

A Rediscovered Tradition: European Pedagogy and Composition in Nineteenth-Century Midwestern Normal Schools

KATHRYN FITZGERALD

Abstract This study examines composition at public Midwestern normal schools, the teacher training institutions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It argues that the unique social environment, educational aims, and intellectual traditions of the normal school gave rise to attitudes about composition theory, methods, teachers, and students that are much more compatible with composition's contemporary ethic than those associated with the elite Eastern colleges where the origins of composition have most often been studied.

JOHN BRERETON POINTS OUT that compositionists seem to "always be defining themselves by their relationship to their origins" (xi). Indeed, ambivalent about their past, compositionists mine classical treatises, institutional documents, professional publications, and early textbooks to recuperate a tradition capable of legitimizing the field as a university discipline, yet also capable of grounding a contemporary democratic ethic radically different from the ethic of its elitist institutional origins. Painted with the broadest of strokes, this work has constructed an intellectual tradition traced to classical, enlightenment, and post-enlightenment rhetoric unfortunately diminished by late nineteenth-century composition textbooks. Historians tell us that these textbooks, in their attempt to convert complex oral and literary rhetorical theory into writing instruction for first-year college students, reduced the theory to sets of formulaic generalizations that were inadequate to their task both conceptually and practically (Connors,

KATHRYN FITZGERALD holds a Ph.D. in rhetoric, composition, and literacy from the Department of Educational Studies, University of Utah. She is emeritus professor of English at Utah State University, where she directed undergraduate studies and prepared teachers of composition and literature. She has published two textbooks, *The Student Writer* (1991) and *Conversations in Context* (1998). This article was awarded the 2002 CCCC Braddock Award for best article after its publication in *College Composition and Communication* in 2001.

"I wrote this because I saw myself as part of the tradition, pioneered by people like Susan Miller, James Berlin, and Bob Connors, of recovering composition's forgotten history. I was part of the movement to look beyond the Eastern establishment to non-traditional sites of writing instruction. My research showed that normal schools (teacher preparation institutions) in the United States successfully adapted influences outside of classical rhetoric, specifically eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Italian and Swiss pedagogy, to public school and postsecondary writing instruction."—KF

Kitzhaber). At the same time, the historical work depicts the vast majority of composition teachers at the end of the nineteenth century as rhetorically ungrounded graduate literature students who were dependent by default on those inadequate textbooks. The result for undergraduate students was, according to Miller, that the composition requirement perpetuated class distinctions by holding the non-elect in a course that taught inconsequential forms of writing, while students from qualified backgrounds, exempted from first-year composition, were promoted promptly to rhetoric courses in which they learned to speak and write for powerful public forums. Students held in first-year composition became convinced that their linguistic roughness disqualified them from serious public participation. Although this brief summary doesn't begin to suggest the wealth of material composition historians have uncovered, it does point up the elitist, undemocratic aspects of the field's past that disturb many contemporary compositionists, who see their aim as extending the opportunities available through education to all social classes by introducing students to discourses of power.

The desire to render a more comprehensive story of composition's intellectual and social traditions than that described above has lately led historians to sites of writing instruction beyond formal schooling like women's clubs (Gere) and the family (Miller, *Assuming*), but work is just beginning on alternative sites of formal education, such as Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, women's colleges, and normal schools. My study participates in the latter move. It examines composition at the normal school, a site that turns out to harbor rich intellectual, methodological, and political implications for composition's tradition. I will demonstrate that several contemporary attitudes about composition theory, methods, teachers, and students have precedent in the normal schools. They include the recognition of the following: the interrelation of theory and practice; the responsibility of the discipline for teaching teachers to teach; the agency and autonomy of the teacher; the linguistic competence of the student; and the possibility of a critical stance toward textbooks. I will argue that these attitudes were possible one hundred years ago at normal schools because of two important factors: Normal schools were established in a completely different social and educational environment from the elite schools on which historians have primarily focused so far, and normal schools had access to an intellectual tradition completely outside of rhetorical theory—the tradition of European pedagogy. These differences enable the weaving of an additional thread into the story of composition's past, one more compatible with composition's contemporary ethic.

NORMAL SCHOOLS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

To begin to understand how normal schools could give rise to such different attitudes from those at the schools where composition began, we need to become more familiar with normal schools as institutions. Their purpose when established in the first half of the nineteenth century was to train new teachers for the burgeoning numbers of free public elementary schools resulting from Horace Mann's common school campaign. Thus normal schools were viewed as "professional" rather than "academic" institutions, though to the

twentieth-century ear, the word *vocational* probably captures the schools' function more accurately. The first normal schools in this country were private institutions established in the East, but when the concept was transported to the Midwest, they were often state supported with free tuition to students who contracted to teach school following graduation. In many states, the schools were located in widely scattered small towns, so that they would be geographically as well as economically accessible to the rural population.

Though largely neglected by historians, normal schools have been the focus of a few notable works. These works show that almost from the outset, normal schools were at the center of many of the significant controversies in American education in the nineteenth century. Together, these histories describe the material, social, institutional, and intellectual conditions that finally led to their disappearance. Jurgen Herbst examines the complex political contest over the function and control of the normals and, more profoundly, over teacher education itself. He unravels the knot of contending interests to describe the stakes of various groups including the common school supporters, who wanted normal schools to serve their original function of professionalizing elementary teaching; normal administrators, who feared extinction unless the status of normal schools could be raised by appealing to males interested in careers in high school teaching and administration; the universities, who wanted to attract the same male students, though their attitudes toward teacher education were ambivalent at best; and the taxpaying citizens, who wanted their children to have access not just to vocational education for teachers, but to liberal studies as well. The outcome of the struggle was the metamorphosis of normal schools into teachers' colleges and, eventually, state universities.

