green was a city of numerous small colleges, most of which were consumed before the 1930s by Western Kentucky State Normal School. This chapter begins with a discussion of those colleges most pertinent to a study of Western Kentucky's history, for their development and existence, indeed their moral structures, led to the development of the school as it was in the 1930s and 1940s and in many ways as it continues to be today. Then, I offer a brief

history of Western as a state teacher training school, followed by a close look at the school's first-year composition program as it existed from 1930 to 1945.

Higher Education in Kentucky  
in the 1930s and 1940s: Teacher Training

In 1905, the Kentucky Education Association realized the "backwardness of Kentucky educationally" (Cornette, 1938, p. 282), the background of which is detailed in Chapter Three of this study. The state's higher education leaders sought to combat the problems evident in Kentucky's educational system with the establishment of teacher training schools as well as with public awareness, sending representatives out to their local districts with a goal of fostering "a more wholesome educational sentiment among the masses" (Cornette, 1938, p. 282). Educators petitioned the Kentucky General Assembly in 1906 at a rally for money for the education of Kentucky's youth.

Educators conducted another rally for education in 1933, this time branching out statewide to elicit public support (McVey, 1949, p. 288). Results included free textbook availability for all elementary schools in the mid-1930s, "the period that marked the beginning of the end of the one-room rural school as the common school in Kentucky" (Hartford, 1977, p. 42). Educators also established the school code of 1934, which eliminated two-year teaching certificates and required four-year certificates for primary and secondary school teaching. The changes worked, according to McVey: "Almost at once the new plan began to bear fruit, for in 1940-1941 nearly 40 per



cent of those who were certified for teaching positions held master's or bachelor's degrees" (p. 250).

Once securing a position, teachers could expect to earn a minimum of \$75.00 per month (The Project Staff, 1937, p. 42). Lois Strange--one of the participants for this study who graduated from Western Kentucky State Teachers College (more information about her can be found under the Western Kentucky University subheading)--recalls her sister making as little as \$49 per month when she started teaching (1993). Teachers also faced an influx of students; high school enrollment jumped 365 percent from 1919-20 to 1934-35 (The Project Staff, p. 21). Fortunately for the teachers, schools usually only offered one of three courses of study--classical (with study in Latin), scientific, or English. English was the most common course offered; in 1920, 148 Kentucky high schools offered the English course (Kentucky General Education Board, p. 126). In such a course of study, students studied only English-related topics throughout their four years. One other point in the teachers' favor in the early part of this century was the "affection and respect" offered them by the students, though perhaps out of student fear:

One pupil from a rural one-room school during the 1930s recalled the situation briefly: "We had hardly any misbehavior at all. We did not have any real problems. We knew what was expected of us and did not give the teacher any real trouble; we knew that we would be paddled if we did." (Hartford, p. 60)

Such were the conditions facing those who did teach; many, however, would often encounter problems trying to enter the work

force. Nepotism seemed common; many graduates realized they "might not secure a teaching position because the local trustees had relatives that needed jobs" (The Project Staff, p. 10). *The Louisville Public School Survey* of 1943 accuses the Board of Education's policy there of giving "preference to local residents in appointing teachers," which posed the possibility of "education inbreeding" among those teachers (p. 166). Yet teaching applicants also suffered from the fact that laws and regulations concerning teacher employment in the states surrounding Kentucky often conflicted with Kentucky's requirements, "bringing a sense of confusion and discrimination that disheartened the teacher who wished to work in states other than the one in which he[sic] had received his education" (McVey, p. 251).

All of these hindrances encouraged local students to remain local in a county or town where they might be remembered by or have connections to a member of the board of education; a 1922 Kentucky General Education Commission report suggests that "emigration passed Kentucky by. Even to-day the conservatism of the state discourages well-trained, progressive, and adventurous youth" (p. 3). The 1930s and 1940s did, however, bring some changes to the situation. State educators developed a reciprocal teacher certification program with twelve other states in 1941 after a four-year study by J. E. Jagers at Western (McVey, p. 251).

Perhaps more significantly, more Kentuckians began moving away from the state for jobs in the 1940s. Between 1942 and 1944, Kentucky lost eleven percent of its population due to men serving in the armed forces and to men and women working in factories and

offices in other states (McVey, p. 271). World War II involvement drained the schools of teachers, so standards for teaching were lowered once again (McVey). Thousands of new teachers entered the schools without training; five thousand emergency certificates were granted in 1945-46 alone, though fourteen hundred of the teachers holding those certificates had no college training whatsoever (McVey, p. 272). Western graduate Lois Strange taught during those years: "I taught during the years after the Depression--the teacher shortage years. . . .At that time one only had to have sixteen hours to get a Certificate" (1993). Such shifts in the required education for certificate holders reversed the progressive trends of the 1930s.

Against a bleak background of a weak educational system, tempered with progressive efforts to reform it, the state department established teacher training schools to begin improving public education in the state. Often at such schools, classes were large, and the institution's mandate to teach teachers encouraged the need to teach not only the subject, but teaching methods related to that subject as well. College instructors there were faced with poor, ill-prepared local students who would ultimately be sent out to teach poor, ill-prepared students from their home counties. One such school faced with these challenges was Western Kentucky State Teachers College, which developed from a group of small colleges into one of two normal schools in the state in the 1930s and 1940s.

Western Kentucky State Teachers College

The campus of what is now Western Kentucky University is the home of The Kentucky Building and The Kentucky Museum; both are housed in a beautiful building of Grecian design constructed by the financial contributions of local school children who literally brought the bricks that made it. This depository constitutes one of the largest collections of state memorabilia in Kentucky and served as a starting point for this project. The Kentucky Library houses many of the documents used in this study to resurrect the history of both Bethel Woman's College and Western. University Archives stores other documents relating specifically to Western, including a transcribed series of oral history interviews with English department professors. Formal histories exist of both Western and its English department, written by W. E. Wood, L. Harrison, and J. Cornette.

Former students are the other sources for this study; two of them now live in Cumberland County, Kentucky. Ruby Norris graduated from Western just as the 1930s began. Norris taught in the one-room schools of the Cumberland County school system, with little guidance from the Superintendent. Her experience corroborates the report of the Kentucky General Education Commission of 1922: "Although schools are usually in the hands of young, inexperienced, and untrained teachers, many superintendents give little or no thought to supervision" (p. 37). Norris survived the experience without supervision, however, and she seems to have loved her job: "I treasure the children I taught, enjoyed being friends with them as they got older" she says. For several years she served as guidance

counselor for the county's elementary schools before retiring from public education.

Lois Strange is another participant who graduated from Western, entered the teaching field (after raising a family), and retired from teaching in Cumberland County, Kentucky. She did not find retirement easy apparently, because she kept returning to teaching in some capacity for several years after giving her first official notice. The residents of Cumberland County remember her most as the librarian for one of the now-closed elementary schools.

The final participant is an alumni of both Bethel Woman's College and Western, and she taught at Western. Detailed information about Julia Neal can be found in Chapter Three. Another source of general information was my own undergraduate experience at Western and resultant familiarity with the buildings and traditions, many of which have their origins in the 1930s and 1940s.

### School History

In the period preceding the 1930s, several small colleges existed in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Those with little pertinence to the development of Western Kentucky State Teachers College include the Female Seminary and Potter Bible College. More influential colleges, each of which will be discussed in further detail as they impacted Western, were Potter College for Young Ladies, Ogden College (formerly known as Warren College), the Bowling Green Business University, and the school that eventually became Western, the Southern Normal School.

Pleasant J. Potter College for Young Ladies. Potter College, a two-year private woman's college was established in Bowling Green on October 9, 1889 (*Park City Weekly Times--Gazette*, 1889, September 11, p. 1 c. 4). The college property sat on Vinegar Hill, the former site of Albert Sidney Johnston fort and Civil War fighting; stones from the fort were placed in the original foundation, "thus planting on the wrecks of war a beautiful temple of learning" (Tyler, 1933, p. 1). It is the site today of Western's Cherry Hall, where the current English Department is housed.

Students from Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, Virginia, and Kentucky were in the first class (*Park City Weekly Times--Gazette*, 1889, September 11, p. 1 c. 4). In 1894, students from sixteen primarily southern states attended the college according to the *Catalogue*, and at one time as many as thirty states were represented (Tyler, 1933, p. 2)

The school's official purpose, as listed in the 1897-1898 *Catalogue*, was

. . .to promote a thorough, rather than a superficial, education and to give careful attention to exercise and recreation on the part of the pupils. . .to cultivate that grace of manner, propriety of taste, and amiability of disposition, which characterize well-bred and well-informed ladies and which will entitle them to the respect of refined and cultivated society. (Tyler, 1933, p. 2)

The school attempted to achieve this purpose in part by requiring "Sunday School and church attendance every Sunday morning," by establishing the Hypation and Ossolion literary societies, each with its

own library, and by publishing a quarterly school magazine, *The Green and the Gold*, and a yearbook, *The Talisman* (Tyler, 1933, pp. 6-7).

*The Talisman* contains some anecdotes pertaining to the instructors, such as those referring to Mrs. Cabell, teacher and wife of the first Potter president, a "woman of exceptional intellectual attainments" (Potter College Fact Sheet, n. d., p. 2). Her favorite saying, according to a student paper in the 1907 *Talisman*, was, "Now, are you quite sure that is the idea your author meant to convey?" (1907, p. 74). Senior advice to Potter first-year students in 1907 includes, "For future use in Literature, learn to write two thousand words in three seconds" (*Talisman*, p. 77).

To further achieve its stated purpose of 1897-98, the school required a daily walk. The students also exercised, in "knee length bloomers of plaited thickness, a middi-like upper part, and stockings," a sharp contrast to the "shorts and jerseys and bare legs seen in the gyms" of the 1930s (Tyler, 1933, p. 6). Students made annual trips to places such as Mammoth Cave. The school became known as a cultural center:

Potter College was, with its ledtures[sic], its art exhibitions, concerts, and social activities, one of the leading institutions of the South. Hundreds of fine young women left its doors to pass out into the world, highly fitted for positions of distinction, trust, and honor. (Vance, 1936, p. 40)

Given the nature of female employment in the workforce at that time, the "positions" which the school prepared women for probably

included little more than traditional female roles such as teaching and homemaking.

In all excursions outside the college, and in all but one activity on campus, administrators made every effort to keep the students away from young men; "the boarding girls could not even have dates under the watchful eye of a teacher in the front parlor" (Tyler, 1933, p. 7). Ironically, however, the school became part of a co-educational institution in the 1920s after being sold in 1909 to the state of Kentucky (Vance, 1936, p. 41). The state merged Potter College into Western Kentucky State Normal School, which was further expanded in 1928 with the addition of all-male Ogden College.

Ogden College. Ogden College, created by the funds from an 1870 will, opened to students in 1877 (Vance, 1936, pp. 31-32). This two-year preparatory school and four-year men's college sat on property purchased from Warren College (Vance, 1936, pp. 32-33). "Special emphasis," at Ogden, "was placed upon the development of the individual's mind and character, and to make of him a classical gentleman" (J. B. Johnson, 1929, p. 4). Ogden College "did not strive for numbers, wither[sic] in attendance or in graduates" (Vance, 1936, p. 35). That attitude may have led to its eventual closure, however. The original endowment made it possible for Kentucky students, and especially those from the local county, to pay virtually no tuition (Vance, 1936, p. 32). Such an opportunity must have been enticing to local students, so it is not surprising that "the local attendance was about all the college could take care of" (Vance, 1936, p. 32).



J. B. Johnson (1929) suggests that Ogden College should have survived, since it was "first in the field, with a choice location, and a wonderful opportunity to become Kentucky's greatest education institution" (p. 11). However, in 1928, the school closed due to insufficient funds. Johnson laments, "when Ogden College failed to keep pace with the demands of the time and the trend of education, she had to close her doors" (p. 3).

Johnson posits several theories concerning why Ogden (and, by analogy, many of the other small colleges in the area) failed to survive. One of those theories is that "frequent changes of Presidents, Regents, and faculty consequently led to a shifting of objective, courses of study, and general policies of education" (p. 4). The school had other problems: "The college failed to keep pace with the trend of education, failed to increase her physical assets, and consequently failed to secure the reputation and rating" necessary for sustaining a college (p. 4). Just as Potter College had, Ogden College sold its property to Western Kentucky Teachers College (Vance, 1936, p. 35).

Bowling Green Business University. A. W. Mell of Glasgow, Kentucky began Bowling Green Business University in 1875 (Harman, 1948, p. 6). Citizens of Bowling Green invited the school to move there in 1884 (McVey, 1949, p. 183). At one time, the school was "the only privately owned accredited four-year business college in the United States" (*Park City Daily News*, June 1, 1954, p. 6A). By 1900, the school had an enrollment of 1000 and had become "Two Separate Schools under One Management"--Bowling Green Business College and the Southern Normal School. Leadership duties were

divided between the Cherry Brothers: Harvard-trained T. C. Cherry at the business school and Henry H. Cherry (the namesake of Cherry Hall, where the current English Department at Western is housed) at the normal school (Harman, 1948, p. 7).

Fire destroyed the school in 1889 and again in 1911 (Harman, 1948, p. 13). Vance reports, "After this second fire the school was forced to struggle to maintain its existence, but it managed to do so and even to expand" (p. 56). The business school specialized in "training young men and women to work in business offices and to conduct their own business affairs" (Vance, 1936, p. 56). The courses available at Bowling Green Business College in 1900 included English, Classic, Elocution and Oratory, and Penmanship, among others (Harman, 1948, p. 7). The school became accredited in 1916 "as the official training school for commercial teachers" (teachers of other business schools) (Harman, 1948, p. 18). The school developed into a junior college in 1922, and it offered a four-year program in 1926 (Vance, 1936, p. 57). By 1927, it had become "One of the largest business schools in the World" (*Park City Daily News*, Sept. 17, 1927).

Academic subjects in 1930 included Penmanship, Spelling, Grammar, and Business Correspondence (in addition to business courses) (*Bowling Green Business College Pamphlet*, 1930, Vol. XXV No. 1). Penmanship apparently equated with good writing; elaborate penmanship displayed in an advertisement for the school includes the line, "Good writing speaks for itself" (Bowling Green Business College, n.d.). Teachers did a commendable job of emphasizing this

skill and others, according to a graduate of the school: "You've got kids today that leave high school and can't read or write or spell. When you left there you could read, you could spell, you could write well" (*Park City Daily News*, June 1, 1954, p. 6A).

The school apparently fulfilled unmet needs in the Bowling Green area much longer than did the other small schools of the area. Its reputation for teaching those who would become business teachers themselves and its flexibility in offering students both academic and vocational training aided in its longevity. It, too, however, officially became part of Western Kentucky State College in June 1963.

Southern Normal School. The history of the Southern Normal School closely parallels that of the Bowling Green Business College because the same man created the two within one year of each other. (Southern Normal began in 1874.) The two schools moved to Bowling Green at the same time before being purchased by the Cherry Brothers. They each suffered loss in the 1889 fire: "Practically all of the school records were lost, most of the equipment was ruined, and the interior of the building was gutted" (Harrison, 1987, p. 10).

Similarities between the two schools diminish after 1906, when Southern Normal became one of the two state sites for a teacher training school, the Western Kentucky State Normal School. H. H. Cherry became the school's president (Vance, pp. 51-52). The school "lacked the prestige and sophistication" of Ogden and Potter Colleges in the eyes of local citizens (Harrison, 1987, p. 14). Indeed, few of the students "had had any schooling past the eighth grade" (Cornette,

1938, p. 95), a fact which offered little promise for the future students of those teachers-to-be. The lack of strict admission policies helps explain why such students could enter college at all and why instruction in teaching methods at Western often covered basic subject matter in addition to teaching methods.

Most of the early normal school students were relatively poor and hailed from the rural areas of western and south-central Kentucky, although Southern Normal did recruit a "surprising" number of out-of-state students, including future United States Secretary of State, Tennessean Cordell Hull, who "heard that the school was both good and cheap" (Harrison, pp. 11, 3). Inexpensive tuition was important, because many of the students hailed

. . .from the homes of the economically less fortunate; most of them would have been unable to attend the more expensive private academies and denominational colleges of that time.

They came to the Southern Normal to get as much education as they possibly could in the short time their limited funds would keep them in school. (Cornette, p. 95)

In 1922, the Kentucky Legislature changed the name, Western Kentucky State Normal School, to Western Kentucky State Normal School and Teachers College. The name would change again in 1930 to Western Kentucky State Teachers College after the purchase of Ogden College (Vance, 1936, p. 53). McVey suggests "the difference in the name is an important matter" because it reveals

. . .a new emphasis placed upon teacher training and the arrival of institutions which are engaged in professionalizing the

calling of teaching within the gates of the academic world. . . .

The teachers themselves were told that they held the destinies of the republic in their hands. (1949, p. 175)

Based on the educational climate in Kentucky, the teachers' task must not have been an enviable one. Initially, entering Southern Normal School students "had such a poor educational background, the first task of the school was to give them a knowledge of the subjects which they would be required to teach in the common schools" (Cornette, 1938, p. 32).

Nonetheless, the Cherry Brothers described Southern Normal as "The Leading Normal School in the South" (Harrison, p. 8); whether this was factual or merely advertising jargon, the school nevertheless strongly impacted the local area by becoming a regional teacher training school. Its graduates would often return to their home counties, and their students would become Western students in a cyclical process. How well the teachers were taught to teach, then, eventually affected the school's curricula and English composition.

### School Atmosphere

Western annually enrolled between 3200 and 4200 students during the 1930s, but actual attendance averaged only 1900 to 2300 students (Cornette, 1938, p. 190). For whatever reasons, students often did not attend their Western classes. Perhaps family obligations kept them away, as in the case of Julia Neal, a student and later an instructor whose father was ailing in nearby Auburn. Or perhaps family work kept them from attending classes, since Bowling Green is

in the heart of tobacco country; the produce and profits from family farms fed and clothed many Western students, but with such benefits came chores.

Those students who were available, as well as the faculty, attended chapel at Van Meter Auditorium every day. Vance says the 9:30 a. m. meetings, presided over by President Cherry, were voluntary, with students and faculty members alternately conducting devotionals (1936, p. 55). Cherry's charisma and this daily chapel routine encouraged school unity (Judd, 1982), and the overall tone of the school was decidedly moral. Cherry encouraged "frequent nature excursions into the hills, woods, and on the rivers" so students could "commune with God through nature"; he furthermore felt a school should "teach that we are all made out of the same clay and by the same God, and to lead the students into humility and to teach no aristocracy except the aristocracy of character" (Cherry, 1900 commencement, in Cornette, 1938, pp. 96-97).

The irony to the moral overtone of the school is that in 1933 and again from 1943 forward, a world-renowned brothel, Pauline's, existed in Bowling Green. The house was the site of frequent Western student pranks, practical jokes, and organization initiations, even Western student visits (Dias, Oct. 7, 1982, p. 10).

Student life. According to Strange (1993), Bowling Green was a quiet town in those years, but large enough to offer recreational opportunities to folks from surrounding counties ("we didn't have any movies in Summer Shade!"). Shopping was not much of a pastime, because, as she puts it, "You didn't have a whole lot to shop

with!" She recalls "it was difficult to find work," and the salaries were very low. The War increased financial difficulties for students attending school because inflation soared (McVey, 1949, p. 273).

Students at Western encountered a campus considered by many today to be one of the prettiest in the South. The campus has sprawled downhill over the years, so that negotiating "The Hill" is a commonplace event today which the students of the 1930s and 1940s did not have to endure. Students certainly must have found it difficult to balance their time between studying, conducting library research, and engaging in traditional student activities, including cheering on the various intercollegiate sports teams which carved out winning traditions--such as the waving of the red towel for the basketball team which was coached by basketball legend E. A. Diddle.

Faculty life. The faculty at Western operated in the shadow of a powerful president, H. H. Cherry, whose tenets continue to be quoted in the University catalog. He had a "firm hand" in overseeing the faculty: "He set up no salary schedule or system of faculty rank and promotion" (Judd, 1982, p. 11). Judd reports an anecdote from 1930, when Cherry offered a music teacher a position at Western for \$2400; when his letter of acceptance inquired about rank and promotion possibilities, "Cherry wrote back, 'I do not care to pursue the negotiations further'" (p. 11).

Despite an environment that may have discouraged an open exchange of ideas and negotiation, Western faculty pursued outside interests, publishing and teaching about those pursuits. In the English department, the abundance of faculty interests resulted in

the department's taking on a myriad of disciplines. But, as a \$2400 music teacher position would suggest, the faculty in general suffered from the same lack of funds found at other schools in the period.

Perhaps a few more cultural activities existed for the faculty of Western than were available in Hopkinsville to Bethel faculty members due to the larger size of Bowling Green. The residents of that town boasted an unusual treat--an outdoor dinner/dance club in the entrance to a cave. Lost River Cave is no longer open, but the vestiges of what must have been a festive dining experience remain. Plus, Western faculty were closer than Bethel faculty were to both Nashville and Louisville and the research and entertainment possibilities which those larger cities offered.

Once World War II began, Kentuckians started to seek better-paying jobs elsewhere, and many men were called to service; this created a turnover of teachers on the primary and secondary levels due to opportunities outside the state (McVey, 1949). This turnover increased the demand for Western teaching graduates. But, because the English department roster remained so stable, it is apparent that few, if any, full-time faculty were tempted to leave Western. Likewise, there is no evidence that substantiates a loss of Western's English department faculty members to the War effort other than the employment of several female part-time faculty members in the early 1940s, which might indicate a drop in the availability of male candidates due to the War.



### English at Western Kentucky State Teachers College

The Department of English at Western maintains a clear sense of its history through several unpublished manuscripts which detail the departmental history and are available in University Archives. The department has participated in oral history projects conducted by other departments within the University over the years. Though there are some gaps, what is available about the composition classroom at Western between 1930 and 1945 is enlightening.

### First-Year Composition Course Description

The philosophy that guided the teaching of writing in the 1930s and 1940s at Western can be traced in the changing course descriptions of the first-year composition courses. Between 1920 and 1930, at least three shifts are readily noticeable. The 1920 version of the *Bulletin* includes the Grammar, Reading, and English courses for both high school and college instruction, with "English 3C--Advanced English Composition" being the four-hour course for first-year college students. At that time, "rather extensive themes in the various forms of discourse" were required with "common matters of technique" (punctuation, capitalization, etc.) being necessary prerequisites for the course. The 1926 *Bulletin* lists a divided first-year course of study, with English 101 being a five-hour course. Instructors devoted three of those hours to composition and two hours to grammar. The course stressed the "fundamentals of correct oral and written expression," and was "designed to promote accuracy and clarity of

expression." The English 102 course was a three-hour English Literature course required for the life certificate for teachers.

By 1930, curriculum requirements were both more obvious and more complicated, but the course descriptions resemble condensed versions of the 1926 descriptions. The lengthy introduction to the English Department section indicates that all students had to take three courses: 101a, 101b, and 102. The 101a course emphasized "the fundamentals of composition and grammar," while 101b served as "a continuation" of the first course and stressed "finished production." Existing stenciled handouts from adjunct faculty (described in The Evaluation of Writing section of this chapter) suggest that this second course may have been taught in a combination of ways: Some stencils for 101b contain questions and exercises primarily designed to pinpoint literature knowledge, while others indicate a concern with argumentation and rhetorical matters, and some have both. The English 102 course, again, was a survey of English literature.

By 1935, students were given an option in the required literature sequence with an American Literature offering. The courses 101a and 101b were still required, but their course descriptions read differently. Freshman English 101a is divided in halves, with one-half of the course "devoted to the study of the principles of grammar" and the other half to "the fundamentals of composition and punctuation" (*Western Kentucky State Teachers College Catalog*, August 1935, p. 139). Students wrote weekly themes, "the last one being a long personal paper." The course included

library and dictionary use, note-taking, outlining, precis-writing, and letter-writing.

The 101b course continued the 101a course but emphasized composition, although a "general review" of difficult grammar and punctuation occurred. Again, students wrote weekly themes, with "the last one involving library research" (*Western Kentucky State Teachers College Catalog*, Aug. 1935, p. 139). The course included bibliography compilation, editorial writing, and the preparation of a debate, the last two of which suggest that argumentation concepts were discussed.

The September 1939 *Catalog* is exactly like the 1935 edition in first-year English requirements and course descriptions. By the July 1945 edition, however, everything had been streamlined (perhaps as the War waged and conservation measures were stressed, these abbreviated descriptions were an effort to conserve paper). The literature requirement now numbered only one, Introduction to Literature, as it would remain for at least forty years. The first-year English courses now carried four hours of credit, with the first one covering "Grammar, composition, punctuation" (*Western Kentucky State Teachers College Catalog*, July 1945, p. 126). The students used a workbook and wrote biweekly themes, including a "long personal theme." In 101b, composition again was emphasized, with "readings and oral discussions" now an official part of the course. Weekly themes and a research paper were again required, as was the "review of the more difficult phases" of grammar and punctuation, as well as composition. These descriptions would remain consistent for

at least ten years although the two first-year courses were reduced to three hours of credit.

Overall, the course descriptions for the years being studied suggest a move to practical, hands-on academic writing, with research being a vital component of the second semester of first-year English. The first semester, as is so often found today, implies that personal writing is somehow less academically challenging and that students should first master that, as well as grammatical matters, before moving on. In general, the descriptions reflect Western's general trends: "Between the years 1939 and 1949, Western continued to expand and revise its overall educational program" ("Western's English department," p. 5).

### Students

One of the factors that complicated the implementation of composition instruction was the overloading of students per course. Neal describes the teaching of composition as an exercise in survival because of the large number of students: "My teaching of freshman English at Western was just a matter of getting through it! The classes were SO big!" (1993). One historian of Western, W. E. Wood, mentions that class size was an ongoing problem at Western: "This matter of teacher-to-student ratio has always been a concern for English teachers" (n. d., p. 20). In 1947, his two 101a sections had 38 students each, with 43 enrolled in his 101b section. Such numbers, Wood suggests, were typical: "In those days a class was closed when the students stopped coming. I recall that Dr. Wilson used to utter

two short whistles when he discovered that a class was running past 40, but nothing else was said" (p. 20).

Furthermore, full time faculty taught a five-course load. By 1959, the 101a average was 35 and the 101b was 29, still high for writing intensive courses (Wood, p. 10). Such "overloading" of writing instructors was in Wood's mind "the biggest mistake they (the school) made" because slavishly poring over hundreds of papers and lecturing for a few hours made for little measurable writing improvement and overworked instructors; fewer students would have allowed more individual conferencing which Wood felt would have helped students better solve their writing problems (pp. 22, 25).

None of these sources, however, address a reality at Western in the 1930s as depicted by Cornette (1938): Many of the students enrolled in a class often failed to attend, so that as many as one-half of the students may have been absent on any given day. Furthermore, despite the large student overload, the former students in this study often felt close to their instructors, and the pedagogies and practices employed by those instructors may have been emulated in the public schools as the students graduated and began teaching.

Strange's (1993) years of teaching in the Kentucky public school systems (she retired in 1985) suggested to her that modern students do more writing than she remembers doing: "I believe the trend now is much more writing and I guess it's good." Before she started her graduate work, Strange had adopted a concern for

correctness in writing: "They always told you in creative writing [taken as a graduate student] not to be aware of the spelling, but it was hard for me to close out the spelling." Misspellings continue to get Strange's attention, she claims: "I lose a little respect for their knowledge if I read a paper that has a lot of misspelled words."

