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Current-Traditional Rhetoric and the Hodges Harbrace Handbook: A Study in the Disconnect Between Theory and Practice

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CURRENT-TRADITIONAL RHETORIC AND THE *HODGES HARBRACE HANDBOOK*:
A STUDY IN THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

by

LESLIE S. TAYLOR

Under the Direction of Michael Harker, PhD and Ashley Holmes, PhD

ABSTRACT

In the 1980s and 1990s, current-traditional rhetoric (CTR) was a popular topic in rhetoric and composition scholarship as the field justified its move away from CTR in an attempt to offer more authentic and process-based forms of writing instruction. Since that time, however, scholarship on the topic has decreased, likely because scholarship has dismissed CTR as a viable composition pedagogy. Though CTR is no longer a popular topic in scholarship, it should still be addressed in scholarship because there are still writing instructors who utilize it to teach writing as a prescriptive, form-first endeavor that minimizes the role of audience and purpose.

This dissertation argues that CTR still exists, and as such, should receive more attention in composition scholarship. One of the reasons that CTR still exists is because the conditions that gave rise to it still exist, but most important here is that CTR still exists because it is perpetuated

through textbooks, particularly the purported best-selling textbook of all time, the *Hodges Harbrace Handbook*. This dissertation traces the origins of the *Hodges Harbrace Handbook* as well as the history of John C. Hodges, the text's initial author, as a means of illustrating the ways that a pedagogical theory, CTR, which has been dismissed in scholarship, continues to make its way into composition classrooms. This dissertation also discusses the problematic implications of the text's continued use in college composition classrooms and proposes public pedagogy as one possible alternative to CTR because of its ability to reintroduce the components of writing that are removed in CTR.

INDEX WORDS: Composition pedagogy, *Hodges Harbrace Handbook*, Current-Traditional Rhetoric, First-year composition, John C. Hodges

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LESLIE S. TAYLOR

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2019

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Leslie S. Taylor
2019

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DEDICATION

To Keith, who has spent the last few years listening and talking about these ideas with me and who has helped me think about things other than current-traditional rhetoric.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CTR = Current-Traditional Rhetoric

HHH = the *Hodges Harbrace Handbook*

UTK = University of Tennessee at Knoxville

1 INTRODUCTION

Years ago, I sat in a graduate class and listened as my professor described current-traditional rhetoric (CTR). I listened intently. Many of the concepts—the 5-paragraph essay, thesis statements, topic sentences, coherence—were concepts I taught in first-year composition courses, so I was excited. I thought that we were about to discuss something in my wheelhouse. However, my professor ended his description of CTR by saying that “no one uses this anymore.” I said nothing, but I felt my face burn in embarrassment as I realized I had been wrong about where the conversation was headed, but even more troubled thinking I might have been teaching writing in an outdated way. At the same time, I knew my professor was wrong; for years I have worked in a department that uses CTR to teach writing though many of the department’s faculty members are unfamiliar with the term current-traditional rhetoric.

After hearing my professor’s description of CTR, I have struggled with what he said. While listening to his description, I quickly understood that CTR was “bad.” I knew he was saying that CTR was bad in theory and in practice, and I even understood a little bit about why. But I remained confused. First, I knew that I taught some of its components of CTR, and I am a conscientious teacher, so why would I teach the wrong way? One reason is because I knew it was how my colleagues were teaching. Another is because *parts* of CTR feel like indispensable elements of writing instruction. If I am teaching a writing class, shouldn’t I be talking to my students about thesis statements, paragraphing, introductions, conclusions, comma splices, and run-ons? I can imagine how one might go overboard with any of these topics, but where is the line: when does talking to students about a topic like paragraphs move from a potentially helpful discussion on organization to a CTR-inspired directive? Surely there is a middle ground between prescription and anarchy.

Perhaps what has been most confusing to me in trying to find a middle ground is that I know CTR still exists even though people, such as my former professor, have told me it does not. People I respect have told me that I am taking rhetoric and composition back to the 1990s by even talking about CTR. The implication in those conversations is that I am somehow out of touch or out of date. Another implication is that I am bringing up a topic that has already been decided. In other words, we all know this is bad, so why do we need to talk about it, if, as my professor said, no one is using this anymore? This is confirmed in scholarship given how often CTR was discussed in the 90s (a great deal) versus how often it is discussed now (rarely). Maybe it has been settled in theory and maybe it has been settled in practice in some places, but my practical experience repeatedly tells me I am correct: CTR is still being taught. I know this from conversations with my colleagues and my students, but I also see it in textbooks, where many have argued is the place it is most often defined.

In thinking about CTR and its relationship to textbooks, I always come back to the *Hodges Harbrace Handbook (HHH)*. Many of the people I know who teach CTR are loyal users of the *HHH*. I have even heard stories from people who, when first teaching composition, were handed the *HHH* by an administrator and told good luck. I repeatedly wonder what makes the *HHH* such an exemplary text that institutions are willing to hand it out with the confidence that someone will be able to teach composition simply by using that text. One of the answers I have come to is that my colleagues who use the *HHH* (or a comparable text) to teach 1101 take a very different approach to teaching that class than I was taught to do, and they are often fierce defenders of the text. Given my suspicions that those who use the text are teaching differently than I do, and given their loyalty to the text, I cannot help but ask, what pedagogical approach does the *HHH* prescribe? In other words, if someone uses *HHH* in English 1101, what does that class look like?

After spending almost a decade working with students in our campus writing lab, I came to the conclusion that what I have seen at work (CTR) is the opposite of what I have learned (anything but CTR) as a student of rhetoric and composition. From my perspective, there is a disconnect between theory and practice. Because of that disconnect, I am analyzing the history of the *HHH* as a means of showing that CTR still exists. The history of the *HHH* and the history of CTR are complicated and often overlapping, but they reveal a great deal about the history of writing instruction and they raise questions about how the book, which is highly commercially successful, meets or fails to meet our current standards for composition pedagogy. Revisiting the history of the book also raises the question of whether or not the book reflects the scholarship and ethical standards common for research in the field.

In the years I have spent thinking about all of this, I have spent a lot of time second guessing the way I teach, and I have gotten a lot of mixed messages (as I just described). However, I know that CTR still exists, so I have tried to understand what constitutes CTR and why it has such a bad reputation. To resolve these questions, this dissertation begins by tracing the roots of CTR as a term to discover what it means, why it has earned a certain reputation in the field of rhetoric and composition, and perhaps most important is to demonstrate where and how it has persisted in composition classes. The *HHH* will provide a means for examining and answering many of these questions. At the heart of all of this is the question I have tried to answer for years: what should I be teaching in my first-year composition (FYC) courses? I propose public pedagogy as one possibility for teaching FYC, particularly because of the way it reintroduces invention and audience, key components of writing that CTR removes or minimizes.

2 WHAT IS CURRENT-TRADITIONAL RHETORIC?

2.1 Literature Review

The best that can be said of this model is that students were indeed writing. The worst that can be said is that this model severely restricts the student's response to experience. -James Berlin on CTR

The term current traditional rhetoric¹ first appeared in 1959 in Daniel Fogarty's *Roots for a New Rhetoric* (Crowley, "Current-Traditional Rhetoric"; Connors). According to Robert Connors, Fogarty labeled all the work that came before him as current traditional rhetoric in an attempt to put the focus on rhetoric and not composition, but the term was not important to him and did not receive much attention at the time (Connors 4). The term gained wider attention later, in 1978, when Richard Young published "Problems and Paradigms: Needed Research in Rhetorical Invention" (Crowley, *University* 163). In this publication, Young adapted Fogarty's term by adding a hyphen and using it to refer to "the older forms of composition teaching theory as based in a 'current-traditional paradigm'" (Connors 4).² At that time, CTR became recognizable as a pejorative phrase to describe rhetoric (and writing instruction) from the late 1800s to the 1960s (Connors 4), and this is how it is still often used.

A few years later, at MLA in 1984, C.H. Knoblauch questioned the term. Though his challenge received little attention at the time, he made an interesting argument. He said, "No major rhetoricians, ancient or modern, have been named as its [CTR] originators or perpetrators; no works, aside from textbooks, have been identified as constituting it; its concepts have never been formally analyzed or proven systematic" (qtd. in Connors, *Composition-Rhetoric*, 4).

¹ There was no hyphen in Fogarty's use of the term.

² Connors notes that Fogarty's and Young's terms are often used without identifying the distinction between the two.

Knoblauch also claimed that Young “had stripped Fogarty’s term of its intellectual seriousness in order to criticize a classroom tradition he disliked” (5). Knoblauch’s observations reveal a fundamental problem with CTR: the term does not describe what its name suggests. In fact, the title of Knoblauch’s presentation was “Current-Traditional Rhetoric: Neither Current, nor Traditional, nor a Paradigm” (Connors 5). The term, originally a rhetorical term coined by Fogarty, was now used to describe classroom practices. Given this dual use of the term, it is unclear what CTR actually describes. Knoblauch’s argument points out that there are competing definitions and perhaps issues of connotation versus denotation for CTR. Connors also acknowledges the ambiguity of the term: “‘Current-traditional rhetoric’ became a convenient whipping boy, the term of choice after 1985 for describing whatever in nineteenth-and twentieth-century rhetorical or pedagogical history any given author found wanting. Got a contemporary problem? Blame it on the darn old current-traditional rhetoric” (5). David Gold will pick up this argument two decades later, but until then, CTR was often a wide-ranging term for what is considered bad or outdated in composition pedagogy.

Though some have pointed to the term’s vagueness as problematic, others have argued against CTR, in part or whole, as a pedagogical practice. One notable such argument appears in James Berlin’s influential text, *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges*. Berlin details the roots of CTR, its features, and its faults. He argues that

While it would at first seem unfair to fault a system that teaches writing by having students write, the disappointing feature of this method [CTR] appears in the view of composing being taught. If textbooks told students anything about the stages of composing, they provided a mechanical model. The student was to select the subject, narrow it to a thesis, make an outline of the essay, write the

essay, and edit it for correctness. They might also be given suggestions for introductions and conclusions. While the student was often told to adapt his message to the audience, he was given no instructions for doing so, or he was given an abstract model of audience response based on the old faculty psychology and the forms of discourse. This conception is a clear example of Whately revisited—view of composing grounded in a positivist epistemology. The best that can be said of this model is that students were indeed writing. The worst that can be said is that this model severely restricts the student’s response to experience. Current-traditional rhetoric dictates that certain matters cannot be discussed because they are either illusory—not empirically verifiable—or they cannot be contained within acceptable structures—rational categories, for example. This very exclusion, meanwhile, encourages a mode of behavior that helps students in their move up the corporate ladder—correctness in usage, grammar, clothing, thought, and a certain sterile objectivity and disinterestedness. (74-75)

This excerpt, though lengthy, is important because it represents what, for at least 20-30 years, was the prevailing scholarly attitude towards CTR and what constitutes its faults. Berlin’s main arguments are that in CTR, students learn to write by using a “mechanical model” that privileges structure and correctness while failing to help students adapt their messages to a given audience. He blames the shortcomings of CTR on positivist epistemology and an approach “based on the old faculty psychology and the forms of discourse.” Many other scholars have lodged similar complaints. W. Ross Winterowd, for example, makes arguments similar to Berlin’s when he states that “for more than a hundred years the configuration of writing instruction was

determined by a psychology [faculty psychology] that had long been discredited and forgotten as a historical force” (39). This complaint that CTR is based on faulty logic, particularly faculty psychology, is common in scholarship of the last 30-40 years.

If, as Berlin argues, CTR relies on outdated psychology and a mechanical model, it is no wonder that CTR has a bad reputation. Reducing writing to a formula that favors grammatical correctness and structure over purpose, audience, and context contradicts years of research and practice in the field of composition. Yet, in practice, CTR has persisted for many years, leaving composition scholars and teachers with many questions to answer: Is it a clearly defined theory and/or practice? If so, what *IS* CTR? Where does it exist (as a theory or practice)? Where did it originate? If it came from the Enlightenment, as is often assumed, is it what the Enlightenment theorists who are credited with creating it intended? If not, has Enlightenment thinking been misunderstood or mischaracterized? On the other hand, if CTR is the mechanical monster it is commonly understood to be, and if the Enlightenment philosophers were aiming to create a formulaic means of composing, why did they do it, and why is it still being taught despite widespread objection from composition scholars?

Sharon Crowley, a scholar known for her work in this area, has focused much of her scholarship on addressing some of these questions, particularly as they relate to the relationship between invention and CTR. She wrote the definition of CTR in the *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*. Given her ethos on the subject, her entry provides a starting point for answering the questions above. Crowley describes CTR as a means “to designate the formalist rhetoric commonly used in American writing instruction during most of the twentieth century” (156). She notes that CTR is not a term that was used during the Enlightenment; this distinction is important because CTR is commonly assumed to have its roots in the Enlightenment, but the

term and concept of CTR were not, based on Crowley's entry and Connors' *Composition-Rhetoric*, labeled as such by Enlightenment professors and philosophers. Therefore, for the sake of clarity and accuracy, it is important to acknowledge that the term reflects the way Enlightenment theories were *later* adapted, meaning that those adaptations may or may not accurately reveal Enlightenment theory. Understanding the term's origins also leads to the question of whether the formulaic, unimaginative understanding we have of CTR should be blamed on Enlightenment theorists. This question is important because scholars, such as Crowley and Winterowd, have blamed the Enlightenment for the faulty logic of CTR, but it is worth considering how those ideas, whose origins are in the Enlightenment, have been adapted and modified throughout the years.

2.2 Recent Scholarship on CTR

Recent scholars have taken up this issue of CTR's origins and suggest that we need to reconsider the labels that have historically been placed on the theory that came from the Enlightenment. Some of the previously harsh and dismissive attitudes towards CTR, especially the 5-paragraph essay, may be softening, as evidenced in the powerful article, "The Five-Paragraph Essay: Its Evolution and Roots in Theme Writing," published in 2015. In this article, Matthew J. Nunes convincingly argues that the 5-paragraph essay's beginning goes back farther than is commonly believed. He traces histories presented by scholars such as James Berlin, Robert Connors, and Sharon Crowley, all major figures in this argument, and outlines the ways they fail to adequately document their arguments for the form's beginning. Nunes goes on to argue that the 5-paragraph essay does not have a definite starting date in schools, and he details how the use of the 5-paragraph essay is based in theme-writing, a practice that pre-dates the 18th- and 19th-centuries by at least a couple hundred years and is based on classical rhetoric (309). He

takes great pains to determine the roots of the 5-paragraph essay to help scholars and teachers better understand how and why the form has persisted and perhaps reconsider their dismissal of anything labeled as CTR. If Nunes is correct, perhaps we need to reconsider our accepted accounts of the conditions that created the form. Nunes says, “The five-paragraph essay and other current-traditional forms and practices need to be reexamined through the lens of their histories instead of through the lens of our current constructions and assumptions concerning such practices” (311). Nunes presents an objective view of 19th-century teachers of rhetoric while also considering that CTR’s negative reputation may not be entirely correct or warranted.

Others have taken similar revisionist approaches to CTR and the period blamed for producing it. More specifically, in 2008, David Gold published *Rhetoric at the Margins: Revising the History of Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1873-1947*, which won the 2010 Outstanding Book Award from CCCC. According to Kristen Garrison, in this text, Gold “prompts us to pause before passing final sentence on this pedagogical paradigm [CTR] because his research reveals the ways in which pedagogies represent a complex of myriad paradigms, with current-traditional as just one of many possibilities for achieving various curricular objectives” (317). Gold explains how the term has been vilified: “current-traditional rhetoric, so we are told, stifled students’ political participation, perpetuated class inequities, erased or supplanted students’ home voices, and was found dull by students and instructors alike” (3). In this context, Gold mentions the origins of the first freshman composition classes and says that CTR “was dominant in American colleges from the late nineteenth century through most of the twentieth, and many maintain it remains the dominant form of writing instruction today” (3), but he seems to be focused on arguing about CTR in the past and the way it has been (mis)understood. He argues that

Current-traditional rhetoric has come to embody a number of academic misdeeds. It was positivistic and foundationalist. The truth was “out there”: thus, invention was no longer a knowledge-making process as it ideally was in classical rhetoric but simply a matter of figuring out how to say what one had already concluded. Epistemologically compromised and severed from its classical roots, current-traditional rhetoric, so we are told, stifled students’ political participation, perpetuated class inequities, erased or supplanted students’ home voices, and was found dull by students and instructors alike. (Gold 3)

Gold takes issue with this understanding of CTR; he believes that what has been labeled current-traditional “often represents a complex of interwoven practices, both conservative and radical, liberatory and disciplining, and subject to wide-ranging local and institutional variations” (5). Gold challenges the traditional understanding of CTR by looking at three different colleges and examining the ways CTR functioned (in the 19th and 20th centuries) and employed “pedagogical practices that encouraged civic participation and catered to local needs” (317). He believes that those practices make it worth reconsidering. Much like Nunes, Gold believes we need to reconsider history to see how this approach has been used successfully in classrooms other than that often-cited 1884 Harvard classroom. Also, like Knoblauch, Gold sees the term as problematic because of the term’s ambiguity. He argues, “Indeed, current-traditional rhetoric has become a convenient catchphrase and catchall for whatever historical pedagogical practices we have deemed reductive, impolitic, or inelegant” (1), again raising questions about exactly what CTR means and pointing out that we may mean different things when we say CTR.

2.3 CTR & Invention

Though Gold hopes to create a new approach to understanding CTR, in recounting attitudes towards it, he brings up an important charge against CTR: it moves or removes invention as it was understood in the classical rhetorical canon. Sharon Crowley has argued that CTR modifies invention as it was used in classical rhetoric. She claims that invention in the classical sense “can be defined as the division of rhetoric that supplies speakers and writers with instructions for finding the specific arguments that are appropriate to a given rhetorical situation” (*Methodical* 2). She also points out that invention has a theoretical component. In that sense, “invention becomes the study of all possible means by which arguments or proofs can be discovered or developed. Rhetoricians develop theories of invention when they focus on questions about how people may be persuaded to accept something as worthy of belief” (2). What is critically important in this discussion, however, is not just invention’s definition; what is essential to understanding the change that CTR made to invention is understanding the way it modified epistemology as it related to invention. Crowley notes that “Some classical rhetoricians and logicians assumed that knowledge was contained in the collected wisdom of the community” (*Methodical* 2). As such, people considered the “collected wisdom” of their community as they decided the best means for persuasion on a given matter. As Crowley observes, “Ancient inventional theory was viable as long as rhetoric was defined as the art that studied the generation and reception of effective public discourse” (4).

However, that understanding of rhetoric (as well as the study of classical rhetoric) eventually lost its foothold in classrooms, and according to Crowley, “modern rhetorical theorists realized that if a viable new rhetoric were to be developed, classical invention had to be altered or rejected altogether because it was utterly unsuited to the modern belief that knowledge

resulted from the actions of individual minds on the things of the world” (*Methodical* 4). In other words, ancient rhetorical theory began with the collected wisdom of the community while CTR begins with the individual. As such, the classical view of invention is incompatible with CTR because the two assume knowledge comes from different places. Thus, invention has to be modified or removed to make CTR viable. Modifying or moving invention is a move with consequences. It is a move that happens because views about epistemology change. When CTR moves invention to the individual, it removes the need for a writer to consider her purpose, audience, and context because now the focus is on the individual’s experience as well as correctness and adherence to a specified form (typically the 5-paragraph essay). The importance of this change cannot be overstated. Removing invention and placing knowledge within the individual, as is done in CTR, leaves the writer or rhetor with almost no choices to make, a situation that is ironic given that knowledge now resides with the individual. Whereas rhetorical invention provides rhetors with choices and options, CTR provides writers with rules, divorced from context, about how writing should be done.

In *Composition in the University*, Crowley explains the 18th-century amendment to invention in this way: “The new rhetoricians [of the eighteenth century] thoroughly revised ancient thought about rhetoric; they rejected ancient location of invention within discourse in common use, relocating it in the relation of individual minds to empirical reality and thus yoking rhetoric to the service of science” (*Composition* 34-5). Janice Lauer similarly explains that “rhetoric was a kind of ‘managerial’ art. Its purpose was not to investigate or create, but rather to organize and present arguments through moral reasoning and empirical evidence. Science and philosophy continued to usurp the role of rhetorical invention” (39). Explanations (and criticisms) of the fate of invention during the 18th and 19th centuries abound in rhetoric and

composition scholarship. They are worth mentioning because how invention was used, misused, placed, or misplaced has much to do with why so many scholars have found fault in CTR.

However, even in the criticism, there is evidence that not all Enlightenment scholars' approaches to invention are problematic for modern scholars. For example, Janice Lauer praises Giambattista Vico for his classical view of invention (40). She quotes Catherine Peardon who "demonstrated that Vico united language and ideas, thus abandoning a Lockean separation of words and ideas and embracing an epistemology resting on 'a mutually implicated language and thought'" (40). Vico, like many figures of his time, is a complicated one. Modern scholars have increasingly given attention to Vico, but as Bizzell and Herzberg point out, "Although a growing number of scholars now see Vico as a major figure in the development of a rhetoric with a culturally based epistemology, in his own time he was regarded as a reactionary because of his opposition to Descartes" (862). Though his ideas may have value to modern scholars, in his lifetime, his ideas did not carry the same weight as his more popular contemporaries, a fact that raises questions about viewing his work as representative of Enlightenment thinking.

Considering Vico's contribution to rhetorical theory is an illustration of how quickly it becomes tricky to label and classify figures and theories. His work defies simple labels and categories, much as is the case with CTR, but in the case of CTR, the question remains of whether or not the reputation it has earned is warranted. As recent scholars (Nunes; Gold) have argued, perhaps our tendency to label everything CTR as worthy of scorn fails to consider the conditions under which the likes of Blair and Campbell were thinking and writing while also potentially preventing us from fully considering what 18th- and 19th- rhetorical theory could teach us. Many of the changes taking place, including approaches to rhetoric, during the 18th- and 19th- centuries were in response to a push for science. Prior to that time, rhetoric had been degraded

and relegated to dealing primarily with issues of style, so rhetoric had lost much of the respect it carried in previous centuries. The conditions surrounding the origins of CTR are worth attention as they may reveal parallels to the present.

2.4 Legitimizing Rhetoric

Trying to find ways to make rhetoric more scientific---linking it to psychology, creating what we might now see as formulas for communicating---were largely attempts to legitimize the field of rhetoric. As Bizzell and Herzberg observe,

Before the end of the seventeenth century, however, traditional rhetoric came under attack by adherents of the new science who claimed that rhetoric obscured the truth by encouraging the use of ornamented rather than plain, direct language. Many philosophers called for broad language reforms in an attempt to purify communication, at least for science and philosophy. (792)

In other words, the rhetorical theory of this time was responding to the culture and climate of the time in which it was produced. It is no surprise then that there was an effort to legitimize rhetoric when it came under attack, and perhaps it is not surprising that science was an avenue for legitimizing rhetoric, but there are consequences for these changes and the science used to make them. More specifically, Crowley identifies associationism and faculty psychology as ways of linking science and rhetoric. These two are noteworthy, according to Crowley, because they produced the most problematic changes to invention. Particularly, “for the first time in the history of rhetoric, the inventional process was focused solely on the individual creative mind of a rhetoric working in relative isolation” (32). This again points to the move away from collective knowledge (in classical rhetoric) to what Crowley describes as “a rhetorical theory that can only be described as author-centered” (32). These changes were not made carelessly; they were made

based on the knowledge of the time. Theorists, philosophers, and rhetoricians were thinking and writing and developing a theory of rhetoric by linking their ideas with popular science. However, the problem with CTR in general---a product of that time—and invention in particular is that those ideas were not revised or reconsidered when the science on which they were based was dismissed. As Crowley astutely observes, “the theory of invention whose genesis I trace here---while originally based in intellectual currents that had wide circulation---continued to invest in these long after they had gone out of fashion within the fields from which they were borrowed” (*Methodical* 31).

In *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American College, 1900-1985*, James Berlin also argues that CTR persisted even after the theories on which it was based were discredited. As he recounts the history of CTR, he explains that composition and literature were both based on a positivistic epistemology. In literature, this manifested itself through “philological and historical analysis, conceived in empirical analysis” (27). According to Berlin, this approach to literary scholarship was intended to “be as scientific as the new university that had given it birth” (27). However, this method did not last for literary analysis. It was eventually abandoned, or, as Berlin says, “questioned and eventually overthrown” (27). What is more important here, however, is that Berlin claims, much like Crowley in the quotes above, that “Current-traditional rhetoric [...] despite the numerous challenges to it [...] continued to be a force in most English departments and survives even today³” (27). In other words, it was never overthrown in composition, meaning that CTR still has its origins in a positivist epistemology even though that theory was dismissed in literary studies.

³ Today refers to the late 1980s as Berlin published this book in 1987.

Like Crowley and Berlin, many scholars have argued knowledgeably and convincingly about the problems with CTR as a rhetorical theory, but many of these arguments appeared at least thirty years ago. Furthermore, an area that has not been addressed in the scholarship is what this historical understanding of CTR can teach us about our current moment, specifically how the current climate in higher education, particularly the ideas that are in vogue (in higher education), is impacting the way we teach writing on the college level. Many of those conditions described above—the attempts to legitimize rhetoric through science and employing an approach to rhetoric based on the climate and culture of the time—still exist. Understanding the similarities in culture and climate between now and the Enlightenment illustrate the ways we are experiencing prime conditions for a resurgence in CTR in writing instruction.

2.5 Connections Between Enlightenment & Now

Though there are certainly many differences, the Enlightenment conditions I have just described have much in common with the current moment, particularly in the way the push for science has impacted other fields, particularly in terms of legitimizing those academic fields. Just as science was a force that dominated the cultural landscape of the Enlightenment, it is also a powerful force now though it has a new name. What was previously broadly labeled as science is now called STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. STEM is everywhere; for years, articles in popular and higher education periodicals have drawn our attention to the need for increased STEM education. Arguments in favor of increasing STEM education often cite the needs of the job market. The U.S. Department of Commerce, for example, has released research from the Office of the Chief Economist claiming that job growth is primarily in STEM fields. More specifically, the report argues the following:

- In 2015, there were 9.0 million STEM workers in the United States. About 6.1 percent of all workers are in STEM occupations, up from 5.5 percent just five years earlier.
- Employment in STEM occupations grew much faster than employment in non-STEM occupations over the last decade (24.4 percent versus 4.0 percent, respectively), and STEM occupations are projected to grow by 8.9 percent from 2014 to 2024, compared to 6.4 percent growth for nonSTEM occupations.
- STEM workers command higher wages, earning 29 percent more than their non-STEM counterparts in 2015. This pay premium has increased since our previous report, which found a STEM wage advantage of 26 percent in 2010.
- Nearly three-quarters of STEM workers have at least a college degree, compared to just over one-third of non-STEM workers.
- STEM degree holders enjoy higher earnings, regardless of whether they work in STEM or nonSTEM occupations. A STEM degree holder can expect an earnings premium of 12 percent over non-STEM degree holders, holding all other factors constant. (Noonan)

The takeaway here is that STEM is growing, and anyone who wants a job earning a respectable amount of money should get a college degree in a STEM field.

In response, those in the humanities have regularly written articles imploring readers to remember all the merits of humanities in general and a liberal arts education in particular (see, for example, Paul Corrigan's "[Jobs Will Save the Humanities](#)" or Thomas G. Burish's "[Why We Should Spend More on Humanities Research in a High-Tech World](#)," both published in *the Chronicle of Higher Education*). Some such articles are alarmist in nature while some have valid

points to make. My concern with this STEM-focused climate is that it creates the conditions that led to the prevalence of CTR in the Enlightenment. In other words, for those of us teaching composition, the push for validating our work (in the classroom) through objective, empirically-based assessments could lead to a resurgence in CTR because CTR makes it easy to assess student work with numbers. In the narrative that follows, I present my own experience with student learning outcomes (SLOs) and assessment to demonstrate how the push for a more scientific approach to writing instruction begs for a CTR approach to teaching composition.

Everyone who teaches ENGL 1101 at the institution where I work is required to use the same Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). In the last few years, a departmental committee was formed to revise the SLOs, and the list below is what they created.

Outcome 1: Students will determine forms of communication appropriate to particular audiences and purposes and organize and communicate knowledge and ideas in a logical and purposeful way. (General Education Learning Outcome)

Outcome 2: Students will use accepted patterns of grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure in written communication. (General Education Learning Outcome)

Outcome 3: Students will analyze, evaluate, and provide convincing reasons in support of conclusions and arguments. (Critical Thinking)

In creating these, administrators stressed that the verbs used in these SLOs had to be measurable and empirically verifiable. We were not allowed to use “touchy-feely” abstract verbs like “understand,” “appreciate,” “consider,” “reflect,” or “value.” What these non-touchy-feely verbs are essentially doing is taking what is subjective and trying to make it objective.