Merle Borrowman, writing some thirty years before Herbst, traces a functionalist rather than materialist story that centers on the fit between intellectual currents and social and institutional conditions to explain the changing fortunes of normal schools. For him, the importance of the contest between the universities and normal schools for control of teacher education lies in the attempt to work out the relation between the liberal and technical aspects of teacher education. He describes the disappearance of the normal schools not so much in materialistic terms as in terms of a sporadic progress toward greater integration of the increasingly complicated social, intellectual, and technical concerns of teacher education.

Mariolina Salvatori questions the direction of that movement in her intellectual history of the concept of pedagogy. Tracing the reception and deployment of the term in this country, Salvatori seeks to explain its low prestige in contrast to its status in Europe, where it is a highly regarded field of study. There, the term denotes a view of the various aspects of pedagogy—the theory, practice, science, and art of teaching—that places them in a dialectical and mutually informative relationship. But in this country, under the pressure for an exclusive focus on theory and research at the new nineteenth-century universities, the concept was split into partial and reductive variants incapable of supporting either productive research or holistic practice. Rather than seeing any movement toward greater integration of pedagogical concepts

in the move of teacher education from the normal school to the university, Salvatori laments their fragmentation. Lost in the transition was not only the complexity of the intellectual conceptualization of teaching, but the corollary demand on teachers to reflexively consider the interrelationships among the various aspects of pedagogy in the context of their own classroom experience. And lost to the practice of teaching was the connection between research in the disciplines and teaching to teach in the disciplines, as pedagogy was relegated to schools of education where it could safely be ignored by the subject-oriented departments.

Herbst, Borrowman, and Salvatori together with a few others limn a complex tale of the contested scene of the nineteenth-century normal schools, which finally resulted in the political supremacy of liberal education over vocational/technical education, the intellectual dominance of research and theory over pedagogy and practice, and the marginalization of teacher education to schools of education in universities. Ironically, from the perspective of teacher education, normal schools themselves metamorphosed into state universities with their own ghettoized schools of education. Herbst notes, "With the eventual transformation of the teacher training schools and colleges into state colleges and universities the American democratic revolution in higher education accomplished one of its greatest triumphs" (6). Though this revolution in access to higher education might not have been achieved if normal schools had continued to focus solely on training public school teachers, Herbst himself argues that it succeeded at great cost in terms of diminished status for the discipline and practice of pedagogy, a cost he terms a "betrayal" of teachers and teaching.

Yet, even before their evolution into liberal education institutions, the public normal schools democratized and expanded educational and vocational opportunity far beyond any existing institution, in terms of both class and gender. The case of Wisconsin's normal school system is an example. Throughout the 1890s, the total of the students enrolled in Wisconsin's six (after 1896, seven) state normal schools exceeded the number enrolled in the University of Wisconsin at Madison. In 1894-95, the total of students enrolled in state normal schools' regular and preparatory classes (for those who had little or no secondary schooling) was 2,008 while only 1,563 were enrolled at the University of Wisconsin. At the end of the decade, enrollments at both institutions continued to increase, though the university's at a more rapid pace. The normal school enrollment in 1899-1900 totaled 2,675 students while the University's total had grown to 2,422 (Seventh Biennial Report 10; Ninth Biennial Report 15; Curti and Carstensen 660). Communities lacking normal schools continued to demand and were awarded new schools until 1916 when the state had nine (Wyman 11). While the university population grew rapidly, normal schools offered an economical local alternative that continued to be extremely attractive to the rural population.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the effects of normal schools in terms of expanded economic opportunities for their primarily rural students were readily apparent in the career paths of their graduates. For men, records show that besides teaching careers, normal schools opened avenues both to a variety of other occupations and to further education. For example,

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Platteville (Wisconsin) Normal School's records of the graduating class of 1898 list by 1905 twelve different occupations for male graduates. Among them were teacher, school principal, school superintendent, physician, lawyer, engineer, and bank clerk. Fifteen years later there was further diversification as three graduates were listed as merchants, and one had become an army captain.

For women the occupations, though much less diverse, were perhaps more socially significant. While twelve female graduates of 1898 were listed as married in 1905, eighteen were teachers who had not married, and these women lived as far afield as Chicago, Denver, Seattle, and Mill Valley, California. Twenty-seven years after graduation, in 1925, eighteen of the women graduates were listed as married and only five remained school teachers. Yet some small diversity of occupation is discernible—two had become normal school instructors, one was in “Americanization work” at Ellis Island, and one was an “assistant” for the American Red Cross. Though the majority of normal female graduates eventually left teaching for marriage, graduation from—and even attendance at—a normal school did alter women's life patterns. Sandra Harmon, reporting on marriage rates for women graduates of Illinois State Normal, points out that while about 90 percent of late nineteenth-century women in the population at large were married, only 62 percent of the graduates of Illinois Normal during the same period were married (13–14). It is reasonable to infer that normal schools granted rural young women a means of independent self-support that freed them from the economic necessity of early marriage. As a facilitator of a significant demographic pattern of the time, normal schools also provided a necessary means of transition from farm to non-farm occupations.

Clearly, normal schools changed the face(s) of higher education, provided opportunity for non-farm employment as farms became unable to support the children of their families, and provided the chance for financial independence (though not an easy life) for young women before marriage or for a lifetime. Their avowed mission to provide egalitarian opportunity was an important difference from the more elite schools where composition has typically been studied. However, as noted above, the normal school, in a time of high-stakes contestation over the financial base, student populations, and objectives of various institutions of higher education, was almost certainly the most contested site of all. The conflict over the objectives and scope of the normal schools was heightened in part because of the very different social and intellectual traditions and allegiances from which they emerged.