Do such concerns reflect a composition classroom where students were considered less intelligent or knowledgeable if their writing was sloppy? Perhaps, though I found no evidence in this study to support that view. Too, participants remember so little about their experience that it is possible that proper usage, especially correct spelling, was highlighted and the students simply do not remember.

If Wilson and other instructors did insist on mechanical correctness (either solely or in conjunction with more content-concerned instruction), they did so in a manner that maintained student respect. They may have also impacted student perceptions of the methods and rewards of good teaching. Because Western was a teacher training institution, with high numbers of teaching candidates possible in any given composition class, such an impact might also have affected writing instruction for primary and secondary students in the local area for 30 years or more.

### Faculty

Stability appropriately defines Western in the 1930s and 1940s, from its administration to the English Department faculty roster during that period. Six full time faculty are listed in the

*Catalog* for the 1930-31 school year: Dr. Wilson, Mrs. Cherry, Mr. Clagett, Mr. Moore, Miss Richards, Miss Stith (p. 96). Clagett had been employed since 1908 and Wilson since 1912. Mrs. Cherry taught at the Southern Normal School beginning in 1896 and arrived at Western in 1923. The other faculty members listed above also arrived in the mid to late 1920s, but only one (Clagett) would retire within the period under study after nearly 30 years of teaching. The rest would remain at Western from 24 to 47 years (Wood, pp. 2-6).

Only a few additional faculty members joined Western over the years. Two with long tenures started in 1930: Jennie Upton, who retired in 1960, and James Cornette who left in 1945. Salomon arrived in 1931, and Sterrett stayed from 1934 to 1946 (*Western Kentucky State Teachers College Catalog*, 1935, p. 138; Wood, pp. 6-7).

T. C. Cherry's wife, Bessie Swartz Cherry, taught at Western from 1923 until retiring in 1947. Ruby Norris took Mrs. Cherry for her first college English course and found the course under her to be challenging. Mrs. Cherry was described by Wood (1977) as "one of the most fastidious women I ever knew"; he found it humorous that she was listed in the *Western Catalog* at one point as "Mrs. T. C. Cherry, B. O." He explains the B. O.: Bachelor of Oratory!

Though Norris retains few vivid memories of Mrs. Cherry's class, she clearly recalls her other composition teacher from the late 1920s--Gordon E. Wilson. His teaching actually helped shape Norris' career as a public school teacher simply because he was "interested" in his work. Wilson, who held a Ph.D. from Indiana University,

enrolled at Western as a student in 1908 and was part of a procession that physically moved Western from the old Normal School building in downtown Bowling Green up to Vinegar Hill and its present location (now shortened to "The Hill") (Wood, p. 12).

Norris remembers Wilson as "a great teacher" and that classroom performance defined good teachers at Western: "They were good teachers in the class. I think they were more interested. . . in the students than nowadays." While she admits not remembering a great deal of specifics about the course as a student of Dr. Wilson's, she recalls, "It wasn't really hard, but I know a lot of it was grammar, and of course reading too." Norris further recalls, "He never lectured us much. . . . I just knew he was a great teacher. . . . I think everybody felt that about him. They respected him."

Wilson became head of the English Department in 1928, where he would serve for thirty years. Wood states that Wilson's stint as department head covered a period of stable faculty numbers: "In his thirty years Dr. Wilson lost about six people and employed about fifteen"--half as many as Wood would lose and hire as department head within a three-year period in the 1960s. Wilson was known by some, Wood says, as a slave-driver "because he did not find some way to reduce our loads." Wood gives two reasons why Wilson maintained the loads:

One was that he was highly patriotic and would not fight the administration for more money when dollars were so scarce. The other was that he was such a workhorse himself that he did not realize how overloaded the rest of us were. (p. 26)



Wood further recalls that most who met Wilson regarded him as "a brilliant man" though he was "the most sadly underpaid and underappreciated faculty member I have known" (p. 31). He also had an excellent memory:

He could meet a student he had had in class some two or three years before, call his name, and generally tell him what seat he had occupied. The second or third time he met a class he could call the roll without looking at his rollbook, or usually he did not call a roll, but glance over his class and jot down the initials of the absent members. (Wood, pp. 31-32)

Norris (1993) describes Wilson as "very outgoing, always smiling," as a short man with short, gray hair and big-rimmed glasses. He always wore a suit, but he was informal in his dealings with his students, Norris recalls. Norris had further contact with Wilson when she attended summer school several years later and took along her daughter Judy who was in fifth grade. Wilson became a family friend, and Judy came to call him "Granddaddy Wilson," continuing a correspondence with him until his death in the early 1970s.

Another instructor who impacted a teacher candidate via composition instruction was James Cornette, who taught at Western from 1930 to 1945, when he left to serve as Dean at Baylor University. He later served as president of West Texas State College until his retirement. He wrote a history of Western as a doctoral dissertation project at George Peabody College for Teachers in 1938. Lois Strange and her sister had English courses under Dr. Cornette

before he received his doctorate: "I remember my instructor--he was very good. . .Mr. Cornette, and. . .it was a lot like high school English, just a little more difficult" (1993). She further recalls:

He was good, and I remember that we [she and her sister] both liked him. He was very thorough and very serious about the work. Then I had the next spring the second course; I guess it's 101B, and I had the same man!

Strange suggests some of the characteristics that made Cornette an enjoyable professor:

He was very, oh, down to earth and sincere and interested. He was a young man--I don't know how many years he had taught, but he was a young man. I'd say he was, oh, upper twenties, maybe, just guessing.

She describes Cornette as "a gentleman of medium height, slender but well-built and neat. He was pleasant and friendly." Cornette's composition class was "definitely a lecture class," Strange recalls, "but we were encouraged to ask questions." Cornette "showed interest in us and in our work," Strange recalls. She further states that he could do this because "the class load was much smaller than it is now," a memory which other data do not necessarily support (though the frequent absenteeism of the students may have contributed to lighter grading loads).

The Norris/Wilson and Strange/Cornette examples suggest that the effects of a teacher-training school on the local area could be far-reaching. The diligence and interest of the individual teachers--even more than the content of their classes--indirectly affected public

school students for years via the teaching candidates. For example, how and how well those two particular instructors taught writing would affect student writing for several generations in a small town 65 miles away.<sup>4</sup>

In some cases, composition instructors faced students who would eventually teach the same course at the same school. Wilson E. Wood began teaching at Western in 1945 and remembers his own first-year instructor, Tom Brackin, as being "a wonderful composition teacher. He taught me more about organizing a paper and how to bring in various aspects of the subject I was working on or in descriptions I was writing than anybody else up there" (1977).

Brackin also worked hard, Wood says, at keeping class attention:

The class arrived one day before he came and was sitting there about half asleep. He came in and said, "I'll bet anybody here a quarter I can skin a cat on that steam pipe before he can," and came out of his coat and made a run for it. Some boy took him up on it, and they both went up and through between the pipe and ceiling; then dropped back to the floor. (1977)

Perhaps administrators did not appreciate Brackin's gymnastic ability, though, because he "disappeared" and Wood does not know why, though he does mention the possibility of mental instability (1977).

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<sup>4</sup>Along those lines, Dr. Gordon Wilson affected me, not simply because a hall is named after him on Western's campus, where I received my undergraduate degree, but because he taught Ruby Norris--my father's teacher, my mother's guidance-counseling mentor, and a long-time English and Math teacher in Cumberland County, Kentucky.

Wood compiled *A Brief History of the English Department Western Kentucky University, 1907-72* in 1977, and in that text, he suggests that part-time faculty members over the years effectively met the fluctuations of enrollment. Wood notes the assistance in the department of Julia Neal, who holds a bachelor's degree from Western and taught for a few years there beginning in 1940. She soon left to do her Michigan graduate work and then to take a position with Florence State College in Alabama.

Another adjunct faculty member was Sara Middleton, who taught from 1928 to 1935. Neal recalls working with Middleton:

Sara was sort of on the same schedule. I don't know why, but she was temporary and so one time Sara said to me, "Julia, I don't know whether we're temporarily permanent or permanently temporary!"

Neal also remembers the hiring process of part-time faculty as slightly haphazard:

Dr. Cherry called me once to teach some English courses and after that, of course I'd gotten my Master's here under Dr. Wilson, he was still head of the department, and uh so he said--well, he just kept me on a string. I couldn't go anywhere; I couldn't leave my father, and I couldn't commute from Auburn up here so I don't know how many spring terms and summer terms and finally it worked [that] the faculty here--the English faculty were going off to get Ph.D.s--and so whenever he had somebody off to get a Ph.D. I'd probably teach first semester or second semester.

Neal suggests that adjunct faculty were often called upon to teach whatever needed being taught, regardless of any specialty (or lack thereof) they might have had:

You just don't know how funny it is now to look back at how loose it all was, and one day Mr. Wilson met me in the hall and said, "I've just given you a class in American Literature to teach" and I said, "Well, Mr. Wilson, I haven't had any American Literature!" And he said, "Oh yes, you had a class with so and so" and so I began to teach in American Literature and I didn't know anything about it, so that's when I decided that in the summer I better go off to graduate school, and I decided to go to University of Michigan and I focused mainly on American Literature while I was there.

Interestingly, throughout Wood's exhaustive list of English department faculty at Western, only one of the many women noted for teaching in the 1930s and 1940s had her doctorate. Curiously, Western President H. H. Cherry fired her, presumably because of mistaken identity as he passed her on a walk across campus. Despite an apology from Cherry, the faculty member promptly left Western and later became the head of the English Department at George Peabody in Tennessee.

Western's mission as a teacher training school (and not a research institution) and the longevity of the tenure of several women--Mrs. Cherry, Emma Stith, and Jennie Upton--suggested that a doctorate was not as important then for securing long-term employment as it is in today's academic world. Still, Julia Neal's

haunting words, "I didn't think it would be worth my time as a woman to put myself through a Ph.D.," are perhaps a telling indication of women's status in the academic world at the time.

### Faculty's Outside Interests

The interests and abilities of the individual faculty members shaped not only what they taught, but also what Western's English department and subsequent departments would become. The department spawned several other departments over the years, even a series of departments. The English department at various times controlled a newspaper and offered instruction in folklore, drama, debate and oratory, in addition to the English Club and related activities one might expect.

While at Western, Julia Neal began doing research on the nearby Shaker settlement of South Union, Kentucky to prepare presentations for the various ladies' clubs in town who often asked the faculty to present lectures at their monthly meetings. Neal developed the material into a graduate paper at the University of Michigan which was published as *By Their Fruits*. She became a nationally known expert on the Shakers and was asked to return to Western to head the Kentucky Building, a large storehouse of Shaker effects, after her stint in Alabama.

Frances Richards, M. A., established the *College Heights Herald* newspaper in 1925 and served as its only faculty advisor until her 1964 retirement. Richards, a Western alumnus, remembers, "I think I was a fair student in English, and the best I knew how to be"

(1977). Nonetheless, she recalls the first issue of the *Herald* with horror: "When the paper came out, it was terrible. . . .It was filled with errors from page one to the last page; and as I told someone not long ago, I cried. . . ." ("Western's English department," p. 4). Such admissions reveal the concern she, as publisher and perhaps as teacher, placed upon correctness. Why she did not edit the paper more carefully before publication is not clear from Richards' account.

Despite the problems of the first issue, the paper went on to win the Columbia Scholastic Press Association's Medalist Award for overall performance in 1942 (and at least seven times since). The paper has some notable alumni: "Whitey Sanders of the Kansas City Star; Julian Goodman, President of NBC, and Bill Strode, outstanding photographer of the Louisville *Courier-Journal*," among others ("Western's English department," p. 4).

Richards taught Shakespeare and Kentucky Literature; Ruby Norris remembers Richards as a good teacher and recalls Kentucky Literature as an enjoyable class. Richards continued to be an active scholar; a list of departmental activities from 1956 lists the publication of a book review by Richards in the *Journal of Southern History* on Thomas Holley Chivers. Richards presented several lectures to various women's clubs in Bowling Green on *Macbeth*, *The Medici*, and *The Dead Sea Scrolls* that year; she served on a Standards Committee with the Kentucky Council of Teachers of English and attended its fall meeting. She also attended the national Modern Language Association meeting that year. Several other department members attended those two conventions that year, though only one

attended the National Council of Teachers of English meeting (Richards, 1977).

Gordon E. Wilson, professor and a prolific writer, cowrote A *New English Grammar*, which was published in 1923 by Macmillan Company. The State of Kentucky adopted the textbook, which "not only brought distinction to the new English Department but to the institution as well" ("Western's English department," p. 2). Wilson cowrote the book with Dr. Macon A. Leiper, Western's first English department head and founder of the English Club in 1924. The English Club peaked in 1940 at 160 members, with World War II decreasing its membership significantly ("Western's English department," p. 3).

Wood remembers Wilson as a lover of birds ("the leading ornithologist of Western Kentucky") and of camping, as a meticulous record keeper, but as a diligent professor nonetheless: "He gave more time and attention to his job than any other person I have known" (p. 30). By 1956, Wilson's personal interests in folklore and ornithology completely dominated his scholarly activities. He edited the folklore magazine that printed Jesse Stuart's "first published prose" ("Western's English department," p. 4). He was personally responsible for the development of Western's folklore program which has since included notable writers Lynwood Montell and Jim Wayne Miller.



### Evaluation of Writing

Ruby Norris' (1993) memories of the first-year composition course as demanding carry the notion that students attending Western when the 1930s began could expect lower grades than they had received in high school:

I was kind of shocked with the grades that I had. I think I got a C. But after that I was more alert. I knew what to do and what to study and that was mainly writing. . .mostly writing and grammar mixed in.

Such comments, if corroborated by other students or additional documents, might suggest that a system which discouraged grade inflation existed at Western, but I recovered no such evidence. Nor could I document the use of peer reviews, a practice which might have assisted instructors in juggling the heavy workload, although neither of the alumni nor the one instructor interviewed for this study recall the use of peer reviews in the composition classroom.

Strange (1993) doesn't recall her final grades in English, only that she "got a decent grade" under Cornette: "We had a great deal of grammar and we may have had some writing, but I don't remember a great deal of writing." When questioned about the content of the grammar instruction she received under Cornette, Strange does not recall doing exercises such as sentence diagramming. Strange would later become an English teacher herself; aided by a course in creative writing at the University of Kentucky, Strange's conception of proper grading included evaluating students on what was being covered at

the time in the classroom: "If we were studying something in grammar particularly, I would look for grammar."

Julia Neal (1993) recounts a pedagogy that emphasized surface problems, such as spelling: "The main thing I always emphasized was spelling. We had those little spelling books and I gave a test on spelling once a week, a page, you know, a page of words the author had spelled." Correctness in papers was important to her, she recalls: "You corrected grammar every time you had a chance. You corrected your students in what they were doing and so on." However, she denies using the course merely to teach grammar: "Well, I didn't teach grammar as such except as I would have conferences with students, I guess. Let's see now, what did we do?"

The very mention of conferences suggests that instruction at Western had at least one activity considered by many compositionists to be a modern invention, and Wood's history urges the advantages that would have been felt had instructors had fewer students and thus more time to conference with students. Neal's comments also indicate that conferences were an opportunity to discuss usage on an individual basis with students. If, however, the conferences dealt only with mechanical correctness (as so many other components of the course did), their existence may not have been as progressive as they sound. Still, Neal did more than devise grammar exercises; students wrote as much as she had time to read: "Here as a temporary teacher, I had them write you know all I thought I could grade, but I had classes with 45 and that limits what you can demand from your students."

Students were not required by course description to write in first-year composition until 1935; until then, adeptness in grammar was the accomplishment sought in composition instruction. Thus, it should not be surprising that several adjunct faculty at Western incorporated usage exercises via stenciled handouts in the two-year composition sequence (though I cannot tell if these particular instructors also required writing).

The handouts that reveal such an emphasis on usage are located in Western's University Archives. Each handout is marked, "For \_\_\_\_" with the instructor's name added and with the number of copies, the date, and the initial, presumably of the person making the stencil and/or copies. The numbers of copies requested seem to corroborate Neal's and Wood's recollections of large classes. The names include Miss Bradley, Mrs. Barnhill, Miss Stoves, Cocke, Miss Brown, and D. B. Cofer. Whether or not the contents of those stencils reflect the course content as taught by full time faculty is conjectural, though the course description through 1935 would suggest that such a reflection is accurate. The handouts do give some idea of the content as taught by adjunct members in addition to corroborating the abundant reliance on adjunct faculty to teach composition.

It is unclear if many of the stencils are daily exercises or examinations. Usage concerns dominate, with some emphasis on grammar and even less attention to an understanding of the concepts guiding usage choices. For example, Bradley's ten section English 101a handout for 22 students included punctuation, sentence, and proper usage exercises, as well as ten sentence diagramming

exercises. Barnhill's copies always numbered 80, so perhaps she taught two sections of 101a. One of her handouts dated 7/8/30 stresses the correct versus slang forms of expression. A second handout of Barnhill's from the same date requires specific identification and classification of clauses and phrases, but it also requires a written explanation for some of the usage exercises.

In fact, for all the usage exercises, an equal number of handouts requiring writing remains. For example, Brown's handouts (see Appendix G) from the early 1930s emphasize written responses and request 40-45 copies. A 101a handout asks students to explain terms such as narration, point of view, argumentation, and exposition; to illustrate the five uses of the comma; and to write a paragraph explaining grammatical concepts. A 101b handout of Brown's requires the explanation of terms such as climactic arrangement, characterization, editorial, and, again, point of view and argumentation. A third handout by Brown, for 101b, asks students to "Outline a theme based on one of the following subjects: Mistaken Identity or The Value of a 'Movie Mind.'"

Stoves' 101b handout asks the students to define narrative, expository, and descriptive writing and to give an example of each from Fulton. On that same handout, students must name, define, and illustrate five figures of speech, define terms such as impropriety and tautology, and punctuate and correct other sentences. A 1928 handout for English II under Cocke asks students to write a note of invitation or an informal note, to improve sentences, and to make parts of a sentence emphatic by combining, among other things.

Several stances about the philosophy of teaching writing held at Western at the time can be inferred from another handout, dated July 10, 1928, for D. B. Cofer with a request of 68 copies. The course was English 303, The Teaching of High-School English; the examination includes a list of six questions, with the option of omitting one. Pertinent to this study seems to be the approach to the wording of the questions. For instance, questions about how to teach spelling, punctuation, diction, the sentence or the paragraph, and literature occur alongside questions about how to interest students in composition and in the essay. This suggests that at that early period, Cofer felt that teaching writing was something that drills and exercises failed to accomplish and was somehow different from teaching grammar or usage.

### Writing Topics

I found little evidence about the paper assignments and topics which teachers at Western gave. The stenciled exercise handouts are the only actual texts created by faculty available in Western's archival holdings, and no student-produced writing remains either. The private sources offered even less in actual text recovery.

The handout exercises do, however, contain individual sentences which are very telling and sometimes humorous indications of the spirit of the times, and they may indicate teacher approaches to involving students by engaging the students in interesting or timely subjects. For example, a 1935 handout for Bradley asks students to punctuate the following sentences:

Four South American countries Brazil Argentina Peru and  
Bolivia experienced revolutions in 1930.

America has one distinguished playwright Eugene O'Neill.

They are also asked to choose the correct verb form of this sentence:

Thirty cents an hour (is, are) low wages.

Sentences on Barnhill's handouts include the following:

I see in the paper where Al Capone is in Miami.

War is sure to affect/effect trade [students were asked to  
check the correct form].

The bank having failed, the depositors lost their money.

Climb on the running board I'll slow down at the corner  
[students were asked to punctuate the sentence  
correctly, with reasons].

Such examples suggest that everyday experiences and world affairs  
were on the minds, if not in the classrooms, of the part-time faculty  
in that period of Western's history.

An occasional sentence gives a specific reference to something  
of local interest, such as one on Stoves' 101a handout:

When he came to Bowling Green Kentucky on April 12 1930 I  
was out of town. [Students are asked to supply  
punctuation with rules.]

Another reference which students might have strongly associated  
with is found on a 1935 Bradley handout:

Father objects to my using the car this week, because my  
grades are low. [Students were asked to diagram it and  
nine other sentences.]

Other sentences reflect cultural practices and activities in many ways foreign to readers of today. For instance, Bradley includes this sentence which depicts a society where Mother did the cooking:

How do I cook clams repeated Mother I usually dip them in  
flour and fry them in deep fat for three minutes

[Students were asked to punctuate the sentence.]

And the following sentence from the same handout suggests that people actually walked then:

He replied that he (walked, had walked) twenty miles before  
we met him.

Some of the sentences found on the exercises are self-reflective about English instruction, as in this sentence from Bradley's 101a handout:

I am getting along (good, well) in English.

And, Barnhill possibly poses a warning to students in this sentence:

Good, English, no less than good manners, are required.

[Students were asked to correct each error and explain  
the correction.]

Throughout most of the exercises, teachers sprinkled references to historical literary works or authors, perhaps implying the instructors' reading preferences, as in sentences on handouts by Barnhill,

Burns a Scotch poet wrote many lyrics [Students were asked to  
punctuate the sentence.],

and by Stoves:

He should as I said before read Pope's Atticus. [Students were asked to punctuate the sentence and give rules];

The ghost of his old partner appeared to Scrooge. He told him he must reform. [Students were asked to correct and give reasons.]

The majority of exercises, however, mundanely offer little contextual reference, such as the following from a handout by Barnhill which requires that the sentences be corrected and the corrections be explained:

We feared we would get caught in the rain.

He spoke to some of us--namely, she and I.

Still others from that same handout perhaps indicate the desire on the instructor's part to flee the paper flood:

I wish I was in Colorado.

I had a two weeks vacation on my aunts farm.

The existence of such specific references to world and local phenomena does suggest that the faculty did not teach in an ivy-towered vacuum. However, to imply that required student essays in any way reflected a desire by the instructors to encourage student awareness of current events is impossible with the few documents that remain. Perhaps the actual topics of papers meant little to the instructors who produced these handouts since the emphasis of the handouts themselves is the development of proofreading/editing skills. The possibility exists that the instructors merely chose many of these sentences from another source and that closely analyzing their content may imbue them with more importance than they



deserve. Still, their existence certainly add flavor to the documents which preserve the history of composition at Western.

### Textbooks

I found few documents to indicate the textbooks used in first-year composition at Western. The nature of the catalog course descriptions in 1930 would indicate the use of a grammar text; by 1935, instructors probably used a text (or supplementary materials) that covered research skills, and the 1945 course description states that 101a students used a workbook.

The participants, likewise, offer little insight into the textbooks, or even the types of textbooks, used. Lois Strange recalls, "The best I remember we had a handbook and I guess we must have had rules too." Time has also softened many of Julia Neal's memories of the period:

I can't even remember having a textbook. What I would do in advanced composition course was to keep good papers from one time to another and use those as examples, read them to the class, then we'd discuss them and so forth. But in the freshman and sophomore classes, the freshman classes, we had workbooks. . .let's see--what were those things called they put out for a while for freshman English? They would be--paperback books with excerpts and examples. . . .Well, anyway they were one of those fads we went through and we used a lot of those.

Neither "rhetoric" nor "reader" sounded right to Neal as she struggled to remember the textbook type.

In the research for their text, *A New English Grammar*, Western faculty members Wilson and Leiper may have reviewed several other grammar texts. Still, *A New English Grammar* was a public school text and not, therefore, a probable text for the Western composition course. Since so little exists to determine either the textbook type or the specific textbooks used in Western's composition program, traditional composition historians--who rely so heavily on textbooks--might find a study of this school's composition heritage difficult to accomplish. In the absence of a clearly designated text, traditional histories would perhaps not examine Western's composition program at all.

#### External Forces Acting on Composition

Bowling Green, Kentucky was not immune to the poverty caused by the Depression nor to the social changes and personal grief and concern created by World War II. These world events most certainly impacted the individuals attending and working at Western Kentucky University. And, on a local level, the administrators--especially the President who was seen as a dictator by some and as a hero by others--perhaps influenced Western's population, and particularly its morale, even more. This section examines how and if such influences affected first-year composition.

Influence of H. H. Cherry. H. H. Cherry secured legislative funding in the early 1900s for the Kentucky teacher training schools.

He served as president of Western from its inception (1906) until his death in 1937, and his influence extended beyond his length of years: "By 1892, at twenty-eight years of age, H. H. Cherry had already formulated the basic principles and policies which were to guide the development of an educational institution for almost half a century" (Cornette, p. 96). To some he seemed a man of contrasts:

He stressed democracy; yet he ran the college almost as a divine-right monarch. He had a stern, humorless appearance; yet he had a quick, wry wit. He was a visionary with detailed plans for his school; yet he was the classic absent-minded professor. He frequently preached against the use of alcohol; yet in 1931 he was arrested for drunken driving. (Judd, Oct. 7, 1982, p. 1)

Cherry presided over the daily chapel exercises that all faculty and students attended. The attendance may not have been voluntary according to Judd who reports that chapel was required of everyone and that it became Cherry's forum for espousing his views as well as divulging important information (p. 10). Frances Richards' (1977) perspective, as both former student and instructor, reveals that everyone "felt honor bound" to attend chapel. Lois Strange (1933) remembers attending chapel daily as a student and noticing the respect Cherry had: "I remember how everybody honored him. When he talked, everyone was just as quiet as they could be, because they really respected him."

The Declaration of Principles and Policies which H. H. Cherry developed with his brother provided a moral guide for the school:

To be a live school and to impart to its students a burning  
zeal to do and be something.

To be progressive, to use modern methods and equipment, but  
reject all worthless educational fads.

To fight against ignorance, and for higher education and the  
liberation of the human soul.

To teach students the power of earnestness and to warn them  
against all show and pretense.

To make the school self-governing and to create a high moral  
sentiment among the pupils. (Cornette, p. 74)

Several of these principles continue to be quoted in the university's catalogs. Cherry's quotable quotes may not have actually influenced classroom content, but a school that discouraged "show and pretense" and encouraged "moral sentiment" might have likewise offered coursework that reflected those beliefs, so that essays encouraging the artistic value of pornography, for instance, might not have been well received.

Despite the respect H. H. Cherry received, he at times ruffled faculty feathers, such as his accidental firing of the wrong faculty member. Furthermore, his inflexibility concerning matters that affected faculty, such as promotion and pay, apparently left little room for negotiation. Cherry's impact was undeniable--be it negative (which overworked faculty might have felt) or positive (which his co-administrators felt). Judd (1982) cites a comment from another Western president, Kelly Thompson, who served as a field representative under Cherry: "He was so dedicated to improvement

and excellence. . .that it permeated the area he operated around and the people with whom he worked. It was as if people were involved in a semi-crusade" (p. 10). Cherry's influence is still felt on Western's campus: "No one can deny that Cherry had a strong impact on Western in his day--and still does. Many people attribute Western's special atmosphere to Cherry's planning and leadership" (Judd, 1982, p. 10).

Cherry's larger-than-life statue stands in front of Cherry Hall; the current home of Western's English Department was not erected when Lois Strange had English at Western. Instead, she says, English was then taught in Potter Hall: "It was an old three story frame building. And I don't believe Cherry Hall was there yet because Potter Hall was about the same location where Cherry Hall was/is."

Cherry's sister-in-law, Bessie Swartz Cherry, was a long-term English Department faculty member. While the relationship between the two family members is unclear, faculty members in the Western English Department might very well have felt uncomfortable expressing their viewpoints about administration within her hearing. Likewise, H. H. Cherry could have had an inside scoop on the department and its direction. While he may never have visited a composition class in Potter Hall, nor exerted any influence over individual course content, his general philosophy about both areas as expressed in other venues no doubt affected the way instructors taught English (and other courses) at Western.