Though these SLOs may have once served as space-fillers on a syllabus, they must now be evaluated carefully and with what some administrators see as “scientific evidence.” I can remember when SLOs were a perfunctory part of a syllabus that loosely guided one’s teaching, but that time has come and gone. Now, those who teach this course and are asked to assess it must make sure to create assignments that will enable them to complete the assessment. To be clear, the assessments are focused on numbers, which means that teachers are faced with finding ways to assess students that involve counting, an approach that lends itself to current-traditional teaching.

The SLOs are not the end of the push to make teaching writing more empirically verifiable. Now, to be in compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the accrediting body, our department has to assess courses using a program called WEAVE⁴. Assessment is not new to our department; everyone in our department completed course assessments before SACS required us to use WEAVE, but WEAVE has further complicated and prescribed how we must assess our courses. We must begin with our new, objective and verifiable sounding SLOs, those that include action verbs such as “determine,” “analyze,” and “evaluate” as well as phrases such as “use accepted patterns of grammar,” and then we must go into great detail about the measures and findings used in our assessment. To be clear, the measures are what we used (quizzes, tests, essays, etc.) to assess the work of our students, and the findings are what the assessment showed us. The findings are the results and often look something like this: during Fall 2015, 87% or 17/20 students in ENGL 1101-03 earned a 75 or better on the grammar portion of their research papers. Then we have to write a narrative of how we came up with the findings (in this case, how we came up with the number

⁴ WEAVE is an acronym that stands for **W**rite expected outcomes & objectives/**E**stablish criteria for success/**A**ssess performance against criteria/**V**iew assessment results/**E**ffect improvements through actions.

87%) and explain why we think the numbers turned out that way. There are always targets (such as 75% of students will earn a 75 or better on the grammar portion of their research paper) for these findings, and if we do not meet the targets, we have to create an action plan for how we will achieve the target next time. We usually have to create them even if we meet the target, and in those cases, we have to outline what we did that worked and say that we will continue to do that. Finally, WEAVE assessments also require documentation, or to use a more scientific term, evidence. Faculty members must include copies of documents such as syllabi, assignment sheets, and grading rubrics as evidence of what they describe throughout their assessments.

The rhetoric of WEAVE suggests that our success in teaching a course lies in numbers: how many students passed our assignments, how many students passed the course, how many students met the targets and SLOs. The use of WEAVE also suggests that our work should function much like the scientific method: our results should be verifiable and replicable. This approach creates conditions conducive to CTR because faculty who teach writing must find ways to evaluate their students' work that will allow them to assess it in Weave. It is easier to complete assessments if one simply counts paragraphs (five is the magic number) or counts grammar errors. For example, the second SLO states that "Students will use accepted patterns of grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure in written communication." In response to this SLO, one of my colleagues decided to meet this objective by giving a grammar test at the end of the semester, a current-traditional choice that makes her work easier by isolating grammar from its context while giving her a simple way to come up with the numbers she needs for her assessment.

The assessments also suggest our effectiveness as teachers is reflected in the work our students do, and if students do not meet the targets, it is *the teacher* who has to create an action

plan, ostensibly to make things turn out more effectively next time. Do not misunderstand me; I am not suggesting that teachers should never assess or reflect. However, anyone who has ever taught a class more than once knows that an instructor can do all the same things in multiple sections of the same course and end up with different results based on the group of students, the dynamics between them, and even the time of day that the class is offered. In other words, WEAVE is a way to hold faculty members accountable for the work they do in the classroom, but it does not fully or fairly assess that work because in many ways, it reduces our work to something that can be counted.

Though my experience with assessment may not be identical to faculty on other campuses, the push for assessment is widespread, especially given that SACS, a major accrediting agency, requires it. This push for assessment often includes a focus on numbers much like my experience has shown. In her 2008 plenary address at the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Conference, Susan McLeod spoke extensively on the presence of assessment, specifically in WAC, and she acknowledged that assessment has always been around and addressed the numbers issue in this way:

The issue of assessment is not going to go away, and we need to be smart about how we address it in our WAC programs. Many directors of WAC programs, myself included, have degrees in the humanities (mine, like most folks my vintage, is in literature, but even most of the shiny new PhDs in composition and rhetoric still come out of English departments). For many of us, numbers are not our friends—at best, numbers are our in-laws. We don't have training in statistics, we never learned how to do pie charts and bar graphs. When we think of assessment, the ethnographic approach, with its emphasis on narrative, seems to

fit both us and the process of learning to write. Unfortunately, narrative is not always persuasive to people who are looking at a business model for universities (as the Spellings Commission⁵ certainly is). If we are to counter the onslaught of mindless standardized testing, we need to do it with numbers, with data, with empirical evidence. My advice to all WAC directors is to either learn statistics yourself, or (perhaps more realistically), make friends with your campus psychometrician and work up a plan to produce the sort of data that administrators and legislators will understand. It can be done. (4)

McLeod seems to be taking a “if you can’t beat them, join them” attitude because, as she sees it, the focus on numbers is not going away. The argument is a smart one that asks us to continue to do what we do best while also learning how to use numbers to make our arguments. Her call for “numbers, data, and empirical evidence” sounds more like the work of STEM than the work of the humanities, but her argument is a compelling one, and it is likely one worth considering if we want to avoid a resurgence of CTR-pedagogies, particularly given her argument that those of us in English departments may not be equipped to play this numbers game.

Though she acknowledges that assessment is not a new issue, she claims that it has changed: “What has changed in the past eight years⁶ is that assessment has become politicized by our federal government. Assessment went from appraisal to accountability in the 1990s; now in the first decade of the 21st century we see assessment as punishment” (4). She illustrates this by discussing No Child Left Behind:

If you are not aware of how NCLB works, the major issue for those of us interested in assessment is that this large-scale testing program rests on the false

⁵ Discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

⁶ She said this in 2008.

assumption that test scores equal educational excellence, and that schools that fail to meet the set standards should be sanctioned and have their resources taken away (one would think that such schools would need more resources, but that's not the mindset behind NCLB). The testing has had a washback effect on the curriculum: with so much riding on the test results, the teachers naturally teach to the test. It's a reductive and pernicious cycle. (4)

Though McLeod is discussing the high-stakes testing associated with NCLB, her point that high stakes testing is a form of assessment that can lead to poor pedagogy as a means of meeting an assessment objective is relevant. As mentioned above, I have seen a similar “reductive, pernicious cycle” as faculty adapt their teaching to meet assessment requirements. Though I have not seen anyone lose (or gain) resources because of assessments, the false assumption that McLeod describes, the assumption that large-scale assessment leads to or proves educational excellence, seems to be a driving force behind assessment. In such a scenario, the assessment clearly becomes the focus, and pedagogy may be left behind. John Warner, former composition professor and popular writer, recently made a similar argument on Twitter when he said, “Systemic pressures on teachers don’t allow teachers to do what they know is best in order to engage students. We have to address how these assessments are distorting instruction at no fault to teachers.” Because I knew he was talking about K-12, I asked him if he thought it was also true at the college level. He responded and said he thought there were differences at the college level, and he didn’t see assessment being as much of a problem though he has seen it happen. He tweeted that “the local conditions really do seem to vary” and that he believes “higher ed is trending towards a K-12 approach to assessment,” which he thinks is wrong. If he is correct about what the trend is, this is another reason to heed McLeod’s warnings.

McLeod is certain to clarify what we have to learn from NCLB and show how higher education is being impacted by the push for assessment:

Lest we think that WAC, as a higher education initiative, is immune from this new wave of assessment, all we need to do is look at the work of the Spellings Commission on the Future of Higher Education. The chair of that committee, an investor named Charles Miller, is pushing for standardized testing for universities as well. A *New York Times* article published in 2006 quotes him as follows:

"What is clearly lacking [in higher education] is a nationwide system for comparative performance purposes, using standard formats" ("Panel"). Try to imagine for a moment what a standardized test for writing would look like. Wait, we already have one in the so-called "new" SAT. So try to imagine how that might be implemented as a nation-wide test of student writing ability. It's our worst nightmare—we'd be teaching students the five-paragraph theme, and making sure they knew that the longer the essay, the higher the score, and it didn't matter if they made factual errors so long as they used big words.

McLeod's argument illustrates my point: the push for assessment, whether it is standardized tests or assessment programs such as WEAVE, asks faculty, and by default students, to conform to a standard that is uniform and regulated so that it can be assessed by common standards. In composition, perhaps the most recognizable standardized form is the 5-paragraph essay, one of the key components of CTR, and McLeod identifies the 5-paragraph theme as the obvious choice for what students would write if asked to use standard forms for assessment purposes. I argue that course assessments such as WEAVE have much in common with standardized tests as they seek to streamline and universalize what happens in writing classrooms.

My experience with WEAVE, McLeod's observations on assessment, and Warner's concerns about higher education trends, serve as testimony to the current atmosphere, much like the Enlightenment, that values science and empirical evidence. As such, I can see how the climate of the Enlightenment would create a rhetorical theory that aims to be objective and create outcomes that can be verified and duplicated among students. Though the Enlightenment theories are far more complex and varied than can be fully addressed here, their similarities present writing teachers with an opportunity to reflect on history so that we are not blindsided by how a focus on STEM might impact the teaching of writing.

I can say that I want my students to think critically and engage with their communities, but that is difficult to assess. The focus on assessment creates the ever-present knowledge that whatever I do in my classrooms will have to be counted and calculated at the end of the semester. This reminds me of the Enlightenment in at least a couple of ways, the first of which I have already addressed: the obvious trend towards empirical/scientific evidence in a field that does not easily lend itself to such. But there is another important parallel between the Enlightenment and the present: the climate that created an increased reliance on the work of Bain and Campbell. The reliance on CTR in American classrooms came about as classrooms became more democratic and no longer the site of learning for only the elite. James Berlin describes the changes that took place in American colleges after the Civil War:

The new college profoundly affected the teaching of writing, bringing about a pedagogy shaped by the interests of the middle class. During the last quarter of the century, more and more students were attending college as the economy expanded and the need for skills provided by the new colleges grew. Most schools, both private and public began to view themselves as serving the needs

of business and industry. Citizens demanded it, students demanded it, and most important, business leaders---the keepers of the funds---demanded it.

The ability to write effectively---then as now---was one of the skills that all agreed was essential to success; as mentioned earlier, Harvard made the composition class the sole course required of all students in an otherwise elective curriculum. (*Writing Instruction* 60)

In many ways, it is hard to believe this passage is describing America over a century ago because it also reflects what is happening in colleges in America in the 21st century. Colleges are increasingly seen as stepping stones at best and hurdles at worst to helping students reach their professional goals. Given this environment, it is not surprising that administrators and faculty, especially in the humanities, are under pressure to validate what they do. It is not enough to say we are teaching students; there has to be some measure to do it. We must be able to prove that we are teaching them valuable skills, especially because, according to many folks inside and outside of the academy, students are paying us money to teach them something that will help them get a job.

The pressure to teach marketable skills and the current focus on STEM are playing out in popular press and both, especially when combined, have the potential to affect how we teach writing, much as the push for science impacted the teaching of writing in the Enlightenment. In 2015, Sean Zwagerman, relying on the scholarship of the '80s and '90s, moves the scholarship on CTR forward. To define CTR, he relies on W. Ross Winterowd's eight "legacies of current-traditional thought" (460), which are too long to detail here, but echo Winterowd's contemporaries who saw CTR as privileging form, particularly the 5-paragraph essay, as well as modes and style. Zwagerman, however, uses Winterowd's legacies to take the conversation

about CTR in a new direction and consider who is speaking publicly about composition. He points to those “scholars who believe the field of composition is making—or needs to make—a public turn” and claims that they “are troubled by our scarcity of prominent public intellectuals” (458). Zwagerman argues that one public intellectual speaking up for composition is Stanley Fish. Zwagerman claims that Fish’s public writing on the topic is problematic because Fish, a Milton scholar, is an unapologetic supporter of CTR (459). Given Fish’s academic background in literature, not rhetoric and composition, his CTR advocacy might not be surprising, but as Zwagerman convincingly argues, his advocacy is problematic because of its

powerful influence on public discussions about composition. For regardless of the extent to which current-traditionalism did or does directly guide classroom practice, it continues to frame public attitudes toward writing pedagogy, and thus—to the extent that public assesses practice and influences policy—continues to influence composition. (459)

Zwagerman makes an astute observation here as he identifies the challenges composition instructors face from a public that desires a CTR approach in composition classes and who may be emboldened by the ally they have in Fish. In other words, while rhetoric and composition scholarship may have focused less on CTR in recent years, perhaps because the topic has been settled in the field, as my former professor claimed, the debate goes on in popular publications and in articles and blogs about the teaching of writing, and the public is not dismissing the approach as many compositionists have.

Zwagerman’s concerns about public perceptions of what writing instruction should do abound. Articles such as John G. Maguire’s “Why So Many College Students Are Lousy at Writing — and How Mr. Miyagi Can Help,” an April 2017 article from *The Washington Post*

and many like them reflect Zwagerman’s concern that the public perceives a literacy crisis and is calling for writing courses that teach “the basics”—grammar and sentence structure—a perception that has potential to impact how writing is taught. Maguire’s popular *Washington Post* article claims that “colleges are not really trying to teach students to write clear sentences. Not anymore. First-semester writing courses now cover rhetorical strategies, research, awareness of audience, youth civic activism — everything except the production of clear sentences.” Luckily, his book, *Readable Writing*, will fix the problem. His website claims,

If you train them properly, today’s college students can learn to write really well in one semester of freshman comp. [...] But you need a clear and minimal set of goals so you can teach them only the skills that matter. Getting the goals and the skills right—that’s the rub. *The Readable Writing Method* makes readability the top and only goal of the course. Every activity you assign contributes to the final skill: the writing of easy-to-read short essays.

Maguire’s sentence-based approach to writing instruction, which reflects a skill-based conception of literacy, is a prime example of a CTR-based pedagogy because it focuses on sentence-level issues and form before content. It is not surprising, however, that Maguire has written a text to teach CTR-based writing. As Connors, Crowley, and Winterowd have argued, textbooks are the places where CTR is most often and easily found.

Recognizing textbooks as a location for finding CTR is a means for reconciling what seems to be a disconnect between composition scholarship, which has disavowed CTR, and the public demand for CTR found in popular press articles, such as those written by Fish and Maguire. More importantly, however, is that the disconnect also exists between composition scholarship and teachers of writing. Though some compositionists argue that CTR is no longer a

viable pedagogical practice, popular articles and books, particularly textbooks, like Maguire's, suggest that CTR still has a place, or should have a place, in composition classrooms.

Unfortunately, there are no easy ways to prove or disprove that CTR still plays a role in the modern composition classroom. One reason it is difficult to prove that CTR is used in composition classes is because so few people seem to be discussing it in scholarship. It is also difficult to know if it exists in practice because at least part of what C.H. Knoblauch said in 1984 remains true. In particular, his argument that "No major rhetoricians, ancient or modern, have been named as its [CTR] originators or perpetrators; no works, aside from textbooks, have been identified as constituting it" is still true (qtd. in Connors, *Composition-Rhetoric*, 4). In other words, the only place to see observance of CTR is in textbooks. Fourteen years after Knoblauch made that argument, W. Ross Winterowd similarly argued that "Though people *write* current traditional rhetorics (i.e. composition textbooks), I can't off-hand think of anyone in the past fifty years who has argued in their favor" (14). If, as Knoblauch and Winterowd have argued, CTR is delineated most clearly in textbooks, then textbooks are the ideal place to look to see that CTR is still taught in composition classes.

CTR still exists despite the field's long dismissal of it as a useful pedagogical approach to teaching writing, and one of the most powerful ways that CTR has been perpetuated in American classrooms since 1941 is the *Hodges Harbrace Handbook*, originally known as the *Harbrace Handbook of English*. The commercial success of the *HHH*, often touted as the best-selling textbook of all time, makes the book worth examining. The book is popular, which suggests that there are people who subscribe to the book's approach to understanding writing, yet the book has repeatedly been labeled a current-traditional text. This situation presents a contradiction: a popular book that goes against what composition scholarship advocates. Given that

contradiction, it is worth examining what the book's history and contents suggest and reveal about composition practice and pedagogy. In particular, why has this book remained a best-seller even though it prescribes an approach to writing that composition scholarship opposes?

Examining the history of the *HHH* will not answer all questions about CTR, but it is a way to reopen the conversations that began 30-40 years ago in scholarship but have since dropped off. These conversations should still be in scholarship because the problems that prompted their discussion 30-40 years ago are still happening. Combining the scholarship of compositionists mentioned throughout this chapter—notably, Crowley, Berlin, and Winterrowd---with an examination of the *HHH* is a powerful means for revisiting and understanding the forces that foster continued use of CTR.

As such, the following chapter, chapter 3, begins the examination of the *HHH*, and by extension, CTR, by presenting a microhistory on the *HHH*, one of the most successful textbooks of all time, as well as a text that perpetuates CTR. The chapter looks at the educational background of the book's creator, John C. Hodges, with an emphasis on his education at Harvard, the place often considered the birthplace of CTR in the composition classroom. More specifically, the chapter looks at the courses Hodges took and the professors with whom he worked as both reveal connections to CTR. Chapter 3 continues the history of the *HHH* by tracing the text's origins to the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, where Hodges taught for many years and where he was inspired to create the book. This chapter also describes what is known about Hodges' methodology in creating the textbook.

Chapter 4 looks at where the *HHH* is now and identifies what the current edition of the text has to offer its users. It also looks at the ways in which the text has been updated to meet the needs of modern students. One way it has been updated is to address the WPA Outcomes

Statement for First-Year Composition, so chapter 4 also considers the way the 19th edition meets or fails to meet those Outcomes. In this consideration of how the text meets the needs of modern students, chapter 4 also identifies the issues involved in using the text, particularly the way that teachers requiring students to purchase the text contributes to the problems of the high costs of higher education.

Chapter 5 considers the legacies and issues that come to light through the microhistory and what the book's continued use reveals about practice and working conditions in the field. Much of the focus of chapter 5 is on identifying the problems with Hodges' methodology. Though his work is the best of its kind, it is a product of its time. The field has come a long way in the 78 years since the text was first published, so it is important to identify the ways his methodology, which is still the basis of the book, fails to meet the field's standards for research and pedagogy. Given the book's lengthy history, it is also important to consider why the book still exists despite criticisms and new research countering the approach the text takes and what that might reveal about less than ideal working conditions that still exist in composition. Addressing this will also include identifying who is benefitting from the text's continued production.

3 THE HISTORY OF JOHN C. HODGES & THE *HODGES HARBRACE HANDBOOK*

Phenomena previously considered to be sufficiently described and understood assume completely new meanings by altering the scale of observation.

-Giovanni Levi (quoted in McComiskey 18).

Perhaps no one has written more about John C. Hodges than Brooks Clark, who works for the Marketing Office at the University of Tennessee Knoxville (UTK). It is probably not surprising that someone at UTK has written a great deal about Hodges, though. Dr. John C. Hodges is the man who wrote what was originally titled the *Harbrace College Handbook* and is

now called the *Hodges Harbrace Handbook (HHH)*, one of the best-selling textbooks of all time. Some even argue that it is *the* best-selling textbook. Hodges was an English professor at UTK from 1920 until his death in 1967. Clark has written a number of articles praising the work of Hodges, and one of those articles describes how Clark came to know Hodges' work:

My fascination with John C. Hodges started with Rule 12d – Nonrestrictive clauses (or phrases) and other parenthetical elements (“interrupters”) are set off by commas, Restrictive clauses (or phrases) are not set off. That was the rule that my wizened, three-piece-suit-wearing, filterless-cigarette-smoking tenth-grade English teacher successfully explained to me on a snowy February day in 1972. For me that moment was the sun coming from behind the clouds. Comprehending Rule 12d opened up the logic of grammar and enabled some modest success in the remainder of that semester. My teacher, Mr. Ferdinand E. Ruge, was an adherent of the *Hodges' Harbrace College Handbook*, and so much a kindred spirit of its author that he wrote, mimeographed, and distributed to classes his own parallel versions of many of these rules, which were posthumously assembled and published as *Ruge Rules*.

Though Clark's story is likely more interesting and better written than many others, it is not the only one of its kind. People know the book, and much like Clark, many of them have a sentimental attachment to it. My husband's cousin, for example, went to UTK, so I asked him if he remembered using the *HHH* as a student at UTK. (For the record, it's been over 20 years since he was a student there.) His response was, “Of course, I remember the *Harbrace Handbook*. I keep my copy (11th edition, published in the early 90s) at work.” He went to high school about an hour from Knoxville, and his high school also used the book. I heard a similar

story when I contacted a librarian at work and asked for her help accessing Hodges' dissertation. When I told her that he's the guy who wrote the *Harbrace Handbook*, she said, oh, my dad still has his first edition of it, and I still have the edition I used in school. In yet another example, I recently picked up a copy of the 9th edition while I was at a used book sale. There is an inscription inside that reads, "This is a great book – use it often – and you'll really improve your writing." In other words, people know this book, and they keep it, but more than that, they typically have what seems like an unlikely attachment for a book about grammar.

All it takes is one look inside the front cover of the book to see that the *HHH* is a book about grammar. The book's signature feature is the taxonomy in the front that lists the many chapters about grammar, but does that make it a book about grammar *and* a book about writing? The book's later chapters deal with writing, but to what degree depends on the edition, a topic that will be discussed more fully in the remainder of this dissertation. For this chapter, however, what is important is that the book is concerned primarily with grammar and minimally with writing⁷, an approach that demonstrates the book's CTR-based pedagogy⁸. This is a practical place to find CTR because, as discussed earlier in this dissertation, textbooks are the place where CTR is most clearly delineated.

One of the primary goals of this dissertation is to illustrate that although composition scholarship has a longstanding rejection of CTR, it still makes its way into composition classrooms. One way to see how CTR makes its way into writing classes is by considering the continued popularity of the *HHH*, a book that has been a prescriptive, grammar-intensive, form-before-content-focused text since its inception in 1941. As such, this chapter presents a

⁷ The minimal focus on writing is most apparent in the earliest editions of the book. Writing takes on a more prominent role in later editions. This change will be addressed in detail in chapter 4.

⁸ This point will be more fully explored and supported later in this chapter.

microhistory of the *HHH*, primarily by presenting the intellectual and work history of the book's initial author, as a means of illuminating that one of the most powerful ways that CTR is perpetuated is through a popular textbook, the *HHH*.

3.1 The Methodology of a Microhistory of John C. Hodges and the *Hodges Harbrace Handbook*

Though many people know the book, they seem to know less about the man who wrote the book. However, knowing Hodges' background provides great insight into the book's content, what prompted Hodges to write it, and what theories and pedagogies informed his approach to the book. Given the context that Hodges' background provides about the *HHH*, this chapter examines Hodges' background and influences as a means to better understand how the book came to be and what influenced its logic and creation. Furthermore, this chapter illustrates the influence of current-traditional thought in Hodges' approach by presenting a microhistory based on the methodology presented in *Microhistories of Composition*, a collection edited by Bruce McComiskey.

In an effort to explain what microhistories are and what value they bring to composition studies, McComiskey quotes David Gold's argument that microhistory "does not merely describe a local scene, but uses the local to illuminate larger historical questions" (14). This microhistory of John C. Hodges does the same: it describes the local scene as Hodges moved from being a student at Harvard to a professor and administrator at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville (UTK). Understanding this local scene and the history around it provides us with a fuller understanding of not only Hodges and the textbook he created, but it also sheds light on what we know, or think we know, about some of composition's most fabled history: English A at

Harvard, Harvard's role in creating compulsory composition, and current-traditional rhetoric's role in early composition classes.

Reconsidering what we know or adding new knowledge to our history is, as McComiskey argues, valuable because such microhistory is “an extension of existing revisionary histories of composition [in] that it brings together a full collection of related methodologies, all of which together reduce the scale of historical analysis and increase the complexity of our current historical knowledge” (14). My hope is just that: to “increase the complexity of our current historical knowledge” (14) to see how the *HHH* has kept CTR as a part of writing instruction for almost 80 years. Though English A and compulsory composition have received a great deal of attention in scholarship, revisiting them through the history of the *HHH* and John C. Hodges provides an opportunity to see a specific case, or the local scene as Gold calls it, in which the theory and practice of CTR are circulated and passed from teacher to student. Many histories of composition studies seek to detail the events that formed and influenced the field as a whole; this microhistory, on the other hand, focuses on how the events of two local scenes, particularly those of Hodges' education and workplace, led to the publication of the *HHH* and allowed CTR to last as a viable approach to composition instruction by giving it life through a textbook, a place where it has remained safe for almost 80 years. This detailed history enriches what we already know about the history of composition and provides a fuller picture of how history has influenced current composition instruction.

To create this microhistory required a variety of kinds of sources, an important component of a microhistory according to McComiskey. He says that using different kinds of sources is an approach that is “more fruitful than repeated re-interpretations of the same contemporary texts” (Susanna Fellman quoted in McComiskey 21). Having this variety of

sources helps to interpret events and provide a “full and complex understanding” (21). Such an approach is necessary for this microhistory of John C. Hodges. To write this microhistory, I began with traditional sources such as the scholarship of James Berlin, Sharon Crowley, W. Ross Winterowd, and Robert Connors, all of whom have written extensively on CTR and the history of composition. I have also relied on the work of Debra Hawhee, the first and only scholar to publish any extensive work on Hodges and the *HHH*. Her work has been invaluable to my own. The work of these scholars is important for this study not only because of the history and scaffolding it provides, but also because it is work that has been influential in the field’s thinking on these topics.

My microhistory builds on the work of these earlier scholars and adds new dimensions by incorporating archival sources. These archival sources include primary sources that provide new insight into what we know about early compulsory composition and CTR. The archival sources come from Harvard University, where Hodges was a student, and the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, where Hodges was a faculty member and administrator. To access these archival sources, I relied on the Harvard University Archives, specifically the Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Student Records, for a number of sources: a list of Harvard professors while Hodges was a student there; Hodges’ signed dissertation form; and Hodges’ student records, including the courses he took, the grades he made, and the professors who taught his courses. I would not have been able to provide this history without these sources. Another essential source is the Harvard Catalogues provided through the HathiTrust. This source provided me with the official course description of the much-storied English A, a description that

I have seen published only once⁹. I combined Hodges' transcripts from the Archives with the course descriptions available through the HathiTrust. Doing this allowed me to create a table that combines Hodges coursework with course descriptions and the names of the professors who taught those courses. This information is essential to knowing what theories and professors influenced Hodges' thinking about writing. It is also valuable because it aids in creating a connection between the CTR pedagogy at Harvard and the CTR pedagogy that would later end up at UTK under Hodges' direction and would also end up in the *HHH*.

I also relied on the Archives at UTK for access to the John C. Hodges Collection, a collection most important for this chapter in that it provides what it describes as Hodges' personal books, many of which he annotated, but the books are all related to teaching English, primarily teaching writing, so they might be better labeled as his personal professional books. The John C. Hodges Collection, specifically the collection of Hodges' books, shows what he was reading leading up to and after the creation of the *HHH*, and his annotations reveal his responses to those texts. Such artifacts are invaluable in understanding the history of the book's creation. Furthermore, those texts help to create contextualization, a concept that Annie S. Mendenhall argues is an essential part of microhistories (41). She defines contextualization as "attention to the textual environment (and what it suggests about actors' institutional relationships and perspective on their own work)" (41). This concept is further defined when Mendenhall, drawing from the work on Magnusson and Szijarto, defines the textual environment as "a text's paratext, sponsorship, and discursive connections to other contemporary texts" (41). The concepts of contextualization and textual environment are valuable to this microhistory of Hodges and the

⁹ The only published description I could find does not match the one available in the HathiTrust, which houses the Harvard Catalogues. The librarians at Harvard sent me to the HathiTrust for the course description, so I believe my description to be the most accurate one available outside of the HathiTrust.

HHH because they provide a framework for examining not only Hodges' education and his books, but also a framework for discussing the implications of those artifacts. As Mendenhall observes,

The point of contextualization is not to construct a complete account of history; rather, this approach seeks to bring texture to grand narratives of the past by studying “events or persons in context, that is to say, within the complex interplay of free choice and constraint where individuals and groups perform in the interstices of the contradictory pluralities of the normative systems that govern them.” (42)

One of the primary goals of this microhistory is to “bring texture to the grand narratives of the past” by using a variety of sources that have allowed me to create a microhistory that is “more fruitful than repeated re-interpretations of the same contemporary texts” (Susanna Fellman quoted in McComiskey 21). This method allows us to look at how one individual's contribution to our field reveals a great deal about the larger trends, ideas, and histories that have influenced our teaching and professional philosophies in composition.

3.2 John Cunyus Hodges

The story of the *HHH* begins with John Cunyus Hodges. According to Clark, Hodges was born in Louisiana in 1892. Clark quotes John Smartt, Hodges' brother-in-law, who said, “His [Hodges'] family down in Louisiana was rich. He knew he wanted to teach, and they resolved to take care of John.” That is apparently what happened as Hodges went on to earn a B.A. from Meridian College in Mississippi, an M.A. in English from Tulane, and in 1918, he earned a Ph.D. in English from Harvard.