CLASSICAL RHETORIC, EUROPEAN PEDAGOGY, AND WISCONSIN NORMAL SCHOOLS

The intellectual tradition of composition, as it has been articulated to date, is well known. Historian/rhetoricians Kitzhaber, Johnson, Berlin, Connors, and others have traced the development of nineteenth-century rhetoric as its professors struggled to accommodate classical theory to written discourse and

their teaching to the expanding research-based institutions that were supplanting the classical tradition in higher education. Securely positioned at the center of the college curriculum at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the study of rhetoric by the end of the century had been confined to English departments and pushed to their margins as first-year composition courses. The rhetorical treatises of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had produced rich theorizations of classical rhetoric refigured in light of faculty and associationist psychologies to address and account for such aspects of written discourse as belletristic aesthetics and scientific empiricism. However, the textbooks of the late nineteenth century, often written by college composition instructors, reworked, modified, and reduced this inherited tradition to address specific writing issues (for example, modes of discourse, patterns of exposition, and rules of written style) that their authors perceived to cause problems for first-year writers. Novice composition instructors, usually part-timers and graduate students whose undergraduate study had been in English departments from which the study of rhetoric had virtually disappeared, relied on the textbooks to teach themselves to teach writing. Textbooks, then, both responded to the demands of and shaped college composition courses. Connors states that the “place [of textbooks] in the development of composition-rhetoric is absolutely central because of the dialogic relation between textbooks and teacher training” (69–70).

I briefly summarize this story of the nineteenth-century textual transition from theorized rhetorics to reductive practical textbooks (most recently and fully told by Connors), because the available evidence indicates that, a few notable exceptions notwithstanding (Fred Newton Scott in Michigan, his student Gertrude Buck later at Vassar, for instance), it accurately describes the intellectual heritage and typical practice of composition instruction both in private eastern colleges and large state-supported universities in the Midwest and West (see Payne, which reprints the *Dial* series of articles describing college English departments in 1894). However, the story at the normal schools is different.

Available to normal school composition teachers was an entirely distinct intellectual tradition. Undoubtedly, normal school English faculty were familiar with the composition textbooks of the time—at a Wisconsin conference in 1900 (to which I will return below), normal teachers reported using texts by Scott and Denney, Buck and Woodbridge, and A. S. Hill. But the intellectual heritage of the normal schools, like the concept of the normal school itself, had different origins. Normal school ideology came from German systems of teacher training and European pedagogical theories. One of the most influential European theorists, Heinrich Pestalozzi, was a Swiss teacher and philanthropist working in the wake of Rousseau’s educational romanticism. He argued that education’s aim was to “fit,” or adjust, all children to society and that all learning begins with the child’s sense perceptions. Pestalozzi is best remembered for what were reductively referred to as “object lessons.” The “object lesson” pedagogy was in fact built upon a child-centered psychology that trusted the child’s intuitive powers based on experience and reason. A logical corollary was to attack textbooks as alien to

students' lives and thus ineffective instructional tools. Pestalozzi, his heirs, John Frederick Herbart, Friedrich Froebel, and their English and American disciples and promoters introduced several major concepts still central to educational psychology: those of a child psychology based on natural developmental patterns of the young mind, of the child's interest in a subject as a starting point for effective learning, and of instruction organized to move inductively from the familiar and concrete toward the unfamiliar and abstract (see Monroe, Pinloche). I do not intend to fully explicate these theories here, a topic beyond the scope of this article, but only to point out that normal schools were grounded in a very different intellectual perspective from the rhetorical tradition of composition.

To demonstrate that these pedagogical traditions did have an impact on normal school teachers of composition, I will briefly review the channels by which the concepts were transported from Europe to American normal schools, in particular, those in Wisconsin. Wisconsin is an especially fruitful site for the study of normal schools first because, as Ogren points out, Wisconsin in the latter half of the nineteenth century was a microcosm of the publicly supported systems of higher education found in several states across the nation (2). Moreover, rich archival materials from official public records to little-known collections of student papers, student tests, student and faculty memoirs, and student publications are held in the libraries of the former normal schools, now state universities. After tracing the channels by which European pedagogical theory reached Wisconsin, I will examine closely the record of the conference of normal school teachers (mentioned above) held in Oshkosh in 1900. At this conference, instructors exhibit these European influences in the discussions of their teaching practices.

Pestalozzian pedagogy received its greatest impetus in this country after the Civil War when Edward A. Sheldon put its principles into practice in the Oswego, New York, school system and promulgated them through the Oswego Normal School. However, even before the Civil War, educators in Wisconsin had been introduced to the new psychology and methods through several channels, including both publications and personal endorsements (Herrmann 293-324). An unsigned editorial advocating Pestalozzian views that appeared in the *Wisconsin Journal of Education* in 1856 may have been the first publication to disseminate the new pedagogy widely to Wisconsin educators. The pedagogy was given further impetus in 1859-60 when the eminent educator Henry Barnard was hired as Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin and simultaneously as an agent of the Board of Regents of Normal Schools. Having observed Pestalozzi and Froebel's methods in English schools in the 1850s, Barnard had returned to this country an ardent advocate, penning laudatory articles for his *American Journal of Education* and publishing informative pamphlets for distribution free of charge to teachers (Herrmann 294). In Wisconsin, besides disseminating written materials, he lectured tirelessly at teaching institutes (of which he was in charge) in spite of the ill health that cut his Wisconsin tenure short. Wisconsin, then, was ideologically prepared to accept the new pedagogical concepts when Sheldon's efforts at Oswego caught fire immediately after the

Civil War. Coincidentally, at the same moment the first Wisconsin normal schools at Platteville and Whitewater were opened (1866 and 1867), needing to staff faculties from scratch. It is not surprising that many of the new faculty members would have been influenced by the ideas emanating from Oswego, though the first hire with Pestalozzian training was a Swiss émigré named Jacob Wernli, who was employed at Platteville the year it opened (Salisbury 24). The most notable of these hires did not occur, however, until 1876 and the appointment of William F. Phelps as president of Whitewater. Phelps was an Oswego plan convert who had served from 1864 to 1876 as president of the Winona Normal School in Minnesota, where he had built a solid reputation as an advocate and practitioner of Pestalozzian pedagogy (Herrmann 298–300).