Influence of World Events. The two major world events during the 1930s and 1940s, the Depression and World War II, each

affected Western. Faculty hiring and teaching loads were the primary effect the events had on the English Department, but as the stenciled sentences examined above suggest, world and national events may have crept into course content, at least subtly if not openly in class discussion.

Lois Strange recalls the impact of the Depression:

I don't remember the instructor saying anything about it. Of course, all the students were aware of it, and we didn't hesitate to say we couldn't afford this and that that people normally had. I was in Western when the banks closed, and my brother came and brought all he could get from the entire family. You could just get ten percent, I think, of what you had in there, but that straightened out in a few days. (1993)

During the Depression, Strange's parents sent three children to college, all of whom shared an apartment:

Tuition wasn't what it is now. Now, I don't remember what our tuition was, but it was very minimum. And, we did--we had an apartment and did our own housekeeping, so it wasn't as expensive as it would've been if we'd stayed otherwise.

Western's English Department taught Air Force cadets brought to campus for intense instruction. Dr. Earl A. Moore taught such a course and notes that before the cadets arrived, "the number of men in the student body was greatly decreased" (1977). Wood reiterates the loss of male students: "There was a big drop in the boy enrollment, men enrollment. There were more girls, more than anything. I knew, of course, it wasn't unusual to have lots of girls in

an English class, but by then it started to be about all girls" (1977).

Wood, too, taught the Air Corps students and recalls, "money was scarce, the department was badly overloaded at the beginning of the period, and when the drop in enrollment came, it afforded some welcome relief," in grading loads though it decreased tuition fees coming in. The Air Corps courses did, however, bring up the student load somewhat by the mid-1940s (n. d., p. 25).

The special courses for soldiers balanced the loss of traditional students on campus from the War effort, but the soldiers' presence created logistical problems: "Such increase of numbers on the campuses crowded every dormitory and private accommodation in the towns where the colleges were located. In some instances, temporary structures were built to house these students" (McVey, 1949, p. 275). McVey reports that the primary impact on curriculum occurred in language courses, but the war impacted all students, he suggests, in that, "the war brought a wider appreciation of world problems, the importance of national ideologies, and the compactness of the world as a whole" (p. 276).

In order to lure graduates into teaching again, the Kentucky legislature enacted a pay raise for teachers in 1944 to \$1,094. Understandably, "many teachers [were] hard pressed to maintain a decent standard" (McVey, p. 277). Thus, Western teaching graduates at the end of the period were not much better rewarded for their efforts than they were during the 1930s. Their experience while at Western, however, probably remained very similar throughout the 1930-1945 period because of the stability of the administration. The

English courses varied only a small amount by their descriptions over the fifteen-year period, and the faculty remained virtually the same.

### Summary

Western Kentucky University seems to be doing an excellent job of preserving as many documents as become available to librarians both at the University Archives and at the Kentucky Library. Nevertheless, Harrison laments "the lack of papers that would document the academic lives of individual students and faculty members" at Western (p. 330). Pleas have been made for such materials in a campaign to acquire "memories of Western," but even with such efforts, few traces remain of what once was.

The picture we can see depicts interested English faculty who stayed at Western for many years, presumably because they were happy there, engaged in varied scholarly and outside pursuits. They may have been reluctant, however, to question their pay, their rank, or even the possibility of promotion due to the tight reins with which the president drove the university. They often taught five courses per semester and had as many as 45 students per class. Adjunct faculty frequently taught with little advance notice or choice about whether or not they would teach or what they would teach. At least one adjunct faculty member conducted conferences with students, and other part-timers took into consideration student concerns as they developed handouts. I found no evidence documenting whether or not grading inflation was a problem, what sort of topics were



assigned, what criteria instructors used to evaluate the writing, nor what textbooks were used or how they were used.

The students often made Western the source for several of their degrees, then returned to their hometowns and became teachers themselves. The students respected their instructors and administrators; that respect may have derived from upbringings which instilled children's respect of their elders or from fear of grade reduction or from the Western faculty's truly deserving such admiration. The comments made by the participants in this study suggest that all three components contributed to their sense of respect. The students, often poor and ill-prepared for college work, were in some cases shocked by the challenge that greeted them in their composition class.

Much of the composition course itself centered on usage. Teachers expected students to know not only how to correct usage errors but also to explain those corrections--presumably by referring to appropriate rules from a textbook or class presentation. Students recall a great deal of writing, but their memories do not evoke images of torture or boredom from the usage exercises. By the mid-1930s, instructors required sharpened research skills and weekly themes. In that respect, the course greatly resembles composition as it is taught in many schools today--students acquire greater competency in academic writing in the first half and then move on in the second course to incorporating into their writing the sources found by their improving research and library skills.

Had Western become something other than a teacher training school, its mission, its graduates, and, arguably, even its composition program would have changed. At one time, Western made a bid to be the state's land grant Agricultural and Mechanical school; Lexington won the bid, and then established the University of Kentucky. The next chapter examines just what another land-grant school, the University of Tennessee, offered its first-year composition students between 1930 and 1945.

## Chapter Five

### The University of Tennessee: A Research Institution in Knoxville

All were poor together! (Curry, 1989, p. 54)

In some ways, the history of The University of Tennessee's English department mirrors that of Western Kentucky University's English program. Feeding into both schools were under-prepared students being taught by teachers who were themselves under prepared. Also, The University of Tennessee developed from a small college into the university it is today, though the growth occurred much earlier and is much less disjointed than Western's.

Similarities between the schools lessen when their missions are considered. Unlike Western's teacher training objective, the University emphasized Extension early on and then, as is consistent with a land-grant research institution, began emphasizing faculty research and publication and de-emphasizing teacher training. This section examines the pertinent history of education in the state and of the development of The University of Tennessee followed by how UT's mission might have affected composition instruction.

#### Education in Tennessee in the 1930s and 1940s-- From Primary to Higher Education

Religion, Morality and Knowledge being necessary to good Government, the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall be forever encouraged. (Article III, "The Territory of the United States of America South of the River Ohio," 1790, in Smith, 1938, p. 18)

Over the years, Tennessee, like Kentucky, has consistently ranked low nationally in education despite well-intentioned credos--such as the one above--espoused by educational leaders and despite

the surveys conducted by educational leaders to ascertain the cause of the inadequacies. Part of the problem, as in Kentucky, derives from the origin of many Tennesseans:

The church in England believed that education was a duty owed by the parent to the child rather than the business of either the church or the state [unlike the Puritans in New England]. And so, Virginia let education become a personal, individual affair. Later on, North Carolina and Tennessee inherited their ideas of education from colonial Virginia.

(Smith, 1938, p. 21)

Public hostility to education, particularly higher education, has been another problem, due in part to an 1806 requirement that settlers on specific lands set aside for colleges had to pay one dollar per acre toward education. As a result, "Strong and bitter opposition developed on the part of the settlers to this arrangement, and here was laid the foundation of much prejudice and opposition to higher education"; this opposition, according to Smith, remained in 1938 (p. 22). In 1920-21, Tennessee was 49th among US states, provinces and D. C. in the number and proportion of its residents who attended higher education institutions and 48th in 1922-23 (United States Bureau of Education, 1926, p. 9).

Hostility fed illiteracy; in 1930, 7.2% of Tennessee's population were illiterate, but the national average was only 4.3% (Smith, 1938, p. 2). The isolation fostered by geography, specifically in East Tennessee, served as yet another factor working against education. A 1937 report on local school units urging consolidation of small rural

schools notes both this problem and how the Depression "tended to aggravate" the situation of isolation (Tennessee State Department, p. 1). A federal report states, "It is such relatively isolated sections that retard social progress and help to keep a State in a backward condition" (United States Bureau of Education, 1926, p. 17).

That same report suggests that the students attending schools in Tennessee did not receive adequate training, rather training that would be "usually considered below standard" (p. 29). Several studies attempted to discover the cause of this. In 1920, the Tennessee State Department listed causes as being a shortage of teachers, unqualified teachers, a frequent turnover of new teachers, a decrease in male teachers (from 75% in 1870 to 26.1% in 1917), and low standards for certificating teachers (p.3). Fueling these staffing problems were low pay, nepotism, and no security for teachers, with no tenure law and virtually no retirement funding (Tennessee State Department, 1920, p. 66).

The average salary for teachers and administrators in the public school system in 1935-1936 was \$718 annually, more than \$500 below the national average (p. 65). A separate report two years later suggests the disparity grew larger to \$600 (University of Tennessee, 1940, p. 5). A 1920 Tennessee State Department report's conclusions seem almost self-evident: "Teaching is not a self-sustaining occupation and teachers are not economically independent" (p. 6). Such poor financial rewards and the lack of security must have compounded the teachers' own feelings of

inadequacy as products of the same educational system which their own students encountered.

For those students able to overcome the odds and attend The University of Tennessee, what sort of preparation would they have had? In addition to their other coursework, they were required to have three high school English units to be admitted to the liberal arts curriculum at UT in 1923-24 (US Bureau of Education, p. 100). By 1938, all students needed four units of high school English (Smith, p. 50). Although Tennessee students consistently ranked low on English (among other subjects) in examination, the 1926 US report states, "Of all the teaching in high schools, that in the field of English is undoubtedly the most effective" (US Bureau of Education, p. 98).

Teachers at the primary and secondary levels relied on textbooks entirely for their teaching materials, Smith says, but "the old, hide-bound, textbook memorization" was beginning to be replaced with more innovative teaching (1938, p. 57). Nevertheless, Smith says new teachers lacked adequate supervision and relied on trial and error (p. 64). As early as 1926, the federal government recommended that closer ties be kept between public schools and Tennessee colleges and universities to help remedy some of these problems, stating,

It is a common fault with higher education as it is organized in America not to be greatly interested in the work and the problems of the public schools, and consequently higher education goes its way, while the lower schools follow a similar policy. (US Bureau of Education, p. 50)

In higher education's defense, the faculty among colleges and universities in Tennessee suffered from problems of their own. They encountered poorly prepared students, especially in such first-year courses as composition. Plus, they too grappled with economic and administrative issues. A comprehensive look at the plight of higher education at UT and at other institutions of higher education across Tennessee is presented in the 1926 survey by the United States Bureau of Education.

More individualized accounts of faculty conditions in the 1930s and 1940s survive in written and oral accounts by long-term UT English department professors Alwin Thaler, Kenneth Leslie Knickerbocker, Kenneth Curry, and Bain Stewart, whose careers are highlighted in the section of this study entitled "The University of Tennessee." Average faculty salaries at UT in 1923-24 were 4th among all colleges and universities in the state, averaging \$2501 and topping out with full professors at only \$3,081 (US Bureau of Education, pp. 57-58). The autobiography of former UT professor Alwin Thaler describes other occupations as paying much better:

Professors, of course, have never been overpaid. They fare somewhat better now than they did when I retired, but usually--or at least often, in many places--not as well as, for example, firemen and "sanitation workers" in New York City, or competent plumbers anywhere. That is one reason why professors, myself included, do a good deal of academic moonlighting. (1974, p. 213)

In 1929, UT instructors made only \$1,500 to \$2,000 annually, and the depression created cuts in that amount of 20% (Curry, 1989). In addition to low salaries, UT teachers received "no fringe benefits, and not until the mid-fifties did the University provide a funded retirement program with TIAA and join the federal social security system" (Curry, 1989, pp. 91-92).

Ironically, the salary and benefits package seemed all the poorer in light of the relatively distinguished faculty: "Many of the best institutions of higher learning in the country are well represented, especially among the doctors' degrees" (US Bureau of Education, p. 55); the University of Tennessee seemed especially immune to the inbreeding found in other institutions at that time. Still, many perks associated with some schools were not (and are still not) available at UT: For example, teachers enjoyed no "systematic provision for faculty sabbatical leave with pay" (Thaler, 1974, p. 211). Former UT professor Kenneth Curry (1993) recalls Dr. Burke, the department head when Curry first arrived at UT, and Burke's precarious position regarding retirement: "He was almost 70 with no retirement or pensions. Most didn't feel they could afford retirement." After an investigation in the mid-1920s, the AAUP decried in one of its *Bulletins* "the lack of any system of tenure" at UT (Curry, 1989, p. 60).

In the classroom of the 1930s and 1940s, professors at the University of Tennessee taught primarily white male students, although females were slowly challenging that statistic. African Americans could not attend the University, and in general, Tennessee



made "a poor showing" in providing higher education opportunities for them at the time (US Bureau of Education, p. 48). The University of Tennessee attracted 19% of all Caucasian college attendees from Tennessee in 1923-24, and a total of 97% of its students came from Tennessee, with 47% from Knox County (US Bureau of Education). Proportionately, more than two times as many Tennessee males attended college as females; the state's overall low college attendance was blamed in part to the disproportionately low number of females in college (US Bureau of Education). According to that same US report, however, the lower numbers of women in attendance could not be blamed on hostility: "The colleges and universities freely admit women, . . . there is apparently a friendly feeling toward coeducation" (p. 43).<sup>5</sup>

Of those women who did receive higher education, many apparently sought better vocational opportunities: "Young women are rapidly and earnestly seeking training of a more substantial and useful character than that which has been afforded them in the past" (US Bureau of Education, p. 80). The 1923 report, in fact, recommended that vocational preparation become a more significant part of the curriculum of Tennessee higher education institutions. Such an imperative creates implications across the curriculum, such as the probability of more technical or specialized courses and more

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<sup>5</sup>My research revealed that cynical attitudes toward female students existed at UT in the 1930s and 1940s, if not hostility (see the Students section of this chapter), though my personal experience as a resident of a remote area of Tennessee in the 1990s suggests that hostility at home, rather than at school, might have contributed to the low numbers of female college students in Tennessee.

career or hands-on training; the recommendation would also seem to suggest an imperative for composition instruction to prepare students for the work force. It also reveals possible contradictions with particular schools' missions, such as the University of Tennessee's.

### The University of Tennessee

Several avenues exist for understanding UT's history, especially as it relates to the department of English there in the 1930s and 1940s. Public documents seem abundant, such as bound copies of the annual *UT Student Directories* and *University Catalogs* from that period, all easily accessible in the school's main library, the John C. Hodges Library (named after the long-term English department chair).

Hodges' papers and various drafts of his textbooks, along with documents from several other English professors and from related literary societies, are located in the Special Collections Library of the James D. Hoskins Building. A particularly interesting collection is that of former UT English professor, Dr. Kenneth Leslie Knickerbocker, whose diaries from the years being examined in this study (though he was not yet at UT) make a personal depiction of faculty life at the time possible. The autobiography of Professor Alwin Thaler is available at Hodges Library, and his notes for an uncompleted sequel are located at UT Special Collections. Another source of data in the Hoskins Building is the University Archives, with holdings that include *Biennial Reports from the College of Liberal Arts* and *Annual*

*Reports* from the UT English Department, all from the 1930s and 1940s; UT administrators presumably requested these files be saved.

Private sources of material for this study include two of the faculty members who taught in the 1930s or 1940s and two students who attended UT in that period. I arranged interviews with the faculty members after consulting the faculty phone directory and quizzing current UT faculty about which emeritus professors would have taught in the era being studied. I arranged the alumni interviews after discussing the study with a neighbor in Scott County, Tennessee; that neighbor retired from public education there, was a member of the Retired Teachers Association, and consequently knew several county residents who attended UT at the appropriate time.

In 1935, Dr. Kenneth Curry began a long teaching career at UT. His history of the UT English Department and his oral accounts of the department as it operated in the 1930s and 1940s suggest a mind cognizant of the importance of detail and accuracy; he makes no apology for the starkness of the picture he paints of Knoxville and of the University at that time. He is a direct man and takes measures to ensure that his involvement in a project will be conducted on his terms. For example, he preferred not to be audiotaped for this study, conducted in McClung Tower on the UT campus; he also requested that he be allowed to talk at length before I asked my specific questions. When he taught, he certainly must have been a commanding presence in the composition classroom and an instructor of uncompromising standards who extracted quality work from his students. Curry's commitment to research is reflected in the form of

an annual UT Research Assistantship founded in his honor and awarded competitively to Teaching Associates in the English Graduate Program.

Dr. Bain Stewart was also a long-term UT professor and a former department head who joined the English department in the Spring of 1940. At his request, I conducted his interview by telephone. His memories remain clear of the approaches he took in the classroom, of his colleagues, and of the departmental and institutional demands that generated a good deal of work for him as an instructor. His voice exudes a warmth which suggests that his students may have found him amiable and lively in the classroom. His presence on campus can still be felt in the form of a stipend in his name which reimburses summer tuition for graduate fellows.<sup>6</sup>

Geraldine McDonald entered UT in 1939, and, though her memories of her composition course that year have faded, she vividly recreates the social atmosphere of the time. She worked in public health upon graduation and established a laboratory for Pet Milk. She married a doctor at the height of W.W.II rationing (and had

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<sup>6</sup>I benefited directly from the Bain T. Stewart Summer Stipend. As a Hilton Smith fellow, my tuition for two semesters was paid, and the Stewart Stipend allowed me to continue my studies without cost that following summer. Such reimbursement was crucial in my completing the MA and Ph.D. in a timely manner. Another participant for this study, Kenneth Curry, has a UT Research Assistantship in his honor. Other professors from the period being studied who have awards in their name within the UT English Department include John B. Emperor, Alwin Thaler and John C. Hodges.

Several graduate student awards are granted annually by the UT English department in Hodges' name. They include a Research Assistantship for the John C. Hodges Chair of Excellence, several \$1000-\$5000 First Year MA and Ph.D. Fellowships, a \$1000 Award for Exceptional Scholarship, and two \$1000 Excellence in Teaching Awards.

to borrow sugar rations for her wedding cake). Now a widow, she lives on a quiet street in Oneida, Tennessee.

A third party arranged the interview with the final participant interviewed for this study, Jane Hoffmann, and only during the interview did the fact become apparent that she had not taken her composition courses at UT; she was a transfer student from David Lipscomb College in Nashville. Her recollections of the campus, of the town of Knoxville, and especially of the military classes during W.W.II are nonetheless crucial in recreating the atmosphere students encountered outside (and in some cases inside) the classroom of the 1940s. Hoffmann is retired from teaching high school Home Economics in eastern Tennessee.

A final source for information is my own experience as a graduate student at the University of Tennessee in the 1990s. As a new student at UT, I had classes in the traditional surroundings of Ayres Hall, where the English department had been located in the 1930s and 1940s. I also observed much about the workings of a large department and became a part of the graduate teaching program which had been put in place in the 1930s and 1940s. As many others have, I personally benefited from the financial foresight of the teachers who taught in the period under study (see Footnote 5), and I struggled with decisions about how best to implement the pedagogical legacy left by those same teachers in the 1930s and 1940s in one of the oldest departments at UT.

### School History

The University of Tennessee originated as Blount College, which was established in September, 1794 in Knoxville before the town itself was legally established. The school became "the first nonsectarian college in the United States," as well as "the first college to admit women students on the same basis as men students" despite the popular description of Tennessee as "The Wilderness" (Smith, 1938, p. 19). Within a little more than a century, Blount College transformed into East Tennessee College, then East Tennessee University, then The University of Tennessee.

An interesting account of early teaching and student life at the University of Tennessee, then East Tennessee University, exists in the form of a diary by William Gibbs McAdoo, Sr. McAdoo served as Head Tutor in July 1877, and he earned approximately \$1500 as Librarian and Instructor of declamation, rhetoric, and composition. His entries suggest a close, although not always amiable, working relationship with administration. For instance, on Feb. 3, 1880, McAdoo writes,

Walked home with Hume, the President. He aims to poison me against Joynes and Fleming so that I will urge Morrow and my other friends, the Nashville delegation of Trustees, to throw out the Joynes movement, and save Humes in his easy place.

Humes visited McAdoo's class for an inspection on Oct. 29, 1877.

Another entry reports on what seems to be a fairly typical faculty meeting: "The discussion turned on the practicability of having fair examinations, relying on students' honor, unwatched, to

seek no aid. Col. Lockett and Joyes advocated the plan; the rest of us laugh at such Utopian folly" (Jan. 26, 1880). That McAdoo felt disdain for many students and their abilities becomes apparent in his entries. For example, the day after the "Utopian" honor system was discussed, McAdoo found two students cheating, and another faculty meeting that afternoon resulted in the expulsion of yet another student whom McAdoo calls "a bad young man" and "a mass of rotten morals."

McAdoo often discussed topics such as the teaching of English Grammar with another professor, Kirkpatrick. Students apparently behaved rudely; McAdoo had juniors in Composition who "behaved badly" with "the worst" being "Dick--a conceited, brainless, ill-mannered fellow." And, on March 4, 1880, when his first-year Declamation class threw garlic on the Chapel floor, McAdoo responded by "taking no notice of it whatever." Students behaved no better that fall; on November, 23-24, 1880, McAdoo records,

Keller threw a rock and struck Jerome on the head. Jerome had insisted on spitting on Keller's foot. I sent Jerome out of the room--glad of a pretext to do so because he is extremely offensive to the nostrils from his condition as a sufferer from venereal disorders. . . . Learned afterward--at noon--that he was dismissed. Joy.

The amusing stories recounted in McAdoo's diary seem to predict several conditions that would exist in UT's English Department in the 1930s and 1940s--the uneasy relationship between administration and faculty, the frequent faculty meetings,

and the exchange of ideas among faculty--although both the attitudes toward students and the behavior of students seem to have improved by the 1930s.

As the University entered the 20th century, it began to be criticized for needing various reforms. The US Bureau of Education suggested in 1926 that UT was perhaps not fulfilling its teacher training obligations:

The committee questions whether the University of Tennessee is doing its full duty in the training of teachers and in giving direction to the public-school system. No practice-teaching facilities, except those for Smith-Hughes trainees, are afforded. There are very few graduate students in education, and practically no research is carried on in education. The presence of a famous teachers' college in the State cannot serve as a sufficient excuse for this neglect on the part of the State university. (p. 87)

The University of Tennessee officially existed to "render service in residence teaching, research, and extension," so that "The State is the University campus in carrying out this work" (Smith, 1938, p. 40). This description stands in contrast to the mission of the state teachers' colleges, located at Memphis, Murfreesboro, and Johnson City, their "sole purpose" being "the training of teachers for the public schools of the State" (Smith, 1938, p. 40).

The 1926 US Report suggests that UT needed to "adjust the curriculum to modern life and needs" and that many US schools were "recognizing occupational objectives as the directing force of the arts



college" (p. 79). This seems especially important considering that many of UT's graduates did indeed become teachers, many of them in liberal arts and especially in English and language arts (US Bureau of Education, pp. 38, 82). Entering students continued to be under-prepared, however, in an age that called for maximum preparation because of the limited availability of jobs. The temperament of the times is an interesting backdrop for an understanding of the classroom environment and thus worthy of examination.

### School Atmosphere

Some of UT English Professor Kenneth Curry's unpublished papers reveal a dramatic 1936 portrait of Knoxville, a town "severely damaged" by the Depression. "Most people were poor back then," Curry recalls (1993), as he describes the poverty of Knoxville:

My principal recollection is of shabbiness and a pervasive poverty. That winter was cold, snowy, and cloudy, with soot and dirt omnipresent. It was often impossible to see more than two hundred feet on West Cumberland at the Aconda Court corner. (n. d., p. 3)

UT student Geraldine McDonald also describes Knoxville at the time as "Very dirty. Everyone used coal to heat with and since it was sitting down in a hollow, it was filled with smog" (1993). Transfer student Jane Hoffmann recalls, "Well it was just a dirty town; see everything was coal." The sootiness of the city did not, however, set a stage for inactivity. Both students and faculty had opportunity for abundant involvement.

Student life. Geraldine McDonald (1993) recalls that being both a first-year student and a commuter in 1939 often required juggling schedules and catching rides with friends to her home on a dairy farm. Often, her trips were adventurous:

I remember one day I was in such a big hurry--I was late for school--and I rounded a curve and turned over a 5-gallon can of milk in the trunk of the car. . . .I just backed into the loading dock and said you all take it and I'll worry about cleaning it up later.

Being a commuter restricted the number of campus activities McDonald could participate in:

I never pledged a sorority. I didn't take part in a lot of campus activities that other people did because of the fact that I was commuting. There was no way I could get back after I got home. . . .that was when we had the Nahheeyayli dances. . .the big bands. . . .The Nahheeyayli dances were--I've forgotten when they were. . . .It was a whole weekend of dances--a dance on Friday night, a tea dance on Saturday afternoon and a dance on Saturday night.

Campus fraternities started The Nahheeyayli Dances in 1925. Jimmy Dorsey and other big name bands played at the four formal dances--two in February called the Mid Winter Formals and two in May called the Spring Formals (*UT Yearbook*, 1941). Jane Hoffmann likewise remembers the dances: "Nearly every weekend there'd be dances--some of it was sorority stuff. We'd have nice bands at least once during the quarter."

Another popular activity was Barnwarmin' which was held on the eve of the Homecoming game. The gym was filled with people enjoying cider and cookies, sitting on bales of hay or dancing, and students named a Barnwarmin' Queen (McDonald). CARNICUS, an annual circus/carnival for students, seemed especially geared toward first-year students; an advertisement in the 1941 Student Directory reads, "Note to Freshmen: CARNICUS IS UT's play day--THE event of the year" (UT All Students' Club, Endpiece).

Participating in such activities was probably easier for students who lived in a dormitory as did Jane Hoffmann, who attended UT from 1941 to 1943:

I don't remember going to any of the baseball games, but I went to all the football games and a good portion of the basketball games. It was according to when they fell cause they were always during the week.

She was also a member of *Zeta Tau Alpha* sorority and recalls, "Well, we were active, but as far as our stuff, it was curtailed with war. All your dances were on campus and you didn't do much going. We might have had a rush week at Gatlinburg."

Hoffmann says that before leaving campus, all first-year female students had to sign out their destination and approximate return time. Regulations for female freshmen also included "hours": "Well, they [freshmen] had hours--9:00 o'clock on school nights--and transfers. But I think they had midnight on weekends." Transfer students at UT had to abide by the same regulations that freshmen followed.

Everyone walked everywhere, Hoffmann says, including to church on Sundays: "There'd not be anybody left in the dorm on Sunday morning. There was just about every congregation within walking distance; you just didn't use cars." McDonald remembers regularly walking home alone at 10:00 p.m. after working at the library, something she says she wouldn't consider now at all. However, the UT campus seemed much smaller then, she reminisces: "You knew everyone and really you knew your professors."

Financially, being a college student meant that many students, like McDonald, had to work odd jobs, even though the tuition by today's standards is quite low: "It seems to me that when I first started going it [tuition] was \$39 a quarter. . . . And I believe the most I ever paid was \$42 per quarter." In addition to working at the library, McDonald worked at various times at JCPenney's and at the lab on campus for 25 cents per hour.

The Student Directory for 1941, published by the UT All Students' Club, includes advertisements which suggest that, despite difficult economic times, college life will always have some constants. One advertisement, for the Vol Book Exchange, lists that the store had "College Seal Jewelry, Victor and Bluebird Records, Bicycles for Rent, and Tennis Equipment" (their specialty being restringing!) (Frontispiece). Another advertisement draws on the college student's perennial desire to look the part: "Why Not be Best Dressed On Campus? Have Your Clothes Styled by M.E. 'SQUIZ' GREEN." Shown are three suits starting from \$26.75, and an easy-payment plan is offered.