Little has been made of the connection between Hodges' time at Harvard and the *HHH*. In fact, the only relevant reference is Debra Hawhee's note that

Hodges' own evaluation of the book [*HHH*] provides a starting point from which to trace—backward and forward—key assumptions about writing instruction, its students, and teachers, assumptions that appear to have had their beginnings in Hodges' graduate education at Harvard, as well as in his indoctrination to the prevailing educational and pedagogical trends at the time, as represented in his own collection of textbooks. (508)

Most important here is Hawhee's point that Hodges' assumptions about teaching writing are, at least in part, based on his Harvard education. Unfortunately, Hawhee does not delve deeply into that subject, but the connection is a useful and fascinating one in understanding the thinking behind the book. It is also important because much of the historical scholarship about the origins of first-year composition trace its beginning to Harvard. Thus, in an effort to more fully understand the history of the *HHH*, this chapter examines the intellectual setting of Hodges' doctoral work at Harvard and how it influenced the *HHH*. In other words, this chapter looks at how Hodges was, as Hawhee said, "indoctrinated to the prevailing educational and pedagogical trends at the time." Understanding his indoctrination will mean considering his scholarly interests, his professors and advisors at Harvard, as well as other influential figures at Harvard, and considering Harvard's influence on composition nationwide. All of these facets work together to provide new insights into the book's origins as well as developing the field's history as it relates to early compulsory composition classes.

3.3 Hodges' Dissertation & Coursework

Understanding Hodges' educational background will become increasingly important in the following chapters when this dissertation examines Hodges' qualifications for writing the *HHH*. The question will later become, what courses or research did he complete that prepared him to write the textbook? Before that question can be answered, however, it is important to study Hodges' educational background. Given that most graduate students' thesis or dissertation discloses where their academic interests lie, it is worth considering Hodges' scholarly pursuits to see what they reveal about the areas in which he had expertise. While a student at Harvard, Hodges' wrote a dissertation entitled, *Blood Brotherhood among the Celts*. Knowing the contents of this dissertation would likely reveal a great deal about Hodges as a scholar, but it never became a book¹⁰. However, there is another work that is accessible and also reveals a great deal about Hodges' intellectual interests, particularly what he studied as a graduate student at Harvard. Hodges published an article with almost the same title as his dissertation; that article is titled "The Blood Covenant among the Celts" and was published in 1927 in the *Revue Celtique*. The article title, with a nearly identical title to that of the dissertation, suggests that the article covers the same material he covered in his dissertation. To that end, the following passage presents the focus of the article:

Those who deny to the Irish any acquaintance the blood covenant, or blood brotherhood, are, however, in the minority. The more recent students of Celtic literature, when they touched upon the rite at all, agree that it existed among the Irish; but even here there is no full accord, one group considering the rite native to

¹⁰ His dissertation is available only through the Harvard Archives in Boston; it is available electronically if one is willing to pay an exorbitant fee to access it.

the Celts, another holding that it was known in Ireland only as a borrowing from the Viking invaders. (110)

Hodges also writes, “Those Celtists who have specialized in early English manners and customs, and from who we should expect a treatment of blood brotherhood often overlook the rite entirely; and when they do not, they never make an adequate study of it” (111). What these brief passages indicate is that Hodges’ research interest was first in the Celt tradition of blood brotherhood, and second, how it has (or has not) been treated in history. Later in the article, he includes a section on “evidence from Irish literature,” (113) where he discusses literature that has accounts of blood covenants. Thus, his interest is broadly in how the tradition of Celtic blood brotherhood has been treated in literature.

His coursework at Harvard reflects these interests. Created by pairing Hodges’ transcripts from Harvard¹¹ and course descriptions from the 1916-1917 and 1917-1918 Harvard catalogs¹², the table below shows the courses he took, when he took them, a course description (if one is available), and the professor who taught the course.

Table 1: John C. Hodges' Graduate Coursework at Harvard

Class	Year	Description	Professor
English 2-Shakespeare	1916-1917	six plays	Kittredge
English 19(2)- Historical English Grammar	1916-1917		F.N. Robinson
English 14-The Drama in England from 1590- 1642	1916-1917		Baker

¹¹ Provided by the Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Student records.

¹² Available through the HathiTrust.

Celtic 3 (hf) – Old & Middle Welsh	1916-1917	Grammar & interpretation of texts. The Mabinogion and other selections from the Red Book of Hergest. Lectures on early Welsh literature.	F.N. Robinson
Romance Philology 3: Old French	1916-1917	Philology & inflections. The oldest texts. La Chanson de Roland; Chretien de Troyes; Aucassin et Nicolette.	Sheldon
Celtic 1-Old Irish	1917-1918	Grammar & interpretation of texts. Thurneysen's Handbuch des Altirischen. General introduction to philology.	F.N. Robinson
Celtic 2-Middle Irish	1917-1918	Windisch's Irische Texte. Lectures on the history of Irish literature.	F.N. Robinson
Celtic 20-Investigation of Special Subjects in Celtic Philology	1917-1918	Opportunities are afforded to competent students for the investigation of special subjects in Celtic philology.	F.N. Robinson
German 12a-Gothic	1917-1918	Introduction to the study of German philology. General introduction; phonology.	Von Jagemann

History of Religion 3(2)	1917-1918	German & Celtic Religions	Kittredge & F.N. Robinson
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This table reflects Hodges' interest not only in Celtic traditions in literature; it also shows that he took courses in philology, language, and literature. Though philology deals with grammar in the context of literary studies, it is not specifically the study of grammar. As Wendell Clausen argues, "Too often philology has been humbled and identified with one or another of its components---with grammar (say) or textual criticism—and its original high purpose forgotten, which is, as it has been since the time of the scholars and poet-scholars of Alexandria, literary criticism" (13). Thus, grammar in literary texts may have been a component of what Hodges studied, but it was not the central focus. The takeaway here is that Hodges' coursework does not confirm that he studied modern grammar or composition, a fact that will be addressed in the next chapter.

3.4 Hodges' Dissertation Readers & Their Intellectual Interests

Given Hodges' interests and the fact that he took 70% of his courses from Robinson and/or Kittredge, Hodges' dissertation readers are not surprising. According to the librarians in the Harvard University Archives, the acceptance certificate for his dissertation is signed by two readers: Fred Norris Robinson, Professor of English and Chairman of the Department, and George Lyman Kittredge, Professor of English Literature. Neither is listed as the primary advisor, but Robinson's signature is first on the certificate. Given the limited information available regarding the content of Hodges' dissertation, it is helpful to know something about those who read his dissertation; knowing who he worked with and knowing about their academic backgrounds will help determine how Hodges' education prepared him to write the *HHH*.

Looking at a variety of types of sources and combining them with others, in this case, knowing who read and approved Hodges' dissertation, is a part of microhistory. As McComiskey argues, relying on the scholarship of Szijarto and Magnusson, "incorporating a plurality of sources not only gives a better total picture of the object or event in question, but since each source is part of a particular context (legal, familial, etc.), this plurality of sources also reveals 'systems of the observed particular case'" (21). This is applicable here because knowing the background of Hodges' dissertation readers means having a "better total picture of the object or event in question." Furthermore, as McComiskey argues, having multiple sources allows for multiple interpretations "from which a full and complex understanding might emerge" (21). Robinson and Kittredge's backgrounds help provide a full and complex understanding of Hodges' education.

3.4.1 Fred Norris Robinson

According to *the Handbook of Medieval Studies*, between 1891-1894, Robinson earned his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. from Harvard. While a student, he worked with both Francis James Child and George Lyman Kittredge, professors whom I will soon discuss in more detail. Robinson also went to Germany where he studied Celtic philology, an important part of his career because he later returned to Harvard to teach, and while he was there, as Obermeier observes, he "singlehandedly [...] introduced the formal study of Celtic languages and literature into the United States" (2594). At Harvard, he went from instructor to full professor and eventually became Gurney Professor of English Philology, after Kittredge. He is probably most known, however, for his research and publication on Chaucer (Obermeier 2594-2595). By Robinson's own description in the *Harvard College Class of 1891 Secretary's Report*, "My publications have been chiefly of a technical character, contributions to encyclopedias and philological journals. They have dealt with English and Celtic philology, medieval literature, and

the history of religions. Since 1900, I have been the secretary of the Dante Society and editor of its reports” (201). This evidence suggests that Robinson was a successful professor in the areas of Chaucer and Celtic Studies.

3.4.2 *George Lyman Kittredge*

Kittredge also had impressive credentials. According to Margaret R. O’Leary and Dennis S. O’Leary, Kittredge spent most of his career at Harvard after becoming a faculty member there in 1888. Prior to joining the faculty, he was an undergraduate student at Harvard and graduated in 1882, but he did not go on to earn master’s or doctoral degrees. He did, however, spend a year studying in Germany, and he also worked at Phillips Exeter Academy, where he taught Latin (O’Leary and O’Leary 155-156). Many sources praise Kittredge as a teacher and a scholar.

3.4.3 *Kittredge & Francis James Child*

Much of Kittredge’s training and development as both a teacher and a scholar came from Harvard’s first Professor of English (and former Boylston Professor of Rhetoric), Francis James Child. Kittredge was a student and eventually a colleague of Child’s. Harvard’s own “The Harvard English Department: A Brief History” describes Child’s work “on the great British poets [...], seminal work on the language of Chaucer, and [...] his monumental collection of English and Scottish Ballads” (Hequembourg). The “Brief History” also states that Child “had also, less happily, spent vast amounts of time and energy correcting the endless themes of undergraduate composition.” Thus, his interest and knowledge were in Chaucer, and he did not enjoy grading and presumably *teaching* composition.

James Berlin confirms that Child did not enjoy teaching composition by recounting the details of how Harvard kept Child when Johns Hopkins tried to lure Child away from Harvard to come teach at Hopkins. To keep Child from accepting Hopkins’ job offer, Charles William Eliot,

President of Harvard, had to make it worth his while to stay. Thus, “in order to keep Child, Eliot freed him from all responsibilities for freshman composition—the first such exemption to be granted” (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 23). This account is verified in “The Harvard English Department: A Brief History” when Hequembourg claims that Eliot gave Child a new title to keep him at Harvard while “freeing him from rhetoric and composition and allowing him to focus solely on the teaching of English literature.” Interestingly, however, though it might seem that composition kept him from teaching literature, he included literature in his composition courses. Hequembourg notes that Child had students read “the masters of English prose” in his composition classes. O’Leary and O’Leary claim that Child taught “authors of great English literature” such as Chaucer, Milton, and Shakespeare in his composition courses. He did so, they claim, to “drive home the sublime expression of thought in the English language” (138).

Like Child, Kittredge also did not want to teach composition, and he also did not have to. According to Berlin, “Although this arrangement [being freed from teaching composition to teach literature] was not common until the twentieth century—Child and George Lyman Kittredge [were] the only Harvard faculty treated so until then” (*Rhetoric and Reality* 23). This information about Child is important because Kittredge became Child’s successor, and Kittredge taught Shakespeare and “employed essentially the same method as Child” (Hequembourg). If he employed the same method as Child and was also released from teaching composition, it seems that, like Child, Kittredge’s interests did not include teaching composition. Unlike Child, however, Kittredge had interests beyond Shakespeare. According to Harvard’s Online Archival Search Information System, “One of his areas of study was medieval superstitions, particularly witchcraft. He was also of great importance in American folklore studies, and was instrumental in encouraging American folk song and folklore collecting among all ethnic groups in all regions

of the country.” Much like Robinson, Kittredge seems to have been accomplished in his areas of academic interest.

3.5 Other Harvard Connections: Adams Sherman Hill & Barrett Wendell

3.5.1 Adams Sherman Hill

Kittredge and Robinson are not the only Harvard professors important to tracing the academic tradition in which Hodges was educated. Adams Sherman Hill and Barrett Wendell, two figures most often associated with CTR, have connections to Harvard, and by extension, connections to Hodges; both were professors at Harvard at or around the time Hodges was a student there. From 1876 to 1904, Hill was the Boylston Professor of Rhetoric. Hill was retired by the time Hodges was a student at Harvard, but given his rank and length of service, it is likely that his thinking was influential on the department in which Hodges was a student. As I will soon discuss, some go as far as to say that Hill’s ideas about composition were influential far beyond Harvard. Speaking to Hill’s qualifications, Crowley says, “Hill [was] a journalist with a degree in law” (72), and John Michael Wozniak notes that Hill wrote for the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Putnam’s Magazine*, and the *North American Review* before becoming a professor at Harvard (85). Wozniak praises Hill’s work at Harvard and claims that Hill “was the man most influential in instituting at Harvard the course in English composition” (85). Given Hill’s connection to Harvard and his association with CTR, it is worth knowing something about his background and work. Understanding his background and work sheds light on the intellectual atmosphere Hodges likely studied in at Harvard, and as Wozniak argues, Hill’s work influenced how many instructors taught composition throughout the United States.

Wozniak praises Hill’s publications, which, he believes, show “the complete way in which he immersed himself in the teaching of English composition and rhetoric” (85). One such

work, what Wozniak calls Hill's "magnum opus," is the *Principles of Rhetoric: And Their Application*. The introduction and table of contents of this text reveal a great deal about Hill's approach to rhetoric and composition. In his introduction, Hill says that rhetoric "is an art, not a science: for it neither observes, nor discovers, nor classifies; but it shows how to convey from one mind to another the results of observation, discovery, or classification; it uses knowledge, not as knowledge, but as power." This sounds much like Berlin's description of CTR and its belief that the way to understand nature is through sensory impression (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 26). Furthermore, the book is divided into sections, the first of which is "Grammatical Purity," and includes chapters on topics such as "good use," "barbarism," and "improprieties." Again, these suggest a CTR-approach to what the text labels "Composition in General." Though the second part of this book contains sections such as proposition and proof as well as three classes of arguments, which could be more rhetoric-based, beginning the book with attention to grammar is a CTR-approach to composition.

As further evidence of both Hill's influence and Harvard's CTR approach to composition, Wozniak's work on *English Composition in Eastern Colleges, 1850-1940*, provides a great deal of insight. In describing the first freshman English classes at Harvard, Wozniak points out that each student in the course was required to use Hill's *Principles of Rhetoric*, a fact that suggests his work's popularity with instructors and his potential to influence student thinking about writing. In addition, Wozniak notes that the course's focus was correctness in grammar (including spelling and punctuation) and paragraph construction. Students lost a significant number of points for misspelled words. They also completed grammar drills to help eliminate errors from their writing. Wozniak also details the number and types of themes students were required to write and notes that "the first concern of the instructors was scarcely

originality” (125). Again, such an approach to composition is decidedly current-traditional in its focus on grammar and structure over higher-order concerns.

Hill’s theory of composition is important for at least a couple of reasons. First, Wozniak argues that Hill was “the most influential man of the period because of his books, his example, and the disciples he inspired to spread his gospel in applied composition” (103). By disciples, Wozniak is referring to Hill’s many students who went on to become composition teachers (90). Wozniak furthers this argument by quoting J.H. Gardiner, who said that

Mr. Hill gradually but steadily revolutionized the teaching of English composition throughout this country, partly by his own exertions, and partly through the efforts of his loyal disciples. There is no considerable institution of learning in America in which his influence direct or indirect, cannot be traced by those who know the history of education for the past thirty years. (Gardiner quoted in Wozniak 114)

This quote comes from an article Gardiner wrote for the *Harvard Graduates Magazine*. It is likely that such a publication would want to portray one of its own in a favorable light, but there seems to be little question that Hill *was* influential. Crowley cites his influence, particularly through his textbooks and says that Hill’s texts (and Wendell’s) were as popular as Whatley’s were in his day (72). She also cites Wozniak as a source for understanding Hill’s influence (181), so again, there seems to be little question that he was influential. Thus, his connection to Harvard and his influence on composition, particularly CTR, make him an important figure for establishing a connection between CTR, Harvard, and Hodges. This connection is important because it speaks to the intellectual climate in which Hodges was educated. In that climate, CTR was pervasive.

3.5.2 *Barrett Wendell*

Another relevant Harvard figure of the time was Barrett Wendell, who taught English at Harvard from 1880-1917. Though his name often appears in scholarship about CTR, Crowley describes him as “a dilettante who studied law but did not pass the bar and who did his scholarly work in American literature” (72). Though he may have been a dilettante, Wendell was also influential as an originator and perpetuator of CTR. Thus, it is important to understand the ideas that influenced his thinking. Berlin traces Wendell’s influences as a scholar of literature and argues that “At the turn of the century, American academics’ [including Wendell] dominant approach to literary scholarship and their dominant method of writing instruction shared a common epistemology” (27). Wozniak makes a similar argument when he states, “A random sampling of the scope of English departments during this period manifests considerably more work offered in philology and literature, which, in turn, influenced the teaching of composition” (103). The literary theory and epistemology that informed the teaching of composition were based on faculty psychology and induction; in other words, they were science-based. The rhetoric that resulted was current-traditional, a rhetoric “grounded in positivistic epistemology” that “provided a counterpart to the scientific logic” of the new elective system (as opposed to the classical-based system) (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 26). The focus on science that created current-traditional rhetoric meant that composition instruction was focused on style and arrangement (Berlin 26).

The emphasis on arrangement and style, an approach we would now label CTR, was an essential component of the textbooks Wendell and his contemporaries wrote. Like many others at the time, Hill and Wendell both wrote popular composition texts, texts that were current-traditional. Though there are a number of problems with the popularity of texts written by people

with academic interests elsewhere, one of the most problematic is that they were passing their ill-informed approaches on to teachers of composition. Crowley draws on Connor's work to note that "the lore contained in Hill or Wendell was often the only information that writing teachers possessed about composition," and even more problematic was that the texts "assumed a degree of authority entirely out of proportion with its intellectual respectability" (72). Connors similarly argues, "Composition was the only college-level course consistently carried on by people whose only real training came from the rules and tenets found in the textbooks they asked their students to buy" (*Composition-Rhetoric* 101). To be fair, this was normal for the time. It may be alarming or disappointing to those of us in the field now, but the people teaching composition and writing composition textbooks were not required to be specialists (Crowley, Connors), and given the popularity of Hill and Wendell's work, perhaps the lack of specialization became the norm because it started at Harvard. On the other hand, maybe such criticisms are unfair. Maybe it is unfair to call Hill and Wendell's approaches "ill-informed." This may be unfair because as mentioned, their approach to composition was common for the time. However, it is worth noting that even after literature moved away from philology and history as the basis for literary study, foundations that were also supporting the teaching of composition, they continued to influence the way composition was taught, particularly as CTR (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 27).

Thus, Hill and Wendell, like Robinson and Kittredge, have no clear, direct training in composition or grammar, but Hill and Wendell are credited with being key figures in the CTR movement of the early twentieth century. To be clear: Hill and Wendell are partially responsible for one of the most lasting approaches to composition instruction, but their academic specialty was not what we would now call composition. I say this not to criticize them for doing what was popular at the time. I say this because Hill and Wendell influenced composition classrooms

across the country (as well as possibly Hodges while Robinson and Kittredge influenced Hodges), and their approach still exists in classrooms today even though the literary counterparts have since been disproven (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 27) and even though we now have people who specialize in both composition and linguistics.

3.6 Who Wrote Current-Traditional Textbooks During This Time?

Though Robinson and Kittredge, much like Hill and Wendell, were respected at Harvard and seem to have been accomplished in their fields, there is little to nothing in their professional biographies that suggests the work they did with Hodges on his dissertation would have had anything to do with composition or grammar necessarily, both subjects that are seemingly necessary for writing a best-selling grammar or writing textbook, which Hodges would later do. This, however, was not unusual at the time. Sharon Crowley argues that many scholars of that time wrote not just textbooks, but current-traditional textbooks, even though their expertise was in an area other than composition (*Methodical* 70). Crowley lists a number of such scholars with expertise in fields as varied as history, rhetoric, psychology, literary criticism, and Chaucer, among others. One scholar she names is Kittredge, a Shakespeare scholar, who as previously noted, was one of Hodges' dissertation readers (Crowley 70).

Thus, if Kittredge, like many of his contemporaries, did not have a composition background but wrote a composition textbook anyway, perhaps it is not surprising that one of his students also wrote such a text. Crowley argues that this was often the case in the nineteenth-and twentieth-centuries when "Hundreds of [...] current-traditional textbooks were written by scholars or teachers whose most enduring claim to fame lay in their participation in the major textbook tradition associated with American composition instruction" (*Methodical* 70). This is not surprising given that, as Crowley observes, composition did not make the move towards

specialization when the elective curriculum took over. While other fields moved from generalization to specialization, composition teachers instead came from a variety of fields. Crowley gives examples of this when she observes that “Genung was a Baptist minister with a doctorate in literature; Hill a journalist with a degree in law; Cyrus Northup at Yale was also a journalist” (72). Given the lack of specialization taking place in English after the Civil War, it is unreasonable to expect that textbook writers and teachers of composition would have had a background in composition in the ways that are available to students and scholars now. According to Robert Connors, that trend continued beyond the turn of the century. He observes, “The great difference between composition and other college-level disciplines is that, for all intents and purposes, composition studies had no scholarly professionals between 1900-1930” (*Composition-Rhetoric* 100).¹³

Crowley’s observation that current-traditional textbooks often came from people whose primary interests are outside of composition is an important one, and it leads to the question, where did the authors of current-traditional texts get their ideas if not from composition scholarship or research (which, to be fair, may not have been available to them)? According to Crowley, the works of Henry Day and Alexander Bain were the basis of many nineteenth-century textbooks while twentieth-century texts relied on the work of the nineteenth-century textbooks. As evidence, she references Ashley Thorndike’s 1905 textbook, *Elements of Rhetoric and Composition*, that opens, according to Crowley, by acknowledging that “nearly all textbooks of rhetoric then [early twentieth-century] in use were indebted to the works of those authors who have since been designated the ‘big four’ of current-traditional thought: John Franklin Genung, Adams Sherman Hill, Barrett Wendell, or Fred Newton Scott and Joseph Villiers Denney” (71).

¹³ Hodges earned his Ph.D. in 1918.

Crowley later cites Kitzhaber as the one who, in 1953, originally labeled Genung, Hill, Wendell, Scott and Denney as the “big four” (Crowley 179). Other notable scholars, namely Connors, Berlin, and Winterowd, also identify these authors as the thinkers behind current-traditional thought.

The fact that Hodges was not an expert in grammar or composition, but wrote a textbook about both, a textbook that is based on current-traditional thought, illustrates Crowley’s arguments that current-traditional texts came (and come) from outside of composition. Though Hodges taught composition, and he was head of the freshman English program at UTK, his own words prove that his academic and research interests lie elsewhere. The article related to his dissertation as well as the courses he took and professors he worked with at Harvard all reflect research and academic interests outside of composition and to some degree even outside of grammar. To be fair, however, it is worth noting that his interest in philology suggests an interest in language in general, which would certainly be important for writing a grammar textbook. But this raises some important questions about the continued production and use of the book. Hodges was a product of his time; in 1941, it was not unusual for him to have studied one area and written a textbook in another. However, as I will discuss in more detail in the following chapter, it is worth considering how the *Hodges’ Harbrace Handbook* still exists today in about the same form¹⁴ and has made it into 19 editions when it is still based on theories that have been dismissed or disproven. What we know about writing and grammar instruction has changed dramatically since the book’s initial publication. Therefore, why is the *HHH* still popular? Furthermore, why is the book still popular when there are textbooks based on current scholarship? What does it

¹⁴ This is a highly debatable point that will be defended later in this chapter and chapter 4.

suggest about composition instruction in practice that this book, based on what many scholars see as an outdated pedagogy, remains popular?

3.7 Harvard's Influence on Composition

To begin answering these questions, it is important to consider Harvard's influence on composition, particularly at the turn of the century. The ideas that came out of Harvard under professors such as Barret and Wendell helped spread CTR. As discussed in chapter 2, much of the relevant rhetoric and composition scholarship of the last 40 years, particularly the scholarship published in the 1980s, acknowledges this and points to Harvard as the site where CTR originated. Recently, however, scholars have revisited what we know about CTR as a means of providing a fuller history of the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century and its relationship with CTR. Sometimes the goal in doing so is to challenge what we think is true of CTR's history. Some such scholars (particularly Gold) have argued that our tendency to focus on Harvard fails to consider other approaches to composition, especially those unlike Harvard's. However, Berlin makes this point in his 1987 monograph, *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985*. Berlin makes it clear that *every* school was not following Harvard's lead while also acknowledging that some did. He argues, "Current-traditional rhetoric frequently appeared at large state universities, which adapted Harvard's plan to a much different setting" (41). He cites the University of Illinois as one school that adapted Harvard's plan as well as schools in Wisconsin, Texas, and Illinois (40-41). He also points out that there were schools, such as Yale, Princeton, and Williams, that were teaching what Berlin calls the "rhetoric of liberal culture" (35), not CTR. This point is important when considering that recent scholarship, particularly David Gold's, argues that Harvard has received an unfair share of the attention in the history of CTR because over thirty years ago, Berlin, a leading

scholar in the field, clearly delineated different approaches to teaching composition in the early twentieth century and did not argue that CTR was the only approach or that everyone did what Harvard did. Furthermore, the history of Harvard and early composition is important because as this microhistory will show, it is possible to trace the ways Harvard's early approach to composition is still influential.

In his important monograph, *English Composition in Eastern Colleges, 1850-1940*, John Michael Wozniak provides additional detail about early composition classes while also pointing to Harvard's influence. He makes numerous distinctions between the composition classes throughout eastern colleges of the time. Nevertheless, he concludes that "the freshman English class at Harvard was the progenitor of many others" (125). He also argues that "Its [the freshman English class at Harvard] influence is still readily perceptible" (125), an observation he made in 1975. In describing composition courses from 1890-1900, Wozniak argues that "This freshman English course at Harvard spread rapidly to many of the eastern colleges. While some installed it bodily, others incorporated its major features. The Harvard influence becomes even more apparent in the next decade and carries over into the advanced elective courses as well" (128). In other words, Harvard's composition course was used entirely in some cases and other times used in part. Either way, it was influential. Wozniak also identifies Barrett Wendell as influencing the way composition was taught at the time, mainly as it relates to theme writing. Wozniak quotes Rollo W. Brown¹⁵, who concluded the following:

Wendell's idea, which was closely akin to the entire conception of the freshman course as Briggs was developing it, likewise went to every part of the country.

The idea had the good fortune, as Briggs¹⁶' ideas had, of coming to birth at a time

¹⁵ Brown, Rollo W. *Dean Briggs*. New York, Harper and Brothers, 1926.

¹⁶ Briggs refers to LeBaron R. Briggs, one of Wendell's colleagues who also taught composition at Harvard.

when institutions everywhere were drawing upon Harvard heavily in their efforts to establish adequate courses. (Brown quoted in Wozniak 171)

Some schools did get on the CTR bandwagon because of Harvard's influence, and, as Berlin argues (36), part of the rationale for teaching CTR came from how its adherents felt about literacy and the American university. For Harvard, that view was based on the elective system that was in place at the time, which, was, according to Berlin, "a uniquely American phenomenon at the time [and] was at once committed to the scientific method and to the creation of a professional meritocracy consisting of an emerging middle class" (36). He goes on to argue that given this focus on the scientific method, "It is not surprising, then, that the rhetoric that A.S. Hill and Barrett Wendell forged at Harvard and that John F. Genung shaped at Amherst designed to emulate the scientific method" (36). This system also placed Harvard in the school of thought that believed that literacy was about utility, and Harvard's goal in undergraduate education was to provide "for the meritocracy of middle-class professionalism" (Berlin 36). The allegiance to both the scientific method and middle-class professionalism is important and will become important later as I connect Hodges' Harvard roots to his writing of the *HHH*.

3.8 From Harvard to the University of Tennessee at Knoxville

One of the ways Harvard had the potential to influence the teaching of composition was by having its graduates teach composition across the country. For example, as mentioned previously, Wozniak argues that one of the ways that Adams Sherman Hill influential was through "the disciples he inspired to spread his gospel in applied composition" (103), with the disciples being Hill's many students who went on to become composition teachers (90). Wozniak makes similar arguments about students of Wendell's who he describes as "spreading the Harvard gospel in composition and rhetoric" (142). He cites George Rice Carpenter, who

taught at Columbia and published textbooks and articles as well as Hammond Lamont, a Harvard graduate who taught at Brown (142-143). Perhaps his most interesting example is James W. Tupper, who from 1902 to 1904, taught English A at Harvard and then taught at Lafayette. Wozniak notes that “His [Tupper’s] appointment to Lafayette specifically enjoined that he ‘be authorized to put into practice the methods of instruction in Freshman composition, now in vogue at Harvard University’” (144). This example illustrates not only that some colleges wanted to adopt Harvard’s approach to composition; they also wanted to hire people who had first-hand experience with it.