Herbart's influence, which began to be felt in this country about a quarter century after Pestalozzi's, also made early inroads into the Wisconsin educational scene. Like Pestalozzian philosophy, Herbartian pedagogy penetrated Wisconsin educational thinking through a variety of channels. Perhaps most importantly, three of the leading American proponents of Herbartianism, Charles De Garmo and the McMurry brothers, Charles and Frank, taught and wrote at the neighboring Illinois Normal School during the decade of the 1890s. Their books were used as texts at every normal school in Wisconsin at one time or another throughout this decade (Herrmann 323–24). Accepting the idea that a child's learning begins with sensual experience of the world, or "apperception," Herbart moved beyond Pestalozzi's faculty-based psychology toward a more associationist view that held that students learn by comparing new ideas with old and reflecting on their similarities and dissonances. But his best remembered contribution to teacher education was his analysis of the teacher's task, or, to put it more reductively, his invention of the lesson plan. The teacher was to become familiar with what students already knew so that she could structure lessons to lead incrementally, sometimes meticulously, from the known to the unknown, building associations between the old and the new. According to the McMurry brothers, Herbartians were committed to organizing and sequencing lessons according to "universal principles of method in learning," which are "based fundamentally upon the inductive-deductive thought movement in acquiring and using knowledge" (McMurry and McMurry 318). While they shared with Pestalozzian pedagogy the fundamental concept of placing the child and his/her interest, rather than subject matter, at the center of education, Herbartians had more in common with later socio-psychological views of the educational process than with Romantic concepts of individual development.

EUROPEAN PEDAGOGY AND COMPOSITION IN THE NORMALS

Thus composition teachers at the normal schools had access to a tradition of educational philosophy strikingly different from that available through Scottish and American rhetorical theory. But whether that availability translated into application remains to be seen. As historians acknowledge, extracting classroom practices from theories and textbooks is a risky business because textbooks can only suggest one tack that might have been

taken in a class. It is important to triangulate—to look for other and possibly more direct windows into the classroom. One such important source that can sometimes be recovered is recorded discussions and exchanges among teachers themselves. They appear in professional journals (*The School Review*, for instance, reprinted minutes from the annual meetings of the New England Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools for several years around the turn of the twentieth century) and sometimes in self-contained printed editions. A remarkable example of the latter exists in the form of the published proceedings of the four-day state-wide meeting of normal school faculties held in 1900 in Oshkosh. Apparently patterned after curricular conferences conducted by the National Education Association and other professional organizations throughout the 1890s (the Committee of 10 is the best known of these), this “Institute of the Faculties of the Normal Schools” was a forum sponsored by the Normal School Board of Regents to improve and standardize curriculum across the Wisconsin normal schools. The normal school faculty members who met in Oshkosh discussed and debated their aims, philosophies, and methods in terms of their unique mission of providing free education to prospective teachers of students in free common schools. English faculty members’ thorough discussions of the purposes and methods of teaching grammar, composition, and rhetoric in the doubled settings of the normal schools and their clients, the common schools, invite comparison to what we already know about the purposes and methods of composition courses in eastern academic institutions.

I will examine a couple of topics covered in English teachers’ discussions to point out the consequences of the unique position of the normal school in the educational landscape for composition teaching. The first of these is the faculty’s views on students’ linguistic competence; the second is their views on the relationship between grammar texts and pedagogy. To begin with students’ linguistic competence, let us recall that Connors, Miller, and others have shown that complex ideological, professional, and economic circumstances resulted in professors at elite eastern institutions often attributing grammatical error to character deficits like stupidity, laziness, or moral turpitude. In contrast, these normal school teachers accorded natural linguistic competence to both elementary school and normal school students. When the teachers talk about the linguistic competence of their normal school students, we see explanations for poor performance based on prior experience and learning with none of the *ad hominem* descriptors like “vulgar,” “illegitimate,” and “slipshod” that we heard from Harvard men (Briggs 305). Carrie J. Smith of River Falls Normal explains the reasons for normal school seniors’ inattention to grammatical correctness as follows:

- a. The subject matter of Grammar has become more or less obscure with all [students whatever their previous education].
- b. The word rather than the sentence is the unit of grammatical thought, hence
- c. The facts of Grammar are in a confused and unrelated state, hence

- d. There is little or no interest in the subject-matter, hence
- e. There is a common distaste for it.
- f. There is little conscious application of the principles of the correct use of the English language to their own speech. (*Proceedings* 117)

Students' errors are the natural outcome of a combination of inadequate teaching and incomplete learning—an explanation worthy of Mina Shaughnessy. Nor has Smith given up on these seniors: The first purpose of the work in the Professional Review in Grammar course is, according to Smith, "To make better the undesirable conditions enumerated [above]—to relate the isolated facts of the subject-matter, to breathe 'the breath of life' into the sentence, to make the student conscious of his own speech, and to create self-activity in the correction of errors" (*Proceedings* 117).

In a similar vein, Anna Barnard notes that "We have in our Normal school (and I suppose the same is true of others) a large number of pupils who come from families which are foreign, or illiterate, or both." She continues, "It has been my experience that mature pupils do learn to apply to themselves the principles they are studying and in some degree acquire the habit of self-criticism" (*Proceedings* 100). While normal school faculty had no illusions about their students' level of performance at entrance, or even as seniors, they identified different causes than did the Harvard faculty, and, moreover, credited students with the competence to monitor and alter their habits. One can speculate that the differences in faculty members' explanations of students' inadequacies emerged in part from the differences in their institutions' purposes and conditions: among them, that the normal schools were preparing students for direct entrance to the labor force, and thus faculty was perhaps more attuned to thinking of them as responsible, self-controlled adults, rather than as schoolboys (and perhaps they acted more like adults, if various memoirs from students at both kinds of institution can be believed). In addition, the different ideologies of the institutions—that the normal school's overt mission was to extend opportunity to the common populace, not to restrict it—may have encouraged teachers to work with rather than against their imperfect students. Pedagogical theory may also have influenced their views: Smith's phrase "to create self-activity" is jargon directly from Froebel. The second discussion at the Institute of the Faculties of the Normal Schools that I will examine develops this pedagogical connection further.