Hoffmann did not work while attending college, but she did make her own clothes, thus stretching the spending money she had. The typical outfit for women at the time, according to McDonald, included "Saddle oxfords, sweater or blouse and skirt." Hoffmann recalls fashion being affected by the dingy Knoxville atmosphere:

We wore skirts and blouses, skirts and sweaters. You sent your towels, sheets, blouses, and underwear to be washed. It was just according to how much soot was in the fog as to how many white blouses you'd wear in a day.

Faculty life. The impressions of Knoxville as a dirty city as recalled by faculty and students alike are softened somewhat by Curry's recounting of Knoxville's social atmosphere in the 1930s, though it too seems to have suffered the ravages of the Depression:

As for music, drama, art, lectures: a Knoxville music club sponsored three concerts at the old Lyric Theater; I recall no art exhibits, and no visiting lecturers ever came to the University. A group of University faculty called the faculty players gave three plays a year to audiences of perhaps fifty or sixty. A student group, I believe, staged a play or two. The Tennessee Theater flourished in those days, and I suppose that I attended more movies that year than in any year before or since. (1989, p. 3)

A reception for new faculty at the beginning of the year gave Curry a lasting impression of the people of the University and of Knoxville:

It was held in the front parlor of Tyson House--a gloomy, dilapidated old mansion. Many men wore tuxedos (slightly

rusty) and several ladies were in evening dresses of ancient vintage. I think my impression of the pervasive poverty of the University was indelibly fixed at this function. I also gained another impression--that of provinciality and a sense that many were socially ill at ease. I later, however, discovered many faculty and their wives who were urbane and accustomed to a gracious way of life, but it was then difficult to pursue such a life on salaries that had recently received cuts of ten and five per cent. (1989, p. 6)

The diaries of former UT English Professor Alwin Thaler tell how he scrounged up enough funds to take his family overseas on his Guggenheim Fellowship in 1929-30. His accounts give an interesting international perspective to events at the time: "More bad news came hurtling across the air waves to England and all the world in October: news of the great 1929 stock market crash in Wall Street, and of the deluge of misery which followed" (1974, p. 220). While in Gottingen in 1930, he and his family watched "companies of boys ominously parading in the town square in black-shirt fashion with broomsticks for guns," three years before Hitler's rise to power (pp. 222-223).

On a lighter note, Thaler traveled to see the Oberammergau Passion Play in Germany and "went regularly, once a week, to the Old Vic, to see its excellent Shakespeare company in action. That was the year when John Gielgud, still in his early twenties, approached his glorious prime" (p. 218). Upon their return to the States, the Thaler family found a new house, and Thaler recalls they "bought our Chevy, our first car, I had my first driving lessons" and they spent

the summer in Cambridge as he taught Harvard summer school (p. 232).

The diary of Kenneth Leslie Knickerbocker, written in 1941, also gives a valuable look at the later years of the era being studied. Although he would not join the UT staff until 1946 (where he would become Director of Freshman English), he was nevertheless teaching English at the time of the diary at Rhode Island State College (now the University of Rhode Island) in Kingston, R. I. He was a lover of sports, watching school basketball games and playing golf regularly (in addition to daily naps), plus he served as the school's tennis coach for a brief time. He often went to the races, seeing Whirlaway (a Triple Crown winner) run at the Narragansett Race Track (September 13, 1941). He and his wife played bridge in between his paper grading and her practicing for the Rhode Island Symphony. Plus, they were devoted to their son Robert who would exercise by hopping on one foot as Knickerbocker graded papers and who also went to the office with his father in the early morning hours on at least one occasion (March 19, 1941).

The pressing financial situation often dictated what professors from Rhode Island to Tennessee could do in their spare time or whether they would have work at all. Thaler notes the Depression resulted in the dismissal of some UT Junior staff; book presses printed fewer reprints, which reduced the supplemental salaries many of those same staff members relied upon (1974, p. 220). UT faculty were paid in scrip one summer instead of cash (Thaler, 1974, p. 233). According to Curry (1989), the foresight of librarian Mary

Baker enabled the UT Library to continue serials subscriptions, but for several years the library received no new books, which certainly must have hampered faculty research efforts.

UT also had no arrangements for outside lecturers until the 1950s, except for a series in the 1930s when department head Dr. Burke "deputized" English faculty "to sell season tickets to town and gown in order to cover modest honoraria and expenses" (Thaler, 1974, p. 264). In 1938, Carl Sandburg lectured in Knoxville as part of the East Tennessee Teachers Association conference (Thaler). Faculty made efforts, apparently, to create a stimulating cultural, social, and educational atmosphere in Knoxville in the 1930s and 1940s; they seemed bent on making the best of dismal conditions.

### English at The University of Tennessee

They offered me a job! (Curry, 1993)  
They offered me a job! (Stewart, 1993)

Many of the professors in the English department at UT from 1930 to 1945 landed in Knoxville by chance; both Curry and Stewart, when asked how they arrived at UT, responded that they went where they were offered positions. The positions they accepted come to life through both the *Biennial* and *Annual Reports* from the College of Liberal Arts and through recollections of those who held the positions in those years. One such professor, Alwin Thaler, writes about his first born son in an unfinished sequel to his 1974 autobiography. When Richard was age 4 or 5, Thaler writes, his friends asked,



What's *your* daddy do? What's he work at?" . . . When they asked our Richard, he replied, "My Dad's a pr'fessor." Said they, "pr'fessor! What's that?" "Well," said our champion after taking thought for a moment, "he teaches people how not to say *ain*/t[sic] and a great many other things *besides*."

The "pr'fessors" at the University of Tennessee *were* indeed doing a great many things in the 1930s and 1940s "besides" teaching grammatical correctness.

Faculty at the time carried a heavy teaching load, with few of the modern privileges associated with collegiate teaching, and a cloud of administrative mandates overshadowed their work. This section details what composition instruction was like in the UT English Department from 1930 to 1945—including the students, the faculty and their outside interests, and the writing evaluation processes, topics, and textbooks. The section then examines how much (or little) academic freedom was allowed in the composition program and concludes with the impact of military classes on the program as the war effort peaked.

### First-Year Composition Course Description

The May 1931 UT *Register and Announcement* describes the aim of the Department of English as "humanistic" and states the instructors' right to assign "themes, papers, essays, stories, plays, and verses, as well as cultural reading" (p. 138). The three-quarter sequence of English 111, 112, and 113 was "required of all Freshmen." English Composition 111 consisted of "A study of the

sentence" with emphasis on "the writing and correction of short expository themes." English Composition 112 focused on "Paragraphing, outlining, library-drill." The courses emphasized "the writing and correction of paragraphs and of a long expository theme." English Composition 113 was considered an "Advanced exposition" course, with students writing "long expository themes" (p. 138).

By May 1940, the course descriptions had changed little for English 112, with the exception of adding "expository writing based on investigation"; English 113 did not change. English Composition 111, however, became much more grammar-oriented; the course entailed "The fundamentals of reading and writing: the interpretation of the printed page, sentence analysis, applied grammar, punctuation" (p. 202). By May 1945, the courses had shifted so that English 113 became the research-focused course. English 111, and English 112 by extension, included "Training in intensive reading and clear expression" (pp. 213-214).

Stewart recalls the course requirements all faculty adhered to: In 1940, we had a very structured program in terms of grading and it sounds incredibly heavy compared to today. In each class, we were expected to have students write--and I'm afraid to say it, it sounds like so much, but if memory serves me right--5000 words, or at least 4000. They wrote 8 to 10 papers and wrote more in the first term of the freshman course. We would comment on student papers and students would keep folders. We had two conferences with each student each term,

one hour each. That was 25 hours total [per class for each conference].

Curry (1993) elaborates on what the course involved:

So there were 18 papers the first quarter. They kept their folders and the folders had to be checked. I discovered a time saver. While they were writing, I checked folders. The other two days in class, we had essays and we studied the essays, and they would be of various types of writing. We discussed the essays in class.

He further suggests that faculty who did not adhere to the system would be easily detected:

The number of essays was prescribed. If we deviated too much, student folders were a giveaway. With the weekly staff meetings, everyone knew what everyone was doing. With small groups, everyone knew what you were doing. If you were goofing off, everyone knew what you were doing. (1993)

Lesson plans for English 111 written on notecards by Dr. John Hodges for the Fall of 1932 provide a more individualized look at the introductory course from the second class meeting onward as Hodges prepared for it. (See Appendix H.) The first three days listed reveal a strong emphasis on Diction study from the handbook. Hodges' own definition of Diction a decade later in his *Harbrace College Handbook* is, "Good Use--Glossary, Exactness, Wordiness, Omission of Necessary Words" (1941), so a combination of grammatical considerations and style may have been taught.

Hodges' note cards reveal that he immediately began assigning themes and planned to spend class time throughout the course discussing how to correct and place the themes properly within the course folders, as well as "the method of estimating value of themes." Hodges often spent class time discussing punctuation and analyzing sentences. He seemed to realize that not all students would complete the work assigned on time; for one assignment, he offered students an opportunity to submit late work at the next class period. Hodges followed his own advice to Stewart; he planned to do several things in each class period to avoid boredom. On several occasions he divided the class into two groups for parallel reading, though his notes provide no clues about how he conducted this activity. As the semester progressed, Hodges' notecards become a bit less detailed and considerably messier.

Hodges spent the summer of 1942 writing a "tentative outline" which may have resembled his notecards from a decade earlier. His goal was "effecting a better-organized and synchronized attack on the problems of introductory freshman composition" (*UT Annual Report*, 1943, p. 16). Hodges and the UT teaching fellows actually followed the outline in the fall of 1942. The approach is described as incorporating "items of grammatical usage and punctuation in a progressive sequence, together with daily lists of words for drill in spelling. Brief passages for dictation, bearing on the topics treated in the lessons, were included" (*UT Annual Report*, 1943, p. 16). Hodges later added "short selections for reading and analysis" and published the work as *Basic Writing and Reading* in 1943 through Harcourt,

Brace and Company (*UT Annual Report*, 1943, pp. 16, 12).

Existing syllabi from Hodges' English 211-213 courses, Masterpieces of English and American Literature, reflect a concern for the grammatical issues covered in English 111-113 (though the overriding focus is that students master the reading of literature). The syllabi also offer a further glimpse into how instructors taught the composition sequence. Hodges required essay corrections and folders; students had done both in their first-year composition courses. Furthermore, the syllabi state, "Clear and correct writing is just as essential in this course as in Freshman English"; the syllabi promise that grading on tests and reports would consider English usage (MS 401, Box II, Folder 13).

A syllabus for ENG 211-212, Survey of English Literature, includes, "The reports must consist of the work of the student himself and must be written in good English. Students who fail to write creditably may be required to repeat ENG 211, 212, or 213" (MS 401, Box II, Folder 13). "Creditably" seems ambiguous; it could mean the failure to write knowledgeably about the subject, or it could mean the failure to write "good English." The more strident tenor of the first syllabus suggests that poor writing/grammatical skills might be the more exact meaning. Again, though, the overall concern seemed to be that the student understand literature, not write perfectly.

In the first-year composition courses, Curry (1993) says, "Our real emphasis was on getting them to write." In the classroom,

Stewart remembers following Hodges' advice--"don't do the same thing the whole hour"--in the following manner:

Part of the hour, we spent discussing the work and especially I tried to focus on how does it go about making its point. And part of the time we worked on particular usage problems. Most of the time we spent either in lecture or discussions, so it was a fairly structured classroom. (1993)

The evidence seems ample--from Hodges' note cards to Stewart's and Curry's recollections--that faculty adhered to the course descriptions for the composition courses; students may have read about and studied sentences for ENG 111 (and paragraphs for ENG 112), but teachers also asked them to write themes almost immediately upon entering their first English composition course and throughout the composition sequence.

### Students

Characterizing a "typical" student of that day would be impossible, as the 1936 *Biennial Report* demonstrates:

The enrollment in the College for 1935-36 totals 1235. These students come from every region and condition of the State. They vary widely in their inheritance, home-training, educational interest, scholarly purpose, and secondary school training. Thus good teaching is made difficult. (p. 18)

The varied backgrounds of the students served to hinder effective teaching; furthermore, many students lacked the tools or the willingness to participate in activities that might have improved

writing instruction. For example, students uniformly "guarded their privacy," says Curry (1993), which would have made a peer review approach difficult; plus, he says, few students in their first year at UT "were capable of reading papers critically."

Though primarily white males, the students exhibited diverse abilities in English skills. Stewart states,

You have to realize the quality of students before the war was not what it is today. There were no community colleges, and we had to siphon off the less-prepared students. We had very inadequate students. There were three sections of students: the top 10% were exempt from two quarters of freshman English if they had a B or above [on the exam]. The middle group took the regular course, and the bottom 30% who weren't prepared for college had special sections with drill work and exercises.

Many times, the less-prepared students simply dropped out, according to Curry (1993): "The university didn't have any kind of admission policy, so some were pitiful and usually left after a month or so."

Determining the sectioning of students into the three section types was quite tedious, according to Stewart. Faculty divided students based on standardized test scores and the entrance examinations:

It was an enormous undertaking; we also had an entrance paper. We spent the better part of a night grading them--the whole freshman staff. Sometimes, we matched papers with ACT

scores. A really good paper could place a student in a different category.

Stewart further suggests that predicting successful composition students was quite possible:

Most of them [the students] did what we wanted them to do. There were a few teachers in the Knoxville area that we knew, if a student came from that teacher, then he or she would do good work. In some areas, teachers had little preparation themselves, with only two years of college themselves. Many of the students' spelling patterns were not that used by writers of standard English and they had to learn the literary language. Students then were very earnest. They worked hard and improved enormously.

Despite their earnest, hard work, many students were, no doubt, distracted from their work. First of all, many of them had outside jobs and overloaded class schedules: "The social structure about the campus has become so complex that some students, at least, have very little time for study" (*UT Biennial Report*, 1936, p. 19). At least in one instance, students were distracted by natural attraction--to their professor. Geraldine McDonald does not remember much about her course, nor even her professor's name, but she does remember him:

Oh! I wish I could think of his name! I remember exactly what he looked like. I had him for third quarter. I remember we had a term paper. I remember he was very good looking, and I think I probably had a crush on him.



Women became increasingly numerous in the classroom as the war developed. Women won many of the awards in the English Department, including "Highest Honors in English" in the 1942-1943 school year (*UT Annual Report*, 1943). Until then, however, male students outnumbered females 12-8 usually, according to Curry (1993). Statewide figures for the 1920s suggested that on the average male-female ratios would have been 12-6 (US Bureau of Education), so Curry's higher ratio seems to verify the trend noted by the US Bureau of Education; more women were entering universities in Tennessee. Curry, though, questions the motives of some of the females at UT: "Getting married was an option that college girls were aware of." The 1936 *Biennial Report* likewise suggests this possibility: "Some (a great majority, I fear!)[sic] may come to college merely for social contacts" (p. 28).

The War brought a new type of student to UT's campus who was denied social contact altogether--the soldier. The military classes created for these special students, to be addressed later in this study, ultimately affected the way teachers taught composition.

### Faculty

Kenneth Curry (1989) writes, "at least two thousand persons have taught courses in English on the University's Knoxville campus" (p. 147). Those who taught the first-year composition sequence included all ranks of teachers, but the 1936 edition of the *Biennial Report* of the College of Liberal Arts suggests that faculty at the rank of instructor performed an overwhelming amount of the teaching:

"About 45% of our faculty are instructors, but they teach about 55% of the students" (p. 3). Curry (1989) states, "most of the freshman and sophomore teaching was performed by a constantly changing group of instructors and by four teaching fellows who taught two sections of Freshman English each quarter while studying for an MA." (p. 147). Though department heads and directors of specific English programs increasingly did not teach Freshman English, Curry (1993) says virtually "everyone taught Freshman English."

Stewart (1993) asserts that UT's program was a strong one: Our staff had Yale, Harvard, North Carolina, Ph.D.s and our very few MA were teaching Freshman English. Our staff had a diverse background. Many of our staff were educated outside the South and they brought diverse teaching methods.

Among tenured faculty, five of those teaching during the time period being studied were hired before 1930, according to Curry (1989, pp. 150-151). All of them remained until retirement or death. During the 1930s, 15 tenurable faculty were hired, but six left before the end of the decade. An additional faculty member was hired in 1943, six in 1946 and four in 1947, thus reflecting the increase in enrollment from the military classes during the war.

Stability in faculty make-up can thus be seen among the tenured and tenure-track faculty--professors, associate professors and assistant professors. Though many instructors stayed for several years before moving on, just as many moved on within a year or two. Several more, such as Stewart, remained with the program and eventually received full promotion. Receiving tenure and rank

promotions was a slow process, as the *Biennial Report* from 1936 notes. A full 1/2 of the faculty held instructor rank then, due in part to several factors, including the "uncertain economic conditions affecting enrollments" (p. 3); thus, faculty had to wait for promotion to assistant professorship before being eligible for tenure.

Gender, also, may have affected promotion. The 1946 *Annual Report* states that the College of Liberal Arts employed no female full professors or associate professors and only three female assistant professors. However, the number of female instructors was almost equal to that of male instructors. Overall, though, three times as many males taught in UT's Liberal Arts program as females.

Teachers of both sexes and at every level suffered from heavy teaching loads due presumably to the severe financial crisis on campus. Stewart remembers, "Only Hodges, who was head of the department, and Thaler, who was in charge of Sophomore English and the Graduate Program, had reduced loads, and they had three" in the mid-1940s. In the 1935-1936 school year, before the establishment of the Graduate Program, Thaler consistently taught the largest number of students: 112+ each quarter of that year. Johnston and Farrar, who held Instructor rank in the department, also consistently taught more than 100 students per quarter that year (*UT Biennial Report*, 1936). In 1943, Johnston taught as many as 20 correspondence students in English 111-113 and English 242 (*UT Annual Report*, 1943).

The 1936 *Biennial Report* states that average loads in 1935-1936 included four classes totaling from 80 to 90 students and that

this situation created concern about the ability of faculty to perform quality teaching: "Class size and student-load are in some cases obstacles to the best teaching. It is questionable whether any of our teachers meeting as many as 125 to 200 students each week can do really effective teaching" (p. 29). Ten years later, the situation had improved little; faculty averaged 2-3 preps and 90 students (*UT Annual Report*, 1946). Stewart (1993) recalls, "We usually had two freshmen and two sophomore courses or three freshmen and one sophomore course. We never taught four freshman courses, but we sometimes taught three."

Stewart (1993) further states that juggling such a load was difficult: "With 50 to 75 Freshman students--I had as many as 110 one quarter--you simply kept your head." Despite the load, Stewart asserts that UT composition courses were well-taught because of the faculty's strong academic backgrounds: "We had quite an excellent English staff who were excellently educated. Freshman English was taught by far more experienced and fully educated people than it is today!"

The staff may well have been collegial, too, as the tribute to John B. Emperor in the 1946 *Annual Report* suggests. He had been well-liked by his colleagues and a good teacher, with "a zest for merry quips and jokes, a love of witty repartee, good conversation, philosophical discussion, and sound argument" (p. 10). A friend to Thaler (whose sons called Emperor "Uncle John"), he received "well-deserved promotions" before his "untimely death" (Thaler, 1974, p. 3). Another faculty member, James Douglas Bruce, apparently "died

while lecturing in his classroom" (Thaler, p. 177). The causes of the deaths of these two faculty members are unclear, but the load undoubtedly created physical and mental strain on all involved in the teaching of composition.

Some of the faculty experienced another burden in that the course held little personal interest for them. Curry (1993) explains, "I was never fascinated with Freshman English. It was just something I had to do. I was more interested in the literary aspects and in elegant writing. You're basically getting them to be literate in Freshman English." In some cases, arriving at basic literacy was not easy.

The problems of teaching ill-prepared students were compounded by the fact that the UT English Department had the largest enrollments on campus, with 1938 students in 1945-1946 and an estimated 2800 in 1946-1947 (*UT Annual Report*, 1946). This prompted the hiring of more instructors and the request for additional help. Teaching fellows became graduate assistants in the 1940s. Curry reveals that the four teaching fellows at UT when he first arrived were "uninteresting and inept, and I believe that not one received an MA" (MS 1527). Such criticisms seemed appropriate in at least one other case, according to another incident Curry (1989) reveals:

A particularly inept and somewhat psychologically maladjusted young woman (whose name shall be unmentioned), chanced to have in her class a very bright and aggressive young woman, who was, unfortunately[sic] for this

teaching fellow, the daughter of a university administrator who had the ear of the president. Strong verbal complaints to that high quarter resulted in the fiat from no less a personage than President Hoskins that teaching fellows would no longer teach but would become graduate assistants to senior professors and help them in their more mundane duties. (p. 62)

An increase in the need for staff resulted in the request for ten graduate assistants in 1946-1947, an increase of six from the previous year (*UT Annual Report*, 1946). This resulted in yet another problem within the department—lack of space. Classrooms became difficult to find (and still are), and twenty-eight faculty needed unavailable office space in Ayres Hall (where English was taught) in 1945-1946. Not until the 1940s did the department even have an office, secretary, or phone (Curry, 1989). Research and library materials were insufficient, as Curry succinctly notes: "The library of the University was small, the collection meager, and the book fund almost non-existent" (MS 1527). Finally, salary remained an ongoing problem.

#### Faculty's Outside Interests

Despite both the unavailability of expanding library resources and the heavy teaching load, the faculty in the UT English Department managed to complete and publish scholarly works. For example, Hodges published articles on Congreve and Pope in *Modern Philology* and *Modern Language Notes*, respectively, in 1936. That same year, Thaler published two articles on Shakespeare in the

*Shakespeare Association Bulletin*, and Parker wrote *A Guide to Good Reading*.

Most of the faculty members used their summer vacations for study and research, as dutifully detailed in the *Biennial and Annual Reports*, with the exception of 1942 when many tenured faculty taught summer school (perhaps they needed the money). Published work dealt with a wide range of literary topics, and the department's faculty versatility extended to the range of courses they taught, including journalism, speech, debating, forensics, and theater at various times in the 1930s and 1940s.

Several faculty publications and activities listed in the *Reports* reveal a budding interest in the study of the field of composition. Several faculty members belonged to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). Drs. Parker and Knickerbocker would express interest in composition in later publications; in 1942-1943, Parker studied "Recent Theories of the Teaching of English" (*UT Annual Report*, p. 68). John Hodges not only served as the writer of the state English program's *Manual* for high school teachers as well as many other books, but also, and more famously, as the author of the *Harbrace College Handbook*, still used at UT and across the United States.

### Evaluation of Writing

The Freshman Composition lesson plans and Sophomore English syllabi written by Hodges, which have already been examined, suggest his emphasis on clean writing which exhibited proper usage

and mechanics in addition to getting the point across. Hodges' work also reflects the general approach to the evaluation of writing taken by the UT English faculty in the 1930s and 1940s.

Alwin Thaler's papers in the UT Archives include a copy of page 91 of *The Dial*, an aesthetic journal featuring modern criticism from the 1880s to 1929 (Spiller, Thorp, Johnson, & Canby, 1957). The article, dated February 1, 1914, discusses the "various corrupting influences" on the English language and states that the carelessness of the use of the language threatens "the uniformity and purity of our English tongue" (MS 327, Box 3-B). No notes on the copy suggest that this reflected Thaler's opinion, but requiring students to correct grammatical errors does suggest a standard which the University and/or the Department expected students to uphold.<sup>7</sup>

Curry (1993) denies, however, that grammar and usage drills became an overriding concern in the classroom:

If it was plain that they didn't understand certain points of grammar, I gave, I guess, a high school grammar review. I never made a big deal of it, though a lady told me I taught it to her. Maybe 15-20 minutes of grammar, and after that they tended to be bored by it. Very often an explanation was all that was necessary.

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<sup>7</sup>The Department of English apparently continues to expect students to uphold a standard of correctness, because the folder and correction system is still in place (though optional now, with less participation), and the sales from those folders and the *Harbrace Handbook* fund graduate programs which have been beneficial to me as well as many other graduate students. The trend in the application of the folder systems, however, is that instructors encourage students to note the patterns in the surface problems found in their writing.



The marking of papers using correction symbols and/or abbreviations created a time saver for the instructors. Stewart says the faculty had little time for extensive comments: "Well, we tried to with the time we had with 50-75 papers and conferences. We did notice and deal with content, or at least I did, especially in conferences. I looked at the way they were developing ideas." Curry's comments (1993) reiterate this theme:

Ideally, you should have had a comment but with so many there wasn't any time to do that. You had freedom within your class, but not in the number of papers assigned. What you did in class was up to you and you could use your judgment.

Hodges would plan to collect papers on Friday or Saturday and then return them the following class period (Monday or Tuesday)--a necessarily brief period if 18 papers were to be completed in a quarter (as required in ENG 111; only 8-10 papers were required thereafter) (Notecards, MS 401, Box II). Understandably, with such frequent paper turnarounds, faculty bemoaned the "heavy grading load with freshmen" as Stewart did and realized the "drudgery of Freshman English" as Curry (1993) had. Knickerbocker, too, realized this fairly early in his career, as his diary at RISC reflects: "Breezed lightly through my three morning classes--find the effort of teaching becomes progressively less and less but the potential boredom becomes more & more" (September 18).

Many days of Knickerbocker's diary reveal an almost slavish devotion to grading papers. He "marked" papers while his son hopped about nearby, or after "bed-tossing" (sex) with his wife, or

while his wife listened to world events played out on "the radio news." He graded despite feeling "very tired" (Jan. 16-March 16). Though not at UT at the time, his experience very likely reflects the overwhelming tedium other UT professors felt when grading.

As they graded, UT instructors probably also bore in mind the University's desire to repress grade inflation. The message from the Report of the Committee on Improvement of Instruction in the Liberal Arts College allows for academic freedom; nonetheless, a warning is implicit:

An instructor, in giving his grades, should not endeavor specifically to make his grades conform to the following rough scale, but may properly compare his totals with it, as representing an approximation to a workable norm: A, 3-10%; B, 7-20%, C, 40-50%; D, 7-20%; Not passed, 3-10%.

At the time, the College's distribution was: A, 11%; B, 27%; C, 30.5%; D, 14%; Not passed, 17.5% (*UT Biennial Report*, 1936). Curry recalls top-heavy grading as being disliked:

We assigned A, B, C, D, and F. You handed in a summary of grades; it became public information. Dr. Hodges wouldn't have liked it if you gave everyone an A or B. He was never unpleasant, but if he didn't like something, he would've said it.

Some were probably told their grading wasn't in line. (1993) Stewart (1993) recalls "The principle was that no class had more than one A student." He further remembers the efforts made to ensure grading similarity: "I believe we had grading sessions then. We took mimeographed papers and marked and graded and

discussed them. We had very lively discussions about them." Few As actually were given according to the 1936, 1943, and 1946 reports from the College of Liberal Arts. Most students received Cs, but the faculty felt no compunction against assigning Ds and Fs; in 1934-1935, 18 percent of the ENG 111 students and 25 percent of the ENG 211 students received No Credit for those courses.

Grade Sheets from the University Archives--representing instructors' individual theme and final grades for students undertaking composition courses during the summers of 1935, 1940, and 1945--suggest that, indeed, instructors gave few As. Only eight students earned As, and two earned A-s of the 175 entries recorded. However, not as many students earned Fs as Curry recalls dispensing during those three summers; only 9 students (of the total 175) received Fs, although several others either dropped the course or received a WF (Withdraw Failing) or no grade at all.