Though not a student of Hill’s or Wendell’s, Hodges was a student of Hill and Wendell’s contemporaries who shared the CTR-based pedagogy, and in his own classrooms, Hodges used what he learned from them. He taught composition in a few schools, but more importantly, he wrote what some argue is the best-selling textbook of all time. Hodges graduated from Harvard in 1918 and joined the faculty at the University of Tennessee Knoxville (UTK) in 1920. According to Kenneth Curry, who wrote a history of UTK’s English department, *English at Tennessee: 1794-1988*, “to speak of Dr. John C. Hodges is to speak of the history and development of the Department for approximately forty years” (85). Curry praises Hodges for how he improved the department in many ways: “He was one of the most tactful persons I have ever known” (87); He “quickly made himself useful by taking over the moribund program of Freshman English” (85); and “His greatest skill lay in his recruitment of an able staff so that in some ways the Department represented for twenty-five years after his retirement his lengthened shadow¹⁷” (87). One such recruit was his friend, Alwin Thaler, a classmate from Harvard (Curry

¹⁷ This means that Hodges’ influence was felt in the department as late as 1987, a date that makes it possible to imagine how these ideas might still be popular. To be more specific, the Department in which I work has had two Chairs who were graduates of UTK, both of whom graduated before 1987, which means they likely saw the

86). Thaler is an important hire for UTK because Curry argues that “the two [Hodges & Thaler] can be said to have provided the direction and leadership of the Department for the next several decades” (86). I mention both here as another way of connecting Harvard’s influence on what would happen at UTK; in other words, two Harvard graduates (though Hodges is most important here) from the CTR period at Harvard would influence the English department at UTK.

Curry offers Hodges high praise for his work with the Freshman English program. Curry describes Hodges’ pedagogical changes to the program in this way:

He designed a system of not only the writing of papers but also of seeing that papers were corrected and revised. The students kept their papers in a folder, and at the end of the quarter turned in their folders with the corrected papers.

Instructors in the course were expected to have two conferences with each student and go over the papers with the student to determine their weaknesses and recommend ways of improving the compositions. The program was as demanding of the instructors as of the students. At one time, changed later, two themes per week were written: one in class; another out of class. (85)

This description sounds a good bit like Wozniak’s description of the original Freshman English at Harvard. Harvard’s students also used theme paper, wrote numerous themes, and maybe most important, the Harvard course also focused on the correction of themes. He says that “The aim of the Harvard instructors was to drill into freshman ‘the habitual use of correct and intelligent English’” (125). Thus, Hodges’ system at UTK is important because it shows some of the ways Harvard’s system influenced Hodges’ system at UTK. It is perhaps more important because it lays the foundation for the system Hodges would use to create the *HHH*.

influence of Hodges. Both were adopters and advocates of the *HHH*. To show how long this influence can last, one of these Chairs retired only two years ago.

In addition to creating guidelines for how student papers would be handled, Hodges also worked with faculty to make sure they were all on the same page in their teaching of composition. Curry describes Hodges' approach to working with faculty as follows:

In order to provide guidance to the changing corps of instructors and teaching fellows, Hodges conducted weekly staff meetings. In those leisurely days no English classes were held [*sic*] at 11:00 a.m. on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays so that Tuesdays were pre-empted for these staff meetings. In those days attendance was expected and since the staff was relatively small, any absence was conspicuous. Because the instructors and fellows came from a large cross-section of the nation, it seemed reasonable that the marking of the papers by this diverse group would exhibit a fair picture of what freshman instructors everywhere considered important. (85-86)

Though Curry never clearly says so, the implication here (and elsewhere in Curry's book) is that these staff meetings were what we might now call norming sessions. Curry does say that Hodges held these meetings to "provide guidance to the changing corps of instructors," which suggests that Hodges is telling instructors how to mark papers, but his later comment that there would be differences in what they marked given their varied backgrounds seems to contradict his earlier point. Thus, the purpose of these meetings is not entirely clear. If they were norming sessions, however, these sessions are likely the result of Harvard's influence. Wozniak notes that Harvard attempted to have instructors mark papers objectively, and one of the ways this was done was through weekly instructors' meetings where "an attempt was made to keep the standard of grades uniform for the whole class" (Wozniak 128).

3.9 Hodges' Methodology

While there may be a question about the purpose of Hodges' meetings, what is clear is that the meetings and Hodges' changes to the Freshman English program led to one specific outcome: the creation of the *HHH*. Ultimately, looking at the *HHH* will show that Hodges took what was popular at Harvard and used it to create a textbook. To understand that, though, one must first understand the methodology Hodges used to create the book. Understanding his methodology shows that his thinking was current-traditional. To provide more context about how the book came to be, I want to again quote Curry at length. I do so because his accounts are not only the closest accounts to first person that exist on this subject, but they are also some of the *only* accounts of the *HHH*'s origins as well as Hodges' method for creating the text. In recounting the origins of the *HHH*, Curry says:

Since the folders of the students were kept for several years, these papers could be analyzed and the results tabulated. Hodges concluded that most handbooks of composition included much material that was ignored and irrelevant to the teaching of composition. Hence he evolved the concept of the Harbrace Handbook of English, which sought to reduce and simplify the points of grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure that were essentials of any course in Freshman English. The Harbrace Handbook appeared in 1941, twenty years after Hodges' arrival at the University. I have heard that students (work-study students) did much of the statistical tabulation of the folders. Hodges, however, kept an eye on what new instructors were doing, and he regularly reviewed the folders—a custom that has continued to the present day—as a way of helping beginning instructors and ensuring a uniformity of standards. (86)

Curry's account of the book's origins reveals that Hodges found current textbooks to be ineffective, so he created his own that would be more streamlined. Moreover, he relied on the collected writings of UTK students as the basis for what topics were essential for this new textbook. Furthermore, the focus on a "uniformity of standards" sounds much like what happened early in Harvard's freshman English classes, which Wozniak described as "an attempt [...] to keep the standard of grades uniform for the whole class" (128). This point is worth emphasizing because it again points to Harvard's potential influence on Hodges' way of thinking, but it is also important because an attempt to create a uniform means of grading was likely at the heart of Hodges' plan and method for the *HHH*.

What little other information is available on his methodology comes from Debra Hawhee. She earned a B.A. and an M.A. in English at UTK and is now a well-known rhetoric and composition professor and scholar. In 1999, she published "Composition History and the *Harbrace College Handbook*" in *College Composition and Communication*. For her research in this article, she used the John C. Hodges Collection at UTK's John C. Hodges Library to access his personal and professional papers. Having accessed those materials, she provides additional detail, beyond Curry's, about where Hodges' research began and about the methodology he employed. She explains as follows:

Hodges' extensive research led him to believe these 35 rules [the taxonomy found in the *HHH*] accurately reflected the 35 most common grammatical errors students make. During the 1920s and early 30s, Hodges and 16 other Tennessee freshman English instructors used a coded system to mark errors on student themes. When the students received the marked-up themes, they were to systematically record all the errors, as directed by the *Manual of Instructions for*

Freshman English, a syllabus-style manual written by Hodges and required for all first-year writers at the University of Tennessee. [...] The *Manual* presented two pages of sample error entries, along with precise instructions for theme correcting [...] The *Manual* directed the students to first classify and then correct the errors on the appropriate sheets, thus producing, at the end of the term, a summary of errors made on all the themes. (510)

Hawhee summarizes this process by explaining that “The first three steps of Hodges’ data collection were completed in this manner: the students made errors, the instructors found and marked them, and the students collated and recorded them” (510). The *Manual* does reveal something about what errors are most problematic. In its section on grading, the *Manual* says that a theme’s substance is most important, but it also says that a theme or paragraph will not earn a passing grade for the following “offenses”:

1. Misspelling of five or more words.
2. Two incomplete sentences.
3. Two sentences run together or separated only by a comma.
4. Three dangling modifiers.
5. Three instances of faulty references.
6. Any combination, equally serious, of such faults.

(*Manual* 11-12)

This list is one way to argue that the approach to composition was current-traditional. Though the *Manual* says substance is most important, this list contradicts the privileging of substance if a theme can immediately fail for reaching a certain number of grammatical errors. Correct

grammar clearly trumps content if a theme can fail for grammar alone¹⁸. Those errors were kept as Hawhee describes, and the student folders were collected by their teachers and then kept in “The Theme Vault.” An actual vault, “The Theme Vault” is where the 20,000 student papers were kept, and errors were tallied. From these tallies, Hodges created his taxonomy for the handbook “that he claimed represented ‘all matters needed by freshman’” (511). This claim will become increasingly important in the following chapters as the contents of *HHH* reveal what Hodges believed were the matters needed by freshmen.

3.10 Hodges’ Books

If, as Curry argues, “Hodges concluded that most handbooks of composition included much material that was ignored and irrelevant to the teaching of composition” (86), Hodges must have known a great deal about the textbooks available at the time. His personal (yet professional) book collection available in the Archives at UTK certainly suggests he was an avid reader of the textbooks of his time. The “John C. Hodges Book Collection” at UTK includes an abstract that details the collection’s content by noting that it includes five boxes, which in sum contain 74 books with publication dates ranging from 1891 (a book by Barrett Wendell) to 1961. Most of the titles, titles such as *Expository Writing* and *Outlining for Effective Writing*, sound like titles of textbooks, and the Collection abstract suggests this as well. The abstract says that the books in the Collection “were part of his collection which Hodges used to write *Harbrace Handbook of Reading [sic]*.” Though the *Handbook of Reading* is not the text under consideration here, it is difficult to believe that the books in Hodges’ collection did not also influence his writing of what became the *Hodges Harbrace Handbook*. Even a cursory glance at the contents of these books,

¹⁸ Chapters 4 and 5 will more fully address the ways in which the text is CTR; here the purpose is primarily to provide a historical background before the analysis of the text.

particularly the inside covers of those containing grammar taxonomies, suggests these books influenced the way Hodges approached *HHH*.

Perhaps the most noticeable components of these textbooks are charts or taxonomies that appear in the front cover and break grammar and mechanics into categories, much like Hodges did in the original *HHH*, a feature that remains in the book today. For example, one of the texts in Hodges' collection is Thomas Ernest Rankin, Clarence D. Thorpe, and Melvin T. Solves' *College Composition*, published in 1929. Figure 1 below is a picture of the front inside cover of

this text.

PUNCTUATION		MISCELLANEOUS		GRAMMAR		GRAMMAR	
P 1	APOSTROPHE Page 798	M 1	ABBREVIATIONS Page 798	G 1	NOON Page 797	G 18	CONJUNCTIONS AND CONJUNCTIVE ADV. Page 782
P 2	BRACKETS Page 799	M 2	ALLUSION Page 798	G 2	PRONOUN Page 794	G 19	SENTENCE Page 783
P 3	COLON Page 798	M 3	BARBARISM Page 798	G 3	CASE Page 793	G 20	CLAUSES Page 784
P 4	COMMA Page 798	M 4	BIBLIOGRAPHY Page 799	G 4	"IT" AND "THERE" AS EXPLETIVES Page 797	G 21	COMPLEMENTS Page 784
P 5	DASH Page 799	M 5	CAPITAL LETTERS Page 800	G 5	VERBS: KINDS AND TENSES Page 799	G 22	AGREEMENT IN GRAMMATICAL NUMBER Page 785
P 6	EXCLAMATION POINT Page 794	M 6	COMPOUND WORDS Page 802	G 6	VOICE Page 771	G 23	ANTECEDENT Page 786
P 7	HYPHEN Page 794	M 7	DATES Page 803	G 7	MOOD Page 772	G 24	DANGLING CONSTRUCTION Page 786
P 8	PARENTHESIS Page 794	M 8	FORMAL NOTES Page 804	G 8	INFINITIVE, INF. PHRASES & CLAUSES Page 773	G 25	ABSOLUTE AND OTHER IND. CONSTRUCTIONS Page 787
P 9	PERIOD Page 798	M 9	ITALICS Page 804	G 9	GERUND AND GERUND PHRASES Page 774	G 26	APPOSITIVE Page 787
P 10	QUESTION MARK Page 798	M 10	LETTERS, BUSINESS AND PERSONAL Page 804	G 10	PARTICIPLE AND PARTICIPIAL PHRASES Page 775	G 27	IDIOM Page 788
P 11	QUOTATION MARKS Page 798	M 11	NUMBERS, HOW TO WRITE Page 806	G 11	SHALL AND WILL Page 775		
P 12	SEMICOLON Page 797	M 12	PARENTHESIS Page 806	G 12	ADJECTIVE Page 776		
		M 13	PLURALS Page 807	G 13	PRONOMINAL ADJECTIVES Page 777		
		M 14	ROMAN NUMERALS Page 809	G 14	ARTICLE Page 777		
		M 15	SPELLING Page 810	G 15	ADVERB Page 778		
		M 16	SYLLABICATION Page 816	G 16	COMPARISON Page 780		
		M 17	TITLES Page 817	G 17	PREPOSITION Page 781		

Figure 1: *College Composition* by Rankin, Thorpe, and Solve, 1929, part of the John C. Hodges Collection

Below, in figure 2, is a picture of the inside cover of the first edition of *HHH*, published in 1941.

GRAMMAR	1=grt Grammatical Terms	2=frag Fragment	3=cs Comma Splice	4=ad Adjectives & Adverbs	Enter other Corrective Symbols in this column at your instructor's easy direct	SYMBOLS ALPHABETICALLY ARRANGED
	5=ca Case	6=agr Agreement	7=t Tense			
MECHANICS	8=ms Manuscript Form & Revision	9=cap Capitals	10=ital Italics	11=ab Abbreviations & Numbers		ab = 11 Abbreviations and Numbers
						ad = 4 Adjectives and Adverbs
PUNCTUATION	12=v Comma	13=o Superfluous Commas	14=s/ Semicolon	15=ap Apostrophe		agr = 6 Agreement
	16="/ Quotation Marks	17= / ? / / / / (/) / Period and Other Marks				ap = 15 Apostrophe
SPELLING	18=sp Spelling					ca = 5 Case
	a-By Observation	b-By Rules	c-Hyphenated Words	d-Spelling List		cap = 9 Capitals
DICTION	19=g Good Use Glossary	20=e Exactness	21=w Wordiness	22=^ Omission of Words		coh = 25 Coherence in general
						cs = 3 Comma Splice
EFFECTIVENESS IN THE SENTENCE	23=u Unity and Logical Thinking	24=sub Subordination a-Clippy Sentences b-And Sentences	25=coh Coherence in general	26=// Parallelism		d = 10-22 Diction
	27=pv Point of View	28=ref Reference of Pronouns	29=emp Emphasis	30=var Variety		e = 20 Exactness
LARGER ELEMENTS	31=¶ Paragraph a-Unity b-Coherence c-Fullness	32=plan Planning the Whole Composition				ef = 23-30 Effectiveness in the Sentence
	33=lib Library & Term Paper	34=let Letters				emp = 29 Emphasis

Figure 2 Harbrace College Handbook, 1st edition, 1941

Though Hodges' taxonomy does not look identical to Rankin, Thorpe, and Solves', it has a similar approach to presenting the book's contents. The major categories are laid out in a way that draws attention to them while the individual chapters appear in smaller boxes. The major categories of both books also have letters to indicate their section; "g" indicates that chapters with that letter fall under the category of "grammar," for example. Both books also give each chapter a number to go along with the letter of the larger category. For example, in the *Harbrace*, commas are classified as "p" for punctuation as well as being labeled as "12" to indicate their chapter number. Interestingly, both taxonomies are found in same place: the inside cover of the books. The comparison of the two shows that Hodges' organizational strategy for his text took a

similar approach as did Rankin, Thorpe, and Solve, whose text was published in 1929, prior to *Harbrace's* 1941 initial publication. These similarities are important because they show that Hodges was familiar with the textbooks that were current when he was writing and because they show that he took a similar approach.

Another book that seems to have influenced Hodges is *the Century Collegiate Handbook*. Given the visual similarities and the fact that Hodges required all students in Freshman English (per *the Manual*) to buy the book, it seems to have influenced Hodges' approach to his own text. Figure 3 below shows its inside cover to illustrate the visual similarities between it and the *HHH*.

SENTENCES AND THE SMALLER ELEMENTS											
COMPLETENESS		1 Fragments misused as sentences	2 Incomplete constructions	3 Necessary words omitted	4 Sentences to be run up	5 Lack of subordination	6 Subordination treated by only	7 Subordination of the main thought	8 The comma splice	9 Exercise	
UNITY		10 Independent ideas	11 The spill-over sentence	12 Excessive detail	13 Choppy sentences to be combined	14 Ambiguous coordination	15 Squinting modifier	16 Misplaced word	17 Split construction	18 Exercise	
CLEARNESS		19 Reference of pronouns	20 Dangling participial or gerund	21 Other dangling elements	22 General incoherence	23 Shift in subject or voice	24 Mixed constructions	25 The exact connective	26 Connective to be repeated	27 Tautologous construction, but habit	28 Exercise
EMPHASIS		29 Parallel structure	30 Misleading parallelism	31 Correlatives	32 Periodic sentence	33 The weak passive voice	34 Emphasis by parallelism	35 Effective repetition of words	36 Offensive repetition of words	37 Exercise	
GRAMMAR		38 Emphasis by position	39 Emphasis by separation	40 Emphasis by subordination	41 Periodic sentence	42 The weak passive voice	43 Adjective and adverb	44 Word in a double capacity	45 List of the terms of grammar	46 Exercise	
DICTION		47 Case	48 Number	49 Agreement	50 Shall and will	51 Incapable verbs	52 Tense and Auxiliary	53 Words confused in meaning	54 Glossary of faulty diction	55 Exercise	
SPELLING		56 Wordiness	57 Triteness	58 The exact word	59 The exact idiom	60 Notation	61 Sound	62 Barbarisms and Slang	63 Words of faulty diction	64 Exercise	
MECHANICS		65 Recording errors	66 Pronouncing accurately	67 Logical kinship	68 Superficial resemblances list	69 and ae	70 Doubling a final consonant	71 Dropping final e	72 Plurals	73 Compounds	74 Spelling list
PUNCTUATION		75 Manuscript	76 References and quotations	77 Capitals	78 Italics	79 Abbreviations	80 Numbers	81 Syllabication	82 Letters (form)	83 Letters (models)	84 Exercise
		85 Superfluous marks	86 Comma	87 Semicolon	88 Colon	89 Dash	90 Parentheses	91 Brackets	92 Apostrophe	93 Question in Explanatory Period	94 Exercise
THE LARGER ELEMENTS OF COMPOSITION (ARTICLES 100 TO 139)											
ORGANIZATION		100 Limiting the subject	101 Irrelevant material	102 Inexact title	103 False leads	104 An effective warning	105 Proportion	106 Order of parts	107 satisfactory ending	108 Outlines	109 Exercise
PARAGRAPHS		110 Indentation Length Dialog	111 Dividing into paragraphs	112 The exact point of division	113 Unity	114 The topic sentence	115 Evidence of unity	116 Repetition of structure	117 Coherence	118 Methods of developing the paragraph	119 Exercise
LOGIC		120 Fuzzy thinking in general	121 Undeveloped thought	122 Logical conformity	123 is when clauses Definitions	124 Comparisons	125 Cause and reason	126 Contradictions Double negative	127 Confusion of fact, with opinion	128 Weak or false reasoning	129 Exercise
STYLE		130 General awkwardness	131 Stiffness	132 Exaggeration	133 Fine writing	134 Mixed imagery	135 The personal element	136 Colloquial expression	137 Concreteness	138 Variety	139 Exercise

Figure 3: *Century Collegiate Handbook*, inside cover

Though the contents of this text are much more cumbersome with 139 sections or categories compared to Hodges' 34 categories, the layout is quite similar, and the table is located in the

inside cover of the text just as it is in Rankin, Thorpe, and Solve's *College Composition* and in the first edition of the *Harbrace*.

The content of the *Century Collegiate Handbook* is also similar to the other texts. Most notable about the content is that the *Harbrace* and the *Century Collegiate Handbook* both move from smaller parts of grammar, such as comma splices and fragments, to punctuation and spelling, and lastly to what both label as the “larger elements” of composition. Connors provides an explanation for this approach when he says that “The primary goal of the early handbooks [...], like that of all early remedial teaching, was elimination of sentence- and word-level errors, since these mechanical elements were perceived as the basics of writing, the foundations upon which all else was built” (*Composition-Rhetoric* 97). This layout is important for at least two reasons. First, it suggests that Hodges' approach to his own text was influenced by the texts he used and read because the similarities are striking. *The Century Collegiate Handbook* and *College Composition* in particular both include taxonomies that are almost identical to the *HHH*. As for content, all three books contain sections on grammar and punctuation while both the *HHH* and the *Century Collegiate Handbook* both include sections on grammar, mechanics, punctuation, spelling, diction, and paragraphs. As noted, Hodges required composition students at UTK to purchase the *Century Collegiate Handbook*, so it is a text he would have been familiar with, and it is clearly one that he---consciously or unconsciously---most clearly imitated.

Furthermore, the layout of these texts, especially the *HHH*, is important because the move from the smallest units of language and composition to the larger elements is, according to Crowley in *Composition in the University*, an identifying feature of CTR. She claims, “Current-traditional textbooks nearly always began with consideration of the smallest units of discourse: words and sentences. This suggests that their authors, and the teachers for whom they wrote,

were anxious to correct two features of students' discourse: usage and grammar" (Crowley, *Composition in the University*, 95). CTR's focus on grammar will become increasingly important in the next chapter, but its importance here is that the layout of the text makes indicates that the text is a current-traditional one. It might be tempting for someone to argue that the layout is not sufficient means for determining whether a book is current-traditional or not, but in this case, the layout makes it clear. Stated another way, this emphasis on grammar over content is made clear by what receives space in the book. In the first edition of the *HHH*, grammar accounts for 310 pages while what can loosely be described as composition (paragraphs, planning the whole composition, library and term papers, and letters) account for 93 pages of the book.¹⁹

Given the popularity of CTR when Hodges was writing, it is understandable that he would have published a text that utilized what was a common approach to teaching writing. However, in *the Methodical Memory*, Crowley notes that another factor that determined what went into new textbooks was not just what was popular, but also what had been successful. She notes that "As certain textbooks met with success because of some new, more teachable, pattern of organization, they would be copied by other writers hoping to cash in on the huge sums that could be made by a best-selling textbook" (146). It makes sense then that Hodges had so many textbooks and that he would have studied them to come up with what he saw as the best approach for his own book. His personal books contain copious notes though it is not always clear how Hodges might have used those notes. It makes sense that they could have been for his work on *HHH* as well as the classes he taught.

¹⁹ I will return to this argument and address it more fully in subsequent chapters.

One such example is John C. French's *Writing*. In the back of the book, Hodges wrote notes, included below in figure 4, planning his class's schedule for writing a particular theme, which suggests he used the book to prepare for his own classes.

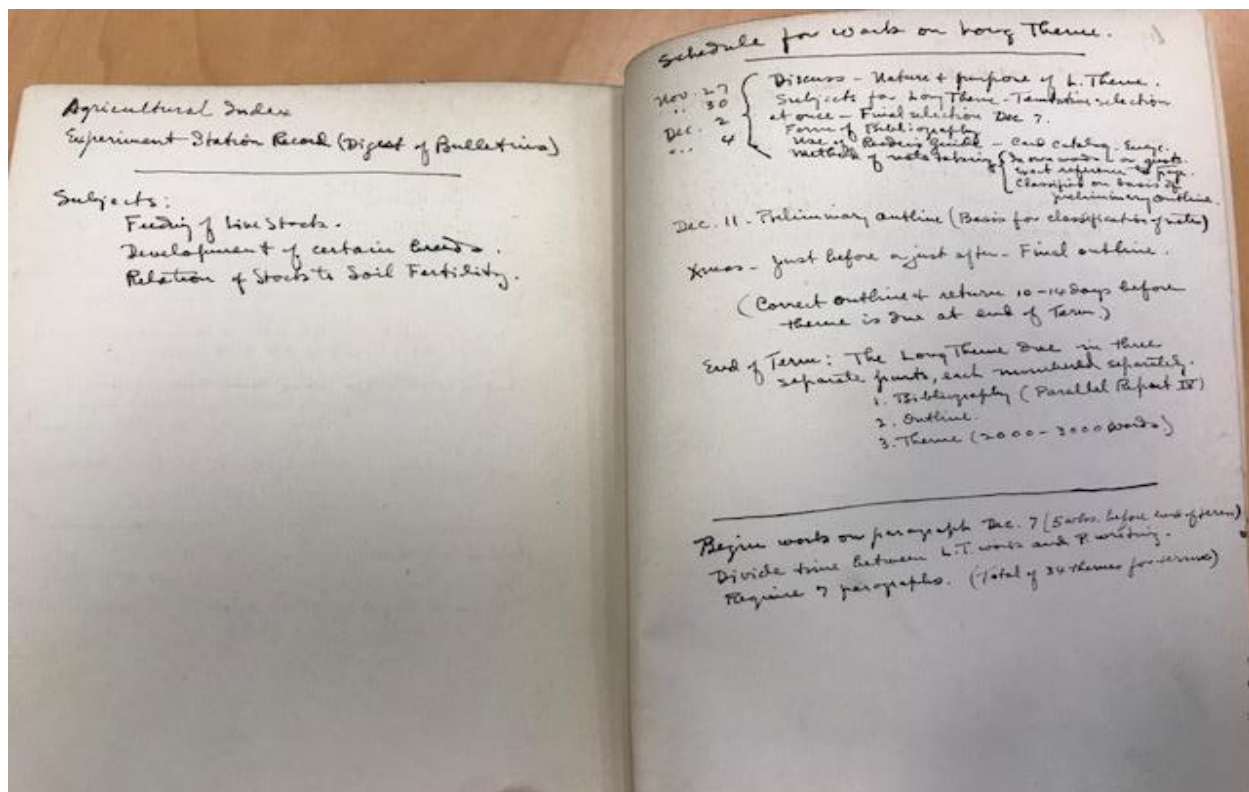


Figure 4: Hodges' scheduling notes in French's *Writing*

However, the book's inside cover, included below in figure 5, suggests he may have also used the book as inspiration for his own text. French's inside cover contains a list of theme correction symbols that greatly resemble those that Hodges included on the right side of the initial edition of *Harbrace*.

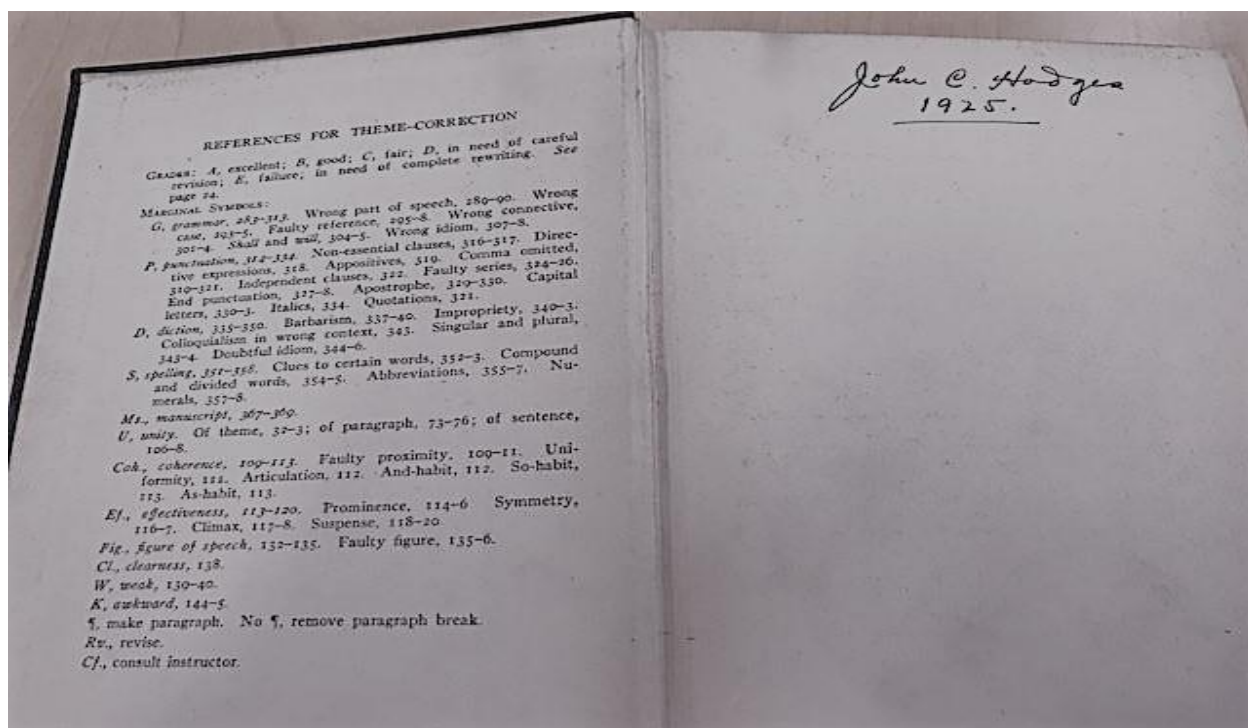


Figure 5: French's theme correction symbols

Other parts of Hodges' copy of French's text suggest that Hodges used the book for both his own classes and his own book. One interesting example of this is on page 73 of Hodges' copy of the book. Featured below in figure 6, page 73 of *Writing* contains Hodges' notes on the structure of a paragraph. He annotated the four places (words, sentences, paragraphs, and chapters) where text is divided. In addition, where French argues that "From being regarded as a mere convention not important enough to be included in lectures on rhetoric, it has come to be treated as an extremely significant unit of structure" (73), Hodges' responded, "The importance of the paragraph now recognized," with "now recognized" underlined. His notes above in figure 4 include the note to "require 7 paragraphs," and the first edition of the *Harbrace* includes an entire chapter on paragraphs, both suggesting the importance he saw in the teaching and writing of paragraphs.