The topic of that discussion is the relationships between grammar study, language, teaching practices, and textbooks. To their credit, Wisconsin's Normal English teachers did not suffer from the delusion that studying grammar equated to learning to use standard English. S. A. Lynch of West Superior Normal notes, in the course of a discussion about grammar in the elementary schools, that "Practically, [grammar's] value is very slight, for it necessarily follows the learning to use the language in both speech and writing" (*Proceedings* 115, emphasis added). After acknowledging the linguistic competencies that six-year-olds bring to school, he moves to consider what the schools can add to that previously acquired competence. In this, the normal school teachers are in accordance with current linguistic theory, which holds that grammatical competence in one's native language is acquired through social interaction

rather than learned through formal study. However, normal school teachers did share with their counterparts at eastern academic colleges the common misconception that teaching grammar meant teaching logic. By this rationale, teaching the abstract system of formal grammar was integral to composition instruction as a way to teach students to express themselves "logically." It was not until midway through the twentieth century that linguists' empirical research laid to rest the notion that standard English grammar provided any more logical structure to thought than any other English dialect.

Though normal faculties bought into the common notion that grammar study improves logical thinking, their approach to implementing the belief in their teaching practices was different from that of academic colleges. The difference comes in their attempts to integrate two theoretical areas—subject matter theory and pedagogical theory—with each other and with teaching practice. Though compositionists have discarded the notion that standard English grammar is related to logical thinking, I focus on the discussions about grammar at the Oshkosh conference for this reason: They effectively illustrate the point that a pedagogical perspective provided the potential to pry open academic subject theory to critical evaluation. In this way, they foreshadow the rich consequences of the pedagogical turn in composition in the late twentieth century.

The "conductor" of the Oshkosh Institute was the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, L. D. Harvey. Though he claimed not to, Harvey had a clear agenda for the Oshkosh meeting. It was to convince Wisconsin's normal faculties to organize and unify their training around four pedagogical principles that he claimed to have formulated over the course of several years of working with in-service teachers in regularly scheduled short summer institutes. He called these principles "The Four Fundamental Propositions," and argued in several general session speeches and discussion periods that these propositions could and should be applied consistently across the normal school curriculum, both in academic and professional subjects, to achieve effective and efficient teaching and learning. These principles were:

- I. The teacher must have in mind a definite purpose or purposes to be realized in the next recitation.
- II. The teacher must have in mind the things which must be known or done in order that the purposes may be realized.
- III. The teacher must determine what of the things falling under proposition II the pupil now knows or can do.
- IV. The teacher must determine what of the things enumerated under proposition II the pupil still has to learn or to do, and the order in which they should be known or done. (*Proceedings* 6)

These propositions constitute a locally developed scheme based on the principles of European pedagogies that we have seen were readily available to Wisconsin educators. Though the names of these influential European thinkers are seldom mentioned during the Institute, these principles are clearly grounded in Herbartian and Pestalozzian concepts. One professor from Milwaukee Normal, C. E. Patzer, overtly links them to European pedagogy, noting

that Harvey's scheme is based on "well-established psychological principles," especially the maxim that "In teaching [one must] proceed from the known to the related unknown," which "Pestalozzi applied . . . in Germany over one hundred years ago" (*Proceedings* 84–85). A close reading of these principles reveals a couple more underlying tenets: Far from providing a "teacher proof" curriculum, these principles posit a professionally trained teacher capable of making fundamental decisions regarding course content and teaching methods. The corollary to this assumption is that textbooks move to the margins, becoming mere supplements to the central teacher-student dyad.

Several presentations to the English section meeting demonstrated attempts to apply Harvey's four propositions to the teaching of grammar. The most elaborately detailed of them is a model plan for a professional course in grammar presented by Grace Darling Madden, another Milwaukee Normal faculty member. She begins with a model for teaching grammar to schoolchildren. "Scientific" in its minute analysis of subject matter and its inductive/deductive sequencing, this model not only exemplifies Herbartian methodology, but also extends it. Defining mastery as reaching understanding rather than mere rote memorization, Madden requires the students to abstract general principles inductively from examples and to state them in their own words. Only after articulating their own generalizations are they to be allowed to turn to textbook definitions to clarify and reinforce learning; then students deductively apply the generalizations to new examples.

The Herbartian analysis and sequencing of grammar content is the core of the more complex endeavor Madden undertakes here: She teaches simultaneously on three levels. First, she teaches grammar to schoolchildren; second, she illustrates to prospective teachers in her normal school professional grammar class how to construct a grammar course; and finally, she teaches her English faculty colleagues how to design a professional course in teaching grammar pedagogy. In this remarkable demonstration, which occupies seventeen pages of the *Proceedings*, Madden

- outlines a common school year's course in grammar consisting of thirty-three units (118–21);
- analyzes one of those units (recognize and define copulative, transitive and intransitive verbs) according to Harvey's principles II and III above (122–24);
- divides the unit into a series of thirteen daily lessons, each with its own "Set of Aims" (124–25) and includes examples of three of them (125–28);
- analyzes the teacher's work necessary to plan a unit and prepare and present a lesson (128–30);
- argues theoretically in support of her pedagogy (130–31); and
- explains to her colleagues how to organize the professional review class in grammar to present these teaching principles to normal school students (131–35).

I reprint here one of Madden's sample daily lesson plans for this unit in grammar to illustrate her detailed application of these pedagogical principles

Class-Plan 1.

Aim 1.—To teach the pupil to recognize and define complete and incomplete verbs.