Quite a few (72) women took one of the composition courses. The use of "Mrs." and of compound last names reveals that many of the female students were married, which suggests the trend Hoffmann remembers of female students marrying the soon-to-be soldiers, following them to the military departure points for the war, then returning to UT for classes. The total number of students per class seems low; the two 1935 sections each had only ten students, and the 1940 summer sessions averaged only slightly higher. The 1945 sections, however, averaged about 20 students each. From the three summers, though, only eleven total classes are represented. Of those eleven, grading sheets from just one associate professor and

one instructor remain; the other teachers must have been part-time faculty.

Curry (1993) says that the allegiance to evaluating students at a demanding level paid off: "You could see the progress the students made. Sophomore English may have improved them, but it wasn't evident in their work. With practice and encouragement, students improve. You have to motivate them; that's the missionary aspect of it." One wonders how successfully teachers could motivate students to excel when the teachers knew that, because of administrative constraints, only a select number of students would ultimately receive As and Bs.

### Writing Topics

Student motivation and essay evaluation are both often affected by topic assignment and selection because a variety of interesting topics can create student interest in the projects and can likewise ease the potential boredom of grading papers. Some of the instructors at UT seemed aware of these trends since they gave students freedom in topic selection. Esther Ellis, adjunct faculty for the Summer 1945 session, noted the choices her students made for term reports on her grade sheet, and they include a variety of war-related topics:

Teo. Roosevelt & the Rough Riders

Fighter Pilots

Synthetic Rubber

Socialism in England.

Other students, however, choose less period-sensitive topics:

Dairying in West Virginia

Photography

Penicillin

Folklore of Tennessee

Roadways of Canada

The Pony Express.

Ellis also recorded the paper topics selected by students for the other papers in her course:

A. Jackson

Payne

Patriotism

Fountain Pen

Peace

Ellis noted whether or not the students completed the following assignments: write paragraphs by example, do outlines, meet in conferences, and complete their folders.

Of the eleven summer grade sheets which survive in UT Archives from the 1930 to 1945 period, only one other suggests course topics. Florence Marsh is listed in the *Annual Report* as an acting instructor for the second term of the summer of 1942 (p. 5), and she required two outlines on "Four Kinds of Thinking" and "The American Student As I See Him." The students also wrote in-class themes on "Military Training After the War" or "The Person I Want [?] to Be." Marsh required a lot of paragraph exercises, outlines, and--

related to the research paper--a Research Outline, Map of the Library, and Practice Bibliography.

Compiling a bibliography is what Geraldine McDonald (1993) remembers from her final composition course; she does not, however, remember the topic: "I don't have the faintest idea. I do remember going to the library and doing that bibliography!" Curry (1993) says the research paper was the "big bugaboo" for many students, though he encouraged them: "Outline YOUR ideas. I gave them *carte blanche* on the research topic, but I conferred with them briefly in class or in my office. It was not as formal as the other conferences. They tended to choose too big of a topic." He admits that topics were "always rather a difficulty," with too much freedom in topic selection often being disastrous: "Sometimes you'd say, 'Write on what you want.' That was awful; they didn't write anything. Some had trouble writing about anything." Typical topics Curry assigned include

My very favorite radio program, my favorite person, so they would do one on dear ol' grandma, my plans for Christmas vacation, a book I once enjoyed reading, or my very favorite summer vacation. Or current sports or news topics or something from an essay. (1993)

For the first in-class write which John Hodges assigned in the Fall of 1932, he initially planned "My Hobby" as the topic, announcing it two class periods in advance (MS 401, Box II). He reminded students the class period beforehand to bring theme paper to class, along with corrections for their out-of-class papers for him to check as they wrote. On that day, however, the topic is listed as

"Halloween, etc." The next in-class write was to be on a biography including "the character of the man[sic] and his chief contribution," and again he checked folders as they wrote. Another in-class write, Theme 13 on November 16, focused on "My Ambition or My Worst Fault or Habit." The final in-class write covered a "Quiz on Bible Selections."

By the tenth class period, Hodges assigned the students to devise their own paper topics for Theme 6. He first asked for a list of six topics from personal experience that would be suitable for 300-word themes, a series if the student so chose. Hodges discussed the topics in class and then took up the list at the next class period. For Theme 7, the topic was optional.

Former UT professors do not recall topic selection as being determined by the rhetorical modes of Narration, Description, Exposition, and Argument, an approach which Connors (1981) says reached its height nationwide in the mid-twenties and a pedagogy often associated with current-traditionalism. I uncovered no evidence in this study to suggest that instruction by modes was a vital pedagogy for any of the UT faculty in the 1930s and 1940s. Hodges assigned papers by topic, not by modal type. Stewart confirms, "we were not doing modes. Or at least, I have no memory of it. Maybe as a basic pattern, sections of the handbook used it for a paragraph, but we didn't deal with it for introducing a paper. It just wasn't our approach." Curry (1993) likewise says he did not "require" the modes.

## Textbooks

The *Harbrace College Handbook* by John Hodges would become the handbook for the University of Tennessee English Department (and many other schools across the country). It was not in print, however, during the earliest years of the 1930-1945 period. Instead, Curry (1993) recalls using the *Century Handbook* and a course pamphlet in his composition course: "The way the course was taught continued that way for a long, long time." Stewart likewise recalls,

*Harbrace* wasn't in use until 1941; it wasn't published until then. But the *Harbrace* didn't determine what we did. We used the old *Century Handbook* until then; it had hundreds of numbers. You couldn't remember them all, so you covered most of the errors students made. *Harbrace* reduced the amount of numbers. (1993)

Both the *Century* and the *Harbrace* handbooks presented efficient systems for noting grammatical, stylistic, or structural problems in student writing. The *Century's* symbols enabled the instructors to more quickly edit student writing, without having to write out lengthy explanations; then, faculty expected students to consult the appropriate section denoted by the symbol. With the *Harbrace* system, faculty used numbers in lieu of symbols, and students marked the error numbers on a folder. But, Stewart (1993) asserts, the textbook did not dictate the direction of the course:

The handbook was just a correction tool. It did not determine the structure of the course. I would set up a day or two (or more scattered) for ways of developing ideas and some for a



review of sentence patterns and punctuating them. They needed systematic treatment of some stuff. I just used what I felt students needed. The *Harbrace* was not used as a course guide. It was a correction book or guide for students.

The Lesson Plans for Hodges' Fall 1932 course corroborate Stewart's recollections. Throughout the extent of the course, Hodges used a handbook extensively for required readings about grammatical and stylistic concerns and for exercises (assigning 40 sentences for correction in one day, for example) but not in the order written, since Chapter 1 was not assigned to be read until October 17. That handbook reading covered "choice & limitation of subjects." Upon the return of Theme 1, Hodges planned to explain the key correction symbols from the text--K1, C1, C11. He would later actually assign the study of sections C1, C3, and C11 in a study of sentence analysis.

Hodges' 1943 *Harbrace Handbook of English*--located in MS 401 of UT Archives--is edited, presumably by Hodges himself, for a 1946 revision. He adds more emphasis on sentence diagrams and writes that "Parts to be thoroughly revised" should include 19g--Introduction on levels of usage (Inside Back Cover). One critic wrote the "Emphasis on outlining wasted--no one really does it this way" (p. 343).

A postcard in the book from F. [Francis?] Christensen reads, "As to the short exercises, I think that the space could be used to much better advantage for fuller discussions of the rules and the methods of avoiding and correcting errors. This would remove some of the

book's 'thinness.'" Another note from a Southern California critic [again, perhaps, from Christensen] reads, "Section 20 [Exactness] gives students the idea that some words are intrinsically better than others" (p. 238). These two criticisms seem contradictory, however, because an emphasis on rules and errors could likewise send students a message that some means of expression are "intrinsically better" than others.

A critic from Northwestern reveals foresight about the direction which composition instruction would take in the following years:

Expand rhetorical matter in #32 and #31 [Whole Composition and Paragraph]. Discuss linking and transitions and means of testing these. Point of view--writing process--should be treated in 32. Sections 1-30 [Grammar Handbook, Mechanics] should be as brief as possible. (p. 334)

This critic evidently understood the need for writing instructors to emphasize writing process over product if they wanted writing content to improve.

Hodges would work to balance these concerns throughout his career, though he ultimately seems to have privileged product. Later editions and accompanying revision suggestions from critics are also preserved in UT archives, and from these collections, it is possible to see a writer at work. Hodges remained current concerning developments in linguistics and basic approaches to the teaching of composition, plus he examined the *Harbrace's* chief competitors and new handbooks.

Still, the *Harbrace Handbook* was and is a handbook concerned primarily with usage and grammatical issues. Even though Hodges specifically asks reviewers if more space should be devoted to rhetoric than was presented in the 5th edition (MS 401, Box 1, Folder 5), he firmly resists suggestions that he reorganize the text "to meet the changing needs of its readers" (Critic B, MS 401, Box 1, Folder 8, p. 1). Critic C of the 5th edition suggests that the text should begin with writing and usage, not grammar and punctuation. Hodges responds in the margins of both criticisms with a resounding "NO!"

Though its organization has changed little, the *Harbrace College Handbook* has continued to undergo revisions in the fifty-plus years since its initial publication. For at least some of the students in the financially strapped period of this study, the book's contents may have mattered less than its cost. The 1945-1946 *Report* of the Liberal Arts College lists the textbook as costing \$8.50 for the three composition courses.

#### External Forces Acting on Composition

Many UT students from 1930 to 1945 were both poor and poorly prepared for their educational experience at UT. Faculty members worked to bring these students' writing abilities to a college level while juggling administrative concerns about grade inflation and faculty publication and retention. As the Depression deepened, enrollments dropped and salaries diminished. World War II alleviated some of those problems because soldiers were brought to campus, and the government required UT faculty to meet certain demands in composition courses for those soldiers. This section

examines how these various influences affected composition instruction at UT.

Influence of student preparation. As the 1930s and 1940s progressed, the work being produced in the composition classroom began to be seen as insufficient. One problem area was the inability of the course, as typically taught, to accommodate the needs of the increasing numbers of foreign students on UT's campus. In the 1945-1946 school year, according to the *UT Annual Report*, 27 students were enrolled who were primarily from "countries to the South" (Panama, Cuba, Mexico, etc.) (p. 17). These students were deemed "unable to handle our language with facility," so a course in English for Foreigners was devised for foreign students in the 1945-1946 school year as a substitute for English 111 (*UT Annual Report*, 1946, p. 17).

The Department established a Writing Laboratory in 1937 at the request of students and faculty (Curry, 1989). Some students came voluntarily, but many were merely fulfilling the requirements of an incomplete grade due to unsatisfactory themes. Students from other classes came as well. In general, sessions with student writers at the Laboratory in 1946-1947 included "remedial work in grammar and spelling, problems of coherence and organization of material, note-taking, and assistance in the writing of reports" (*UT Annual Report*, 1946, p. 18).

The Laboratory was not enough, however, for some students; Remedial Freshman English involved "special sectioning for deficient freshman" in the fall and then adapting courses in the other quarters

for repeating students (*UT Annual Report*, 1943, p. 16). Faculty determined if students were "deficient" through scores from the Placement Exam, which was instituted in 1928 and required the reading of 30-40 exams each quarter by every faculty member (Curry, 1989). The Exam also earmarked students of exceptional abilities in English. The English Placement test in 1942-1943 excused 26 students from English 111 and placed them in a special section of English 112. This number of excused students was "proportionately less" than normal, but the smaller number proved to be more successful since those 26 did well in subsequent English classes (*UT Annual Report*, 1943, p. 17).

Far more frequent were the ill-prepared students, a fact the 1943 Report frequently bemoans: "The problem of deficiency in English composition skills on the part of our freshmen is closely related to a broader problem--the evaluation and improvement of the teaching of English, as language, in the high schools of Tennessee" (p. 16). Five years earlier in Tennessee, English had been "the most poorly taught of all the subjects in the schools, with a rank of only 28 as against the national average of 50" (according to tests of graduating seniors in fifty Tennessee high schools) (*UT Annual Report*, 1943, p. 61).

In 1942-1943, UT and the state of Tennessee began a program with the sponsorship of the Tennessee Council of Teachers of English (TCTE) to help improve high school English. This "State-Wide English Program" included a study to find "the most effective English teaching in the state"; UT English representatives visited the

"outstanding teachers" throughout the state that year to find "the common denominator" that produced the best teaching (and/or the best students) (*UT Annual Report*, 1943, pp. 35, 38). UT also sent representatives to the Indianapolis MLA meeting in December 1941 to talk with educators from Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and North Carolina about how they had improved their English programs state-wide. The Tennessee program was officially launched at the Nashville TCTE meeting in April 1942 (*UT Annual Report*, 1943, pp. 38, 35). An *English Manual*, written by Dr. John Hodges for distribution statewide, served as one of the key tools used by the program to effect change (*UT Annual Report*, 1943, p. 62). Such efforts at establishing rapport with public school systems may have also served to alleviate the distancing of universities from public education noted by the federal government in its 1926 report of education in Tennessee.

Influence of the administration Several incidents from the not-so-distant past haunted UT administrators who tried in the 1930s and 1940s to establish rapport and to generate support from the general public. Negative nationwide attention had been focused on the University of Tennessee and Knoxville in the 1920s. First, in 1923, the university administration fired seven professors (none in English), prompting an investigation by the American Association of University Professors. Second, in 1925, the Scopes trial "brought more unfavorable national publicity, not only to the state but to the University" (Curry, 1989, p. 36). Curry remarks that, as a direct result of the events of the 1920s, the faculty

. . .had every reason to be afraid of the president and the dean. In fact, for many years newcomers to the campus observed that the faculty were careful not to offend, and it was not uncommon as late as the 1950s for someone to remark on how many people seemed afraid of someone else. (1989, p. 40)

Such comments suggest that, despite the number of years that had passed, faculty may have feared another wholesale firing by the administration, or they may have felt pressure to align themselves publicly (including in the classroom) with the administration, especially concerning such issues as those brought to public attention in the Scopes trial.

Situations at UT such as the change from using teaching fellows to graduate assistants certainly suggest the direct influence higher administrative powers had over the department. Hodges had "no choice but to follow" such orders, according to Curry (1989, p. 62). Nor was the large number of low-paid instructors a choice "of the professors of English but of the deans and the president" (Curry, 1989, p. 43). The President for most of this period was Dean Hoskins, who resigned in 1946 at age 76 after a dozen years at UT's helm. These years of "marked time" disappointed faculty and ultimately damaged UT, according to Curry (1989), for they led to "the failure of the institution to seize its opportunities and build upon the strengths of the strong departments" (p. 50).

When UT instructors discuss former administrators, however, they generally refer to the English department heads and/or program directors, not the UT president, and not with a sense of fear.

For example, most accounts of Dr. Burke's administration are less than flattering. Burke served as official English department chair from 1923 to 1942 and had been in charge of first-year composition from 1909 until the mid-1920s. However, "no student. . . had a good word either for the [freshman composition] course or for the professor" (Curry, 1989, p. 33). Even a student who had received an A under Burke, Joseph Wood Krutch (who, interestingly, was also involved in the Scopes' trial) describes Burke as "a rather fierce little man with a mustache waxed in military fashion and by temperament both frantically respectable and a martinet" (Curry, 1989, p. 33). President Hoskins himself made disparaging comments about Burke as being "one of the most rigid teachers" at UT: "He was so rigid that students dreaded to take his English. All Freshmen are required to take English and more students failed under him than under any professor in years" (Curry, 1989, p. 34).

Burke taught from Genung's *Rhetoric* and required weekly memorizations from the text (Curry, 1993). Stewart (1993) recalls:

His idea of Freshman English was that you learn the principles of rhetoric and you could learn to write. There were no applications of the principles, and so it was as simple as the modes, just using the principles of classical rhetoric.

Dr. Burke apparently had the opportunity to discover how other schools taught English composition, for in 1926 a letter addressed to Burke arrived from Ralph L. Henry of Miami University. The letter describes Miami's first-year composition course, which many of their English staff felt was "one of the most important in the



university curriculum" (MS401 Box 2). This opinion was supported, Henry says, by their President. Their procedures included an entrance exam, a sub-Freshman class, advanced sections, drill classes for those not keeping up, theme corrections, and the filing of folders until graduation, not unlike UT's own methods.

Even with such awareness, Curry (1993) says Burke remained a "stickler": "He was known as a severe grader and students didn't like that. Students were as frivolous then as they are today." Burke also impacted the department's overall grading policy, as Stewart (1993) remembers: "In the early 1930s, Burke was a major influence. There was very strong pressure to keep grades low." As department head, Burke's major accomplishment seems to have been his insistence on seeking qualified Ph.D.s. In the early 1920s, President Hoskins removed Burke from teaching freshman English, and during the last seven years before Burke's 1942 retirement, Hodges served as *de facto* head (Curry, 1989, p. 34).

Hodges' assignment as Freshman English Supervisor "was to have a great impact upon everyone in the Department and the University whether as a student or professor," according to Curry (1989, p. 32), because that work led directly to his writing of the *Harbrace College Handbook*. Plus, his serious approach to composition "assisted the Department greatly in its relations with other departments and colleges" (p. 32). Indeed, the departmental conviction became this: "The responsibility for maintaining standards of good writing must be shared by all departments of the University" (*UT Annual Report*, 1945-46, p. 19).

Curry (1993) recalls Hodges' leadership approach relative to Burke's: "Hodges was more relaxed and reasonable on the matter of style." Stewart likewise remembers Hodges as being "very helpful; he talked with me for hours. He gave me his philosophy on Freshman English and some suggestions. Not all helped, but some I used." Aside from the required conferences, folders, weekly meetings, and student essays, professors had relative freedom within the classroom. A manuscript of Curry's suggests that one of the reasons Hodges' leadership ran smoothly was that he surrounded himself with people of similar opinions:

Professors Hodges, Thaler, and Parker, who guided the department during those years, were all scholars who valued scholarly pursuits. I was not involved in decision-making in those days, but it is easy to see now that they sought to ensure that like-minded individuals were added to the staff.

(1989, p. 6)

And, though inbreeding was not a problem at UT, the administration could be faulted with bringing in inexperienced teachers, though from excellent schools. The 1936 *Biennial Report of the College of Liberal Arts* details the problems associated with inexperienced teachers and notes that six of the instructors hired that year had only one year of practice in college teaching. That number included Curry (1993), who admits, "The first year I taught, I wasn't very good!" Stewart (1993), too, says he only had one year of experience as a teaching assistant before arriving at UT, "and at

the other school, I was told what the schedule was and [what I] was expected to teach. So, I knew very little."

The Department developed ways to guide inexperienced teachers, including individual conferences, staff meetings, and suggestions. The Department also outlined "Methods and purposes of teaching" for the new teachers. The manuals designed to guide students likewise helped new instructors. The administration expected department heads to provide "sympathetic and friendly criticism" (*UT Biennial Report*, 1946, p. 26). Teachers were evaluated primarily by the department head's observations about their attitude toward education and students, willingness to accept responsibility, mental alertness, enthusiasm, resourcefulness, and intelligence (*UT Annual Report*, 1946). The department head also personally gathered opinions about teachers from serious students, analyzed grade distribution, and reported the results of a class-room visitation, though this final element was dropped because of schedule complexity (*UT Biennial Report*, 1946).

Administrators reminded teachers to hold classes "for the full class period" and warned that, though written instructions might help freshman, "few people read instructions and fewer still follow them" (*UT Biennial Report*, 1936, p. 36). Weekly staff meetings further served to create cohesion, but Stewart (1993) asserts there "was no real effort to impose how we taught, only the way papers were treated and conferences were expected."

Influence of world events. Just as administrative decisions affected individuals and departments, global events also impacted

the campus. The sobering poverty of the Depression certainly created financial constraints for both UT faculty and the English department as a whole. World War II likewise left its mark on individuals and the department.

Kenneth Knickerbocker's diary, written in Rhode Island in 1941, gives a chilling account of the impact of world events on the teachers at the time; on March 22, he writes, "worked on estimates of what we should be saving. . . Such planning seems wasteful in the face of this world's downhill plunge to destruction." On Sept. 20, he notes, "One hardly dares record the serious news of the fall of Kiev." September also brought deadly news closer to home; a polio scare had closed the schools in the area. On September 7, Knickerbocker writes of his son, "Robert [was] grumpy and tired at noon--one of [the] symptoms of polio is change in disposition." That night Robert would cry out, doubled over with arm and leg pains: "Like the shadow in a crude murder mystery, the fright of polio myelitis hangs over every complaint," yet the child apparently only suffered from muscle cramps.

Another somber, highlighted entry, as one might expect, was December 7: "This day, as all the world will forever know, is properly circled in red, for out of the skies over Honolulu and the Hawaiian group rained bombs." Knickerbocker sent a telegram to his Senator asking for all-out war. The next day, he writes,

Our first full day of war has passed. The campus is of course buzzing. . . . two of my tennis players, came in--wanted to know

how one should feel under the circumstances--how did I feel when the first World War was declared?

Jane Hoffmann (1993) recalls the effect which the events of December 7, 1941, had on UT students:

It was right at exam week, so we were getting ready for exams, and everybody can tell you where they were and what they were doing. . . . It was Sunday afternoon, and I was in my room working on a term paper for child development. I had the radio on, and our hall was just as quiet as it could be and all the doors were open and all 13 of us were in the hall, and you've got to remember that the boys started leaving that day.

Hoffmann remembers that even her most hard-hearted teacher (not in English) was deeply moved, and a nationalistic spirit prevailed: "Now we did, everyone did patriotic work. I did a lot of knitting and we took all of our first aid courses."

The war effort affected all, as Hoffmann remembers, "gas was rationed, shoes were rationed, certain foods were rationed. And you just operated with or without." McDonald (1993), too, recalls the sacrifices made by everyone, including going without shoes or having to borrow sugar for a wedding cake. The emotional sacrifices were the most difficult, though, according to the two women. Hoffmann remembers, "Now, emotionally we were--disturbed. I'll word it that way, and after I left UT was when my friends were all killed. But we knew the war was there." McDonald becomes teary-eyed as she explains, "I know it affected all of us because really a lot of my friends were killed in the war." Hoffmann, too, remembers, "An awful

lot of them didn't come back." And as for her initial reaction at the bombing of Pearl Harbor, she says,

Well, you were just numb. And then it was, 'Who's where?' and who was it that you knew that might be on certain boats that might be at Pearl Harbor, because see, now when I finished high school, it was '39, so everybody was saying, "Who's on what boat?" and then, "Who do you think will be sent out now?"

Students were not the only people with thought-provoking questions; Knickerbocker's diary reveals the issues with which he was grappling: "What should I do? What should I teach? How shall life go on? What is ridiculous now? What is essential?" For Knickerbocker, the war became a topic of classroom discussion on several occasions; on December 9, he writes, "Could not refuse plea of students for brief discussion of the war in my first class." On December 19, he notes, "Last round of classes ended in a patriotic burst from me set off by the remark of one of my best male freshmen to the effect that he believed in maintaining an objective attitude toward our enemies!"

Other professors do not recall making a habit of discussing the world's affairs in composition classes. For instance, Curry (1993) says, "No, we didn't bring in world events. It was there. They all knew it all too well. Concerning the Depression, everyone was in the same boat and no one was affluent." Nor does Stewart (1993) recollect discussing the war initially:

Very little in the classroom. We were all very aware of it. Many of them [the students] expected that in a year or two, they would be involved. But we just didn't feel that the Freshman English class was the place to know about the world. Now, after the war, that changed greatly. You couldn't avoid it with the Veterans' Bill starting with the 1946 sessions. They wanted to talk about their experiences in every class.

McDonald doesn't remember discussions of the war in her English classes either: "It probably was brought up more in possibly history classes or sociology classes and things like that."

The war nonetheless impacted the campus. As the men, and their newlywed wives, marched off to coastal US bases and the soldiers then deployed around the world, enrollment at UT plummeted: "our enrolment[sic] was cut in half, with only coeds and a comparatively small number of older or physically disqualified men remaining on campus" (Curry, 1989, p. 54).

The English Department, however, was spared some of the problems of declining enrollment created by the war and felt in other departments because composition was a required course for all students. Still, other English courses suffered as much as fifty percent decreases in enrollment between 1938 and 1944 (Curry, 1989, p. 54). Curry further recalls, "The sharp decline in student enrollments at the University as the war continued caused the administration great concern, but the arrival of 1,200 Air Force trainees in March, 1943, helped alleviate the stringent situation" (p. 55). The English

department taught the Air Force trainees on campus an intense version of composition called Air Crew English.

Not all of those trainees, Hoffmann (1993) remembers, were new to UT: "You'd be surprised that they were the boys who had already been there." Military requirements, however, would not allow the soldiers to have contact with the UT students, some of whom they already knew:

We couldn't talk to them; they were under quarantine about as long as they were there. It was hard to realize, but they'd be marching up the street, but we couldn't talk to them. . . . They marched on 16th and part of the time on Cumberland. Most of the time they'd come up on Temple, then on 16th, 'cause they'd eat in the cafeteria below us. Every time we'd see 'em in the court there, they'd form a single line and come in.

Even the Air Crew English courses were highly regimented, according to Thaler:

Washington--i. e., the Army command--set up the course and required strict adherence to its directions. In a twelve-weeks course and in sections numbering fifty men (twice as many as our peace-time norm) we were to cover the essentials of a year of Freshman English; i. e., Freshman English in uniform. All comers, all students (or non-students!) of all ages and sorts--we had untutored country boys of eighteen and mature college graduates including engineers, teachers, and other young professional men--were required to take the army-prescribed



work in "writing, reading, listening, and speaking," with daily sessions five times each week. (pp. 243-244)

The 1943 *Annual Report of the Liberal Arts College* reports the course's purpose:

Not primarily to impart information; it is rather to develop certain skills. Although the course does move definitely forward from the principles of "sentence sense" through punctuation and on to emphasis and variety in the sentence, it must repeat exercises [every two weeks] of the same general nature [as taught two weeks earlier]. (p. 51)

Every two weeks, the soldiers were required to study the material and complete exercises that reflect the progression noted above from sentence sense to variety of sentences. They were also required to write one 200-400 word theme in one full class hour every two weeks. The instructors were required to complete "Careful marking of errors on each theme, followed by revision in red on [the] part of the student" (p. 51).

Thaler writes, "It was not difficult--after reading a first set of student papers on 'The Story of My Life'--to spot first-rate or obviously weak men" (p. 244). The weak writers received "supplementary drills" on an individual basis, with special emphasis placed on certain errors: "frag, cs, agr, ref, and ,/." (*UT Annual Report*, 1946, p. 51). Typical class work is described in the 1946 *Report*:

(1) Explanation, with aid of the board, of principles causing general difficulty; (2) discussion and correction of drills assigned to the whole class. (Such drills--usually prepared by

students before class--should be selected according to the needs of the particular class. Each section should study Drill 1--to insure familiarity with the use of the dictionary; Drills 2, 3--to review "sentence sense" before taking up punctuation; Drills 10, 12, 14, 16--to develop skill in the use of the comma; Drills 23, 24--vocabulary; and Drill 30--emphasis and variety in sentences. Other drills will be used as needed.) (p. 51)

Curry (1989) recalls the course as being incorporated quite smoothly: "Despite many frustrations occasioned by sudden changes in schedules, the program on the whole went well" (p. 55). Thaler, in fact, found the work "surprisingly rewarding" (1974, p. 245).