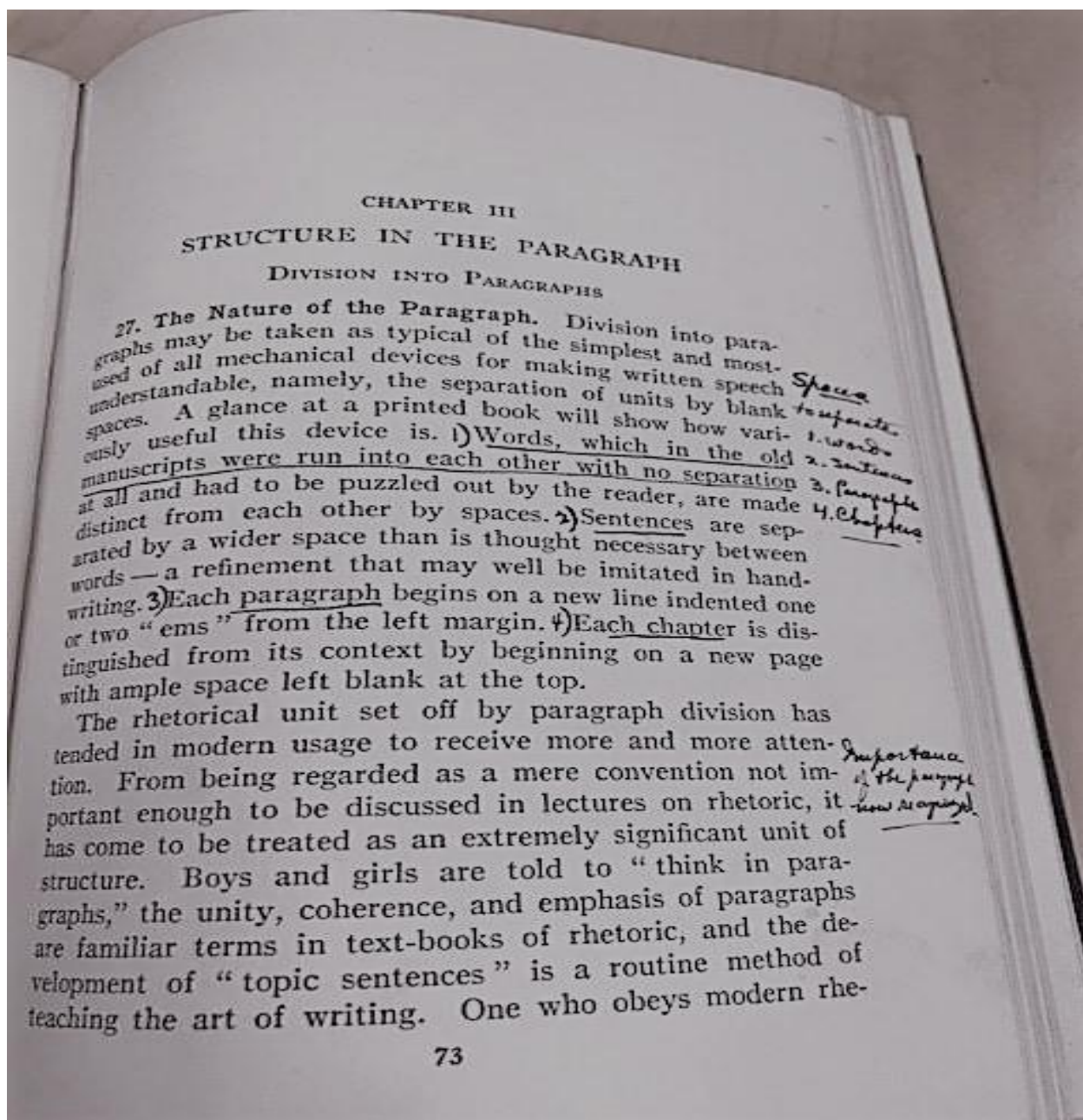


Figure 6: French's *Writing*, p. 73, with Hodges' annotations

It could be argued that the attention to paragraphs and paragraphing is current-traditional, and further proof of Hodges' current-traditional approach exists on page 74 of his copy of French's *Writing*. On that page, French continues his discussion of paragraphs and goes on to identify types of paragraphs, which Hodges marks as “exposition & argument,” “description,”

and “narration.” Seen below in figure 7, these notes again suggest an emphasis on those elements that have since been defined as current-traditional, and more specifically what Crowley has labeled EDNA (exposition, description, narration, argumentation), a means for identifying the genres most commonly found in CTR (Crowley, *Methodical*, p. 101).

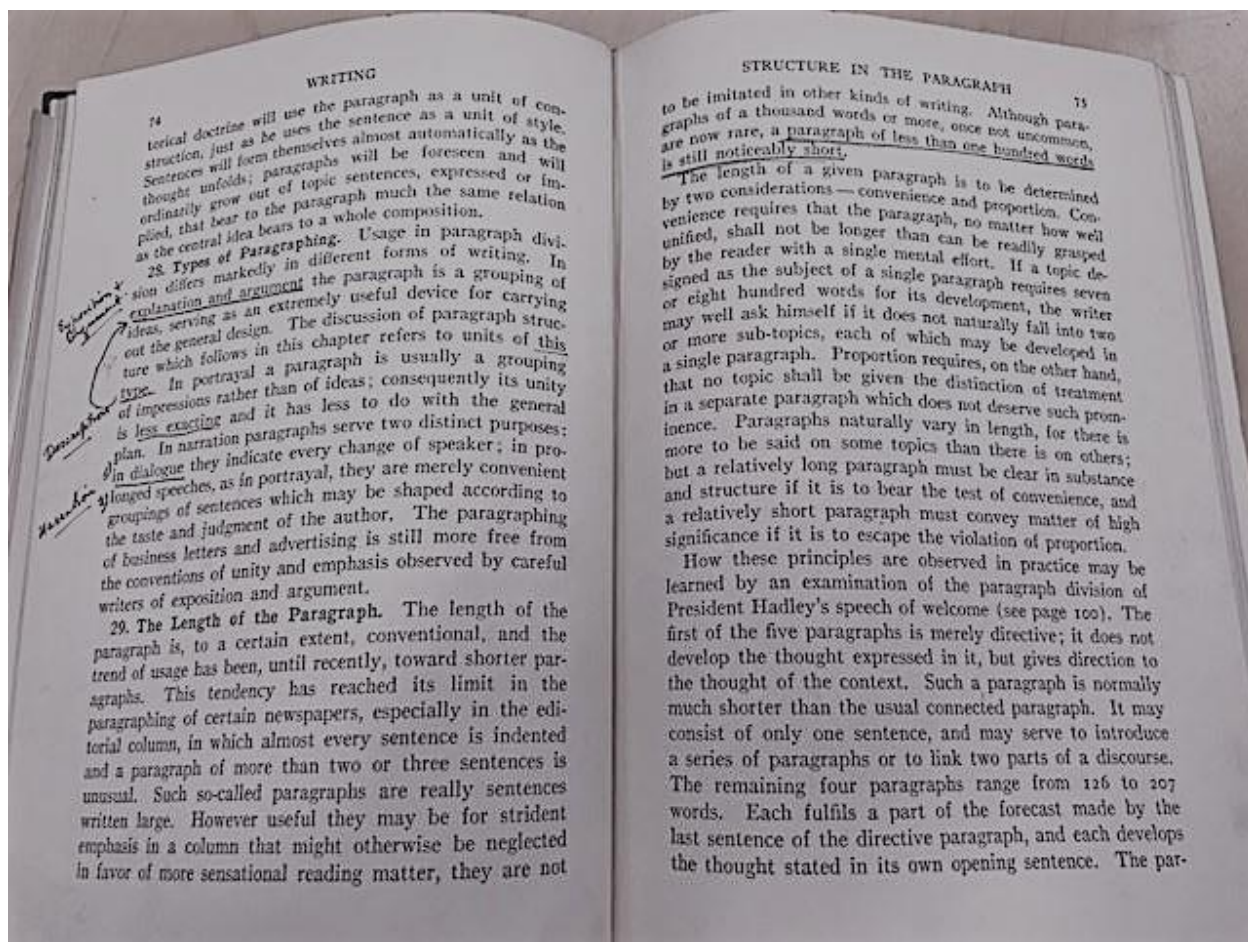


Figure 7: p. 74 of Hodges' copy of French's Writing

Other books in Hodges' collection include similar notes and approaches to composition. One such text, *English Composition*, written by Greenough and Hersey, (both Harvard English professors while Hodges was a student there) contains interesting annotations from Hodges. Several sections, like those included below in figure 8, contain numbers written by Hodges. It is clear from looking through Hodges' notes and papers that he kept meticulous records and notes,

but it is not clear what notes like these meant for Hodges. My initial guess was that the numbers he included in the annotations below would match chapter numbers in *HHH* though that is not the case. However, it is possible that the numbers matched an earlier version of the taxonomy or that they somehow helped him plan the *HHH* chapters. Regardless of what the numbers meant to Hodges, the notes in his books and the particular books in his collection make clear that he was an avid reader of the textbooks of his time, and his own text reflected his knowledge of those texts and what was a popular approach to composition at the time.

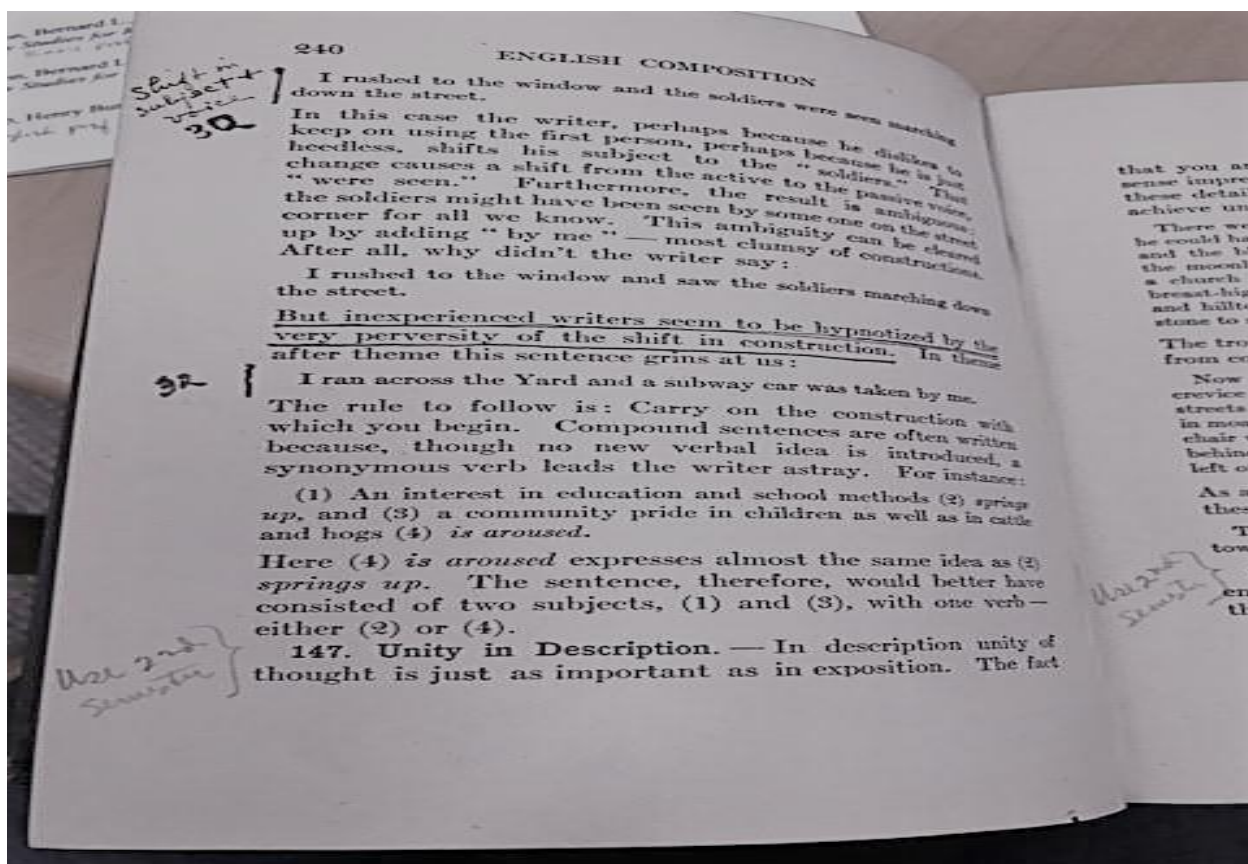


Figure 8: Hodges' notes in *English Composition* by Greenough & Hersey

3.10.1 Other Important Books in the Hodges' Collection: Another Harvard Connection

Many, perhaps most, of the texts in the Hodges' Collection take a current-traditional approach to writing. This is not particularly surprising given their dates of publication and CTR's

prevalence at that time. However, these books are worth considering as they illuminate what influenced Hodges' thinking on the text he created. Looking at these texts reveals that Hodges was influenced by CTR and more specifically, the brand of CTR that came out of the Harvard at the turn of the century. A number of the books in his collection were written by men who were professors at Harvard²⁰ when Hodges was a student there. Table 2 below lists those books.

Table 2: Hodges' Books Written by Harvard Professors

Author	Title	Publication Date
George Pierce Baker	<i>The Principle of Argumentation</i>	1895
Chester Noyes Greenough & Frank Wilson Cheney Hersey	<i>English Composition</i>	1917
Frank Wilson Cheney Hersey & Chester Noyes Greenough	<i>Specimens of Prose Composition</i>	1923
Percy Waldron Long & Frank W.C. Hersey	<i>Military English</i>	1918
Barrett Wendell	<i>English Composition</i>	1891

In addition, Hodges owned a number of books by Harvard graduates. The UTK Archives has Hodges' copy of *Freshman Rhetoric*, published in 1913 and written by John Rothwell Slater, an 1894 graduate of Harvard. It also has Hodges' copy of *The Writing of English*, published in 1920 and written by Edith Rickert and John Matthews Manly, who earned a PhD at Harvard in 1890 in philology, even though there was no philology department. According to the University of Chicago Library's "Guide to the John Matthews Manly Papers, 1885-1940," Manly worked

²⁰ All of these men are also graduates of Harvard.

with professors from several departments to earn the degree. Two of those faculty members were Barrett Wendell and George Lyman Kittredge, both figures who have been discussed at length earlier in this chapter. Thus, in knowing this snippet about Manly, many of the themes discussed throughout this chapter are again illuminated. First, Manly wrote a book called *The Writing of English* though, according to his archives at the University of Chicago, where he was a Professor of English and Head of the Department, he was a specialist in medieval literature, particularly on the work of Chaucer²¹. Furthermore, one of his major professors, Wendell, was a major figure of CTR, while one of his others, Kittredge, was a Shakespeare scholar. However, they all wrote books on composition. More importantly, however, is that through their books or teaching, all of these Harvard graduates or professors influenced Hodges' thinking on the field of English, particularly composition.

Manly's book in particular is revealing because it again shows the reach of Harvard's influence on the teaching of composition as Manly was a graduate who left Harvard, taught elsewhere, and employed a current-traditional approach to composition instruction that was likely based on what he learned at Harvard. In the Preface of his book, the one that Hodges owned and annotated, Manly explains that the book came to be after the University of Chicago "experimented" with students who did not meet the entrance requirements for freshman English. In other words, in our modern terminology, the students were placed in developmental writing classes. The book was based on Chicago's successful results with those developmental students. The book, much like the *Century Collegiate Handbook* and many others of the time, takes a current-traditional approach by (after an introductory section with topics such as using a dictionary) beginning with the sentence, moving to the paragraph, and then to narration,

²¹ a fact also noted by Crowley who mentions that both Rickert and Manly studied Chaucer (70).

description, exposition, and argument, another example of what Crowley calls EDNA. Thus, Hodges, even after graduating from Harvard, was still influenced by Wendell and Kittredge's approach to composition, though this time it was second hand, because he was reading the work of one of their former students who also published current-traditional texts.

Many of the books in Hodges' collection tell similar stories; they were written by Harvard graduates (Charles Harvey Raymond, H. Robinson Shipherd, and Harvey Lee Marcoux, for example) or professors (listed above), and many prescribe a current-traditional approach to composition. Barrett Wendell's *English Composition*, for example, contains a note before the text begins that says that "Any student of the subject will at once perceive my obligation to the textbooks of Professor A.S. Hill, Professor Bain, Professor Genung, and the late Professor McElroy." If identifying the primary figures of CTR thought were not enough to set it up as a CTR text, it goes on to establish itself as such by addressing words, sentences, paragraphs, contents, and whole compositions (among other things), but doing so in this order is, as Crowley notes, a current-traditional organizational approach in textbooks. Many of the books, like those in the images above, also reflect a CTR-approach by their focus on grammar. In many cases, grammar is privileged above all else in composition, and some even go as far as to suggest that grammar is a reflection of one's character. C.H. Ward's *Better Sentences*, for example, admonishes students not to use a comma without a reason. Ward²² argues that "the student who sprinkles in commas just by luck, for good measure, is an intolerable person" (161).²³ Thus, grammar is not just about language; it is about character²⁴.

²² Connors describes Ward as "the quintessential composition hack author of the early part of this century" (*Composition-Rhetoric* 98).

²³ There is no hint of humor or irony in Ward saying this.

²⁴ I will return to this argument in chapter 5.

3.11 From Harvard's English A to UTK's Freshman English

Harvard's influence on Hodges and ultimately on composition at UTK under Hodges did not end with the books that Hodges read or the book that he created. The similarities between UTK's freshman English class and Harvard's first year English class, English A, are striking. English A was the result of Harvard's entrance testing. According to Wozniak (69-70) and Connors (184) as well as numerous others, in 1874, Harvard began administering an English composition test for entering students. Wozniak quotes Harvard Dean Gurney who explained the need for the entrance exam by observing that "Bad spelling, incorrectness as well as inelegance of expression in writing, ignorance of the simplest rules of punctuation, and almost entire want of familiarity with English literature are far from rare among young men of eighteen otherwise well prepared to pursue their college studies" (quoted in Wozniak 70). The entrance tests confirmed Gurney's (and others') concerns about the quality of student writing; Connors notes that more than half of students who took the exam failed it (Connors 184). The response, in 1885, was to create English A, a freshman course in writing that, according to Connors, was remedial (184-185). Connors blames the entrance tests and English A for creating "the first American College Literacy Crisis and the first experiments in basic writing instruction on the college level" (185).

Given the conditions that gave rise to English A, the content of the course is to be expected. The 1894-1895 Harvard University Catalog describes English A, a course for undergraduates as follows:

Rhetoric and English Composition – A.S. Hill's Rhetoric, and part, of his Foundations of Rhetoric. – Lectures, written exercisess [*sic*], and conferences. *T., Th., or Sat., at 12 and two other hours to be appointed by the instructors.*

Professors A.S. Hill and Briggs, and Messrs. Hurlburt, Copeland, Lamont, Boynton, Hart, and Damon.

Course A is prescribed for Freshmen and for first-year students in the Lawrence Scientific School.

Citing C.T. Copeland and H.M. Rideout's *Freshman English and Theme-Correcting in Harvard College*, Wozniak provides further information about English A: "The aim of the Harvard instructors was to drill into freshman 'the habitual use of correct and intelligent English'"

(Wozniak 125). Copeland and Rideout support this argument by making the following statement:

The first effort of the instructors, then, is not to make the daily themes interesting, but to make them correct. In the two weeks before the first fortnightly theme, these daily exercises are the only material from which to teach punctuation, spelling, grammar, the right use of words, the principles of structure, and whatever else ill-prepared youths need to learn. (9)

Likely one of the ways those themes were corrected was using the "English Composition Card" that students were required to have. Copeland and Rideout say that the card was "arranged by Professor Hill" and it contained a "key to the abbreviated marks of correction" (3). Berlin also mentions the abbreviated marks of correction and says they focused on "superficial correctness – spelling, punctuation, usage, syntax – and on paragraph structure" (38). One of the ways this focus on correctness was addressed was in weekly instructor meetings where under discussion was how "the standard of grades is kept uniform" (Copeland and Rideout 77).

Copeland and Rideout also explain that students in English A wrote 12 fortnightly themes of 3-6 pages as well as a 1-page theme each day (3), and they mention that the daily themes were Barrett Wendell's idea (7). Furthermore, "Each fortnightly theme and many of the daily themes,

if particularly faulty, must be rewritten, or if fairly successful, revised” (Copeland and Rideout 3). Lastly, one other pertinent detail about English A is that students were required to have conferences, usually about once a month with their instructor to talk about the student’s work (Copeland and Rideout 3). This course, with its emphasis on “superficial correctness” and attention to grammar and form over content make it clear that the course was current-traditional in nature. Connors goes a step further to say that the class was remedial (185).

Though there are many other elements of Harvard’s English A class, these are the components that are most like those found in Freshman English at UTK once Hodges took over the program. UTK’s Freshman English class sounds slightly less demanding of both teachers and students, but Curry, who wrote a history of English at UTK, claims that “The program was as demanding of the instructors as of the students” (85). He describes the class by explaining that the instructors had two conferences (during a quarter) with students, and students wrote 1 theme in class and 1 out of class each week. Much like at Harvard, the instructors attended weekly staff meetings, meetings that were held to “provide guidance to the changing corps of instructors and teaching fellows” (85). Though Curry does not say that these meetings were held to make sure “the standard of grades is uniform” as they were at Harvard, the uniformity of grading standards was a concern for Hodges. Curry explains that Hodges looked at the folders (that contained freshman papers) regularly to ensure a “uniformity of standards” (86).²⁵ It is worth noting here that one major difference between the UTK class and Harvard’s is that the early accounts of English A at Harvard often reference instructors such as A.S. Hill and Barrett Wendell, some of its most respected faculty members. At UTK, however, Curry refers to the “changing corps of instructors” for Freshman English, and he notes that Hodges and other “professorial staff”

²⁵ He also says Hodges reviewed the folders as a way to help instructors.

typically taught upper-level classes while that changing corps of instructors and M.A. students primarily taught the freshman and sophomore classes (32, 85).

It might be easy to dismiss the similarities between the UTK classes and the Harvard classes as coincidence or simply reflective of what was common pedagogy of the time. It might even be easy to dismiss that Hodges was heavily influenced by his classmates or professors at Harvard. Someone could certainly argue that Hodges' ownership of certain books, for example, did not mean he subscribed to the ideas within those books. However, the *HHH* reflects his allegiance to the ideas that came out of Harvard in the late-19th and early 20th centuries as do his annotations in his personal books. Tracing Hodges' educational trajectory reveals a web of intermingled figures (Wendell, Kittredge, Hill, and Manly, for example) who shared similar ideas about composition and some of whom had the power to influence the formation of the first required composition classes. Following the path of one individual, such as Hodges, often reveals that American approaches to composition often have the same origins if we dig deep enough, and much of that digging, especially where Hodges is concerned, leads back to a web of Harvard professors and alumni.

To clarify this point, it is helpful to consider changes in academic hiring practices. In the academic environment in which Hodges studied, worked, and wrote, it was common for ideas and scholars to be homogenous. This is important and different from our current academic climate in which schools typically will not hire their graduates for tenure-track positions. This was explained to me years ago when a former professor told me that the school liked to hire people from different places to keep ideas "fresh." She explained that the school did not want a department full of people who all thought the same way. I have come to understand and accept this practice, and I imagine many current graduate students and professors also accept it.

However, in Hodges' day, the norm was the opposite; schools hired their graduates, and at least in the case of Hodges, the prevailing ideas about composition were fairly consistent. For that reason, and many others, it is reasonable to accept that Hodges' thoughts on composition were influenced by his connections to Harvard. Thus, it stands to reason that his Harvard education and connections influenced the direction in which he took the UTK English Department, particularly in its Freshman English program.

It is also certain that Harvard influenced composition classes other than those at UTK. Given the strong arguments made by Wozniak and the scholars who cite his work (namely Berlin and Crowley), it is difficult to believe that Harvard did not influence the way at least some schools approached first-year composition. I argue, however, that Hodges' influence on composition has been more powerful and more lasting than the credit (or blame) Harvard has received for how first-year composition is taught in the United States. Hodges' textbook has lasted for almost 80 years, and not just survived but thrived, resulting in 18 subsequent editions²⁶ that have been used in classrooms throughout the country. If a book has influenced composition instructors and students for this long, it is worth knowing about the creator and his education, influences, and methodology. Understanding the history of Hodges and the *HHH* also means adding to our knowledge about early compulsory composition and CTR. The next chapter will consider why the *HHH* has persisted and whether or not it aligns with what current rhetoric and composition scholarship says about composition pedagogy.

4 WHY DOES THE HISTORY OF THE *HHH* MATTER NOW?

“But accuracy is only one composition aim; it is not the only composition aim. Yet it is frequently allowed to obscure all other aims. In our zeal to be practical we mistake the

²⁶ This is not counting the numerous offshoots of the book.

obvious function for the important function. Red ink looks impressive but is often a smoke screen behind which our failure to appraise thought and composition values significantly goes undiscovered. Our dread of the paper load causes us to confuse composition values, and the reaching of other composition goals is thwarted.”

-Luella B. Cook, 1932

After reading the microhistory in the previous chapter, perhaps you are wondering why the history of the *HHH* is relevant now. More specifically, why is now the time to consider some of the questions the *HHH* history raises, questions such as why should we care if a book first published in 1941 is based on questionable research methods? Wouldn't we find that many books published at that time do not meet our modern standards for theory and research practices? Maybe. But this is not about just any book published in 1941. This is a book that is purported to be the best-selling textbook of all time, and it is still available to current students for about \$120 even though much of what the book covers is available online, for free, through reliable websites such as [Purdue OWL](#) (or [Chomp Chomp](#) or [Guide to Grammar](#) if one wants grammar drills). This is to say nothing of the many other comparable textbooks on the market. The history of the *HHH* and its continued commercial success despite the plethora of textbooks available and despite changes in the field are interesting stories; however, the real value of understanding both the history and success of the book is that it is a way to see how and why ideas, though largely disproven in scholarship, continue to be disseminated to students. Furthermore, the story of the *HHH* also sheds light on the working conditions of composition instructors and how those working conditions can cause instructors to have to make choices between pedagogy and efficiency (which, because of working conditions, are sometimes at odds).

The story is a complicated one; there are many people and institutions involved. Because of this, following the tangled webs of production and dissemination means going in many different directions. With these various webs in mind, this chapter considers why the book and, by extension, CTR remain popular. Though there are no easy answers, there are many points worth considering. This chapter will address many of those, including the following:

- In what ways has the book changed from the 1st to the 19th edition?
- What are the most useful aspects of the text?
- How does the text meet the WPA Outcomes for First-Year Composition?
- In what ways does the text reflect a commitment to CTR?
- Why do students need the *HHH*?
- How does use of the *HHH* exacerbate problems related to the high costs of college (and textbooks)?
- Why is the text still being used?

In addressing these issues, it is important to begin by noting that though *HHH* and CTR are two entities, they have much in common and remain popular for similar reasons. Another way of understanding this is that CTR is the problem, and the *HHH* is a manifestation of the problem.

4.1 The Carceral Network

The production and use of this textbook have created a carceral network all around it; it is a network of textbook publishing companies, colleges, and sometimes unwitting writing instructors and students who are caught up in the production, dissemination, and use of the text, a situation that creates many pedagogical and ethical questions that need to be examined. To begin answering those questions, I return to the historical context of the *HHH* and rely on the scholarship of Libby Miles as a framework. She proposed a methodology that examines “the

institutions that create and perpetuate instructional materials.” To do so, Miles draws on Foucault’s idea of the “carceral network,” or the “inter-connectedness of institutions.” The idea is that an institution does not function in isolation; it is supported and perpetuated by those institutions surrounding it. In terms of higher education, and specifically composition courses, the institutions surrounding textbook production are worth examining because as Miles argues, “Flowing among these institutions, then, are common systems of knowledge and power production, which both creates and perpetuates the normalizing function.” In other words, if we apply Miles’s framework to textbook production, we can begin to understand how textbooks create knowledge in composition classrooms, and more specifically, how the *HHH* produces certain kinds of knowledge and pedagogy. This will become increasingly important as a means of showing that what the *HHH* creates as normal knowledge for the first-year composition classroom is CTR.