2. What must be known or done by the pupil to realize these aims.

- (a) That a sentence is an expression of thought in words.
- (b) That every sentence has at least two parts, subject and predicate.
- (c) That the subject is that about which something is asserted.
- (d) That the predicate is that which asserts something about the subject.
- (e) That the subject may be many-worded.
- (f) That the predicate may be many-worded.
- (g) That a verb is usually the predicate, or is that which asserts something about the subject.
- (h) The pupil must be able to analyze a series of sentences presented by the teacher and observe that some verbs do not need a word to complete the assertion about the subject.
 - (i) He must observe this again and again.
 - (j) He must be told that such verbs are called complete verbs.
 - (k) He must select the complete verbs in this series of sentences.
 - (l) He must be led to define a complete verb.
 - (m) He must observe in this series of sentences that some verbs do require other words to complete the assertion about the subject.
 - (n) He must observe this again and again.
 - (o) He must be told that such verbs are called incomplete verbs.
 - (p) He must select incomplete verbs in this series of sentences.
 - (q) He must be led to define an incomplete verb.
 - (r) He must be led to discriminate between all the complete and incomplete verbs in this series of sentences, by the teacher.
 - (s) He must turn to his grammar to fix and perfect the definitions of a complete and an incomplete verb.
 - (t) He must be told to analyze a series of sentences selected by the teacher taken from the grammar, to select and name the complete and incomplete verbs. This last is in preparation for the next day's lesson.
- (3) Of all under proposition (2) what does the pupil already know or what can he do?
He knows all of a, b, c, d, e, f, g.
- (4) What remains to be known or done?
All under proposition (2) not found under proposition (3), namely, from h to s.

FIGURE 1 Class plan for teaching a grammar lesson to school pupils. Grace Darling Madden, Milwaukee Normal School (*Proceedings of the Institute of Faculties of the Normal Schools*, 1900).

at the simplest level, the grammar lesson in the elementary school classroom.

These lesson plans are certainly open to criticism. First is the questionable rationale for teaching grammar at all, discussed above. Second, though these teachers claim that their curriculum is student driven, we would probably have to conclude that the analysis of grammar that we see demonstrated is, finally, subject driven rather than psychologically based. That should not prevent us from noting, however, the level of responsibility assigned to the

teacher for this plan. Determining the sequence of subject matter topics and recognizing the cognitive needs of the child are the obligation of the classroom teacher according to this model, not of the textbook designer. Additionally, the teacher is responsible for developing her own teaching materials—a copious number of sample sentences as the data for inductive learning (see 2h). Meanwhile, true to pedagogical theories that argue that the child's mind must be actively engaged in her own learning ("self-activated," in Froebel's terms) the student is required to formulate her own definition of complete and incomplete verbs before she is allowed to check the textbook. In fact, the textbook serves only peripherally as a source for review of concise definitions, additional sample sentences, and summaries of information already taught.

This example demonstrates the application of several theoretical precepts: among them that the teacher must determine what the student knows and does not know, must sequence material to move from familiar to unfamiliar, and must require students to form generalizations inductively on the basis of data presented. However, it represents just one of the three teaching contexts within which Madden is working. As noted above, she also lays out her analysis of the work a teacher must perform in order to prepare the units and individual lessons she has described, and then describes to her colleagues how to teach these techniques to normal school students. I include these sections of her presentation in Appendices A and B so the reader who wishes to may pursue for herself the intricacies of interaction among the theory, practice, and multiple settings of normal school work. Suffice it to say here that Madden demonstrates the normal school ideal of embedding all academic teaching in the professional context of preparing teachers to teach the subject matter.

Though the sample lesson plans offered at the Oshkosh Institute as well as the actual practices within the normal schools may be open to criticism for a variety of reasons, my point here is to show that a potentially creative intersection of forces is present in the conditions of teaching in the normal school. The various theoretical perspectives available from both academic and pedagogical disciplines together with the multiple sites of practice in which normal faculty operated granted them critical positions unavailable to professors in strictly academic institutions.

Madden's complex analysis of the content, preparation, and presentation of lessons is just one example of a larger nineteenth-century reform in pedagogy that led from the ubiquitous use of rote memorization and recitation at the beginning of the century to student-centered pedagogies by the end of the century. By 1900 the changes in psychological thinking were no longer confined to Europeans like Pestalozzi and Herbart, for Americans like John Dewey, William James, and Stanley Hall were beginning their work on theories of learning and development that would render faculty psychology obsolete and begin to frame educational theory for the next century.

We saw above that normal school faculties in Wisconsin were quite conscious of these theoretical innovations. At the Oshkosh Institute, one entire morning's general session was devoted to the question of whether normal and/or common school teachers needed to be aware of psychological theories of learning and development in order to teach well, and if so, which princi-

principles were essential to their success. S. A. Lynch, an English professor from West Superior Normal, provides an outline of psychology-based principles that summarizes succinctly the consensus on what psychology the teachers should know. They include

1. The healthy child finds pleasure in activity of body and mind.
2. The processes of teaching are determined by the order and laws of mental growth.
3. The first presentation of subject matter should be made with objects or actions (wherever possible).
4. Teaching should proceed first inductively, then deductively, fact, definition, exercises to show the application of the definition.
5. The work and content of the learner's mind must be brought to adequate expression. [Contemporary translation: Learning must be active, not merely receptive.] (*Proceedings* 115)

Normal school teachers' desire to base teaching methods on current psychological precepts such as these meant that they had to rely on the teacher's expertise to design lesson plans. The new psychology-based methods required the teacher to use her professional judgment grounded on her knowledge of the subject matter and her students' level of achievement to develop, arrange, and sequence the subject matter in patterns accessible to her students. Though Madden's description of these responsibilities is the most detailed, she is far from alone in advocating this teacher rather than text-intensive pedagogy. Lynch, in a paper given before Madden's, describes a major element of a professional review class as planning "in detail how [normal students] would present new phases of the subject to classes." They must consider, that is, "what would be their aim, what previous knowledge . . . must the pupils have before the new fact can be attempted, [and] how the teacher may apply scientific principles without requiring pupils to learn these principles" (*Proceedings* 113). Demonstrating their willingness at least in spirit to apply these principles to practice, Albert Hardy, chair of the English section, noted in his final report to the Institute that the English faculties recommended "the plan of teaching Grammar by application of the four fundamental propositions as presented by Mrs. Madden of Milwaukee Normal" be adopted as standard practice (*Proceedings* 147).