The course impacted first-year composition courses in several ways. The 1942-1943 *Annual Report* from the English department reveals that the Air Crew English course encouraged questions about the proper content of composition courses as faculty members debated the inclusion of reading comprehension and analysis and especially of speech in composition instruction: "Does the knowledge by the student that a theme he is to write must stand the test of oral presentation, encourage a more logical organization, more accurate and emphatic phrasing, and a more thorough acquaintance with his material?" (p. 53). Also, the 1942-1943 *Report* suggests that the government's standards of correctness in the course did not reflect the UT English department's:

Do the results of training to meet military standards of correctness, clarity, and economy recommend more attention to these standards in freshman English writing assignments? For

instance, should student themes be held more strictly to central ideas which can be adequately supported in the space and time available, and to more logical thought and phrasing? (p. 53)

These questions prompted minimal change, it seems; the 1946 *Annual Report* notes that Freshman English "was continued as before, except that more emphasis was given to reading and speech" (p. viii). Curry recalls, "As a result of the program the Department considered --and experimented briefly--with the idea of incorporating into the regular Freshman English course a little training in oral presentation of material" (pp. 55-56).

The military course also impacted the entire English program in several ways, and the War itself created shortages of necessary equipment. Sophomore literature began to incorporate references to "the present world crisis and to basic and permanent values" (*UT Annual Report*, 1943, p. 17). The staff conducted experimental examinations in cooperation with the US Army Institute in developing proficiency tests for service men (*UT Annual Report*, 1943, p. 17). Several faculty served on "Wartime Adjustments" committees in addition to their other work. The English program was already suffering from a loss of instructors to military service: Mangam, Baird, Stewart, and Miles were sent "On Leave of Absence, in National Service" in 1942 (*UT Annual Report*, 1943, p. 5). Most of them did not return until the 1945-1946 school year (*UT Annual Report*, 1946, p. viii). That year, the English program began the fall with 14 teachers and ended in June with 33 as the increase in students from 1434 to 2551 created "a serious problem in finding

sufficient staff, and of space for offices and classrooms in Ayres Hall" (*UT Annual Report*, 1946, p. viii).

### Summary

The English department at The University of Tennessee offers a much longer history than that of the English departments at the other two schools in this study. That history, along with the department's position within a large research institution, seems to have impacted the department in two ways. First, the department had had more time by the 1930s and 1940s to become more hierarchical than the English departments at Bethel and Western. Second, the department seems to have had over the years an awareness of the importance of preserving its history, with the result being more documentation of the then current state of affairs and more contributions of pertinent papers by individual professors to University Archives.

The resultant portrait of composition instruction is a much clearer one than exists with the other two schools. The first-year writing courses--especially ENG 111--simultaneously offered professors rigidity and flexibility in teaching options, so that certain requirements were necessarily prescriptive, though much of the course's content depended entirely on the individual professor. For example, the English Department strictly regimented the number of papers and how the papers were corrected, but beyond that, professors theoretically had freedom to conduct the class as they wished, including topics of discussion and assignments. Realistically,

though, departmental administrators took measures to ensure that comparable instruction was being offered in the multiple sections of composition. Furthermore, through weekly meetings and a variety of evaluation measures, departmental administration kept tabs on individual instructors.

Such measures do not seem to have engendered resentment. In fact, some professors actively quizzed their colleagues about effective methods and assignments. Stewart (1993) remembers discussing methods with Davenport, with whom he shared an office, and Stewart further recalls using some of Knickerbocker's ideas: "they produced some very fine, challenging pieces." The ultimate effect probably resulted in uniformity of content within the course, and evidence suggests the composition courses in general were likewise consistent with the official course description. Overall, the department maintained a staff serious about their work: "The Department was staffed by able persons, still in their prime, and the work of instruction was faithfully, conscientiously, and competently performed under conditions that can only be described as discouraging" (Curry, 1989, p. 53).

Individuals made conscious efforts to professionalize the composition program at UT. A Director of Composition was hired, and John Hodges proved that producing handbooks for the composition course could be professionally and financially rewarding. Both administrative and personal finances were tight; despite the impoverished conditions, faculty were expected to conduct and to publish research. Only a minimal amount dealt with composition, but

the fact that any at all did suggests that research and writing about composition instruction were starting to be considered as vehicles for retention, tenure, and promotion, or at least as areas that had piqued faculty member's personal interests.

If publication about composition can be seen as a progressive trend, even more so were the other developments within the UT English program in the 1930s and 1940s. Rather than complain about the poor quality of student writing, the department took several steps to improve student writing skills and thus lighten the faculty burden of addressing basic skills. First, the department established both special courses for ESL and developmental writers and a writing center for all students. Second, the department began working to ensure improved high school English courses in the hopes that students with stronger writing skills might enter composition courses. The pedagogy employed by the faculty seemed to be a combination of writing and of study about stylistic and mechanical concerns (including abundant sentence exercises).

Faculty began to question the method of instruction in composition as a result of W.W.II, however. As faculty incorporated the components required by the government in Air Crew English, they began to consider adopting a more holistic approach to the composition course, including speaking, a consideration of rhetorical situations in writing, and reading analysis. The department's reaction, again, was a rigid flexibility; some change resulted, but not as much as the questions they had been posing suggested they might have.

The resultant composition course created a legacy which remains to this day with its (voluntary) folder correction system but abundant writing opportunity. By its very existence, the system may have emphasized correctness at the expense of essay content, depending on individual instructor preference. While many current instructors at UT may find such a system at odds with contemporary composition theory, the emphasis created by the folder system within composition instruction at UT in the 1930s and 1940s seems consistent with the approaches at other Upper South schools of the period, as will be discussed in Chapter Six.

## Chapter Six Analysis of the Case Studies

Like all other forms of inquiry, historical inquiry is essentially a search for patterns that can be deemed meaningful. (North, 1987, p. 75)

Making meaning from research data--interpreting it and writing and distributing the results to others--is one of the most important aspects of historical inquiry according to North (1987). This chapter presents my analysis of the data from the combined case studies of composition instruction at Bethel Woman's College, Western Kentucky State Teachers College, and The University of Tennessee. The chapter attempts to answer the three research questions asked at the onset of the study:

- 1) What were the classroom experiences of students/teachers in the 1930s and 1940s in American college composition in the Upper South section of the United States?
- 2) What can be learned about those classroom experiences using materials other than the traditionally represented textbook?
- 3) What evidence is there for or against the period as one of stagnation in the composition field?

The chapter then examines other implications of the classroom experiences at these three schools.

### Upper South Composition Classroom Experiences in the 1930s and 1940s

The existence of many poor school districts and poorly prepared, poorly paid teachers served to hamper the educational



system in general in the states of Kentucky and Tennessee in the Depression and World War II years. Many of the entering college students of the day had been taught by teachers with little more than a high school education (if they had they that much). Professors dealt with their students' inadequacies by providing grammar refreshers to students not prepared to write, especially to write academically. This helps explain the heavy emphasis on usage in course syllabi, lesson plans, and handouts, and it further suggests why graduates from these schools remain conscious of others' misuse of the language, especially spelling.

This section analyzes the content of the first-year composition course at the three schools. I first discuss the methods and products of the composition instruction itself. Then, I present the institutional forces that affected composition instruction at all three schools. Finally, I reveal the social and economic factors that impacted the course and its participants.

### Composition Instruction Themes

This finding corroborates what many existing histories assert about the abundance of grammar instruction and usage exercises within first-year composition courses in the early part of this century, but students also wrote a relatively large amount of writing. We know that instructors at all three schools required and evaluated many essays; statements made by students and professors alike, as well as surviving course plans, all support the notion that students did more than correct improper sentences; they wrote many

sentences, paragraphs, and essays of their own at all three schools. One irony of the study, however, is that none of this writing remains, which may help explain why historians do not discuss the existence of varied, abundant writing at other schools in the period.

At the three schools, research dominated the final term of the first-year composition sequence, with library skills a significant aspect of the course. Conferencing seemed to be a popular device, as it is in many schools today, for effecting one-on-one communication about student writing. Teachers and students often discussed essays from students and textbooks in class. Teachers provided individual attention to specific writing problems in a variety of ways, including entrance exams and resultant class sectioning, conferencing, drills, and a writing lab at UT.

Handbooks did not seem to dictate the direction of the course, though faculty used them often for exercises. The evidence in this study corroborates one of my original assumptions; most teachers do not follow a textbook verbatim, which implies the potential uselessness of a textbook as a guide to course content. John Hodges at UT clearly skipped around from section to section in making textbook reading and exercise assignments. Instructors emphasized mechanical correctness, but they were not robot-like in their lives or in their teaching.

### Institutional Themes

Full-time faculty at all three schools taught heavy course loads, with four to five classes per term. High student ratios compounded

the heavy teaching loads, with anywhere from 22 to 45 students per class. Administrators allowed courses to exceed limits; like some administrators of today, they may have misunderstood the potential impact on teachers by allowing one or two extra students in a writing course. While the same addition of a few students to a lecture course may have gone unnoticed by a faculty member, the added demands on a writing teacher of evaluating several extra papers per class added up over time.

Despite being overloaded, many of the faculty members earned student respect for not only being intelligent but for being concerned as well. The faculty dedicated themselves to their work, evidenced in part by their conscientious struggles to keep their students' papers graded. No one mentioned the time involved in class preparation, although the outlines provided by Hodges' note cards at UT do suggest that he prepared his class presentations in advance.

Part-time faculty were numerous at the schools, subject to the fluctuations of enrollment and haphazard hiring practices. All college and university faculty in this study suffered from low salaries, and not until later would they experience the benefits of retirement and tenure systems. Bethel's administrators were too numerous in the period under study to affect stability. Faculty at Western had no tenure; hiring practices there seemed capricious, helping to place H. H. Cherry firmly at the top as the administrator in this study who most directly affected his faculty's production and morale. Inbreeding seems to have been a problem at Western, since Western graduates frequently taught courses there, reflecting the corollary

problem on the county school level where teachers taught "back home," often resulting in poorly prepared students entering composition courses.

UT's administrators may have learned some lessons from their wholesale firing of faculty in the 1920s, but faculty there reportedly remained concerned about the security of their positions. In general, though, the tenured faculty ranks at all three schools reflected a great deal of stability, disturbed only by the decreasing enrollments as a result of the war, the schools' actual involvement in the war effort, and later the frantic hiring of adjunct faculty caused by military class and GI Bill influxes.

Administrators stressed that standards be maintained at all three schools, with Bethel hoping to be one of the finest colleges in Kentucky, and UT annually publishing grades to reduce grade inflation. Since the English departments at these schools began offering a variety of courses tangentially related to composition and literature, faculty experienced some freedom in developing new courses; nothing in my research, aside from grade inflation warnings, indicates that administrators ever curtailed the academic freedom of faculty members, though the decidedly moral tone at Bethel and Western may have implicitly limited classroom assignments and topics. Faculty at UT assigned a departmentally dictated number of papers, but they otherwise enjoyed academic freedom.

Faculty generally needed a Ph.D. to get tenure, though seniority sometimes made tenure possible. Catalogs boasted of accreditation; fears of losing that accreditation are not expressed in any of the

formal, public documents. Administrative pressures nevertheless encouraged faculty not only to complete their terminal degrees, but also to pursue scholarly interests and to publish the findings of their studies, especially at UT. Finding time to pursue scholarly and outside interests must have been difficult, for many of the faculty juggled heavy workloads and graded student papers while their children played nearby; they were not too different from many faculty of today. Still, instructors at all three schools spoke to outside groups and attended conferences in addition to publishing articles and books. They also wore many hats, managing a wide variety of programs and courses within their departments.

### Economic Themes

Both World War II and the Depression affected first-year composition and English programs at the three schools examined, though more directly at the larger schools. Poverty abounded, and with poverty came poor physical conditions and even poorer educational programs. Except perhaps at Bethel, instructors grappled daily with reaching poor, poorly prepared students in the classroom. Bethel's role as a private college primarily seems to have impacted only the types of students who attended, not the pedagogies used to teach those students. Many of the concerns about and approaches to reaching students seemed consistent at all three schools, and despite the financial changes wrought by the Depression, the pedagogies utilized by the instructors generally remained on course.

The War, however, created more change in teaching approaches. The onset and escalation of World War II influenced all three schools; military students arrived on all three campuses at some point to disrupt the normal sanctity of academia. English teachers at Western and UT found themselves teaching composition to military personnel according to government regulations which emphasized oral communication and continual repetition of basic skills. Whether or not such emphases should become standard components of the composition course became an issue of concern at UT; the resultant debate reveals the self-reflective nature which that department was beginning to adopt, though the actual changes which resulted from the debate were minimal. On the two campuses, however, the military's presence financially rescued the English departments, so the composition programs did not show the dramatic declines in student enrollment which other departments experienced.

### Social and Feminist Themes

By and large, the students at Western and UT were from the surrounding areas (at Bethel, however, less than 1/4 were local students). The students at Bethel Woman's College were taught to be ladies and received a broad education as they traveled about Kentucky and Tennessee on excursions. Western's daily chapel routine with H. H. Cherry at the helm reminded the students there of the importance of nature, exercise, and good taste, and it suggests that many campus activities, including coursework, occurred in an environment which encouraged moral conduct. UT students usually

went to church on Sundays by one account, and dances, campus activities, and outside jobs threatened to overload students.

Faculty, too, adopted clearly defined roles both laden with moral overtones and subject to administrative approval. Few female faculty members acquired tenure or were offered positions at the assistant professor position or higher. Women nevertheless played a major role in accomplishing the work of composition instruction, though most often as adjunct faculty denied the relative security and meager benefits of full time employment. In only one instance, at Bethel Woman's College, did a woman serve as administrator, and then her title carried less connotative weight than the titles held by the men before and after her. Women faculty members actively participated on the departmental, community, and regional organization levels, though such participation did not guarantee professional security. A resultant frustration is apparent in the documents that survive and in the interview I conducted with one female instructor.

The female students interviewed in this study reveal respect and admiration for instructors of both sexes. Examining how and if issues of gender-related power struggles surfaced in the classroom would be an excellent replication of this study. Had it occurred, however, students may not have recalled it simply because composition courses played only a minor role in their lives. And, though faculty often felt overwhelmed by grading papers and perhaps frustrated by their ability for upward career movement, the composition course was only one small part of their lives as well.

Archival Remains and Participant Memories  
of Composition Classrooms

This study offers readers the opportunity to read a composition instruction history based on evidence other than just the textbooks used by the teachers and students. Participant interviews and public and private archival materials offer a heightened perspective of what the classroom experience must have been like for students and teachers alike in the 1930s and 1940s. As years go by, the need to preserve documents from schools which no longer exist and to discover the knowledge which former students have becomes increasingly immediate.

The people in this narrative create the interest; the former students I interviewed earnestly desired to recreate a classroom and institutional context that is at times amusing, often poignant, and at other times fuzzy since the study deals with "memories stored way back" (Norris, 1993). In most cases, the participants' recollections of the composition course itself remain less focused than the memories of the professors who taught them. Perhaps the course fades in the memories of students because it is one of the earliest taken in the college setting. However, the course as taught at these three schools seemed vital in bringing students' writing up to an academic writing level which would help ensure their collegiate success, so it seems ironic that the class has not typically been a memorable one.

Perhaps the composition courses, spread out over a year, gave students tools without a full appreciation for what those tools could do. At Bethel Woman's College, for which I have the smallest body of



evidence and the weakest personal affiliation, the independent thinking skills emphasized in the Bethel girls' creed suggest that, if any sense of true engagement with writing as a form of personal discovery could be found in this study, it might well have been at Bethel. The evidence from the other two schools suggests that teachers felt writing could primarily help students make external discoveries.

The recollections of the former students seem less clear than those of the faculty members, and though the professors' versions of the instruction they offered seem to reveal quite current trends, such memories may have been embellished by awareness later in their careers of the advances in composition theory. Still, the instructors' accounts reveal they had more good sense than many composition histories are wont to give them; they talked among themselves about strategies and their shared miseries just as we do today. They exhibited, even at this early stage, signs of the professionalization of the composition program that would result in the development of rhetoric and composition as a discipline.

In general, only a limited amount of primary archival materials remain from the 1930s and 1940s about these three schools; the public collections that exist have relatively complete official documents but fewer student, faculty, and unofficial materials. The official perspectives, we must remember, might represent what the institution wanted future generations to remember about a course or department, so those perspectives might be extremely biased. Efforts of a local historian preserve most of what we know about Bethel; just

in the last two decades has Western's English department begun actively recording voices and documents from the past. Only at UT did administrators and faculty seem to take conscious steps toward preserving their work for future generations. The random collection of documents which remain necessitates the individual participants' recollections; those memories serve as an important element in the data triangulation because they offer a fuller picture of what actually occurred.

As I began this study, I assumed that a relatively full recreation of past classroom instruction could develop from the remaining archival documents and participant memories. Though the picture is still not as clear as I would have liked, I think the image we do get is valuable, and the study itself points to the potential of and desirability of using historical primary data for qualitative composition studies. Additional materials exist for other periods, such as the 1950s and 1960s, especially in the John Hodges' collection of materials at UT, though the surface abundance of those materials might also prove to be inadequate for a complete picture of that period.

Finding and examining essays, lesson plans, syllabi, etc., and conducting oral history interviews with participants from the past are time-consuming and unpredictable; still, both public and private collections offer possible sources for material. Plus, finding even one document can help disprove or verify existing theories. The possibility of rescuing additional materials such as student papers from America's colleges is improving because an archival center for

the history of college-level writing instruction has been established through the efforts of Robert J. Connors and others at the University of New Hampshire (Simmons, 1991, p. 517).

Modern Approaches to Teaching Composition  
at the Three Case Study Schools

In *Tradition and Reform in the Teaching of English: A History*, Arthur Applebee (1974) points to the early 1950s as the target date for the end of the progressive education movement and its emphasis on the student; he says the 1950s marked the beginning of "A New Curriculum Model," whose programs both "placed their emphasis on long-term goals and the nature of the subject" and strongly emphasized curriculum reform (pp. 191-192). The findings from the three case studies involved in this study suggest that such a movement started much earlier in the English programs in the Upper South, and the larger the institution, the more pronounced such a development became.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Bethel Woman's College still exhibited traces of progressive education, with the enculturation of the student being a significant aspect of the extracurricular program. I could not ascertain what, if any, steps the English program there was taking in terms of curricular reform, though the course descriptions as they stand might accurately describe many composition courses today; if curricular revision had occurred, it might have been retroactive and not a step forward.

The other two schools, Western and UT, exhibit more of the trends Applebee notes; this may have been a result of the schools'

larger size and more hierarchical structure. The course description for composition courses at Western suggests a trend toward more hands-on writing between 1930 and 1935, which would indicate an emphasis toward student concerns rather than academy concerns. However, student numbers were simultaneously increasing, so that teachers actually had less time to spend with individual student writing or to conference with students as the English program struggled under the university's cumbersome growth. The entire program exhibited tremendous growth in curriculum offerings as professors brought their interests--such as theater and speech--into the classroom.

At UT, the English program clearly reveals a developing interest in the discipline of composition and in accomplishing departmental goals, especially in terms of evaluation. Revision of the composition course description occurred, but generally by editing it to be shorter. Overall, curricular reform cannot, however, truly be said to have been accomplished. Despite the probing questions which the Air Force Crew course compelled the faculty to ask, including whether or not to add communication elements to the course; despite the frequent interactions among faculty about appropriate ways to handle the course; despite efforts to standardize the course (which in itself might be seen as a type of curricular reform); despite the self-reflective nature of the professors teaching the course as evidenced in their accounts of teaching at the time; despite all this, the course remained very much the same at the end of the period under study. The folder system remains today on a volunteer basis for financial

and practical reasons; its early application in some instances at UT might be seen as a forerunner of portfolios.

We should not, however, chastise the professors at UT for not delving deeper into pedagogies that would accelerate the writing process; the theories available to modern compositionists simply did not exist then. However, it seems interesting to note that the smaller school, Bethel, appears to have approximated modern theories of composition the most closely. The composition course at Bethel officially included class criticism of and student conferences about student writing.

I found evidence at all three schools that faculty encouraged students to produce writing that exhibited creative expression or revealed research on original topics of interest to them. Faculty, too, displayed creativity in classroom activities. Teachers encouraged students to speak often in class and to write themes to be presented orally--which suggests that teachers may have expected students to consider rhetorical concepts of audience and appropriateness.

A 1935 NCTE Report, *An Experience Curriculum in English*, "came out against the mechanic and formulaic methods of current-traditional approaches, most controversially in its recommendation that formal grammar training be abandoned in favor of teaching grammar as a part of composing" (Berlin, 1990, p. 201). Faculty involvement with NCTE at UT and Western suggest that they were probably aware of this report; the data that remains and the evidence as revealed by the participants suggest that many

instructors at these three schools were doing what this progressive recommendation suggests.

For example, some teachers used grammar review as it applied to a student's writing. Those teachers who were still doing grammar exercises asked students to explain the reasoning behind the drills in a more holistic approach than we might readily ascribe to this period of composition instruction. Even at this early stage and at these three Upper South schools, faculty were grappling with the issues surrounding the process versus product debate as they sought to help improve student writing.

Smaller student numbers at Bethel probably allowed for more intensive student involvement with both texts and teachers. The two larger schools amply reveal the struggles which larger student loads involved; just filling teaching slots became problematic for administrators, hence the use of graduate assistants at Western and UT to help meet the demands. Teachers at both Western and UT reveal they did hold conferences (and sometimes quite lengthy ones), so that progressive education methods were not entirely discarded.

Administrators at UT seemed quite interested in ensuring that new faculty reached par with existing faculty, and toward that end, they devised a fairly comprehensive approach to ensuring standard performances. At least some of the teachers and administrators recognized that they needed to know more about being better teachers, especially since they felt "there is no reliable known method of measuring efficient teaching" (*UT Biennial Report*, 1936, p. 27). That report suggests that UT administrators really did not know

exactly what occurred in the classroom, and they assumed "that all kinds of teaching are being done in our class-rooms: good, mediocre, bad" (*UT Biennial Report*, 1936, p. 27). With the attempts being made to mentor new instructors, and with the abundant practice instructors got at all three schools in evaluating writing, one can only assume that many of the instructors got better.

In the absence of widely distributed, articulate, adequately developed theories supporting the pedagogies being used, teachers simply used what had been tried before and what may have worked before (at least, probably, for them, though their own writing abilities may have been amenable to any type of instruction). Thus, the presence of exercise handouts at Western and of handbook reading assignments with required sentence exercises at UT should come as no surprise. Also, teachers often assigned work that was quickly and easily graded; still, writing was done, and it was done frequently.

Teachers graded and graded and graded, but, as teachers know who have evaluated papers both as holistic readers and as editors, the very approach the professors at Western and UT took of marking individual errors is by far the more time-consuming approach. I cannot estimate the relative weight of content-based comments which instructors gave, though the UT professors assert they looked for global problems primarily. In the absence of student papers from the 1930s and 1940s at any of the three schools, I could not triangulate these assertions.

### Additional Considerations about the Case Studies

Robert J. Connors (1988) reminds us of the potential impact composition courses have:

Since, more than most other college-level courses, the teaching of writing is tied in with larger cultural goals, dreams, and fears, our history, to be useful, must show us how this connection has developed and worked in the past. (p. 7)

While the composition course may have only been one part of their lives, the unique demands on student cognitive skills required by writing necessarily impacted students, even when that writing may have been evaluated primarily for its grammatical correctness. The linkage between student experience, knowledge, and understanding of the audience's role (even when the audience was only the instructor) necessitated that students look within and beyond the classroom for writing their papers. Faculty, too, felt the need to tie in larger cultural goals with the course; pressured by administrators to maintain increasingly large workloads yet keep stringent standards, the teachers moved students from basic competence in writing to preparation for both the academic and work worlds.

What, then, did teachers and students want to gain from the composition course? Since faculty members spent so much time reading their students' work, seeing improvement in student writing was a priority. Though teachers often measured that improvement by the removal of grammatical mistakes, I found evidence that faculty also wanted their students to present coherent, organized discussions. Students wanted meaningful class periods; they



displayed an interest in working hard to ensure faculty satisfaction with their work. The classroom was centralized, and faculty often spent the class periods lecturing. Still, faculty encouraged students to ask questions, and occasionally the classroom became a place where a sense of humor was appreciated.

Generally, however, these case studies can be read as depressing in that the time period offered little hope--with world events impacting local individuals and the factories of even smaller cities such as Knoxville polluting the air--and many groups suffered oppression. Female students of the time were, in general, being encouraged to pursue academic training that prepared them for careers. Some writing assignments, such as letter-writing at Western, serve as examples of that trend. Still, attitudes such as Julia Neal's and Sara Middleton's suggest that female students felt limited by their circumstances. In many cases, due to either administrative mandates, peer pressure, financial limitations, or personal choice, female students seemed to have dressed quite similarly, which may have resulted in loss of individuality and even in the consideration by some that the students lacked creativity.

The financial difficulties of the time required that it be a time of practicality and frugality. This fact of existence for many is revealed at all three schools of this study, both on an individual basis, with poorly paid faculty and poorer students, and on an institutional level, with libraries offering few new selections and personnel offices occasionally withholding faculty pay.

The time period is frequently romanticized as one offering simple pleasures. However, while the picturesque locales of the two smaller schools offered opportunities for scenic and educational outings, both faculty and students may have felt restricted by the lack of cultural opportunities often found in larger cities (though for some students from rural areas, even Bowling Green, Kentucky offered more than they were accustomed to). Faculty at UT, however, found Knoxville, Tennessee to lack sufficient entertainment and research opportunities and to offer a dismal, dirty living environment.

Sometimes, the climate of mistrust, especially at UT but also at Western, made faculty uncomfortable. Administrative mandates influenced classroom decisions; faculty faced the contradiction of encouraging students to improve their writing skills while knowing that only a limited number would ultimately receive an A, regardless of the improvement shown class-wide. Despite the larger size of UT, faculty there attempted to create interest in the course among students by offering different writing topics, among other things. They recognized students' vulnerability as a result of the traumatic world events; they understood that long lectures about grammar would bore their students; they realized their students came from a variety of backgrounds and of widely varied high school instruction; they knew students sometimes have tendencies to "forget" their homework. In general, they displayed empathy for and understanding of their students.

### Summary

Overall, the English composition courses at the three schools in this study impressed me as being much more contemporary than many stereotypes of the period suggest possible. Those elements that seem regressive by today's standards--such as frequent usage exercises--seem much more productive when one considers the lack of basic writing skills by many students of that day. Students interviewed for this project do not recall the course as an exercise in grammar recitation or rules, though all of them have instilled within them a deep respect for adhering to the rules of standard English--a distaste for spelling errors, for instance, which suggests that somewhere students were taught that good writing equals proper spelling (and indeed, spelling was a required activity in Neal's composition course at Western).

Students also revealed respect not only for the sanctity of proper language usage but also for school administrators--a respect which reached near-reverence for President Cherry at Western--and for their instructors. While awe might be too strong a term to describe student attitudes, teacher authority in the classroom evidently impacted students. This was not something, however, that engendered anger or rebellion, since many informants recall their professors fondly. Still, an overriding concern with pleasing the teacher most assuredly ruled the writing which students submitted.

Other students do not seem to have been a part of the actual audience for class papers because peer reviews apparently were not in place at any of the three schools, with perhaps the exception of

Bethel and the "class criticism" component of the course. (This, however, may have been the teacher's selection and discussion of the relative merits of one students' paper to the class.) Furthermore, none of the assignment topics recommend that students project an audience in their writings beyond their teacher.

The classroom itself was affected by external factors which included not only the Depression and World War II, but also departmental and administrative mandates, none of which seem to have been consistent at all three schools. One apparent trend at both Bethel and Western, however, is the moral imperative administrators dictated in the form of published or oral creeds and philosophies, chapel exercises, and emphases on nature (though the very existence of a creed may suggest that Bethel did not, after all, encourage critical thinking unless it coincided with administrative views).