Miles provides “strategies for tracing the material conditions of the composition textbook industry, *through* the discursive construction of power as it moves from one supporting institution to another.” To investigate the supporting institutions, or the carceral network, Miles proposes the following “possible steps for recognizing neighboring institutions”:

1. Follow the money trail.
2. Find the physical locations.
3. Describe the material manifestations.
4. Include ideological manifestations. (9)

These are fascinating and potentially fruitful avenues for investigating textbook production. Many of these components overlap, however, making it difficult to fully address one area and

then move to another. Thus, these various components of the carceral network will come up throughout the remainder of this dissertation.

4.2 University of Tennessee at Knoxville (UTK)

The physical location for the *HHH* begins at UTK, where Hodges first created the *HHH*, and UTK remains an important physical location for understanding the carceral network of the text. UTK is also an illustration of how the money trail, physical locations, and material manifestations can overlap. At UTK, the people who are profiting from the text are in some cases the ones requiring students to purchase the book. This does not appear to be an evil scheme on the part of the UTK English Department, a department that won the 2011-2012 Writing Program Certificate of Excellence²⁷, a national award from the Conference on College Composition and Communication (“First-Year Composition”; “CCCC Writing Program Certificate of Excellence”); it appears more to be part of a tradition that remains unexamined in many ways. That tradition is part of the way this carceral network continues. In *the Writer’s Harbrace Handbook* currently used at UTK, the Composition Director’s Foreword begins by noting, “The book you hold in your hands is part of the Volunteer²⁸ tradition” (n.p.), referencing the book’s long history at UTK. Even though the text’s original methodology and the text’s contents do not align with the field of rhetoric and composition’s espoused values for first-year composition²⁹, the text continues to be published and required in composition courses, and the system of people who require and use the book create a complicated carceral network that perpetuates the book’s production and use.

²⁷ According to the CCCC’s website, UTK was one of 7 winners; they won specifically for their “Writing Program.” Other categories include first-year writing, ESL, undergraduate rhetoric program, etc.

²⁸ UTK is Home of the Volunteers.

²⁹ I will return to this argument later in this chapter.

Hodges' methodology matters even now because it is still the linchpin of the 19th edition of the book. One part of this argument that has not yet been examined is that the current edition of the *HHH* is not radically different from the 1st edition published in 1941. This argument is complicated because the current text has been updated in certain aspects but not in others. I will take on that argument in this chapter, but first, it is important to acknowledge the text's strengths and in what ways it can be used effectively. Doing so is important to be fair to the text and its editors. Moreover, it is important to recognize what the book does have to offer so as not to suggest that it has no redeeming qualities. This is also necessary because it raises the question of whether or not the content justifies the price students pay for the book.

4.3 The Strengths of the *HHH*

If one needs a grammar reference book, there is likely no better reference than the *HHH*. It contains 30 chapters on grammar, broken down into the following sections: grammar, mechanics, punctuation, spelling and diction, and effective sentences. Within those sections, readers can find explanations and examples of topics ranging from subject-verb agreement to commas to apostrophes. It is hard to imagine that there is a grammar topic not covered in the *HHH*. Also important to the text's ethos is that the topics are being addressed by editors who are experts in the field. Cheryl Glenn, one of the text's editors, is described on her faculty webpage as Distinguished Professor of English and Women's Studies Director. Her areas of specialization are listed as "Rhetorical histories, historiography, and theories (ancient to contemporary); composition theory and practice; rhetorical delivery systems (speaking, writing, silence, and listening); feminist and gender theories; feminist historiography, pedagogies, and research methods; medieval and Renaissance literatures." It seems likely then that her responsibilities lie primarily in the chapters on writing and rhetoric. Loretta Gray, also editor of the text, is likely

primarily responsible for the grammar chapters. Dr. Gray has a Ph.D. in applied linguistics, and her faculty webpage lists her interests and specialties as “Corpus Linguistics, Rhetorical Grammar, Pedagogical Grammar, Composition Pedagogy, Discourse Analysis, [and] TESOL Methodology.” With such credentials, it is clear that both editors are experts in their fields.

Given the expertise of the editors and given the book’s longevity, there is no reason to doubt its credibility in terms of being a reliable source for grammar reference. The book’s definitions and explanations sound much like other popular sources. The 19th edition, for example, describes sentence fragments as missing a subject or a verb or both a subject and a verb. It also notes that fragments can result from improperly punctuated dependent clauses (45). The popular Purdue OWL similarly explains that fragments are typically either dependent clauses punctuated as sentences, or they are groups of words without a main verb or subject (“Sentence Fragments”). I could provide many similar examples, but this does not seem productive as there does not seem to be an issue with the book’s grammatical content being correct. However, it is worth pointing out that the book is reliable for grammar reference. That is likely its biggest strength.

The chapters on writing also appear credible as they include information typically found in first-year writing textbooks. Chapter 31 thoroughly discusses the rhetorical situation, writing for different kinds of audiences, and even covers topics such as what it calls “rhetorical opportunity,” or “the issue compelling you to speak or write,” which seems to be a combination of *kairos* and *exigence*. The strength of such content is that it asks students to consider writing for practical purposes as opposed to the kinds of artificial assignments that CTR pedagogies typically require. It also covers topics such as writing paragraphs, particularly introductions and conclusions, and making paragraphs unified and coherent (which is often a component of CTR).

The bottom line, however, is that the writing content in the 19th edition of the *HHH* offers instruction that appears in many first-year writing textbooks.

4.4 The Taxonomy: A Means for Efficiency

Another strength of the book is its taxonomy. The current *HHH* includes the taxonomy in the front cover that first appeared in the original edition of the book. There are good, specific reasons for this taxonomy. Though such tables were common in textbooks when Hodges first wrote the *HHH*, Hodges found that they were often overwhelming, offering readers too much information, or they were haphazardly organized. Curry confirms this when he says,

Hodges concluded that most handbooks of composition included much material that was ignored and irrelevant to the teaching of composition. Hence he evolved the concept of the Harbrace Handbook of English, which sought to reduce and simplify the points of grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure that were essentials of any course in Freshman English. (86)

Robert Connors, who has written extensively on handbooks, also acknowledges the problems with the precursors to the *HHH*. He notes that before the *HHH*, there were some successful handbooks, but many still had weaknesses. Connors argues that

there remained multifarious systems of competing numbered or lettered rules; there was still overlap between grammatical and rhetorical treatments of such elements as the sentence and the paragraph; there were disagreements about whether forms such as letters or activities as library research should be covered. (95)

Hodges' taxonomy, on the other hand, had a thoughtful organizational scheme designed to help both teachers and students. Because teachers were often carrying heavy teaching and grading

loads, Hodges wanted to find a way to make grading more manageable. He also wanted to create a book that would help students improve their grammar. In the 1st edition of the *HHH*, Hodges' "To the Instructor" acknowledges this when he says, "The *Harbrace Handbook* is a guide to the correction of student themes and also a text for use in class. It presents well-known subject matter in a more usable form, and thus eases the instructor's task of grading papers" (iii). The answer to both of these problems, according to Hodges, was found in the organization of the *HHH*. With its taxonomy, based on common student errors, teachers could learn the taxonomy once, and then they would have an efficient means for marking papers. For example, instead of creating a system of their own to mark errors or instead of having to write out phrases such as "pronoun-antecedent agreement," teachers could instead write "6b," which would signal to a student that he/she needed to go to section 6b in the *HHH* to see what error was in the paper. This would save the teacher time grading, and it would refer the student to the relevant section of the book. Given that many composition instructors are still carrying heavy teaching and grading loads, such a taxonomy could still help make grading and instruction more efficient, making the taxonomy a strength of the book.

4.5 Other Useful Aspects

There are other potentially useful components of the book. One component includes the grammar exercises found throughout the chapters. If an instructor wants his/her students to complete grammar drills, they can use the book for that. The current edition, for example, includes exercises in section 6b to help students with pronoun agreement as well as subject-verb agreement.³⁰ The book also includes potentially educational chapters on writing and research and

³⁰ There are answer keys for some exercises and not others though it is not clear why some topics have them and others do not.

documentation, and it even offers advice for multilingual writers. Chapters 31-45 cover important topics such as revision, editing, composing arguments, and communicating online. Chapters 36-40 address research and help readers learn skills such as how to use sources responsibly and how to cite sources in MLA and APA. Though there are fewer chapters on writing than grammar,³¹ the writing chapters are still potentially useful as they cover topics, such as those listed above, that are common components of first-year writing courses. Thus, there are ways in which the book's grammar contents are useful for faculty and students.

Though those seeking grammar instruction may find it in the *HHH*, there are issues with the *HHH*'s treatment of grammar. The major problem with the text's treatment of grammar is not simply that it treats grammar. Grammar is important in communication for the sake of clarity for the reader and authority for the writer. There are at least two significant problems with the presentation of grammar in the *HHH*. First, the book's treatment of grammar suggests that grammar is a writer's primary concern. It does this, as has been mentioned throughout this dissertation, by giving grammar 30 chapters and making them the first 30 chapters of the book. Furthermore, the basis for the grammar chapters, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5, is the belief that marking errors is the primary concern of the writing teacher. As Connors contends, "The primary goal of the early handbooks [...] was elimination of sentence- and word-level errors, since these mechanical elements were perceived as the basics of writing, the foundations upon which all else was built" (97). To be clear, the taxonomy, which still appears as main feature of the book, was created to give instructors a way to mark grammatical errors. However, if we accept the WPA Outcomes Statement, error correction should no longer be the primary focus of writing instruction or paper marking. Furthermore, as discussed

³¹ The writing chapters account for chapters 31-45 while grammar appears first and makes up chapter 1-30.

previously, the treatment of grammar in the *HHH* is problematic in the way it removes invention, particularly in that it removes choice for the writer. The writer should instead follow a prescribed set of rules for grammar while ignoring what construction of language would be appropriate for the given purpose, audience, and context. This was the book's approach in the 1st edition, and it remains the approach in the current edition.

4.6 The 1st and 19th editions of the *HHH*: Has the Book Changed Throughout its Many Editions?

Grammar has always been a key component of the *HHH*, but it is worth asking whether its treatment of grammar has undergone substantive changes as the book has gone through various editions. One person, Debra Hawhee, has argued that the book has not changed significantly. When Hawhee wrote about the *HHH* in 1999, she argued about the ways that the 12th edition (current at that time) was unchanged from the initial edition. She acknowledges changes such as updated sample sentences and the removal of sentence diagramming, but concludes that “The *Harbrace* has retained the same structure since 1941” (505). In looking at subsequent editions, particularly the 19th, I have argued the same thing. Though content has been updated as necessary, the essence of the book remains the same. The editors of the book would likely disagree with this argument, though, because earlier editors disagreed with this argument. In the three responses to Hawhee's article, there was what seemed like outrage³² that Hawhee could make such a claim. Thus, I feel certain that the current editors and publishers would be outraged at such a claim, and in some ways, they might be correct because there are substantial ways that the text has been updated. It is important, however, to consider in what ways those changes not only make the text more current, but to also consider what pedagogy those changes promote.

³² It is strange how often the responses directly reference “Hawhee” instead of her arguments.

4.7 The 19th Edition & the WPA Outcomes

The easiest way to determine the changes to a new edition of the *HHH* is to look in the Preface. Throughout the text's many editions, the editors seem to anticipate criticism, particularly the criticism that the text has not changed since the 1st edition or perhaps not since the previous edition. One of the reasons that they may anticipate criticism is that there has been criticism of the book since at least the 5th edition. The John C. Hodges Collection at UTK contains the following criticisms of the 5th edition:

Critic A: Generally the adverse criticisms of Harbrace, 5th edition, that I have heard voiced repeatedly by colleagues and that I concur in are (1) that it is too prescriptive in its approach (Its claim to take cognizance of recent linguistic research is not actually justified by the content of such basic chapters as 1 and 18).....(3) that it should have more on rhetoric (This last, of course, is in line with recent trends in the general 'philosophy' of freshman composition. (MS 0401, box 1, folder 16)

Critic B: Because many of our students are going to be teachers of English, and because the whole emphasis of Freshman English at Upsala has shifted from a remedial, 'review grammar' approach (with drill and workbook), to a more advanced, sophisticated approach to language and writing, we need a handbook that does more than tell students what to do. (MS 0401, box 1, folder 16)

There are other criticisms in the Collection. Several critics said reorganize the book. Each time, Hodges has written NO, in all caps, in the margin next to the suggestion.

Recent editions attempt to counter such potential criticism in the book's Preface, where they detail updates to the book. In the 19th edition, this is covered in the section titled, "What Is

New to This Edition?” as well as the section titled, “How Does This Edition Address the ‘WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition (v 3.0)’?” In this section, the editors include 15 bullet points that list which chapters address the WPA Outcomes. For example, under “Rhetorical Knowledge,” one of the four main sections of the WPA Outcomes, the *HHH* Preface claims that Part 1 (Chapters 1-7) of the *HHH*, a section titled *Grammar*, addresses rhetorical knowledge because it asks students to “think rhetorically about grammar” (xviii). Chapters 1-7 are as follows:

Ch. 1: Sentence Essentials

Ch. 2: Sentence Fragments

Ch. 3: Comma Splices and Fused Sentences

Ch. 4: Adjectives and Adverbs

Ch. 5: Pronouns and Case

Ch. 6: Agreement

Ch. 7. Verbs

These sound like standard chapters on grammar, but the editors argue that the chapters ask students to think rhetorically about grammar. An example of this can be found in chapter 4. After defining and describing adverbs, the text includes a textbox with the heading, “THINKING RHETORICALLY.” The box asks students, “What do the adverbs add to the following sentences” (8) and then presents the sentences below:

The scientist **delicately** places the slide under the microscope.

“You’re late,” he whispered **vehemently**.

She is **wistfully** hopeful. (8)

After these sentences, the book explains: “Adverbs convey shades of meaning; they can help you portray an action, indicate how someone is speaking, or add detail to a description” (8). The above sentences contain adverbs, but how useful is the “thinking rhetorically” explanation? By the text’s own definition, adverbs “provide information about time, manner, place, and frequency, thus answering one of these questions: When? How? Where? How often?” (7). Doesn’t that definition make it clear that adverbs will provide additional detail? Does the “thinking rhetorically” explanation really offer more than traditional grammar instruction? In what ways does it add a rhetorical way of thinking about grammar?

It may seem that I am splitting hairs here, but these questions are important in determining whether or not the book actually addresses the WPA Outcomes. Therefore, does the section on adverbs (described above), as well as the first seven chapters of the book, fulfill (or at least address) the WPA Outcomes for Rhetorical Knowledge? To answer this question, it is worth reading this section of the WPA Outcomes, copied below:

Rhetorical Knowledge

Rhetorical knowledge is the ability to analyze contexts and audiences and then to act on that analysis in comprehending and creating texts. Rhetorical knowledge is the basis of composing.

Writers develop rhetorical knowledge by negotiating purpose, audience, context, and conventions as they compose a variety of texts for different situations.

By the end of first-year composition, students should

- Learn and use key rhetorical concepts through analyzing and composing a variety of texts
- Gain experience reading and composing in several genres to understand how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers’ and writers’ practices and purposes

- Develop facility in responding to a variety of situations and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and/or structure
- Understand and use a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences
- Match the capacities of different environments (e.g., print and electronic) to varying rhetorical situations

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- The expectations of readers in their fields
- The main features of genres in their fields
- The main purposes of composing in their fields

(“WPA Outcomes Statement”)

Though “Rhetorical Knowledge” covers a lot of ground, the essence of what it means is conveyed in the opening sentence of the section: “*Rhetorical knowledge* is the ability to analyze contexts and audiences and then to act on that analysis in comprehending and creating texts” (“WPA Outcomes Statement”). Thus, grammar may be a component of rhetorical knowledge, but in the above Outcomes Statement, grammar is not a writer’s first consideration as it is in the *HHH*. The Outcomes Statement argues that “Rhetorical knowledge is the basis of composing” while the *HHH* treats rhetorical knowledge as subservient to grammar. Given the setup of the *HHH*, that the first 30 chapters cover grammar, writers are asked to consider their grammar before they have a purpose or audience. While some people may address grammar as they write and others may address it after, how can writers address grammar before they have a reason to write? If a writer must address grammar before she has something to say, before she has a purpose or audience, how is it fair to say that 7 chapters on grammar address “Rhetorical Knowledge”? Furthermore, would the authors of the WPA Outcomes agree that the above

example with adverbs is what they had in mind when they outline what rhetorical knowledge means, particularly when considering that the last section of the Outcomes is “Knowledge of Conventions,” and the first bullet point under that list addresses grammar, punctuation, and spelling?

Claiming that the first 7 chapters of the *HHH* align with the WPA Outcomes is also problematic because it misrepresents the book’s ratio of grammar to rhetoric/writing, which is 2:1. In other words, the book has more chapters on grammar than on writing. Looking at the Preface of the *HHH* and its lists of chapters that align with WPA Outcomes suggests that the *HHH* is focused primarily on the Outcomes’ first 3 sections: rhetorical knowledge; critical thinking, reading, and composing; and processes and not the Outcomes’ fourth and final section. The last section of the WPA Outcomes is “Knowledge of Conventions,” a section that covers both formal and informal rules that govern writing in genres. This is the section that most explicitly covers grammar. As evidence of the *HHH*’s adherence to the WPA Outcomes, the Preface lists 10 bullet points that point to various chapters between 31 and 42, writing-themed chapters. The other 5 bullet points point to chapters between 1 and 17, grammar-focused chapters. Thus, two-thirds of the bulleted list draws on the writing chapters while one-third draws from the grammar chapters. What this means is that there is a disproportionate relationship between the book’s chapters and the WPA Outcomes. While the bulleted list in the 19th edition suggests that the book goes a long way in meeting the WPA Outcomes, it relies more heavily on the writing chapters than the grammar chapters to do so. More specifically, while the grammar chapters make up 67% (or 30 out of 45) of the *HHH*’s chapters, they only make up 33% of the list for meeting the WPA Outcomes. The writing chapters, which make up 33% of the book’s chapters, account for 67% of the text’s alignment with the WPA Outcomes. This raises the

question, why are there so many chapters on grammar? And if the book is so intent on meeting the WPA Outcomes, why are there chapters that do not meet WPA Outcomes? What functions do they serve? Furthermore, given that there are more grammar chapters than writing chapters, how would readers know that the writing chapters are most important, which is what the editors seem to suggest by listing so many of the writing chapters as the means of meeting the WPA Outcomes?

4.8 Similarities and Differences between the 1st and 19 Editions

Though the 19th edition has the significant change of attempting to address the WPA Outcomes, it still owes much to the 1st edition. The easiest place to see this is in the taxonomies, which remain largely unchanged. Figures 8 and 9 (below) show both editions' taxonomies.

GRAMMAR		MECHANICS		PUNCTUATION		SPELLING		DICTION		EFFECTIVENESS IN THE SENTENCE		LARGER ELEMENTS		
1=grt Grammatical Terms	2=frag Fragment	3=cs Comma Splice	4=ad Adjectives & Adverbs	5=ca Case	6=agr Agreement	7=t Tense	8=ms Manuscript Form & Revision	9=cap Capitals	10=ital Italics	11=ab Abbreviations & Numbers	12=v/ Comma	13=o Superfluous Comma	14=s/ Semicolon	15=ap Apostrophe
		16=q/ Quotation Marks		17= / ? / / / / (/) / Period and Other Marks		18=sp Spelling		19=g Good Use Glossary		20=e Exactness		21=w Wordiness		
		22=a Unity and Logical Thinking		23=u Subordination		24=sub Subordination		25=coh Coherence in general		26=// Parallelism		27=pv Point of View		
		28=ref Reference of Pronouns		29=emp Emphasis		30=var Variety		31=¶ Paragraph		32=plan Planning the Whole Composition		33=lib Library & Term Paper		
		34=let Letters												

SYMBOLS ALPHABETICALLY ARRANGED	
ab	= 11 Abbreviations and Numbers
ad	= 4 Adjectives and Adverbs
agr	= 6 Agreement
ap	= 15 Apostrophe
ca	= 5 Case
cap	= 9 Capitals
cah	= 25 Coherence in general
cs	= 3 Comma Splice
d=19-22	Diction
e	= 20 Exactness
ef	= 23-30 Effectiveness in the Sentence
emp	= 29 Emphasis
frag	= 2 Fragment
g	= 19 Good Use — Glossary
gr	= 1-7 Grammar
get	= 1 Grammatical Terms
ital	= 10 Italics
k	= 10 Awkward Recast
let	= 34 Letters
lib	= 33 Library and Term Paper
ms	= 8-11 Manuscript Form and Revision
o	= 13 Superfluous Comma
ps	= 12-17 Punctuation
plan	= 32 Planning the Whole Composition
pv	= 27 Point of View
ref	= 28 Reference of Pronouns
sp	= 18 Spelling
sub	= 24 Subordination
t	= 7 Tense
u	= 23 Unity and Logical Thinking
var	= 30 Variety
w	= 21 Wordiness
x	= Obvious Error. Correct it.
^	= 22 Omission of Words
//	= 26 Parallelism
¶	= 31 Paragraph
no ¶	= No Paragraph
/	= 12 Comma
/	= 14 Semicolon
?	= 16 Quotation Marks
/ ? / / / / (/) /	= 17 Period and Other Marks

Figure 8, *The HHH's taxonomy, 1st edition, published in 1941, found inside the book's front cover.*

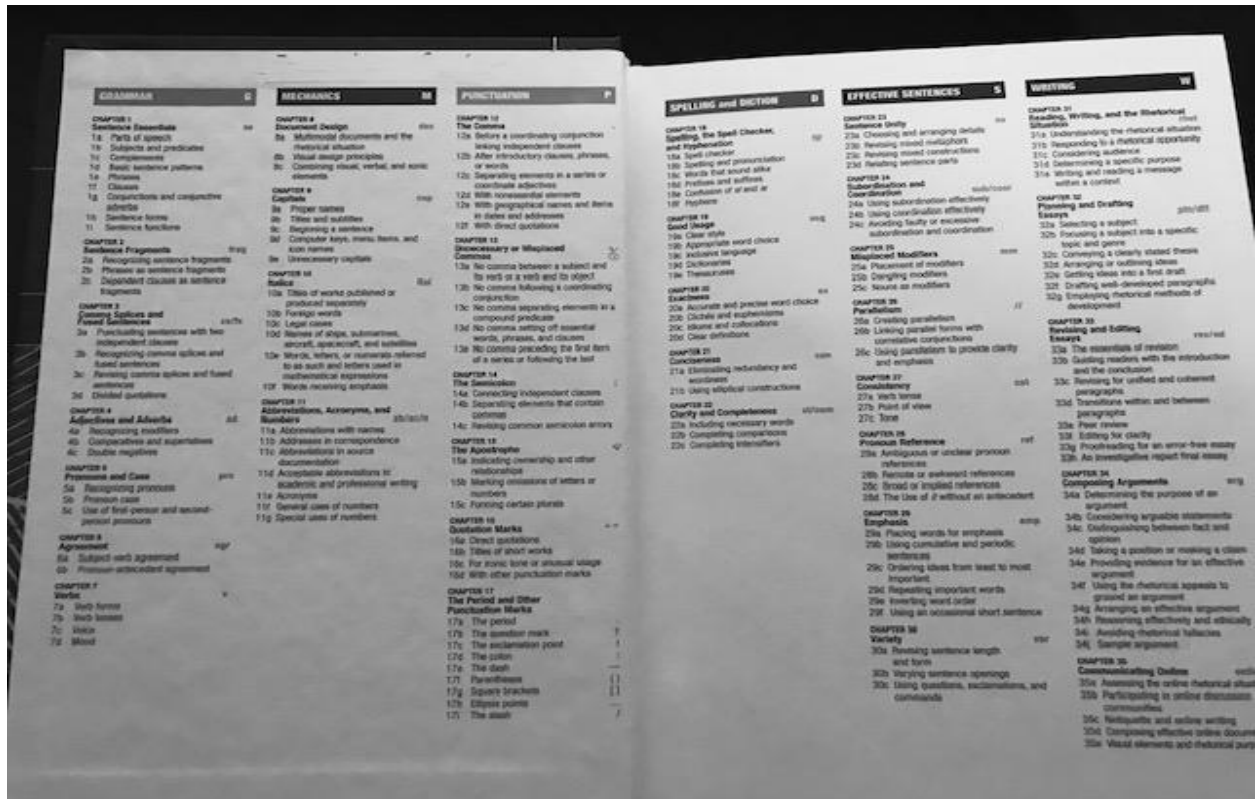


Figure 9 The HHH's taxonomy, 19th edition, published in 2017, found inside the book's front cover

There are only minor differences in the two if we look at only the first 30 chapters. For example, chapter 5 is called “case” in the 1st edition while it is called “pronouns and case” in the 19th edition. Chapter 19 was originally titled “good use glossary” and is now called “good usage.” The only significant change in chapter titles is in chapter 8. Chapter 8 was originally called “manuscript form and revision” and dealt with topics such as “using the proper materials” (which meant what kind of paper and ink to use unless one was able to type) and how to space, indent, and paginate a paper (102-103). Given the many options now available for writing formats, chapter 8 has been updated to address topics such as writing multimodally and using visuals (110, 113). It is easy to understand why the book would now include such information,

and such updates are useful and important. At essence, though, these chapters are really covering the same information: how to format the words a writer puts on a page.

Chapter 8—then and now—is a prime example of why it quickly becomes difficult to say that the *HHH* has not changed since 1941. The original edition clearly did not address multimodality, so given that the current edition does, it seems as though the text has kept up with the times. That is true. The information in the text, in my estimation, is current and correct³³. This is worth mentioning because one of the arguments against Hawhee’s research was that it was not reasonable to conflate the current edition (the 12th at the time) with the original. In his response to her article, Thomas Broadbent, a former editor of the *HHH*, said,

Directly contrary to both the letter and spirit of Hawhee’s article, I assert that the *Harbrace* has survived as well as it has because it has changed with the times, not because it remains rooted in the 1930s. Indeed, my main complaint about Hawhee’s article is that hardly anything she imputes to the *Harbrace* was true by the time of the tenth edition, published in 1986. (643)

I do not agree with Broadbent’s assessment of Hawhee’s work; such an argument fails to consider the nuances in Hawhee’s argument. Furthermore, Broadbent is personally invested in the *HHH* because he edited the 10th edition, so he may have been too close to the text to make an objective argument about it. For that same reason, anyone invested in the *HHH* might leverage the same claim against the arguments I have made in this dissertation. Thus, I want to be clear that I am not taking issue with the book’s content because it is out of date. It is not. On the contrary, the first major problem with the text is its roots. As will be detailed in the next chapter,

³³ I could go into deeper detail on this point, but I see no reason to. I am not arguing that the text is not reliable for grammar rules. It is. My arguments lie elsewhere, so this point is not worth developing, but it does need to be acknowledged.

there are many problems with the methodology used to create the text. The other major problem is that the text's logic is based on an outdated, disproven theory for composition instruction, a fact that leads to the text's other major issue, which is that its contents and structure still prescribe—to both teachers and students—a current-traditional approach to writing.

4.9 How the Book is Still CTR

Anyone who opens the *HHH* will first see the taxonomy shown in figure 2. The taxonomy is important because it is a reader's introduction to the text; its visual and spatial organization tell the reader what the text privileges and what it has to teach readers. It also introduces the reader to the text by listing the book's sections and chapters, the first 30 of which are grammar-related. Those chapters are followed by chapters 31-45, which address writing, but this format raises questions for an observant reader of the text. Why does grammar deserve 30 chapters, or more accurately, 33 chapters³⁴, leaving only 11 chapters to writing? What impression does that create on readers about what matters most in writing?

The order of the chapters suggests that grammar is more important than any larger issues of writing because grammar appears first in the text. As noted previously in this dissertation, this layout is important because the move from the smallest units of language to the larger elements of composition is, according to Crowley in *Composition in the University*, an identifying feature of CTR. She claims, "Current-traditional textbooks nearly always began with consideration of the smallest units of discourse: words and sentences. This suggests that their authors, and the teachers for whom they wrote, were anxious to correct two features of students' discourse: usage and grammar" (Crowley, *Composition in the University*, 95). W. Ross Winterowd makes a

³⁴ Though chapters 43-45 are included in the section on writing, they are part of a section for multilingual writers, and all three chapters address grammar.

related argument when he lists the components of CTR, one of which is that in CTR, “Instruction becomes bottom-up (from word to sentence to paragraph) rather than top-down (from purpose or intention to general plan to textual details” (89). Thus, given Crowley and Winterrowd’s arguments, CTR and CTR-based textbooks, address grammar before larger writing concerns because grammar is the preeminent concern for writing instructors, and by extension, students of writing. This is certainly the case for the *HHH*: grammar is located before writing, both physically and pedagogically.