What is important here is the critical distance from textbooks teachers gained by means of their pedagogical viewpoint. Their pedagogical principles required them as agents of their students' learning to analyze their own students' levels of attainment and design the presentation of material accordingly. Rather than accept the text's presentation of subject matter at face value, they judged textbook approaches by their own views about the psychology of learning, and found the textbooks wanting. In his presentation, Lynch notes that grammar texts are valuable for limited reasons only:

- 1) in setting forth the thoughts of those authors who have given the subject much study;
- 2) in furnishing facts regarding the language, not known by the average reader;

- 3) as a sort of standard of comparison for pupils after they have attempted to formulate their own definitions and rules;
- 4) as a ready reference for review work;
- 5) and in providing exercises for drill in parsing and analysis. (*Proceedings* 113)

Notable in its absence from this list is *teaching* the concepts of grammar.

Continuing the critique of textbooks, Madden compares the deductive presentation of subject matter to methods required by sound pedagogy:

The average grammar usually introduces an individual generalization which is illustrated by a single sentence and then applied to a few disjointed and often meaningless sentences. The teacher's attempt to see how he may best realize the aim or aims [of the lesson] . . . leads him to see that the pupil must arrive inductively at a new generalization and apply this generalization again and again to new particulars. (*Proceedings* 131)

Madden points out that her class plan

discloses possible shortcomings with respect to the subject matter as presented in the average text-book. How? The teacher in formulating what is to be known or done to realize aims or propositions must inevitably analyze the subject matter as presented in the average text, must criticise the presentation of the same, and must determine whether the subject needs further elucidation and illustration than that presented by the text. Again many a text-book calls for the rote-memorizing of underived generals and the application of imperfectly understood generals to new particulars. (*Proceedings* 135)

Lynch suggests that the basis for criticizing textbooks should extend beyond the teacher's knowledge of learning theory. While allowing that "for facts of usage, students must depend upon the investigation of others as recorded in text-books," he insists that "they should, however, compare the information given in books with what they know of the language, and test the conclusions of the texts by logical reasoning" (*Proceedings* 113, emphasis added). Not only were the textbooks' methods of presentation inadequate, but even their conclusions could be questioned. What's more, the basis for challenging the conclusions could lie in the linguistic competence, experience, and reasoning capacity of the students themselves. Admittedly, Lynch's confidence in the agency and authority of teachers and students might represent an extreme position; the point, however, is that the dissonance created by the juxtaposition of textbook authority and the authority of pedagogical theory created a space from which radical critiques could emerge.

NORMALS, COMPOSITION, AND HIGHER EDUCATION TODAY

On the basis of the past work in composition history that has demonstrated how the aims and methods of composition as a discipline emerged from their local social, economic, cultural, and ideological contexts, we would

expect a very different story to emerge from a very different set of conditions. I have pointed out that the conditions of the normal schools differ significantly from those of the institutions where composition originated in two respects. The first is the aims of the institutions—the normal schools were intended to be inclusive, democratic institutions that focused on professional rather than academic preparation. The second is the intellectual traditions upon which composition faculty drew—normal school faculties had access to European pedagogical theories as well as composition textbooks. Together these conditions shaped a unique normal school ethos. Perhaps the most notable feature of this ethos is the active integration of theory and practice. Although normal schools were accused of reductive, mechanistic approaches to teaching (Herbst, Borrowman), the Oshkosh conversations uncover a more complex picture, one in which theory and practice are held in dialectical, mutually informative tension. Integral to this dynamic is the conviction, warranted by their pedagogical theories, of the autonomy of the normal professors and students. Because of their intellectual and psychological grounding in pedagogy, normal school faculty, far from being slavishly dependent on textbooks, assumed the agency to critically analyze and adapt them to their own teaching practices. Yet another consequence of the normal professors' access to learning theory was their attitude toward their students' linguistic competence. They saw linguistic competence as a socially constructed and constantly modified process, not as a static, class-based character trait. In all these ways, the attitudes of normal faculty provide a precedent far more compatible with the contemporary ethic of composition than those depicted at the more elite academic institutions.

The story told here about composition in the normal school plays out against larger issues in the history of composition and of American education. First, for doing the history of composition, it is important to note that none of these observations would have been possible from the evidence provided by theoretical works and textbooks alone. Historians of composition in formal education have relied heavily on textbooks, not only for their valuable information about how the field was conceptualized, but also because they are readily available sources. This study demonstrates how partially these texts reveal the thinking of teachers. As historians, we need to search for more direct access to teachers' thinking and to classroom practices. Teachers' lecture notes and diaries, students' notes, diaries, and papers, and recorded professional conversations are just beginning to receive the attention they merit in our research.

A second contextual issue is the continuing struggle in American education over the place of teaching in the curriculum. Salvatori and Herbst argue that the absorption of the normal school—the single purpose institution committed to teaching teachers to teach—into the research oriented university that divorces theory from practice had the effect of destroying the status of pedagogy as a complex human endeavor uniting theory, research, art, and method in a mutually constructive conversation. As has often been observed, composition in English departments suffers in prestige because of its association with teaching, devalued as a mere service to students. This study argues that

it is time to examine how constructions of the English student, professor, and teaching mission might be enriched by cross-fertilization with the pedagogical perspective.

The third background issue against which this story plays out is that of composition's search for its own identity as a discipline. If, as Brereton suspects, we compositionists tend to define ourselves by our relation to our origins, then our identity depends in part on our ability to see our past fully. Our search for our past not only uncovers historical precedents for current viewpoints, but also enables us to discover alternative perspectives from which to assert ourselves in our contemporary institutional settings. Current historical research into alternate sites of writing instruction will give compositionists multiple options for identifying with as well as against our past.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to Mary Freymiller, archivist (now retired) at the Southwest Wisconsin Room at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville's Karrmann Library, and to the members of the Utah State University English Department's FHE reading group for their patient and insightful readings of this manuscript in various drafts.