What such external pressures meant at all three schools is in some cases mere speculation, but we can probably safely assume that instruction at Bethel and Western did not encourage or assign writing topics that were at odds with administrative ideologies. UT instructors, by their admission, stuck to the required amount of writing assignments and conferences. They also evaluated papers according to the departmentally mandated folder system and according to the recommendation or pressure of their peers.

With such a variety of external forces affecting composition at all three schools--in addition to the complexities added to the course from individual personalities and approaches--it becomes clear that standard textbook-based histories could in no way present a

comprehensive view of the composition courses at those schools in this time period. Furthermore, textbook histories would be difficult to do in the first place because titles of the actual textbooks used in the 1930s and 1940s at Bethel and Western are not available. More information exists about UT's textbook selection, and that may well be because the author of one of this country's most popular composition handbooks was Director of Composition and Chair of the entire department there.

This study, then, bridges gaps in our history as a field--gaps we could not overcome through traditional research methods used in composition instruction histories. Chapter Seven describes how, and how well, this study bridges those gaps within the dominant historical narrative.

## Chapter Seven

### Significance of the Study

The uncontrollable world of ambiguity and uncertainty opens up, my colleagues imagine, as soon as the academic embraces the personal. (Sommers, 1994, p. 161)

This examination of three Upper South schools in the 1930s and 1940s gives the field of rhetoric and composition a richer insight into the personalities and purposes, the components and contexts of composition instruction. It strives, in short, to merge the academic with the personal, as Sommers indicates inquiry should. A qualitative methodology, while certainly not unique in composition instruction research, is herein uniquely applied to history, and the resultant product benefits from the simultaneously broadened data base and focused vignettes. Most historians in the field tell us only what was studied (and they reach their conclusions by examining the textbook used). If they do examine who taught (after generally ignoring who studied), they only tell us about famous scholars at major institutions. Like Weidner's 1991 study, this project deliberately ignores the famous institutions and the famous historical figures of composition instruction.

The result is a hands-on study that situates not only what was studied--as evidenced by lesson plans, handouts, diaries, and personal recollections--but also who taught and who studied at schools typically ignored by historians. Is such an approach valuable, since these schools have not been the trendsetters in composition instruction? Yes, because they show that trend-setting pedagogies and techniques were not relegated to the more elite schools in this

country. (See also Weidner [1991] and Simmons [1995].) Faculty members enjoyed tremendous influence over public education in their local areas, especially at UT through the efforts of John Hodges, who attempted statewide reform in English studies and can be considered as effecting some national change with his handbook.

I have found no other studies which examine schools in the Upper South; thus, what this study adds to the histories we already have is another perspective--a geographic one with abundant socioeconomic and cultural underpinnings as a result of the extremely impoverished conditions and poor educational systems in Kentucky and Tennessee in the 1930s and 1940s.

### Placement of the Study

Where, then, does this seemingly anomalous work fit in? How useful is it in light of the composition instruction histories which already exist? First, it serves as a companion piece to works such as Weidner's in broadening the data sources and locales studied. And, it seeks to understand the motivations of teachers "varied by gender, age, subject taught, instructional style, location of school--who succeed and fail, with success and failure variably defined," as recommended by Peshkin (1993, p. 25).

What about more highly visible histories? Does this study corroborate or contradict them? It corroborates several patterns evident through textbook-based research. For example, the trend away from progressive education and an emphasis on the student to a focus on professionalizing the discipline, as discussed in Chapter

Six, shows a beginning movement in the schools examined. Both Berlin (1987) and Applebee (1974) address the impact of progressive education on English programs, but the two historians contradict each other in their depiction of the movement's time frame. Berlin suggests that the period between 1920 and 1940 was its heyday, but both Applebee and the data in this study reveal that a move away from progressive education had already started at that time.

The findings in this study complicate further aspects of histories such as Berlin's. In many ways, the various surveys conducted between the late 1920s and 1940 and cited by Berlin (1987) describe aspects of instruction found at the three schools in this study; however, certain generalizations of Berlin's have little support in the data I uncovered. For example, Berlin discusses trends, such as developing objective scales for testing writing value and other quantification methods, which do not appear to have been occurring at these three schools; one exception is UT's *Annual Report* which indicated course and student loads by professor, as well as UT's freshman deficiency course which initially placed students according to a quantitative ranking.

This study both corroborates and contradicts Berlin's insistence that current-traditional rhetoric reigned supreme in this period; Berlin's definition of current-traditional rhetoric implies a concern with "superficial correctness" (p. 9) which is clearly evident in much of the evidence from these schools, but Berlin's term also suggests patterns of arrangements or "the modes of discourse" (p. 9).



Furthermore, Connors (1981) asserts that modal instruction was beginning to lose its grip in the 1930s and 1940s; the evidence in this study complicates this claim because it suggests that neither Western nor UT seemed to have assigned modal-based writing at all. Was it that these schools never used the modes, or were they already out of use by this time? The evidence does not reveal a clear answer.

Only minimal evidence at the three schools in this study exists to confirm Berlin's (1990) assertion that expressive writing was prioritized in composition instruction between the World Wars; some of the topics assigned at UT clearly required expressive writing, but just as many paper topics appeared to be impersonal and antithetical to expressionist rhetoric. Less information about writing assignments survives from the other schools, so adopting Berlin's firm stance is impossible based on this project alone. Furthermore, no evidence supports Berlin's assertion that socially based rhetorics were beginning to appear in collegiate writing between the World Wars, though the premise of much of this dissertation is that students and teachers brought with them who and what they were outside the classroom. No texts remain, however, to indicate that teachers asked students to accuse or defend the social environment, nor do any texts actually exhibit socially produced work, two ideas which encompass Berlin's definition of socially based rhetorics.

In those areas where Berlin's discussion is corroborated by the data from this study, such as the existence of conferencing, his approach utilizes histories of major institutions and prominent articles from the time, while this study serves to complement the

evidence using both personal recollections on a local level and preserved archival documents. Where other histories which examine more than the textbooks adopted for a course have been done, the findings coincide with mine that teachers then incorporated many of the methods used today in composition instruction. Furthermore, the teachers molded the textbooks and other instructional materials to suit their students' needs rather than blindly following the textbooks.

Sue Carter Simmons is one of several current researchers who are examining atypical documents to establish revisionist histories; her 1995 *CCC* article complicates the accepted history of Barrett Wendell's contributions to composition instruction at Harvard. Though at one of this country's most prestigious schools, Wendell's activities sound remarkably like those found within the Upper South schools of this study: "[He] worked hard to make writing meaningful for his students, despite institutional constraints that shaped what he could and could not do" (Simmons, 1995, p. 328). Wendell's reputation needed revising, according to Simmons, because he often utilized modern techniques in his writing pedagogy. The classrooms in my study have no official histories to revise although the very existence of modern pedagogies at these schools seems as justifiable a cause for studying them as for studying Wendell or other individuals at larger schools.

This work corroborates other studies conducted at some of this country's most prestigious schools, including Campbell's study of Vassar; Campbell suggests that larger schools such as Harvard realized the necessity of saving documents because of their potential

historic value while Vassar did not. This theme repeats itself on a micro level in my study, because the smaller schools kept fewer documents. Furthermore, Campbell's notion of first-year English as a battleground can be seen in the long-standing tradition of bickering between administrators and English faculty that existed at UT in the 1930s and 1940s.

This study also confirms both the reliability of and thinness of much of the existing historical knowledge about the field which Connors (1991) and Nelms (1992) admit, and it clearly supports Connors' 1991 revelation of what we can learn from history; he says we "stand on the shoulders of thousands of good-willed teachers and writers surprisingly like us, who faced in 1870 or 1930 problems amazingly similar to those we confront each time we enter the classroom" (p. 49).

#### Implications for Further Research

This study further reveals areas that either have never been addressed or need additional research. For example, this study provides a history of the academically disadvantaged student that we could not have had by looking at Ivy League schools. While studies of basic writers now comprise a sub-discipline of rhetoric and composition, the results of this study--particularly at Western and UT since Bethel attracted many out-of-state students--provide a historical look at groups of students ill-prepared for college, though there were, of course, exceptions.

This study also picks up a thread that needs further unraveling in composition histories. The roles assigned to women in composition instruction create a great deal of the drama in this study. Women carried much of the teaching burden, especially as the war effort progressed, but in most cases they were only adjunct faculty. Hopes of success on a tenure track seemed futile, even if opportunities to complete doctoral degrees existed. The roles for female undergraduates were beginning to change, though they still waited to be asked to dances.

In the geographic area surrounding Bethel Woman's College, some people expressed open hostility toward female education. Female students were allowed at Western and UT, but evidence exists which suggests that some males at those schools questioned the female students' motives. Further evidence suggests that, given the increasing demand for workers, many females were at college primarily to secure good jobs, and the majority of the student participants (all female) in this study acquired teaching positions with their degrees.

Another population blatantly discriminated against in the schools of this study were African-Americans, who simply found no place at any of the three schools, though federal and state reports were beginning to acknowledge both the injustice of the prejudice and the inadequacy of the educational facilities available to African-Americans. This points to the need for histories to recreate the composition classroom as it existed in past years at black institutions

of higher learning, as well as the need to examine the composition instruction history of other minority groups.

While prejudice may have created attitudes that separated students, the lack of money seems to play an ironic role in the ultimate success of institutions, even of pedagogies. Bethel attracted richer students, but it ultimately shut its doors as its mission became counter to the demands of the workforce at large. Western and UT received large numbers of poorer students despite the pressing financial times; state and federal funding doubtless helped these institutions survive. While the influx of students from a variety of socioeconomic levels may have called for more range in teaching methods, it also infused the larger institutions with a blend of student types.

This study does not attempt to explain the overall implications of economics on the classroom, nor does it aim for a Marxist perspective. However, only a few epistemological perspectives toward composition instruction history have been offered, such as Berlin's collections about the 19th and 20th centuries, so a variety of ideological/epistemological approaches at several schools at various time periods would strengthen the body of composition instruction histories.

Other potentially useful studies include attempts to examine the relationship at the classroom level between composition pedagogy and studies in associated intellectual disciplines. For instance, this study reveals that the faculty members at Western and UT saw their work in composition and literature as distinct (many,

indeed, preferred literature). They also were beginning to teach courses in other areas, though no evidence exists to indicate that they brought those interests or shared the methods used in those courses into the composition classroom. However, triangulated data indicate that faculty members were utilizing speech and communication methods and activities in the composition classroom. Whether or not the pedagogies from other disciplines were entering the composition course might be detectable via a literal or theoretical replication of this study (Yin, 1984).

### Summary

A textbook is not a course; a mid-sized teacher training school in Kentucky is not an Ivy League school in the Northeast; a pedagogy embraced by one school or one instructor is not always embraced by all. The learning experience as encountered by student and teacher alike encompasses too much to grant positivist statements much accuracy. Few studies or historical perspectives could ever wholly capture the variety of dimensions found in the teaching process because too many variables are present.

By letting the surviving participants and documents speak for themselves, we avoid the "too easy generalizations" of the past (Nelms, 1990, pp. 1-2). However, traditional composition histories--and the resultant stereotypes they form--are often laden with positivist overtones. N. Johnson (1988) argues against such a view of history: "All histories are partial accounts, are both biased and incomplete. The good histories admit this and then tell their stories.

The bad attempt to dominate the past, pretending at the same time to be mere recorders of the past" (p. 12). Such bad attempts strip too much authority from the participants of the past; the teachers in particular are often seen as wrongminded, even unintelligent, for making choices that their contexts limited them to. Overcoming such positivist tendencies, Johnson suggests, is "a baffling responsibility" (p. 18). I assert that a qualitative approach makes that responsibility easier to manage because it describes and analyzes past composition instruction in its complexities and for its inherent qualities, thus placing authority on the students, the teachers, the administrators, the schools (and not on the textbooks alone) for re-creating what was with *what they had*.

Furthermore, to return to Nancy Sommers' 1992 article, "Between the Drafts," we are reminded that we strip authority from a participant in a situation when we create either/or demands:

Either I accept authority or I question it. Either I have babies and be in service of the species or I write books and be in service of the academy. Either I be personal or I be academic. . . .Only when I suspend myself between either *and* or can I move away from conventional boundaries and begin to see shapes and shadows and contours--ambiguity, uncertainty, and discontinuity, moments when the seams of life just don't want to hold. . . (p. 160, her emphasis)

The students and teachers of composition classrooms--from sixty years ago to today--are neither totally in nor out of the physical dimensions of the room. Their psyches bring with them what they

have experienced, and their writing or teaching or speaking reflects that. Plus, they leave the classroom with subtle notions of what constitutes effectiveness in writing, even in thinking.

So, this dissertation serves to dispel the either/or fallacies which many other histories in the field offer. The resultant portrait is one of students rushing to class with milk jars in their car trunks and of teachers staying up late to grade papers after playing with their children. Though parts of the picture are blurry or even missing, it is a portrait much more reflective of the ambiguities life offers than many of the existing composition histories provide. The qualitative approach reveals the participants as they met their daily needs and sustained their self-identities (Heath, 1983). It is a portrait of real people holding "the seams of life" together.

This study also acknowledges the complexity of the period, when people were incredibly poor, though their ingenuity and simple, strong values made their lives incredibly rich. The period is one we are still coming to terms with as a country. Now, almost sixty years after the start of World War II, multiple histories are developing about the impact of that period on a personal level. Such histories reveal that life was perhaps more complicated than war movies indicate. For instance, one hiring decision or mandate from administrators at the schools in this study created a wave effect upon faculty and students alike.

Because the characters and the lives of those characters are so intriguing, making models of the instruction being offered in the 1930s and 1940s at these three schools becomes natural; we notice



that the faculty held conferences with their students, and we become aware that personal dialogue about student writing seemed important to them. On the other hand, some aspects of the three schools' pedagogies clearly place them within the outdated trends noted about other schools in existing textbook-based histories.

Such revelations encourage us to question what good writing, teaching, and learning were then and what they *should* have been. Such considerations also imply our opinions about what good teaching is now and what it should be. Though I do not subscribe to the advisability of historians' being reformers, I also believe that Young-Bruehl's warning should be heeded: "To learn, we can't just dig in archives or read these studies; we must participate to learn from them" (1983, p. 426). Finding ourselves within histories such as this--and perhaps re-creating ourselves based on that discovery--can be one of the most beneficial aspects of a qualitative study.

What does this study tell us about the validity of other non-qualitative composition histories? Many are right on target, but simply lack the human component that in many cases justifies specific actions. This leads to the reason for the minor contradictions between this study and other composition histories. Faculty did emphasize grammar and usage, for example, more than we do today in college composition courses, but the evidence from Upper South schools suggests that entering students did not have sufficient background in those--or any other--areas. Modern theorists would say, of course, that introducing students to grammar and usage in a context devoid of writing does not work; the teachers at these three

schools, however, combined sentence exercises with abundant writing. So, this study reveals that, despite the stereotypes often perpetuated by composition instruction histories, faculty at these three schools utilized only some current-traditional methods while they adopted other, quite-contemporary approaches.

Susan Jarratt, too, examines a stereotyped group from the past--the Sophists, a misunderstood group from the Classical period about which we have little textual data--with the purpose of advancing "a reinterpretation of the history of classical rhetoric in order to forward the cause of a politically progressive composition pedagogy" (1991, p. 117). In many ways, I am doing the same with this study. The teachers and students of the schools in this study left loosely connected reminders of their participation in a composition course, and no historians have, until now, recovered their work. Historians who have studied composition instruction in the 1930s and 1940s have not accurately represented the work being performed at these three schools concerning some admittedly minor aspects of the classroom experience. Although the "rediscovery and possession of forgotten treasures" (Jarratt, 1988, p. 9) can be exciting and is valuable, the value of my work lies more in the approach than in the actual recovery of specific documents because that approach adds to the layering needed to develop more complicated, and realistic, images of former classrooms.

This study presents Donsky's (1984) "balanced pictures of classroom instruction" by underscoring the influence of individual instructors on students and, simultaneously, the influence of students

and their writing on instructors. Textbook-based histories offer no clues about the behavior of teachers and students. This study reveals that finding documents about those teachers and students requires some digging; public documents are available, though piecing together those documents can be challenging. The triangulated data, interviews, and public and private documents offer an interesting depiction, and a fuller one, than textbooks alone could have.

Finally, this study offers, as Kitzhaber did in one of the first composition instruction histories, additional background into the way first-year composition has been taught. It adds to our understanding of where the field has been and provides support that we as teachers sometimes do reinvent the wheel by supposing that all contemporary methods are new. Every addition to the composite image of composition instruction strengthens our position as a discipline. This study asserts that more innovative and effective instruction than we readily ascribe to the period of the 1930s and 1940s actually occurred. Furthermore, that instruction took place in schools not traditionally associated with major contributions to the field. Such findings lend academic prestige to the field and to its practitioners both then and now.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A

### Types of Documents Gathered and Sources

| Document Type                                                                                                                                                                                      | Source                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| BETHEL WOMAN'S COLLEGE                                                                                                                                                                             |                                            |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <u>WKU's Kentucky Library</u>              |
| Course Catalog from 1934                                                                                                                                                                           | "                                          |
| Lewis, A. F. "Bethel Female College."<br><i>History of higher education in Kentucky.</i>                                                                                                           | "                                          |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <u>William Turner's Private Collection</u> |
| Bethel Women's College <i>Bulletin</i> 15.38<br>(Jan. 1942); 12.20 (April 1938);<br>12.30 (Oct. 1940); 12.24 (Oct. 1939)                                                                           | "                                          |
| Flyers, Jan. 17, 1936; May 28, 1937;<br>May 27, 1938; 1948;                                                                                                                                        | "                                          |
| Commencement Programs, Various Years                                                                                                                                                               | "                                          |
| Personal Letter, 1947                                                                                                                                                                              | "                                          |
| Post Card, n.d.                                                                                                                                                                                    | "                                          |
| Lecture notes relating school's history                                                                                                                                                            | "                                          |
| WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY                                                                                                                                                                        |                                            |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <u>WKU's Kentucky Library</u>              |
| Hamlett's <i>History of education in Kentucky</i> , pp. 282-313.                                                                                                                                   | "                                          |
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Wood, William E. "A Brief History of the English Department of Western Kentucky University, 1907-72." Essay ms. Box 68

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Tyler, Sara. (Jan. 10, 1933). "Pleasant J. Potter College for Young Ladies." Paper for a Journalism Course prefaced in 1956. Box 98

Cornette, James P. (1938). A history of the Western Kentucky University State Teachers College. George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, TN. Box 98

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ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, WKU RESEARCH OFFICE INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING INTERVIEWS: Box 68

Dr. Wilson Wood, 9/12/77  
by James Bennett Box 68/8B21 No. 7641

Dr. Earl A. Moore, 9/28/77  
by James Bennett Box 68/8B21 No. 7645

Frances Richards, 12/14/77  
by James Bennett & Lowell Harrison Box 68/8B21 No. 7652

Tom Jones, 11/26/83  
by Lowell Harrison Box 68/8B21 No. 7906

MIMEOGRAPHED STENCILS FOR EXAMS AND ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE FOLLOWING COURSES, TEACHERS, AND DATES:

Folder, Box 98

English 101 a:

Miss Bradley, May 29, 1935  
Mrs. Bornhill, July 8, 1930  
Miss Brown, Jan. 28, 1931 (?)  
Miss Stoves, May 26, 1930

English 101 b:

Miss Brown, May 29, 1931  
Miss Brown, July 7, 1930  
Miss Stoves, May 24, 1930  
Miss Stoves, May 26, 1930



WKU's Archives

Folder, Box 98

English II/102/English Literature:

Miss Daniels, May 26, 1930

T. Cocke, May 17, 1928

Miss Brown, May 29, 1931

Miss Brown, July 7, 1930

Miss (?), May 22, 1930

Grammar I:

T. Cocke, May 17, 1928

Miss North, July 3, 1928

(?), July 3, 1928

English 303, The Teaching ofHigh School English:

D. B. Cofer, July 10, 1928

English Course Listings circa 1920s

Box 68/6

WKU Archives ShelvesCOURSE CATALOGS FROM THE FOLLOWING  
YEARS:1920, 1926, 1930-31, 1935-7,  
1939-41, 1945-47, and 1955-57

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Harman, J. L., Sr. (1948). *Brief  
historical sketch of the Bowling Green  
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Teachers, Nashville, TN.UT Interlibrary Loan  
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University

## THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

UT Special CollectionsKnickerbocker, K.L.  
Professional Papers

MS1706 Box 1 Folder 4

Personal Diary

MS1706 Box 1 Folder 4

Vita

MS1706 Box 1 Folder 8

Curry, K.  
Professional Papers

MS1527

UT Special Collections

- Thaler, A.  
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 A sequel to an autobiography.  
 1978. MS1519
- Copy of article from *The Dial* MS327 Box 3-B
- Publications Information  
 Dec. 1941 MS654
- McAdoo, W. G., Sr. Diary. 1846-1894. MS1122
- Hodges, John C.  
 Professional Papers & Texts MS401 Box 2

UT Special Collections Library

- Veterans History Project.  
 "Don't Lose World War Two!"  
 UT-K Pamphlet. "
- The Center for the Study of War  
 and Society. UT-K Pamphlet. "

UT Archives

- Grade Book Copies:  
 Spring 1935 AR278, Box 1, Folder 19  
     Daniels  
     Stebbins  
 Summer 1940 AR278, Box 1, Folder 28  
     Miles  
     Carter  
 Summer 1945 AR278, Box 1, Folder 33  
     Florence Marsh  
     Kirkland  
     Fillers  
     Ellis  
     Fannan
- Biennial Report AR274, Box 1  
 The College of Liberal Arts (UT-K)  
 June 30, 1936
- Annual Reports  
 The College of Liberal Arts (UT-K)  
     June 1943 AR73, Folder 15  
     July 29, 1946 AR274, Box 1

UT Hodges Library

University of Tennessee.

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*Record*. Knoxville, TN: UT Press.

Vol. 34, No. 3 (May 1931)

Vol. 43, No. 3 (May 1940)

Vol. 48, No. 3 (May 1945)

Curry, K. (1989). *English at Tennessee,*

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*1794-1988*. Knoxville, TN: U of TN

Dept. of English.

Thaler, A. (1989). *Ports and happy havens:*

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UT All Students' Club. *The University  
of Tennessee Directory*. Knoxville, TN.

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Fall 1941, Fall 1942, Fall 1943,

Fall 1944

Appendix B  
Participants Interviewed and Schools They Represent

BETHEL WOMEN'S COLLEGE, HOPKINSVILLE, KY

Jeanette Wilson Farley

Julia Neal

June D. Tandy Faxon

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY, BOWLING GREEN, KY

Ruby R. Norris

Lois Strange

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

Students

Jane T. Hoffman

Geraldine C. (Jerri) McDonald

Former Professors

Bain T. Stewart

Kenneth Curry

## Appendix C

### Questions Asked of Participants During Interviews

#### Former Student Interviews:

- Tell me a little about your educational background.
- How would you describe your experience at (school)?
- What do you remember about your first year at school?
- Tell me about your experience in your English courses.
- What sorts of activities did your freshman English class engage in?
- Did you enjoy writing then?
- Do you enjoy writing now?
- How would you sum up your time spent at (school)?

#### Former Professor Interviews:

- What is your educational background?
- Tell me about the students you taught.
- What textbooks did you use?
- How did you develop your syllabus?
- What are some typical topics you might have asked students to write about?
- How did you evaluate your students' papers? What were some typical comments?
- How did you organize your class period? Lectures? Discussion?
- Can you tell me about the atmosphere of the times. . .depression, war time, etc.? Did you or the students bring that to class?
- How did your teaching change over time?
- Did the students change?
- Do you remember using the modes for instructing students how to write . . .i.e., description, narration, cause and effect papers, etc.?

## Appendix D

### Sample Participant Interviews

Interview with Kenneth Curry, Knoxville, TN.

By Gina Claywell at McClung Tower, The University of Tennessee,  
June 23, 1993.

[Dr. Curry did not want the interview to be taped. He preferred to talk at first and then answer follow-up questions.]

Curry: In the Spring quarter, we taught literature which was rather nice, especially for me because that was what I was interested in. We read a novel; at one time, we had a big anthology and taught the Hardy novel from it--*The Return of the Native*--and had the students write essays based on the novel. By then, they wrote one a week.

I tried to teach them how to read poetry. There aren't many people who write elegantly. There are always a few students who would've been good anyway.

Fees were \$120. Students tended to come from rather substantial families and were all white. There were many more males than females. Engineering was strong here; many freshmen were engineers. In one class, I had only one girl. In a class of 20, I usually had 12 boys and 8 girls. Getting married was an option that college girls were aware of.

I remember a student from the early days and still know her. She was smart and witty and from an educated family. She came to UT her first year; times got better and she went away to college.

There's a lot of drudgery in Freshman English and Hodges agreed. Yet you could see the progress the students made. Sophomore English may have improved the, but it wasn't evident in their work.

With practice and encouragement, students improve. You have to motivate them; that's the missionary aspect of it.

We did grammar drills or exercises probably a little bit, but it wasn't emphasized. We gave up slow sections and that was used there.

Teaching regular Freshman English was hard because of the different kinds of teaching--some old-fashioned high school teachers made their students diagram and expected no errors. Students didn't have much experience writing papers. Some high school teachers, especially the city ones, those teachers were college graduates and there were some very good ones. Knoxville High school was very good. Many Knoxville students lived at home; it cut down the cost.

The University was comparatively small (but large compared to other small schools). It rose up from the depths of the depression with an enrollment of 2500 to 3000 to 3500. Enrollment increased in the '20s, then went down in the depression. People just couldn't afford to come. In '46, enrollment skyrocketed. Numbered courses increased and the graduate program developed above the MA. There were 13 full time instructors and professors in the department when I came and four teaching fellows who taught two and took two courses. That was an increase of 3 or 4 from the years before.

Dr. Burke was head of the department. He didn't teach freshman. He was almost 70 with no retirement or pensions. Most didn't feel they could afford retirement. The university put in 40% retirement.

Thaler was in charge of Sophomore English which was required throughout most of the university along with English and American Literature. Business still requires it. Thaler didn't teach freshman.

We had a staff meeting weekly. There were no classes at 11:00 on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. On Tuesdays was the meeting of Freshman English and on Thursdays was the meeting of Sophomore English.

Emperor was in charge of Public speaking and taught 2 or 3 sections of Argumentation 231. He didn't teach Freshman English.

Most people were poor back then. Basically, everyone taught Freshman English. Honors students were exempt from first quarter and those who passed the Placement Test.

We used the Century Handbook and published a pamphlet describing the Freshman course. The way the course was taught continued that way for a long, long time.

Dr. Stewart became the Freshman Director. Hodges had been in charge before that. Dr. Burke's course--he was a martinet according to an autobiography by J. W. Krutch, who received an A, but was caustic. He taught

Genung and was a stickler. He was known as a severe grader and students didn't like that. Students were as frivolous as they are today.

Hodges was more relaxed and reasonable on the matter of style. The pamphlet detailed Freshman English. The students kept folders using numbers, for example, 2 was a sentence fragment. That hasn't changed.

Researcher: Did you write a lot of comments?

Curry: Ideally, you should have had a comment but with so many there wasn't any time to do that. You had freedom within your class, but not in the number of papers assigned. What you did in class was up to you and you could use your judgment.