Given the book that Hodges created, there can be little doubt that grammar was his primary concern. In an effort to make grading more efficient, he created a system of numbers and letters that would make it easy to mark and identify grammatical errors in student papers. To be clear, those numbers and letters, in the first 30 chapters of the first edition, relate exclusively to grammar. That system, or taxonomy, found in the book is current-traditional because it moves from small units of discourse—the sentence, particularly the sentence fragment—to the larger components. As an example, chapter 1, “Sentence Essentials,” includes parts of speech, subjects and predicates, complements, basic sentence patterns, phrases, clauses, conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs, sentence forms, and sentence functions. Chapter 1 opens by defining and exemplifying the parts of speech (2-10). The chapter’s last section defines and exemplifies sentence types: declarative, imperative, interrogative, and exclamative (41-42). Chapter 1, then, meets Crowley’s definition of as a current-traditional text because it moves from words to sentences. The consideration of words of sentences is considered before purpose, audience, and context, which also suggests a CTR-approach.

The move from what Crowley labels the smallest units of discourse can also be seen on the chapter level, as chapter one above illustrates, but it can also be seen in the move from chapter to

chapter. Whereas chapter 1 begins with parts of speech, chapter 30, the last grammar chapter, is titled “Variety,” and addresses topics such as how to revise sentence length and form. Thus, readers move from the smallest unit of discourse, the parts of speech, to larger units of discourse, sentences. Though this approach makes the text current-traditional, the book’s subsequent chapters are focused on writing. Thus, it is important to ask whether or not those chapters have any impact on whether or not the book is CTR. I argue no because, as I said above, the text privileges grammar over writing by placing grammar first and by covering grammar in such detail.

Regardless of that format, the chapters on writing, which cover topics such as the rhetorical situation, drafting essays, revising essays, cannot be ignored. Therefore, it is important to consider what the chapters on writing reveal about the theory of writing that underlies the book. On a positive note, the number of chapters on writing has increased since the 1st edition. That edition had 4 chapters on writing: the paragraph, planning the whole composition, the library & term paper, and letters. The current edition offers much more in the way of writing instruction. As figures 3 and 4 below illustrate, the writing chapters included in the 19th edition offer information such as understanding the rhetorical situation, determining the purpose of an audience, and using visual elements with a rhetorical purpose, all of which could be helpful to college-level writers.

D		EFFECTIVE SENTENCES		S		WRITING		W	
		CHAPTER 23				CHAPTER 31			
		Sentence Unity			su	Reading, Writing, and the Rhetorical Situation			rhet
sp		23a	Choosing and arranging details			31a	Understanding the rhetorical situation		
		23b	Revising mixed metaphors			31b	Responding to a rhetorical opportunity		
		23c	Revising mixed constructions			31c	Considering audience		
		23d	Relating sentence parts			31d	Determining a specific purpose		
						31e	Writing and reading a message within a context		
		CHAPTER 24				CHAPTER 32			
		Subordination and Coordination			sub/coord	Planning and Drafting Essays			pln/dft
msg		24a	Using subordination effectively			32a	Selecting a subject		
		24b	Using coordination effectively			32b	Focusing a subject into a specific topic and genre		
		24c	Avoiding faulty or excessive subordination and coordination			32c	Conveying a clearly stated thesis		
						32d	Arranging or outlining ideas		
						32e	Getting ideas into a first draft		
ex choice		CHAPTER 25				32f	Drafting well-developed paragraphs		
		Misplaced Modifiers			mm	32g	Employing rhetorical methods of development		
		25a	Placement of modifiers			CHAPTER 33			
		25b	Dangling modifiers			Revising and Editing Essays			rev/ed
		25c	Nouns as modifiers			33a	The essentials of revision		
		CHAPTER 26				33b	Guiding readers with the introduction and the conclusion		
		Parallelism			//	33c	Revising for unified and coherent paragraphs		
		26a	Creating parallelism			33d	Transitions within and between paragraphs		
		26b	Linking parallel forms with correlative conjunctions			33e	Peer review		
conn		26c	Using parallelism to provide clarity and emphasis			33f	Editing for clarity		
		CHAPTER 27				33g	Proofreading for an error-free essay		
		Consistency			cst	33h	An investigative report final essay		
		27a	Verb tense			CHAPTER 34			
		27b	Point of view			Composing Arguments			arg
cl/comm		27c	Tone			34a	Determining the purpose of an argument		
		CHAPTER 28				34b	Considering arguable statements		
		Pronoun Reference			ref	34c	Distinguishing between fact and opinion		
		28a	Ambiguous or unclear pronoun references			34d	Taking a position or making a claim		
		28b	Remote or awkward references			34e	Providing evidence for an effective argument		
		28c	Broad or implied references			34f	Using the rhetorical appeals to ground an argument		
		28d	The Use of <i>it</i> without an antecedent			34g	Arranging an effective argument		
		CHAPTER 29				34h	Reasoning effectively and ethically		
		Emphasis			emp	34i	Avoiding rhetorical fallacies		
		29a	Placing words for emphasis			34j	Sample argument		
		29b	Using cumulative and periodic sentences			CHAPTER 35			
		29c	Ordering ideas from least to most important			Communicating Online			online
		29d	Repeating important words			35a	Assessing the online rhetorical situation		
		29e	Inverting word order			35b	Participating in online discussion communities		
		29f	Using an occasional short sentence			35c	Netiquette and online writing		
		CHAPTER 30				35d	Composing effective online documents		
		Variety			var	35e	Visual elements and rhetorical purpose		
		30a	Revising sentence length and form						
		30b	Varying sentence openings						
		30c	Using questions, exclamations, and commands						

Figure 10, chs. 30-35 of the 19th edition of the HHH

RESEARCH and DOCUMENTATION	R	ADVICE for MULTILINGUAL WRITERS	A
CHAPTER 36 Finding Sources Online, in Print, and in the Field	<i>find</i>	CHAPTER 43 Determiners, Nouns, and Adjectives	<i>det/noun/adj</i>
36a Research and the rhetorical situation		43a Determiners and proper nouns	
36b Searching electronically		43b Determiners and count nouns	
36c Locating reference works		43c Determiners and noncount nouns	
36d Locating articles		43d Determiners and adjectives	
36e Locating books		43e Shifting from nonspecific to specific references	
36f Locating online sources		CHAPTER 44 Verbs and Verb Forms	<i>v/vf</i>
36g Locating images		44a Verb tenses	
36h Keeping track of your sources		44b Auxiliary verbs	
36i Doing field research		44c Prepositional verbs and phrasal verbs	
CHAPTER 37 Evaluating Print and Online Sources	<i>eval</i>	44d Participles used as adjectives	
37a Credibility of authors		CHAPTER 45 Word Order	<i>wo</i>
37b Credibility of publishers		45a Ordering adjectives	
37c Evaluation of online sources		45b Placing adverbs of frequency	
37d Relevance and timeliness of sources		45c Placing adverbs and direct objects	
CHAPTER 38 Integrating Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism	<i>src</i>	45d Ordering words within clauses	
38a The rhetorical situation and the research paper		Glossary of Usage	<i>gu</i>
38b Taking and organizing notes		Glossary of Terms	<i>gt</i>
38c Working bibliography and annotated bibliography			
38d Quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing sources			
38e Analyzing and responding to sources			
38f Synthesizing sources			
38g Avoiding plagiarism			
CHAPTER 39 MLA Documentation	<i>mla</i>		
39a MLA-style in-text citations			
39b MLA list of works cited			
CHAPTER 40 APA Documentation	<i>apa</i>		
40a APA-style in-text citations			
40b APA-style reference list			
40c Sample APA-style paper			
CHAPTER 41 Writing about Literature	<i>lit</i>		
41a Literature and its genres			
41b Rhetorical reading and literary interpretation			
41c Vocabulary for discussing literature			
41d Approaches to interpreting literature			
41e Conventions for writing about literature			
41f Literary interpretation of a short story			
CHAPTER 42 Writing in Business	<i>bus</i>		
42a Conventions of language and organization			
42b Business letters			
42c Business memos and e-mails			
42d Résumés			
42e Letters of application			
42f Oral presentations with PowerPoint			
42g Business reports			

Figure 11, chs. 36-45 of the 19th edition of the HHH

However, there is no transition between what feels like two parts of the book. In other words, there is no bridge from the grammar chapters to the writing section of the book. Because of this, the writing chapters appear to be an addendum or an afterthought. In other words, they seem like a late and unnecessary addition. Or, if they are not an afterthought, at best, they confuse the purpose of the book. If it is a handbook, why include the chapters on writing? If it is a book about writing, why does it have so many detailed, specific chapters about grammar, and why is grammar listed first? To have grammar first suggests it is most important, which does not align with the aforementioned WPA Outcomes that privilege purpose, audience, and context. With all of this in mind, the question becomes, for what purpose is the book to be used? More importantly, who should use such a book?

4.10 Who Needs the *HHH*?

Considering the book's purpose also raises the question, who needs the *HHH*? In other words, who is the book's intended audience? The current publisher of the book, Cengage, has the *HHH* listed on its website under English Composition and more specifically under handbooks. The Cengage website does not list a specific course (such as first-year composition) for which the book may be intended. Without a student or faculty Cengage account, one can access the following information about the book:

THE HODGES HARBRACE HANDBOOK [*sic*] guides student writers in developing their understanding of the rhetorical situation. Even students with minimal experience or confidence in their writing learn to write more effectively -- to choose the most pertinent information, arrange it well, and use the most appropriate language when writing for an audience. This grammar-first handbook provides comprehensive coverage of grammar,

style, punctuation, mechanics, writing, and research -- all presented in the context of rhetorical concerns, including the writer, reader, message, context, and purpose. The nineteenth edition provides the ease of reference and attention to detail that have made the HARBRACE handbooks THE standard of reliability since 1941.

(“*Hodges Harbrace Handbook*, 2016 MLA Update, 19th Edition--
Overview”)

Thus, the only information this description provides in terms of audience is that the book is intended for students, even those with “minimal experience or confidence in their writing.” Interestingly, the description begins by saying the book will help “student writers in developing their understanding of the rhetorical situation,” but a few lines later it says, “this grammar-first handbook.” Of course both grammar and the rhetorical situation are important, but this description again shows the book’s identity crisis: is this book a grammar handbook intended for reference, or is it a full textbook that covers, as Hodges originally intended, “the essentials of any course in Freshman English³⁵” (Curry 86). Either way, there is no specific indication of what level of student might benefit from this book. This identity crisis suggests that the book is attempting to cover so much ground in an effort to meet all potential writing needs of both teachers and students, an attempt that brings to mind the cliché a jack of all trades but master of none. Though the book may have its strengths, a clear purpose is not one of them.

³⁵ The full quote from Curry is that “Hence he [Hodges] evolved the concept of the Harbrace Handbook of English, which sought to reduce and simplify the points of grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure that were essentials of any course in Freshman English” (Curry 86).

4.11 Which Students Need the *HHH*?

The book's intended audience matters tremendously. There may be legitimate arguments for using the *HHH* if the book is intended for students in an upper-level undergraduate or even a graduate-level grammar class. In that case, perhaps the detailed attention to grammar makes sense. However, it is unlikely that such students are the only intended audience given that the book is the bestselling textbook of all time. For a book to sell that many copies, it must be intended for a class that many students take, which suggests the book is more likely to be intended for students in required general education courses, likely first-year composition. Though some schools have done away with compulsory composition, many have not, so it seems likely that first-year students are the book's intended audience. UTK offers evidence of this. According to the UTK bookstore's website, students in English 101 and 102 are required to have the book. The Foreword of *The Writer's Harbrace Handbook* currently required at UTK says, "While you are mostly likely purchasing this book for one of your first-year composition courses—English 101, 102, 118, 131, 132, 198, 290, or 298," (n.p.), suggesting that there are many first-year courses at UTK that utilize the text.

4.12 Why Would First-Year Writing Students Need this Text?

If the book is indeed intended for first-year college-level writing students, I must ask why. Why does a first-year writing student need a book that covers so much grammatical ground? How do first-year students become better writers by studying parts of speech, apostrophes, and italics, especially given the scholarship that argues against such an approach³⁶? The question is whether or not students, particularly first-year writing students, need this degree of grammar instruction or reference. This is not a new question; W. Ross Winterowd asked this question 20

³⁶ I will discuss these studies more fully in chapter 5.

years ago. While looking at the *HHH*, he happened upon a chart about verb conjugation that includes “active and passive voices and as indicative, imperative, and subjunctive moods” (99).

He observes that

If one wants or needs this information, it is available in *Harbrace*, but the question, of course, is why a composition student would either want or need it. That is precisely the question about the extensive treatments of grammar (“correctness,” right from the eighteenth century) in current-traditional texts such as *English in Action*, Warriner’s and *Harbrace*, and the answer is that students often want it because they think they need it and that teachers are products of an unexamined tradition, victims of history. (99)

This is still an important question: why does a composition student want or need this information? This question is one that has been answered in theory³⁷: composition scholarship rejected this grammar and form first approach to composition many years ago. Crowley asserts this by saying, “Now, principles of grammar and usage are not, strictly speaking, inherent to the mastery of composition. Today teachers of composition pay little attention to these matters (unless, of course, they still subscribe to current-traditional pedagogy)” (*Composition* 95). The form of the current *HHH* and the fact that it remains a bestseller suggests that there are teachers of composition who still subscribe to current-traditional pedagogy.

Besides just considering whether students want or need this information, it is worth considering whether students can even understand it. Patrick Hartwell raised this question over 30 years ago in “Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar.” In this article, he discusses the way *Harbrace*, in the 9th edition, advised students not to write sentence fragments.

³⁷ See Chapter 2 of this dissertation for a detailed response to how this question has been answered in rhetoric and composition scholarship.

To avoid fragments, Hartwell points out that students would have to be proficient in all of the following:

Recognizing verbs.

Recognizing subjects and verbs.

Recognizing all parts of speech. (*Harbrace* lists eight.)

Recognizing phrases and subordinate clauses. (*Harbrace* lists six types of phrases, and it offers incomplete lists of eight relative pronouns and eighteen subordinating conjunctions.)

Recognizing main clauses and types of sentences. (Hartwell 576)

This is a lot to expect from a student. Furthermore, though Hartwell was discussing the 9th edition, the same holds true for the 19th edition: fragments are still covered in such a way that students would need all of the knowledge outlined by Hartwell if they want to understand the *HHH*'s definition of fragments.

More importantly, however, is that this kind of knowledge does not reflect what many scholars believe students need to know in first-year composition. The Council of Writing Program Administrators created the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition, a common and respected guide for many composition programs. Those Outcomes *do* recommend that students learn about grammar. Under “Knowledge of Conventions,” the Outcomes Statement includes the following guidelines for grammar:

By the end of first-year composition, students should

- Develop knowledge of linguistic structures, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling, through practice in composing and revising

- Understand why genre conventions for structure, paragraphing, tone, and mechanics vary.

The first point mentions grammar, punctuation, and spelling while noting that knowledge of those areas should come from writing, not from studying those areas in a textbook. Though nothing in the Outcomes notes that the topics included are listed in order of importance, it does not seem accidental that grammar, or conventions, comes last and receives the least amount of space in the document.

Furthermore, the letter and spirit of the Outcomes are rhetorical. In other words, conventions are dictated by purpose, audience, and context. The Outcomes say that “Successful writers understand, analyze, and negotiate conventions for purpose, audience, and genre, understanding that genres evolve in response to changes in material conditions and composing technologies and attending carefully to emergent conventions” (“WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition”). Requiring students to learn prescriptive grammar rules, such as those noted by Hartwell, does not prepare them to think or write rhetorically. It teaches them a strict set of rules without encouraging them to consider context, purpose, and audience, which is contrary to the letter and spirit of the WPA Outcomes.

4.13 The Costs of College

If the letter and spirit of the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Writing are to teach students to write rhetorically, to teach them to make decisions about writing based on their purpose, audience, and context, then a text that prescribes many of their decisions is not ideal. A text that prescribes how to write does not allow students to make choices based on the rhetorical situation. Besides the problem of the text containing material that is not what a first-year writing student really needs, the cost of the book should be a major concern for anyone who requires

students to purchase it. One of the reasons the use of the *HHH* should be of concern now is because of a larger issue in higher education: the high costs of going to college. Colleges and universities are facing regular criticism that higher education is too expensive as students face an uncertain and often financially unrewarding job market. Popular newspapers such as *The Washington Post* have published articles such as “Is College Worth the Cost? Many Recent Graduates Don’t Think So” (2015), which look at the costs associated with going to college to determine whether a college education is worth the expense. They often conclude it is not. Even *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, a publication written primarily for those who work in higher education, has published articles like “‘Is College Worth It?’ You Might First Ask, ‘Worth It for Whom?’” (2014). Though these are just a couple of examples, a quick Google search of “high college costs” will yield many similar results, most of which also evaluate whether college is worth what many consider to be “high” costs.

Search “college debt,” and the results are more troublesome. In October 2018, *The Washington Post*, citing the Federal Reserve, reported that student loan debt had reached \$1.53 trillion. In June of 2018, *Forbes* also reported that student loan debt amounted to \$1.5 trillion, an astonishing number that writer Zack Friedman called a “crisis” while comparing it to other levels of debt:

Student loan debt is now the second highest consumer debt category - behind only mortgage debt - and higher than both credit cards and auto loans. According to Make Lemonade, there are more than 44 million borrowers who collectively owe \$1.5 trillion in student loan debt in the U.S. alone. The average student in the Class of 2016 has \$37,172 in student loan debt. (Friedman)

In “The Student Loan Debt Crisis Is About to Get Worse,” Riley Griffin, writing for *Bloomberg*, provides further context by explaining that 85% of students work while in college as they face not only higher tuition costs, but higher interest on the loans they are taking to pay for college. All of these higher costs have not resulted in higher pay for students once they graduate, though (Griffin). Given these facts, it is no wonder that popular news outlets are regularly asking whether higher education is worth the financial cost.

4.14 The Costs of Textbooks

Higher education, then, faces the dilemma of a lot of bad press about the financial burdens placed on students who attend college. The larger problem, however, is the debt that many students face after they begin their college careers. The issue of tuition costs and student loan debt interest is germane, but too complicated to be solved here. However, relevant and worth addressing here is one specific part of the problem: textbook costs. Costs associated with purchasing physical or online textbooks and sometimes access codes are a part of the increasing costs of college, and those costs make it worth considering whether having students purchase a book like the *HHH* is worth the money students must spend to purchase it.

To put this into perspective, we first need to understand that textbook costs in general are a problem for students. Much like the rising costs of college tuition and the increasing student loan debt articles, the cost of college textbooks is a popular topic in the news. In January of 2018, CBS News reported that “the average cost of college textbooks has risen four times faster than the rate of inflation over the past 10 years” (Kristof). The costs of textbooks are so high that in some cases, according to Kristof, 65% of students have not purchased a required textbook because it was too expensive. Kristof also notes that, according to the College Board, students

spend an average of over \$1200 a year on textbooks. Thus, textbooks are certainly part of the problem of increasing higher education costs for students.

This situation of rising costs of tuition and debt has not gone unnoticed by those in higher education, particularly in the area of book costs and specifically in the state of Georgia. Whether it is out of concern for how colleges are perceived or a genuine concern for students, there are college and system-level decisions being made to address the situation. At the institution where I work, we are now required to submit whether or not our classes use low- or no-cost textbooks³⁸. This information is published online along with the listing for the class. To my knowledge, no one has been asked to choose a different book for students because of a “high-cost” textbook, but there is an unspoken pressure to be conscious of the cost of textbooks when faculty are required to label their textbook requirements in this way because the information is available to anyone who looks up the class schedule. Thus, it is possible that providing this information is a way to say to the public, “We are attempting to address concerns about expensive textbooks.”

I asked my Dean about the initiative to address textbook costs, and she told me it is a system-wide effort of the University System of Georgia (USG). The USG began the Affordable Learning Georgia (ALG) initiative in 2014 “to promote student success by supporting the implementation of affordable alternatives to textbooks” (Judy). At Kennesaw State, Andrea Judy wrote this about the initiative: “Since ALG first launched in 2014, all USG-sponsored textbook affordability programs have saved students a total projected 31.3 million dollars in textbook costs, affecting nearly 220,000 students state-wide.” Her article also cites that students typically spend about \$1,200 a year on textbooks, so it seems reasonable to conclude that the system is

³⁸ Low-cost textbooks are classified as those that cost \$40 or less.

aware of the problem of the costs associated with textbooks and has implemented the ALG to help combat it. The ALG website confirms this in its description of the initiative,

Affordable Learning Georgia (ALG) is a USG initiative to promote student success by supporting the implementation of affordable alternatives to expensive commercial textbooks, particularly Open Educational Resources (OER) and open textbooks such as OpenStax Textbooks, which are both free and customizable for exactly what a faculty member would like to teach within their courses. We also encourage the use of electronic resources made available through GALILEO.

This project offers anyone with internet access the opportunity to access many free textbooks on a variety of subjects. The State Legislature has funded this project, so it is clear that the state of Georgia and the USG are doing their part to help combat the problem of high textbook costs. The rest, it seems, is up to individual instructors.

Given the mounting costs associated with attending college as well as the increases in interest on loans as well as the fact that students are spending over \$1,000 a year on textbooks, all of us in higher education should carefully consider what materials we ask students to purchase for our classes. That means that choosing a required textbook is no small matter. The book's contents and costs should be given great consideration before a faculty member lists a textbook as required for a course. One option to faculty members in Georgia, and many other states³⁹, is no-cost textbooks. The state of Georgia, the USG, and the Legislature are offering opportunities for instructors to provide their students with free textbooks in lieu of requiring students to purchase a book from a for-profit publishing company. The ALG website links instructors to OER, or, free textbooks that have been created by other faculty members, and those

³⁹ Tennessee, South Carolina, Arizona, and New York, for example, all have programs comparable to ALG.

resources are free for student and faculty use. If faculty cannot find a text to fit their needs, they also have the option of applying for an ALG grant and creating their own text. Faculty members who are awarded grants receive a stipend, and they can also apply for extra funding to cover the costs of materials, such as software, needed for the creation of their texts. To be clear, this means that faculty can be financially compensated for taking the time to create a textbook that their students can use for free.

The support that is in place for faculty to access or create their own course materials makes it worth considering why anyone would require a first-year writing student to purchase a textbook that can cost as much as \$120 and has over 40 chapters, particularly when much of what the book covers (at least in the first 30 chapters) is available online for free. The book does not provide first-year students with the material they most need, and the book's benefits do not outweigh its cost, and this is without saying anything about the ethical and pedagogical issues that will be discussed in the next chapter. However, there are ways to explain why instructors require the text even given all of these compelling opportunities for faculty to use free textbooks. These reasons are important because they, in some cases, illustrate why current-traditional rhetoric still exists. To be clear, I am not conflating CTR and the *HHH*, though the *HHH* is a current-traditional text. Instead, I am arguing that both CTR and the *HHH* appeal to people for similar reasons.

4.15 The Reliance on Textbooks and the Continuation of CTR

Perhaps the simplest explanation for why people continue to use texts such as the *HHH* is because is because they have already structured their course(s) around it. If someone has learned the taxonomy and uses it to mark student papers, it would probably be labor-intensive to switch to another textbook. The same is true if that person has created course materials based on or

keyed to the *HHH*⁴⁰. Anyone who has ever switched to a new textbook likely knows it can be a lot of work to create new materials, so perhaps people continue to use it because it is the easiest thing to do. Besides, there is no guarantee that a new book will be better than the old one, after all.

Sticking with tradition is the kind of logic that often accompanies CTR: let's continue to do it this way because this is the way we have always done it. Kathleen Dudden Rowlands found this mindset in her students who were studying to be teachers. They were hesitant to accept the scholarship she presented that encouraged them to teach students something other than the 5-paragraph essay. Every student in her class had been taught the 5-paragraph essay, and some had an emotional attachment to it. Her students associated the 5-paragraph essay with learning to write and often from teachers they liked. One student told her he understood the logic of those against using the 5-paragraph essay, but he did not know what else to teach. Another student, who was already teaching, was hesitant to teach something besides the 5-paragraph essay because she knew it was what all of her colleagues were teaching. Rowlands summarizes the situation by arguing that

Those of us working to replace the form-first approach to writing instruction with more authentic teaching face two primary obstacles: undoing traditional beliefs and habits, and offering readily adopted, effective replacements for those habits. Teaching the five-paragraph essay is a deeply entrenched instructional habit, repeated unquestioningly across the nation. (Rowlands 52-53)

The words Rowland uses here—words such as “traditional,” “habits,” and more specifically “deeply entrenched instructional habits”—highlight how deeply people’s attachment to the 5-

⁴⁰ I know this happens in at least some cases because I know people who have done this.

paragraph essay, and I would argue their attachment to CTR, run. Getting people to give up CTR isn't a simple task.

Faculty who see the 5-paragraph essay as a tradition would likely be difficult to convince to give it up. Thus, it is also difficult to get them to give up a book like the *HHH* because it reflects what they see as tradition in their work. Furthermore, faculty might continue to use the *HHH* because there may be no reward for doing the work it would take to switch to a new book. If someone is not intrinsically motivated to change to a new textbook, why would they take on the extra work if there is no reward for doing so? At the heart of this issue, however, is that the textbook is only a symptom of the problem (though it is one that creates other problems). The deepest problem is that some instructors want a CTR-pedagogy, and the *HHH* offers them that.

Though tradition and habit are powerful contributors to why CTR, and the *HHH*, still exist, there are other reasons. Perhaps most unfortunate is that in many places, classes are still too large and teaching loads are too large, so faculty are still left to find ways to make their work manageable. This is one of the reasons CTR came into practice. In the late nineteenth century, faculty at Harvard, who are generally recognized as the first to teach a compulsory composition course, had hundreds of students. According to James Berlin, in 1894, there were 2,000 students taking writing courses, and there were 20 teachers for those students (*Writing Instruction* 60), and they had to find a way to teach them and assess their work. Though there were factors related to class that prompted the implementation of CTR at Harvard, the working conditions also played a significant role. As one of my former professors, Dr. George Pullman, says, "People would rather count than read." In the case of large classes and large teaching loads, people may not have the option to read closely; they may *have* to count. A pedagogy like CTR and a textbook like *HHH* give people a way to count while grading essays. Instructors can count

grammar errors and mark them with the letter and number system provided by the *HHH*, and then they can give the paper back to the student who can dutifully look up his/her errors in the *HHH*. Though this system offers little opportunity to substantively respond to the content in student papers, it is *a way* for them to respond. The problems with priorities in marking student papers was pointed out at least as early as 1932 when Luella B. Cook wrote the following in an article in *the English Journal*:

The difficulty of assigning daily written thinking lies in the supposed enormity of the task of correcting papers. [...] Since it is commonly assumed that the chief business of theme-correcting is the detection of errors in usage, the proof-reading of daily themes quite obviously imposes a heavy burden. But accuracy is only one composition aim; it is not the only composition aim. Yet it is frequently allowed to obscure all other aims. In our zeal to be practical we mistake the obvious function for the important function. Red ink *looks* impressive but is often a smoke screen behind which our failure to appraise thought and composition values significantly goes undiscovered. Our dread of the paper load causes us to confuse composition values, and the reaching of other composition goals is thwarted.

(365)

This cannot be overemphasized: many faculty members who teach writing struggle to find ways to manage the paper load. That is, after all, one of the reasons John C. Hodges wrote the 1st edition of the *HHH*. One way to manage the paper load is to mark what is easiest to explain.

It is not just the grammar focus that makes the *HHH* appealing in these situations where faculty are overwhelmed by their workloads. The other parts of CTR, the 5-paragraph essay, the focus on a specific structure or structural components (topic sentences, paragraphs, thesis

statements, etc.) give instructors tangible, assessable material to cover with their students. This is especially important in situations where the instructor's education and expertise lie in an area other than composition, a situation that still occurs in English departments. Those people may need guidance as to what to cover in class, and 5-paragraph essays and grammar quizzes give them something to cover and more importantly, a clear way to talk about writing. Regardless of whether or not someone specializes in composition, teaching writing is not easy. I imagine that anyone who has taught writing has, at some point, struggled to find the ways and words to explain the indescribable qualities of good, clear, convincing writing. Given the difficulties inherent in trying to make abstract qualities of writing more concrete, it is understandable why some instructors would be drawn to the specificity CTR provides. That specificity may also appeal to anyone who has ever had to deal with a student who is angry about a grade on a paper. It is much easier to say, "You failed because you had three comma splices and two fragments," than to try and explain errors in logic or the ways a paper fails to consider its audience's relationship to the claim. Being able to point to what some see as an objective component of writing makes it easier to explain and defend the way a paper is marked or graded. To be clear, the difficulties of teaching writing are not an excuse to take an easier way out. I present these potential ways of thinking as a means of understanding why some people might be drawn to CTR and a book like the *HHH*.