APPENDIX A

According to Grace Darling Madden, the lesson plans she illustrates (Figure 1) require the following "lines of work" or preparation by the teacher (*Proceedings of an Institute of the Faculties of the Normal Schools, 1900*).

V. Above selections and grouping of material and organization of the same in lesson plans involves what plans or lines of work on the part of the teacher:

- 1.—The teacher must know the subject of grammar as a whole and see its natural and logical division into units. See units I to XXXIX given in Introduction.
- 2.—The teacher must see the relation between these units if any exists.
- 3.—The teacher must determine the naming of the "unit-heads."
- 4.—The teacher must determine their relative importance.
- 5.—The teacher must determine their order.
- 6.—The teacher must organize lesson-plans corresponding to a unit or a division of a unit, if the unit is so large as to require a series of lesson plans.
- 7.—The teacher must determine what topics a, b, c, etc., under proposition "2" of the lesson-plan the pupil now knows or can do.
- 8.—The teacher must determine how he may rapidly and effectively bring to the consciousness of the pupils the data already known, which may be brought into such living and vital relation with the new as to aid the class to comprehend the new or unknown.
- 9.—The teacher must determine his mode of procedure before he attempts to teach the class the topics under proposition "4" of the lesson plan.

10.—The teacher must prepare a series of sentences, which sentences are so selected and grouped that the pupil may observe again and again some grammatical fact; for example, that some verbs require other words to complete the assertion about the subject and may finally arrive at generalizations; for example, verbs which require other words to complete the assertion about the subject are called incomplete verbs.

11.—The teacher must be ready to refer the pupil to certain pages of the text-book for reference and study. The pupil will need to compare the text for the purpose of applying the generalizations arrived at to new particulars, will need the guidance of the text-book in the formation of summaries of units; such as all the offices of nouns in sentences, classes of pronouns, etc.

12.—The teacher must think out logical summaries of units in order that he may teach his class to form similar summaries.

APPENDIX B

This is Grace Darling Madden's plan for teaching the normal school professional course in teaching grammar (*Proceedings of an Institute of the Faculties of the Normal Schools*, 1900).

VIII. The handling of a class-plan with a class who are composed of students in *the Professional Review Class in Grammar*.

1. The teacher presents a large unit, the outline of which is based upon the class-plan. The unit is large for two reasons: (a) The pupil has a breadth of knowledge concerning Grammar before entering the professional review class. (b) The large unit saves time in so far as topics are reviewed.

2. The teacher at least once during the half quarter takes a large unit which has been developed with the class, divides this unit into a series of logically related smaller units, organizes a series of class-plans corresponding to each of the smaller units. These individual class-plans, corresponding to the units of the large class-plan, make up an orderly series developing the whole unit. The class-plan embraces the four heads.

1. Aim or aims of the day's work.

2. What must be known or done to realize these aims.

3. What is already known or can be done by the pupil.

4. What remains to be done or known.

5. Each student in the professional class is expected to develop, as a piece of original and special work done by himself, a similar series of related class-plans which are parts of a series developing a large unit, or larger class-plan whole. He carefully prepares each of the units of the series in an orderly outline—this outline is based upon the four fundamental propositions noted above. This individual work of each student is criticised by the teacher and compared with class-plan work presented to the class by the teacher. The student then reviews and corrects his work and puts it in the best shape possible. After some two or three weeks have been devoted to the consideration of class-plans

continued on next page

outlined by the teacher, the class are expected to formulate the results of the teaching of grammar based upon the four fundamental propositions, which results they infer or derive from their own experience in the classroom. These results are read aloud in class by individual students, compared, and different students are required to state how each one of these results seems to him to have been accomplished. At times the teacher definitely discusses with the class the aims in view in the development of a class-plan, the order and arrangement of the subject matter of instruction, and the means used for drill and application.

The teacher reviews with the class the subject matter of grammar. This subject matter was organized and grouped by the teacher in some thirty units. As many of these units are reviewed with the class as time permits. These units represent large wholes which then need subdivision into smaller units, making up a related series of this larger whole. The teacher uses these lesson-plans for two reasons: (a) to review with the pupil the essentials of English Grammar; (b) to illustrate to the pupil the organization of the subject matter of Grammar based upon the four fundamental propositions. Thus the academic work and professional work are combined. There is a necessity for the combination of the academic work and professional for two reasons: (1) The average student in the professional class evinces a lack of understanding of Grammar. (2) It seems a foolish waste of time to first present the subject matter of instruction by one method to the class, and then later to organize this subject matter of instruction based upon the four fundamental propositions in a different manner and order than that originally presented by the teacher. The review or the academic work is presented to the class inductively, that is, the teacher prepares a series of sentences to be used in connection with each unit of instruction. The pupil observes the phenomena or facts through the medium of these correct illustrations; he observes like illustrations; he is led to consciously compare them and to determine their points of similarity. Through this observation, comparison and abstraction of a similarity, he arrives finally at a generalization. This generalization may be a definition. It may be a rule of syntax. This generalization, made by the student is then compared with the text-book generalization, is fixed and formulated. The student then applies the generalization to many new concrete illustrations of the same phenomena. These concrete illustrations are taken from the text-book in Grammar. The student is expected to make a summary of each day's new lesson presented, and a final summary of the series of successive units which go to make up a larger unit or whole. The student is thus illustrating also the deductive method in the study of Grammar in so far as he is required to apply the generalization at which he has arrived to many a new particular.

The student is required in time to discuss with a teacher the class-plan based upon the four fundamental propositions under the following heads: 1—Preparation for class-work, (a) the preparation or organization of the subject matter of instruction; (b) the preparation of the child's mind for the rapid and effective assimilation of this new data. 2—The presentation of the same in the classroom, (a) the method of presentation through induction; (b) the character, number and kind of the sentences or concrete illustrations to be prepared by the teacher; (c) the logical order of the presentation of the new. (3)—Drill and application. Necessity of drill to fulfill the aim as stated under the four fundamental propositions. Means to vary mode of drilling, such as the summary of each day's work, the summary of larger units, and application of the principle derived to new particulars.

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