Researcher: Did you teach grammar?

Curry: If it was plain that they didn't understand certain points of grammar, I gave, I guess, a high school grammar review. I never made a big deal of it, though a lady told me I taught it to her. Maybe 15-20 minutes of grammar, and after that they tended to be bored by it. Very often an explanation was all that was necessary.

Researcher: What sort of topics did you assign?

Curry: Topics were always rather a difficulty. Some typical ones might have been:

My very favorite radio program.

My favorite person, so they would do one on dear ol' grandma.

My plans for Christmas vacation.

A book I once enjoyed reading.

My very favorite summer vacation.

Current Sports or News Topics or Something from an Essay

Sometimes you'd say, "Write on what you want." That was awful; they didn't write anything. Some had trouble writing about anything.

We had two conferences per quarter. With 60 students, by evening I was done for.



Teaching honors was and still is a prize. They didn't moan or groan about the assignments. No, "Do we have to read that? How many pages?"

The first year I taught, Parker had the honors students.

Researcher: Were you given much freedom?

Curry: Not really. The number of essays was prescribed. If we deviated too much, student folders were a giveaway. With the weekly staff meetings, everyone knew what everyone was doing. With small groups, everyone knew what you were doing. If you were goofing off, everyone knew what you were doing.

The first quarter, every Monday or Tuesday, "the students write a theme in class" as a matter of control you might say. (There were no afternoon classes. T-Th-Saturday classes met at 8, 9 and 10. On Fridays [or Saturdays], students handed in a paper from out of class. So there were 18 papers the first quarter. They kept their folders and the folders had to be checked. I discovered a time saver. While they were writing, I checked folders. The other two days in class, we had essays and we studied the essays, and they would be of various types of writing. We discussed the essays in class. We always had a reader. I did my preparation and grading then on Saturday afternoon.

One half of the winter quarter, that was the big bugaboo--the research paper. It was just awful. They had a terrible time with that--it had a 2000 word requirement. I suppose the handbook told how to do that, but I told them not to outline the essay you're reading. Instead, outline YOUR ideas. I gave them *carte blanche* on the research topic, but I conferred with them briefly in class or in my office. It was not as formal as the other conferences. They tended to choose too big of a topic. Some did very well, but most didn't. Some were so poor, we couldn't pass them.

Researcher: How did you evaluate students?

Curry: We assigned A, B, C, D, and F. You handed in a summary of grades; it became public information. Dr. Hodges wouldn't have liked it if you gave everyone an A or B. He was never unpleasant, but if he didn't like something, he would've said it. Some were probably told their grading wasn't in line. As

and Bs were given in honors courses (the top 10%). Only an occasional A was given in Freshman English; Sophomore English could have more. We usually gave a fair number of Bs, but most got Cs. In a class of 20, you'd usually have 7 or 8 Fs, 10 Cs. The university didn't have any kind of admission policy, so some were pitiful and usually left after a month or so. By the next two quarters, the worst ones were eliminated. At one time, the slow sections on the other end were established for those who didn't do well on the test. I'm forgetting all the grim details.

**Researcher:** Did you teach the modes?

**Curry:** Our real emphasis was on getting them to write. Of course, we didn't require the modes.

**Researcher:** Did you bring in world events, such as the war or the Depression, into the class or essay topics?

**Curry:** No, we didn't bring in world events. It was there. They all knew it all too well. Concerning the Depression, everyone was in the same boat and no one was affluent.

**Researcher:** How did your teaching change over time?

**Curry:** On spelling patterns, I was far more conscientious than Steward. But we were given a good deal of liberty since we had so much to deal with. You did use textbooks, however you wanted to teach. The first year I taught, I wasn't very good. I was never fascinated with Freshman English. It was just something I had to do. I was more interested in the literary aspects and in elegant writing. You're basically getting them to be literate in Freshman English. The standard graduate school training was in literature; I did mine in Chaucer.

**Researcher:** Why did you come to UT?

**Curry:** They offered me a job!

In the way the course was organized, I could read a paper, and I knew what was wrong or at least what could make it better. I read essays and asked questions. I was idealistic; I wanted them to learn to do well and I got along well.

Interview with Mrs. Geraldine McDonald, Oneida, TN.

By Gina Claywell at the Participant's Home, July 21, 1993.

Researcher: Would you rather just talk or would you prefer me to ask questions?

McDonald: Well, if you have some questions. . .

Course that was in '39 and that was before we were into war really it was just. . .well we weren't into it that much I guess my freshman year.

I had a different experience from a lot of people because I didn't live in a dormitory ever. I lived 18 miles out of Knoxville, and my brother let me have his car and I drove back and forth I guess the first half of the year. And then after that I roomed in boarding houses and rode back and forth--I lived in a farm--with other people that worked in Knoxville.

I did all kinds of things--ha!--getting back and forth to school including part of the time delivering milk--ha! We had a dairy farm. . .

Researcher: And you hitched a ride with the milk?

McDonald: No, I carried the milk in the car when I had a car and was driving. We had just a very small dairy farm, and I took usually it was about 4 or 5 gallon cans of milk I guess from the farm to Southern Dairies which was on Cooper? Street or somewhere around there near the Oak? viaduct. I remember one day I was in such a big hurry--I was late for school --and I rounded a curve and turned over a 5-gallon can of milk in the trunk of the car.

Researcher: It took a while to get all that milk and smell out of the car?

McDonald: Yes! I just backed into the loading dock and said you all take it and I'll worry about cleaning it up later--ha!

Researcher: Of course you had to absorb the cost of that five gallons of milk out of your own pocket?

McDonald: Yes--[chuckles!].

Researcher: So, more than likely, since you commuted, you probably weren't as involved maybe as some of your classmates?

McDonald: No that's true. I was never as or at least not for a long time. . .I never pledged a sorority. I didn't take part in a lot of campus activities that other people did because of the fact that I was commuting. There was no way I could get back after I got home.

Researcher: What do you think would have been more of a typical kind of experience that some of your friends might have had? Being in a sorority--was that typical?

McDonald: Well I would say. . .I graduated from Central High School in Fountain City. I actually had to drive back and forth to school from where I originally went. . .Gibbs High School burned. . .my last two years of high school I had to drive. There were 6 of us at Central who were all friends; about half of them pledged sororities. My sister-in-law was in my class. She lived in Knoxville; she didn't live on campus.

I was trying to think of the most important campus activities. . .the football games, and the big dances. . .that was when we had the Nahheeyayli dances. . .the big bands.

Researcher: What were those?

McDonald: The Nahheeyayli dances were--I've forgotten when they were--it was a whole weekend of dances, a dance on Friday night, a tea dance on Saturday afternoon and a dance on Saturday night.

Researcher: And you were able to participate in those?

McDonald: I probably didn't go to all of them but I made it usually to one of them. Back then, you didn't go if you didn't have a date.

Researcher: So you had to wait for an invitation?

McDonald: Yes. You waited for an invitation.

Researcher: Were these really formal?

McDonald: Oh yes.

Researcher: Describe what you would have worn.

McDonald: A long formal.

Researcher: Gloves?

McDonald: Probably not gloves. And the other thing I remember is being invited to the fraternity houses because they always served meals, and if you dated one of them you were always invited to luncheons.

Researcher: So you were still very much a part of campus activity?

McDonald: Oh yes, I was uh a part of it. At least a lot more than these young people now that commute like to Roane State you know down at Harriman or at Williamsburg. They way they commute, I don't see how they could have any part in activities. . .

Researcher: Yes, I know. I commuted for 3 1/2 years to Knoxville and you get in and get out, and you don't want to go back any more than you have to.

McDonald: Well and the University is so big now. When I graduated from the University there were 3300 students on the entire campus. Now there's a lot more than that in the Freshman class. So that you knew everyone and really you knew your professors.

I haven't been on campus in a while but it really amazes me. I don't see how people get to their classes. Really when I was there it was a problem. I had gym in the old alumni gym, and from there I went to the 3rd floor of old South

College for German class. You had fifteen minutes to shower, dress, and get to class.

Researcher: So if you didn't get your exercise in gym, you did on your way there!

McDonald: Yes! Sometimes it took me several minutes to know what was going on in class.

Researcher: Now, I don't see how students get from the ag campus to the main campus. Was the ag campus there then?

McDonald: No, the ag campus wasn't there. The other thing we had on campus then was the "Y"over near Ayres Hall. It had a grill and it had sofas on the bottom floor. If you brought your lunch, you could sit down there and eat it and rest for a while.

Researcher: Was there much interaction between the faculty and the students? Were they involved? Did you have that feeling?

McDonald: Yes. I think so.

Researcher: What about your English teachers?

McDonald: Oh! I wish I could think of his name! I remember exactly what he looked like. I had him for third quarter. I remember we had a term paper. I remember he was very good looking, and I think I probably had a crush on him. . .You can tell I'm almost 72 years old!

Researcher: Well, really it's been almost 10 years since I've had freshman English, and I really can't remember that much about my class either! I wondered if I gave you the names of some of the faculty members if that might not spark your memory?!? Knickerbocker, Kenneth Curry, Bain Tate Stewart, Miller wouldn't have been there then, John Hodges.

McDonald: I remember John Hodges. He was head of the English department. I had a friend who majored in English.

Researcher: Any remembrances of him specifically?

McDonald: No, I just remember him through her. She was always involved in things there.

Researcher: Do you remember the topic of your term paper?

McDonald: No.

Researcher: I keep trying!

McDonald: I don't have the faintest idea. I do remember going to the library and doing that bibliography!

Researcher: How did you feel about it? Like it? Hate it?

McDonald: I enjoyed school. I didn't really--I never had any that I disliked.

Researcher: So you weren't one of these students who had a major dislike of writing?

McDonald: No. Oh no. I'm trying to remember the name of that English teacher--Raymond? I really. . .

Researcher: I've got a list of who taught what years and I might can look it up in there. That would have been (taking notes)--

McDonald: . . .spring quarter of '40.

Researcher: You know you mentioned women getting into medical school; what ratio was there just on campus of females to males? Were you the only female on campus?! [Chuckles.]



McDonald: No.

Researcher: Were they evenly distributed?

McDonald: Yes. There were probably more males in chemistry but in zoology and bacteriology they were even. I had a full load every semester and never went to summer school.

Researcher: And you graduated in four years?

McDonald: Yes.

Researcher: That's remarkable. You knew what you wanted.

McDonald: Yes.

Researcher: I think there's something too when you know you're commuting.

McDonald: Yes. Plus, I came from a family that it wasn't easy for me to go to school, and too we never had much money so I had to work.

Researcher: Did you work while you were in school?

McDonald: Yes. I started working in high school at JCPenney's on Saturdays. In college, I usually had Saturday morning classes.

Then I also worked in the lab on campus. I was paid all of 25 cents per hour.

Researcher: You were a lab assistant or something?

McDonald: No. I was the dishwasher and the autoclave operator; I was not a lab assistant! Ha! I was strictly doing the dirty work.

Researcher: So tuition seemed expensive at the time?

McDonald: It was for me actually. It seems to me that when I first started going it was \$39 a quarter. [Chuckles!]

Researcher: Doesn't seem possible by today's standards.

McDonald: And I believe the most I ever paid was \$42 per quarter.

Researcher: Uh. Well, you talked about the war. How much did world events enter in at all to what was going on on the campus?

McDonald: Well, I don't know how much it affected what was going on on campus, but I know it affected all of us because really a lot of my friends were killed in the war [becomes kind of teary-eyed]. I remember the war effort very well, but I remember it more really right after I graduated.

Researcher: What about rationing?

McDonald: We had the coupons. Some people went without shoes, but we never did. Really by that time, when I was married, I was married in 1945, you know, to get my cake made for the wedding, I had to borrow ration coupons from other people because I had to take sugar to the woman who made the cake! [Chuckles!]

Researcher: So just to get the cake made it took a lot of planning!

McDonald: Yes.

Researcher: Something else I wanted to ask you. Did the war figure in in the classroom? Did students talk about it much? Do you remember any teachers talking about the war situation?

McDonald: No. It probably was brought up more in possibly history classes or sociology classes and things like that. . .I do remember that DuPont was hiring a lot of chemistry majors for the war effort.

Researcher: What did you do after you graduated?

McDonald: I went into public health. I worked in Nashville for three months. I worked with the state department in the lab over there. Then I worked in Atlanta until my father was killed in a car wreck and so I came home to be with my mother. I worked for Pet Milk and established their lab there.

TAPE DAMAGED IN TRANSCRIBING. [BULK OF THE INTERVIEW WAS TRANSCRIBED.]

Spring '40 was the quarter she remembers her teacher. In subsequent talks, she remembered her teacher's name--Ransom.

One of the popular songs she remembers of the time was "The Three Little Fiddies [Fishies] swam in the pond. . ." written by 3 female UT students. It became a national hit. One of the girls was "Tydie Bomar" [spelling unsure].

The Nahheeyayli Dances (1941 Yearbook) were formed in 1925 by campus fraternities. There were four formal dances--2 in February called the Mid Winter Formals and 2 in May called the Spring Formals. Jimmy Dorsey and other big name bands played.

"Barnwarmin'" was held on the eve of the Homecoming game. The gym was filled with people enjoying cider and cookies, sitting on bales of hay and dancing. A Barnwarmin' Queen was named.

She described Knoxville at the time as "Very dirty. Everyone used coal to heat with and since it was sitting down in a hollow, it was filled with smog. I remember the street cars."

McDonald: "I remember I used to work at the Library (that was another of my jobs!) and I didn't think a thing about walking by myself at 10 o'clock at night to my boarding house. You wouldn't do that now."

To the question, "What was the typical outfit?" she answered, "Saddle oxfords, sweater or blouse and skirt."

## Appendix E

### Codes Developed from Data Analysis

#### Composition Instruction Themes

|    |                 |
|----|-----------------|
| W  | Writing         |
| C  | Conferencing    |
| PR | Peer Reviews    |
| D  | Drills          |
| O  | Oral Deliveries |
| PC | Correctness     |
| TB | Textbooks       |

#### Institutional Themes

|    |                          |
|----|--------------------------|
| S  | Academic Endeavors       |
| E  | Education                |
| T  | Teaching                 |
| AI | Administrative Influence |

#### Economic Themes

|    |                         |
|----|-------------------------|
| PE | Physical Conditions     |
| DP | Depression              |
| WW | World War II            |
| MC | Military Classes        |
| S  | Expenses, Lack of Money |

#### Social Themes

|     |                    |
|-----|--------------------|
| Ha  | Socializing        |
| M   | Morality           |
| FH  | Feminist Hostility |
| Res | Restriction        |

## Appendix F Informed Consent Form

University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
Project: First-Year American College Composition Courses  
from 1930-45: A Broader Perspective  
Principal Investigator: Gina Claywell

You are invited to participate in a research study that examines the experiences of college freshmen enrolled in composition courses between 1930 and 1945. Your participation will consist of one or more short (approximately one hour) interviews that will be audiotaped. You will be asked questions about your memories of college and your English/writing courses in particular. The study will benefit the field of English composition in providing a broader history than has previously been presented. You will be identified on the tape and credited as the source of the information you provide. The tape will remain in the possession of the principal investigator throughout the study and will be destroyed upon completion of the project; it will at no time be used for purposes other than that described herein.

Your participation will be voluntary, and you may decline or withdraw from participation at any time without penalty or prejudice. The interviewer in this project will be happy to provide answers to any questions you may have about the project.

The audiotaped recording of the interview(s) will be stored at the investigator's home in a filing cabinet; no one except the investigator will have access to the tape, although a transcript of relevant portions of the interview and your identity may become a part of the final research project. The interview and/or subsequent publication of parts of the interview should pose little or no threat to you physically, psychologically, or socially. If you have any follow-up questions on this project, please contact Gina Claywell at 311 McClung Tower, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37796 or call (615) 974-5401.

\* \* \* \* \*

I have read and understood this explanation of the freshmen composition project and have had my questions about it answered satisfactorily. I voluntarily agree to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

Date\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Appendix G  
Brown's Handouts at Western

English 101B

1. Give five rules for the use of the comma and illustrate each.
2. Punctuate the following sentences.
  - a. Charles is not in school now he has taken a position in an office.
  - b. He gave some very convincing reasons for this manely[sic] that the cost is too great that the time is too short and that there is no one at hand who is able or willing to undertake the work.
  - c. We got down the hill with all possible speed slid down in fact
  - d. Let us remember in this connection he said the well-known words of Jackson the way to resume is to resume
  - e. The Courier published later than usual did not appear until after the concert had been given.
3. Outline a theme based on one of the following subjects.  
Mistaken Identity  
The Value of a "Movie Mind".
4. Explain the following terms  
narration; point of view; Ibid; exposition; argumentation; essay;  
allegory; metaphor; colloquialisms; diction; onomatopoeia; prolixity
5. Revise
  - a. There could always be seen a number of children running to and fro.
  - b. This is the most important point of all, I think.
  - c. Also this is true.
  - d. He is a murderer, after all is said.

W. K. T. C. July 7, 1930  
D.W.W.

45 copies  
Miss Brown  
July 7, 1930  
By. M. A.

## English 101a 1:20 Section

## I

Illustrate and underscore the following constructions in sentences.

Transitive verb; copulative verb; cognate object; retained object; gerund; subordinate conjunction; compound preposition; predicate adjective.

## II

Explain the following terms:

Precis; biography; prefatory paragraph; clause; autobiography; phrase; clincher sentence.

## III

Write two sentences illustrating the use of the subjunctive in conditional and concessive clauses, respectively.

## IV

A. Fill the blanks in the following sentences with forms of shall or will.

1. I hoped I \_\_\_\_\_ succeed.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ you go, if I invited you?
3. I told you what \_\_\_\_\_ happen.

B. Write a paragraph explaining the use of shall and will.

## V

Correct the errors in the following sentences.

1. Send whomever will do the work.
2. The question of who should be leader arose.
3. He is happier[sic] than me.
4. Whistling for Rover, my cousin put a pail in his mouth, and we started.
5. Mink-skins are valuable, because these animals are now scarce.
6. Whom do they say won?
7. Here nature has done her best to enchant those that can see and feel and make them her lifelong worshipers.
8. The place is often visited by tourists who are fond of rugged scenery, and especially amateur photographers.

WKTC:B

45 copies  
For Miss Brown  
By H. S.



## English 101b

## I.

Classify the following figures of speech:

1. "Her eyes were deeper than the depth  
Of waters stilled at even."
2. "And if I should live to be  
The last leaf upon the tree  
In the spring. . ."
3. "Forsake not wisdom and she shall preserve thee."
4. "Roll on thou dark and deep blue ocean, roll."
5. "He scorned the sceptic, but revered the cross."
6. His movements were quick as lightening.

## II.

Punctuate the following sentences:

1. Tom who by this time had perceived that something was wrong began to sidle toward the door
2. The old hound Maida a noble animal and a great favorite of Scott's lay at the door
3. It was as I have said a fine day
4. We respect they words
5. Go into the library I mean go if you please
6. The wreck occurred on Friday June 13 1923
7. The brakes being worn he stopped barely in time

## III.

Correct the errors in the following sentences:

1. All the pent-up venom of his evil heart rushed to his forehead.
2. The difference between them is DeQuincy is humorous and Macaulay is grave.
3. He is one of those men who talks much and thinks little.
4. If I was in his place, I should refuse.
5. I wish that I was not so late.
6. I only want three.
7. It is the handsomest vase I almost ever saw.
8. I walked out into the night as the moon rose and wandered through the grounds.

## IV.

Explain the following terms:

Characterization; climatic arrangement; obsolete works[sic]; editorial; bibliography; impressionistic description; argumentation; point of view; barbarisms; Ibid., p. 23.

WKTC May 29, 1931

40 copies May 22  
Miss Brown  
W. A.

## Appendix H

### Hodges' Comp. 1 Note Cards at UT

Hodges MS401 Box 2 Notecards A  
Lesson Plans for ENG 111 Sept-Dec. 1932

Sept. 28 (Weds.)/Sept. 29 (Thurs.)

1. Adjust Roll
2. Take up Outline for D. Study in which first word of each list has been worked up. Assignment from general meeting.
3. Assign Theme 1, Sept. 30, 1932, 200-400 words. Read & Ex. Marival [?] Pref. of MS form.
4. Diction Study. *Handbook* H.

Sept. 30, 1932

1. Take up Theme 1. (Check mechanical details: Endorsement, pagination, title.)
2. Assign Theme 2, Oct. 7, 1932, 200-400 words.
3. Study Diction, *Handbook* H. Assign pp. 187-206. Prepare sentences 1-10, pp. 217, 218.

Oct. 3, 1932

1. Study Diction, Hb., H. Sentences 1-10, pp. 206, 7.
2. Assign preparation of 40 additional sentences of same list.

Oct. 5, 1932

1. Return Theme 1. Explain corrections of K1, C1, C11.

Fri. Oct. 7, 1932

1. Collect Theme 2
2. Parallel Reading
  - a) Purpose--See Handbook, p. 219
  - b) Group II. The List.
3. Theme 4, October 14  
Theme 3 in class next Wed.  
My Hobby--200-400 words.
4. Assignment for Monday--Handbook, pp. 54-60.  
Write out Sentences 1-7 on p. 60. C11.
5. Check on board corrections for K1, C1, C11.

Mon. Oct. 10, 1932

1. Return Theme 2  
Explain how to fill out folder. Themes to be brought to class Wed.
2. Study C1 & C3 & C11. (Sentence Analysis).
3. Exercises, p. 60.
4. Assignment for Wed.
  - a) Correction of Theme 2 & filling out of folder. (Bring to class)
  - b) Write out *Handbook*, p. 60, sentences 8-14.
  - c) Bring theme paper to class to write Theme 3.

Wed. Oct. 12, 1932

1. Take up theme folders. Check corrections. Return (if possible)
2. Theme 3--(100-300 words) Halloween, etc.

Friday, Oct. 14, 1932

1. Take up Theme 4.
2. Extend time on first Parallel Reading (Theme 5) until next Wed.)
3. Assign for Mon. Handbook, Ch. I, especially choice and limitation of subjects.
4. Assign for Mon. a list of 6 topics from personal experience suitable for 300-word theme--a series, if student wishes. Theme 7 for next Fri. from out of these topics.
5. Discuss sentences in Handbook, p. 60.

Mon. Oct. 17, 1932

1. Take up & discuss the topics for future Friday themes.
2. Return themes for correction--Folder to be brought Wed for inspection while students are writing on biography.
3. Take up C1, C11--if time permits.

Wed. Oct. 19, 1932

1. Theme 5. Quiz on biography. Char. of the man or His Chief Contribution
2. Check & return folders while students write.

Friday October 21, 1932

- Assign Theme 8--From list.
1. Explain method of estimating value of Themes--Read Manual, pp. 5, 6.  
Explain Nos. C1, C11, etc.
  2. Have students read Theme 6 before handing it to me to make sure that they have avoided the proscribed errors.
  3. Assign for Monday Nos. D8, D9, D10, D11, D12, D13, D14.  
Sentences 1-7, p. 101  
1-7, p. 108  
To be handed in Mon.  
Each sentence to be marked for specific error, D8, etc.

Monday, Oct. 24, 1932

- 2.[sic] Study with class D8-14. (Students who do not have Ex. 1-7 (p. 101), Ex. 1-7 (p. 108) will write out for Wed. Ex 1-14 p. 101 & 1-14 p. 108.
1. Assign for wed--Theme 7 (200) Topic optional.
3. Take up sentence exercises.

Wednesday, Oct. 26, 1932.

1. Take up exercises from students who did not have sentences written out for Monday.
2. Take up Theme 7.
3. Study K1 (Use appendix also.)
4. Assign for Mon. the Punctuation (reason, 1-12, for commas) of the 36 sentences on pp. 275-7. (Theme 8 for Friday)

Friday, Oct. 28, 1932

1. Assign--Handbook, XV, XVI, XIX, XX All commas explained.
2. Study Punctuation--Sentences on pp. 275. (Theme 10 for Nov. 4)

Monday, Oct. 31, 1931[sic]

1. Assign--correction of Themes. Further work on Punct.
2. Study Punctuation, pp. 275. Bring paper to write Theme 9 in class Wed.

Wed. Nov. 2, 1932

Class Theme--9 (Theme 10 for Fri.)

Fri. Nov. 4, 1932

Take up Theme 10.

Assign Handbook, pp. 58-69.

Analyze sentences on pp. as follows:

A. Sentence type

|               |       |
|---------------|-------|
| Simple--      | s     |
| Compound--    | cd    |
| Complex--     | cx    |
| Comp. Comp.-- | cd.cx |

B. Clauses

Main  
Subordinate  
Noun  
Adj.  
Adv.

C. Phrases

Part.  
Inf.  
Prep.

D. Words--Parts of Speech

State function of each subordinate clause, phrase, word.  
Study punctuation in handbook, pp. XV, XVI, XIX, XX.

Mon. Nov. 7

Study Punctuation in class. Study G1-11. for Wed.

Wed. Nov. 9

Bring Parallel Refs (Theme p. 20 ss[?]) to class.

Study Punctuation.

Assign G1-11. Correct sentences 1-60 on p. 182.

Put Nos. 1-11 in margin opposite sentences.

Fri. Nov. 11  
Holiday.

Mon. Nov. 14  
Discuss sentences 1-60.

Wed. Nov. 16, 1932  
1. Class Theme, 13.  
My Ambition  
My Worst Fault (Habit)  
2. Check corrections of Themes written since first conference & return folders to students. (Students bring Theme 14 to class Friday, and *Handbook*).

Fri. Nov. 18, 1932  
1. Take up Theme 14.  
2. Study Sentences Handbook 168, 9; 176

Mon. Nov. 21  
Study sentences under G1-11. Assign (?)

Wed. Nov. 23  
1. Write Theme 15 in class.

Fri. Nov. 25  
1. Bring Theme 16 to class.  
2. Study sentences under G1-11.  
3. Assign Handbook, pp. 63, 64.

Mon. Nov. 28  
1. Assign writing out of 19 sentences pp. 75, 76.  
2. Study 9 sentences in *Handbook* pp. 63, 64.

Wed. Nov. 30  
1. Write Theme 17 in class. (Check writing of sentences assigned.)

Fri. Dec. 2  
1. Take up Theme 18.  
2. In Class Study 19 sentences from handbook, pp. 75, 76.  
3. Assign study of Hb, D1-4 Corrections of pp. 88, 89  
(Quiz on Bible Selections for Monday; bring Theme paper.)

## Vita

Gina Smith Claywell was born in Glasgow, Kentucky on December 31, 1964. She attended elementary and high school in the Cumberland County, Kentucky, school system and graduated Valedictorian in May 1982. She attended Western Kentucky University on an Award of Excellence Scholarship, maintaining a 4.0 GPA, and graduating in May 1985 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Broadcast Communications; she was named Scholar of the Potter College of Arts and Humanities and received the Ogden Scholarship Award at commencement exercises.

She worked as a television producer with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources and as a commercial writer with WBKO-TV in Bowling Green, Kentucky before entering the University of Tennessee in January 1990. She served as a Graduate Assistant with the UT English Department from 1990 to 1991 and received a Master of Arts degree in English in May 1991. She was a Graduate Teaching Associate from 1992 to 1993. While at UT, she received a Hilton A. Smith Graduate Fellowship, a Bain T. Stewart Fellowship, an Alumni Association Fellowship, and several travel grants.

She has been employed since 1993 as an Assistant Professor at East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma, where she teaches writing courses. She is a member of the Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English and the National Council of Teachers of English.