Though faculty may face difficulties in teaching writing, the people who are suffering most in this situation are the students who are required to purchase the textbook. In requiring students to purchase the *HHH* or a similar text, students are forced to spend a lot of money on a textbook that offers them little in return. To be clear, that does not mean that the text has nothing to offer. The text simply does not offer information that a first-year writing student needs enough to

spend \$100 or more to purchase, especially because the text does not focus on the kinds of course content advocated in current scholarship and professional position statements such as the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition. Thus, the question remains: Why does this situation still exist? Our field has grown and researched so much since Hodges published his original research in 1941. The current edition of the *HHH* does not reflect the growth of the field that has taken place since Hodges published the 1st edition of his text, which was revolutionary at the time, but is not so now. On what grounds could a current rhetoric and composition scholar support the kind of methodology Hodges used? No one would approve such a research project if it were proposed now, but every time someone puts that book on a syllabus, he is registering his approval for a methodology that is problematic at best and unethical at worst.

5 THE IMPLICATIONS OF AN UNEXAMINED TRADITION

“Writing textbooks are an opportunistic response to our field’s inability to change the terms of work in composition and thus reflect the tenuous relevance of scholarship in rhetoric and composition to the pedagogies that are enacted in many postsecondary writing classes.”

-Tony Scott

“These men, in gathering information from students around the country, have naturalized for all users a particular set of grammatical errors that arise from and apply to a narrow population.”

-Nicole Merola, referring to the 16 instructors who helped create the *HHH* taxonomy

Chapter 4 argued for why the history of the *HHH* and its continued use are relevant and worth discussing. This chapter develops that argument by further examining the implications of the book’s use. To do so, this chapter responds to the microhistory presented in chapter 3 by analyzing the intellectual tradition in which Dr. John C. Hodges worked and was educated, a

background presented primarily as a means of contextualizing the origins of Hodges' bestselling textbook, originally called the *Harbrace Handbook of English*, now known as the *Hodges Harbrace Handbook (HHH)*. The microhistory in chapter 3 shows that the intellectual and pedagogical origins of the text (and the theories that influenced it) are current-traditional rhetoric (CTR), and it sets the stage for this chapter, which analyzes the ways, primarily pedagogically and intellectually, that the book's history and contents are problematic. More specifically, this chapter addresses the fact that composition theory and pedagogy have progressed significantly since 1941, but the *HHH* does not reflect the ways the field has developed. Though the publisher and editors argue otherwise, the text relies so heavily on the book's original form and content that it fails to reflect the depth and breadth of what the field now knows through its many years of research, scholarship, and practice. Furthermore, this chapter considers how the *HHH*'s continued use of the 1st editions' methodology is problematic because the method used to create the original book does not meet the field's current standards for research, particularly regarding the use of human subjects.

Though the book has certain strengths, its roots are troubling enough that those who teach college English should give serious thought to whether those strengths outweigh the troubling and in some ways unethical history and pedagogy at the heart of the book. Furthermore, understanding the history of the *HHH* provides us with an opportunity to consider how the book has influenced both teachers and students of composition classes to subscribe to a writing approach that favors form over content and context and removes invention, thus limiting a student's choice about how to approach a writing task. Though it is difficult to generalize about what happens in composition classrooms, considering the contents of the *HHH* reveals a great deal about what its readers value in writing.

Though some call the *HHH* a handbook (and handbook is part of the title, after all), which means it is technically a text for reference, there are people who use it as the primary text for teaching writing. I work at such a place. For years, and as recently as last year, when a first-year writing class is put on the schedule without being assigned an instructor, the book that is ordered for the class is the *HHH*, and it is the only text ordered for the class. And, of course, there are instructors who choose to require the text for their classes. Whether it is the sole required text or paired with another text, the point is that the *HHH* is still showing up in classrooms even though it is a CTR-based text. This is particularly problematic when it is the only text used in a class because it offers students a limited, prescriptive way of understanding writing. But again, whether or not it is the sole textbook, the use of the *HHH* in a class provides a means for CTR to show up in classrooms,⁴¹ a situation that increases the likelihood that students will learn a prescriptive, mechanistic approach to writing.

Though there are still ways for CTR to end up in composition classrooms, it has less of a place in current scholarship. Much of the scholarship that criticized CTR was published in the 1980s and early '90s, but it seems to have dropped off in the last twenty years. It is hard to find much current scholarship (excluding Zwagerman; Gold; Trammell; and Nunes) that discusses CTR. The lack of scholarship might suggest that CTR no longer exists in practice, particularly given the overwhelmingly negative treatment of it in the last twenty to thirty years, and this is not surprising. Why would scholarship continue to address a practice that has overwhelmingly been maligned in previous scholarship?

CTR was not always maligned, though. CTR was a common pedagogy in 1941 when Hodges published the first edition of the *HHH*; however, since at least the late 1970s and early

⁴¹ This is, of course, not the only way CTR ends up in classrooms. It is just one way.

1980s, much of the research in rhetoric and composition suggests that current-traditional rhetoric (CTR) is an outdated practice (Berlin; Crowley; Trammel; Zwagerman). Texts such as Berlin's seminal monograph, *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges*, Sharon Crowley's work (particularly "Invention in Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric," *Composition in the University*, and *The Methodical Memory*), and W. Ross Winterowd's *The English Department: A Personal and Professional History* are just a few of the texts that have influenced the field's thinking regarding CTR and the conditions that created it. Though such composition scholarship has made a compelling case against CTR, CTR still exists in composition classrooms and in texts, such as the *HHH*. As discussed throughout this dissertation, the reasons for CTR's continued presence are complicated, but one of the reasons it continues to make its way into composition classrooms is because the conditions that initially made it appealing still exist. Among those conditions are undertrained teachers, large classes, large teaching loads, predatory textbook companies, and other less than ideal conditions surrounding the teaching and learning happening in composition classrooms. In determining CTR's place in the modern composition classroom, the most relevant of those conditions is the relationship between textbooks and first-year composition classes as well as the training (or lack of) of those who teach composition. As long as these conditions persist, so will CTR.

Yet CTR is not at the forefront of our professional discussions. It is unfortunate that CTR is not getting much attention in scholarship; it should still be discussed because it is still a problem. Maybe it is debatable whether or not we need to continue to consider the ways that CTR fails to offer students a meaningful understanding of writing because those ways have been well documented. As cited throughout this dissertation, Crowley, Berlin, Connors, and Winterowd have addressed those problems. In summary, CTR is problematic because it places

the focus of writing on a student's finished product while ignoring or minimizing other parts of the writing process, particularly as it removes invention. As Crowley has written about extensively, CTR values form and correctness over content. She also addresses the problems with CTR by referencing Donald Murray's 1972 "Teach Writing as a Process, not a Product" where he enumerated the problems with CTR. She paraphrases those as follows:

Teachers who use traditional pedagogy focused on texts other than those composed by students, ignored the discovery process, insisted that students compose only one draft of each assignment, confined student writing to certain forms or genres of discourse, gave prominent attention to mechanics, did not allow sufficient time for composing to occur, graded every paper, and forced every student to follow the same absolute rules. What he described by omission, then, was the pedagogy of current-traditional rhetoric. (*Composition in the University* 188)

This list touches on the main problems with CTR, but as Crowley has also written, CTR is problematic for the way it treats (or fails to treat) invention. One of the ways Crowley has explained invention is as "the division of rhetoric that supplies speakers and writers with instructions for finding the specific arguments that are appropriate to a given rhetorical situation" (*Methodical Memory* 2). The key to that definition is that invention asks writers to consider the rhetorical situation; in other words, what types of arguments are best for the writer given the audience, purpose, and context? CTR, on the other hand, makes those decisions for writers. CTR prescribes forms, focuses on mechanics, and "forced every student to follow the same absolute rules." Furthermore, Crowley explains that in ancient invention, knowledge came from the community; in CTR, knowledge comes from the individual (Crowley, *Methodical Memory*, 3-5).

Thus, with CTR, there is no real need to consider audience, which results in the removal or alteration of invention. In summary, then, the major problem with CTR is that instead of allowing writers to make choices based on their audience, purpose, and context, CTR prescribes rules a writer must follow without consideration for the rhetorical situation.

Again, many scholars may say those problems are well documented and no longer worth discussing. What is not debatable, however, is that CTR continues to manifest itself in textbooks, and textbooks end up in classrooms, so students are still learning CTR, which means they are still missing opportunities to make their own choices about how to compose and how to create a message tailored to a specific audience, both practices needed for students who plan to write beyond the classroom. Though rhetoric and composition scholarship regularly considers and researches topics such as class size and contingent labor issues, there is less attention given to one of the effects of these conditions: the working conditions of composition instructors, particularly those who teach first-year writing courses, are ideal conditions for CTR to remain a viable means for teaching writing.

5.1 Why CTR Needs to be Discussed in Scholarship: Another Perspective

As I said in the introduction, in 2013, a former professor told me that no one uses CTR anymore. The topic only came up in his class because it was a history of rhetoric class. His attitude seems normal to me; thinking of CTR as a relic of history seems to be common to those in rhetoric and composition. However, we should still be discussing CTR for all the reasons Crowley, Berlin, and Winterowd did, primarily because it does not teach students how real writing works. Some scholars and teachers may say we don't need to discuss it because we already know the problems it creates. Unfortunately, however, not everyone who teaches writing has been trained in composition, so they may not see the problems with this pedagogical

approach. The lack of training in composition is a condition that created CTR, and it still exists. Also, many instructors still face heavy teaching loads and large classes, both of which are ideal conditions for a CTR-based pedagogy. For these reasons (and others), saying no one uses CTR anymore just does not seem true to me.

5.2 A Personal Perspective

My experience suggests that CTR and its most well-known form, the 5-paragraph essay, are both still a part of composition instruction in both high schools and college. From 2009-2018, I was the Coordinator of the Writing Lab at the small liberal arts college where I work. In that time, I regularly helped students who were writing 5-paragraph, mode-driven essays. Because of what I saw in there, I started asking my English 1101 students about their writing experiences in high school, and the students who were asked to write in high school told me that they have often been asked to write 5-paragraph essays. Those students typically become uncomfortable (and some may question my ethos as a writing instructor) when I tell them they can write more (or fewer) than 5 paragraphs.

It is not just first-year students who are uncomfortable with forms other than the 5-paragraph essay, though. I recently taught a 3000-level course in composition studies, and I asked the students in that course, most of whom are majoring in secondary education English, about their writing experiences in high school and college, and based on their responses, I spent almost the entire semester trying to make them rethink their attachment to the 5-paragraph essay and convince them it is only one of many ways to approach writing instruction. We regularly discussed the limited uses of the 5-paragraph essay and that it is primarily only helpful to students when they are taking standardized tests. We talked about the form's unfairness to students when they had more or fewer than 3 main points to make and how the form's focus on

correctness does not invite students to consider their content or audience. We also talked about the fear and stress the 5-paragraph creates for students when it is the only form they know; they do not know what to do when in a writing situation where the 5-paragraph essay will not work. Though the students could see the form's limitations, it was an uphill battle to get them to see that students become stronger writers by writing in various genres for various audiences and that students need both high and low stakes writing assignments. My students, who were good, smart students, could agree with this in theory, but because what they had been taught varied so wildly from that theory, they had trouble accepting it in practice.

I suspect that my colleagues are not the only ones who are asking their students to complete CTR-type assignments, particularly in first-year composition courses, nor are the high schools near where I teach the only ones indoctrinating students into the 5-paragraph tradition. My suspicions were confirmed recently when I was at a national conference. In casual conversation, I told two rhetoric and composition professors who teach at larger universities about my frustration with my colleagues who teach in a current-traditional style. Both women nodded their heads and shared stories of their colleagues who do the same. Their nonchalance seemed to suggest that it happens everywhere. I have even heard from a faculty member at a research university that it occasionally happens there, and when it does, someone has to step in and redirect the faculty member to more current composition pedagogy.

My first experience with such texts came in 2005, when I was hired to teach English 1101 as an adjunct. I was excited to teach in a new place, but I did have one complaint: I did not get to choose my textbook for my ENGL 1101 class, and the text that was chosen for me was nothing like the reader I was used to. The textbook I was required to use was the *Hodges' Harbrace Handbook*. The textbook had a lot of grammar in it, which confused me. I had taught several

first-year composition courses, so I had some idea what I would need to do in English 1101, but I was not used to teaching a lot of grammar. Thus, I focused on the back of the book, which had some chapters on writing, and my class did very little with the bulk of the book that was devoted to grammar. I did the best I could with the *HHH*. I used materials from other classes I had taught, and it was a good class despite having to use a textbook I did not like.

It was not until years later that I thought much about having to use the *HHH*. The book was not particularly problematic for me because I had taken a class on teaching college writing, and I have an M.A. in rhetoric and composition, so I felt confident in teaching the class regardless of the textbook. However, I later realized two things: my colleagues had not all had experiences like mine, and some of them were devout users of the *HHH*. Two of my colleagues, both of whom specialize in literature, told me—in separate conversations—that at their first teaching jobs, they were handed a copy of the *HHH* and told good luck. These are people who were hired primarily to teach writing, but they had not been trained to do so. They did not have coursework in composition or pedagogy, so it stands to reason that these people would rely on the textbook more heavily than I did, and their experiences confirm the arguments made by Crowley, Connors, and Welch⁴²: textbooks are influential, and in some cases, textbooks train the teacher.

Beyond these anecdotes, however, it is difficult to generalize about CTR's presence in college classrooms across the country. It might seem that asking writing teachers what they do would be a good place to start, but people who employ a CTR approach to teaching might not admit it because they either do not know the term and therefore would not know to label their work that way, or they do know the term and its reputation, so they may not want to admit that they teach that way. On the other hand, W. Ross Winterowd goes a step further to say that CTR

⁴² The next few pages will address these more fully.

has no advocates. He says that “Though people *write* current-traditional rhetorics (i.e., composition textbooks), I can’t offhand think of anyone in the past fifty years who has argued in their favor” (14). Thus, as Winterowd says, people may not argue in favor of CTR, but there are people teaching it, or there would not be textbooks full of it, and there would not be classrooms full of students, especially first-year composition students, writing 5-paragraph essays⁴³ that adhere to the strict, formalist standards of CTR.

5.3 Where to Find CTR: Textbooks

A reasonable conclusion here is that textbooks are a logical place to look for CTR’s presence. Many scholars, particularly Crowley and Connors, have argued that CTR is most often found in textbooks. In *Composition in the University*, Crowley identifies the elements of CTR typically found in textbooks, beginning with the way CTR texts privilege form over the rhetorical situation:

Current-traditional textbooks display no interest in suiting discourses to the occasions for which they are composed. Rather, they collapse every composing occasion into an ideal which authors, readers, and messages are alike undistinguished. What matters in current-traditional rhetoric is form. Current-traditional pedagogy forces students to repeatedly display their use of institutionally sanctioned forms. (*Composition in the University* 94-95)

The form Crowley most likely refers to here is the 5-paragraph essay, a form that CTR privileges over authors, readers, and messages. This approach is problematic as it suggests that form

⁴³ This is not to say that an essay with 5 paragraphs is necessarily a 5-paragraph essay. Here I am referring to those essays that include 5 paragraphs because students have been told that is the required number of paragraphs for an essay. Such essays also include strict requirements for placement of thesis statements and topic sentences, among the other rules CTR requires.

precedes content though content may not be addressed at all. Crowley says that CTR does not require students to “engage with issues” because “it never address[es] the quality of a students’ argument or its suitability to a given rhetorical situation” (*Composition in the University* 95). In a related argument, Winterowd quotes Edward P.J. Corbett, who offers this explanation of persuasion:

Aristotle said that we persuade others by three means: (1) by appeal to their reason (*logos*); (2) by appeal to their emotions (*pathos*); (3) by the appeal of our personality or character (*ethos*). We may use one of these means exclusively or predominately, or we may use all three. Which of these means we will use will be partly determined by the thesis we are arguing, partly by current circumstances, partly (perhaps mainly) by the kind of audience we are addressing. (14).

Winterowd responds to this explanation by saying, “With its stress on contingencies, this is hardly a computer algorithm for composition!” (14). With this observation, Winterowd is explaining that no form (or algorithm) is sufficient enough to address the various choices a writer must make when communicating with an audience. That is a significant part of the problem with CTR’s hyper focus on form: in CTR, there is no room for a writer to make changes to the form in order to meet the needs of the audience or the situation. The rules, often prescribed to students through CTR-textbooks, provide students with an algorithm instead of a set of principles that can be adapted to a given rhetorical situation.

Crowley also identifies how such texts approach grammar, another main component of CTR:

Current-traditional textbooks nearly always begin with consideration of the smallest units of discourse: words and sentences. This suggests that their authors,

and the teachers for whom they wrote, were anxious to correct two features of students' discourse: usage and grammar. [...] Current-traditional textbooks delineated thousands of possible errors in grammar that could be committed by a 'careless' or 'lazy' writer. (94-95)

There are many arguments to be made about this treatment of grammar, but most relevant here is that this approach to grammar, much like content is described above, does not give writers a chance to choose how to write to an audience; instead, writers are provided with a form and a set of grammatical rules to follow. Connors explains that “the primary goal of the early handbooks [...] like that of all early remedial teaching, was elimination of sentence- and word-level errors, since these mechanical errors were perceived as the basics of writing, the foundations upon which all else was built” (*Composition-Rhetoric* 97). Winterowd makes a similar argument, drawing on Crowley's work, by saying that CTR focuses on “product rather than process [...] from words to sentences to paragraphs” (49). If, as Crowley, Winterowd, and Connors argue, CTR textbooks begin with low-order concerns, such as grammar, specifically words and sentences, the texts are again asking students to “display their use of institutionally sanctioned forms” by applying prescriptive grammar to their writing while ignoring important rhetorical concepts, such as exigence and invention, where communication often begins.

Though looking at textbooks reveals a site where CTR exists, some may argue that textbooks do not tell us what happens in classrooms or that textbooks do not really affect the way writing is taught. However, many scholars have convincingly argued otherwise. One of their arguments is that textbooks often determine what happen in composition classrooms. Debra Hawhee has argued that handbooks “function as a site for the articulation of what is deemed important subject matter for composition classrooms—that is, handbooks write the discipline;

and they effectively shape teacher and student subjectivities—that is, they discipline the writer” (504). In a similar vein, W. Ross Winterowd asserts, “It is simply and undeniably the case that textbooks for English classes are massively influential, establishing the canon or reinforcing canonical traditions, instilling attitudes towards literature and language, and determining how both literature and language will be taught” (34), again identifying the power of the ideas found in textbooks as they can and do determine the content of English courses.

Others have argued that textbooks tell us about CTR’s role in composition pedagogy because in some cases, textbooks teach the teacher. Connors, for example, argues that “the ‘textbook’s place in the development of composition-rhetoric is absolutely central because of the dialogic relation between textbooks and teacher training” (qtd. in Myers 229). Kathleen Ethel Welch picks up this argument when she claims that “textbooks are instructional material more important for the writing teacher than the writing student” as well as that writing textbooks “act as persuasive places where new teachers of writing are trained and where experienced ones reinforce the training” (761). She further argues that “For the inexperienced writing teacher, the text teaches the instructor the crucial aspects of language theory that create the possibilities for writing” (768). Taken together, Connors’ and Welch’s arguments, as well as Winterowd’s, suggest that the material for teaching writing comes from textbooks, not from the teacher or his/her training, a powerful argument on its own and an even more powerful argument considering how often people with little to no composition training or graduate coursework teach composition.

Crowley takes up the issue of training and traces it back to American universities after the Civil War, a time she claims gave rise to the specialist “who had spent many years of study—often abroad—to learn his craft” (72). Unfortunately, however, this was not the case in English

composition, “which developed no professoriate of its own. Rather, composition teachers (when they were professors) were recruited from a variety of backgrounds” (72). She develops this argument by quoting Robert Connors’ description of composition at the beginning of the twentieth century:

Bereft of a theoretical discipline and a professional tradition, teachers during this period had nothing to turn to for information about their subject—except their textbooks. After 1910, composition courses were increasingly staffed by graduate students and low-level instructors. Writing teachers became as a result the only college-level instructors who know no more of the discipline than is contained in the texts they assign than their students—a sad pattern, that still, alas, continues today at too many schools. (qtd. in Crowley 72)

If these arguments are true, and my experience suggests they are, textbooks are a logical place to look for CTR. In fact, Connors argues in favor of looking at textbooks for evidence of CTR because textbooks are where “C-T rhetoric is most clearly delineated” (“Current-Traditional Rhetoric” 208). Though Connors made that statement almost forty years, it is still true. There are still many textbooks that utilize CTR. It seems unlikely that publishers would continue to produce such texts if they were not profitable, so a logical conclusion is that there must be people teaching writing who are requiring these books.

5.4 Understanding the Carceral Network of the *HHH*

The *HHH*, as one of the bestselling textbooks of all time, and one of the most well-known CTR-based textbooks, offers a place to consider how CTR appears in textbooks. Interestingly and importantly, the history and methodology of the *HHH*’s creation also offer a way to investigate the various forces and locations at work in textbook production. Libby Miles’

methodology for examining textbook production again offers a framework for such an analysis. In summary, her methodology offers a means to examine “the institutions that create and perpetuate instructional materials,” an approach draws on Foucault’s idea of the “carceral network,” or the “inter-connectedness of institutions.” The idea is that an institution does not function in isolation; it is supported and perpetuated by those institutions surrounding it. In terms of higher education, and specifically composition courses, the institutions surrounding textbook production are worth examining. I return to Miles’ methodology here as the following sections analyze the physical locations, particularly the university where the research was conducted, that led to the initial edition of the *HHH*. I will also examine the ideological manifestations, specifically Hodges’ academic background and influences, as a means of understanding what influenced his approach to the *HHH*.

5.5 The Commercial Success of the *HHH*

Before moving to the physical locations and ideological manifestations, it is worth touching on the material manifestations of the text as further proof that the *HHH* is powerful and worth examining. When Winterowd published *The English Department* in 1998, he hypothesized about the *HHH*’s commercial success. At the time, the *HHH* was in its 12th edition. He argued as follows:

When a new edition appears, every two, three, or four years, in the neighborhood of 350,000 copies are sold, with successively fewer copies selling each year (since the market is flooded with used copies) until the new edition comes out. Though we can assume the first few editions were not so successful, nonetheless the most conservative estimates of the book’s success are dazzling. Suppose that the four editions from the ninth through the twelfth each sold 350,000 copies in their first

year, half the number in the second, and no copies beyond the second year: the total number for just the four editions is two million copies. Supposed further that one million of those used copies are resold: the total number of students who have been exposed to Harbrace since 1982 is three million. (99)

Winterowd's estimates are reliable at least in part because his use of the number 350,000 came from Thomas Broadbent⁴⁴, who edited two editions of the *HHH*. The possibility that three million students have used the *HHH* is astonishing. This number is even more astonishing when considering what is excluded from Winterowd's equation. His equation does not include 1941-1981 as well as 1999-2019, which means the actual figures are much larger than his estimates.

UTK offers more recent figures, arguing that "as many as 15 million students have used the text over the past seventy years," and interestingly, UTK also claims that "Harbrace has remained one of the most definitive college composition textbooks, embraced by English composition instructors at both two- and four-year colleges and universities and career colleges." Brooks Clark, who works in UTK's Office of Communications & Marketing and who has written extensively about Hodges and the *HHH* has written that "According to its publisher, *Harbrace* really is the top-selling textbook ever, with only McGraw-Hill's *Principles of Economics* anywhere close. (Book sales are proprietary information for publishers; most authors don't even know their own sales figures, so there is no way to verify this claim.)" I contacted Mr. Clark to ask him about how he knew this claim was true. He replied, "My source for that was the historian at Cengage, who said that textbook publishers don't release figures like that, but that it was generally known that *Harbrace* in all its editions was No. 1 and Paul Samuelson's *Economics* was probably No. 2." From these statements, it is clear that although

⁴⁴ This is the same Thomas Broadbent who criticized Hawhee's analysis of the *HHH* (discussed in chapter 3 of this dissertation).

textbook publishers do not release sales figures, the consensus is that the *HHH* is the bestselling textbook. Though there is no way to verify this claim, it seems reasonable. On the other hand, even if it turned out to be untrue, it is worth considering what Cengage, now owner of the text, has to gain from perpetuating the idea that it is the bestselling textbook. Is it possible that touting the book's success is a bandwagon appeal to composition instructors? Furthermore, the *HHH*'s material success is important because given the crowded field of composition textbooks, it is worth evaluating what has made this text so popular for so long. However, before evaluating the text in its current iteration, it is essential to return to the history of the text and the conditions that prompted its creation. Doing so will connect the history to the physical locations as well as the ideological and material manifestations.

5.6 Physical Locations, or, Hodges' Methodology

As previously noted, the first edition of the *HHH* was published in 1941 by Harcourt Brace and was based on the work of John C. Hodges, a professor of English at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville (UTK). UTK is the primary physical location of the book's origins; it was Hodges' work at UTK that gave him the basis for the book's content. Thus, it is important for this chapter to return to the issue of location, an important component for analysis because the location, Knoxville, Tennessee, greatly influenced the book's content. Hodges' work was based on the writing of students in Knoxville, so if the book been created elsewhere, the result would likely be a quite different book that reflected the grammatical errors of students in that location. In this chapter, revisiting the relevant components of the microhistory with a focus on the role of location will reveal a number of problems with Hodges' methodology and the book's content.

5.6.1 *A Point of Clarification*

At this point, it is important to be clear that I am not simply trying to say that in 1941, Hodges should have somehow been able to meet our current standards for research. As discussed in chapter three, Hodges did not have access to the research and methods that our field uses and requires today. What he did was remarkable in its original time, and many would argue that it is still the best handbook available, and it likely is. It has been noted many times that it is the book that set the standard for all handbooks that would follow. However, the book still exists based on Hodges' initial research though the editors of the most recent editions claim this heritage when it is convenient for their rhetorical purposes while distancing the book from Hodges' early editions when it does not suit the rhetorical purposes. For example, in the 19th edition, the most current edition, published in 2017, the Preface notes that "The Nineteenth Edition both introduces the new and keeps the best of the old" (xvii) while also noting that "The Harbrace Family of handbooks has the longest history of any set of handbooks in the United States" (Glenn and Gray xxi).

In other parts of the Preface, the editors again turn to the positive aspects of the book's history by spending a couple of paragraphs describing Hodges' work. However, just a few pages prior, the Preface opens by saying that "The original *Harbrace Handbook* included comprehensive, up-to-date, research-based coverage of essential topics for writers. This edition does the same. Reflecting current studies in composition and linguistics, its forty-five chapters help students at all stages of the writing process [...]" (xvii). This statement does not explain exactly what "comprehensive," "up to date," or "research-based coverage" mean, but the implication is that the current edition follows the standards of the original, but does so based on current information. That seems an impossible balance to strike when the original is based on

information and an approach (CTR) that has since been dismissed as a meaningful, productive way to teach writing. However, the Preface marches on with its unsupported claims that the book is a timeless, reliable source for learning to write. It claims, “Like the original, this handbook has been class-tested⁴⁵” (xvii). It is difficult to dispute this claim because there is no way to know what it meant the original did. (It explains how it was class-tested for the 19th edition). None of my research suggests that Hodges tested the material in class; the most reliable sources on the first edition simply say that he took papers from the freshman English classes at UTK. That hardly sounds like class-tested. Again, these details matter because if the book itself claims that it is still relying on and based on the original research conducted by Hodges, then his research and methodology are important. It is essential to know how his methodology and research align (or do not) with our current goals and standards.

5.7 Hodges’ Methodology

Hodges initially created the book because, according to Curry, he felt that the books on the market covered too much or not enough. He “concluded that most handbooks of composition included much material that was ignored and irrelevant to the teaching of composition” (Curry 86). Therefore, Hodges created a new book. The book, according to Curry, “sought to reduce and simplify the points of grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure that were the essentials of any course in Freshman English” (86). The common story of how the book came to be often looks like the one below, found in the 18th edition of the *HHH*:

In the 1930s, Hodges obtained federal funding to support his study of the frequency of errors in college students’ essays. He collected 20,000 papers,

⁴⁵ It is unclear exactly what class-tested means.

counted and analyzed the errors in those papers, and created the taxonomy that he used to organize the original *Harbrace Handbook of English*. (inside cover)

This story has been repeated in various editions of the book itself as well as in promotional materials published by UTK. What is more difficult to find, however, is detailed information about Hodges' methodology for his study. One place that offers slightly more detail is the preface of the 19th edition of the *HHH*. It claims the following:

The Harbrace family of handbooks has the longest history of any set of handbooks in the United States. First published in 1941 by University of Tennessee English professor John C. Hodges, *The Harbrace Handbook of English* was a product of Hodges's classroom experience and his federally funded research, which comprised an analysis of twenty thousand student papers. Sixteen English professors from various regions of the United States marked those papers; they found a number of common mistakes, including (1) misplaced commas, (2) misspelling, (3) inexact language, (4) lack of subject-verb agreement, (5) superfluous commas, (6) shift in tense, (7) misused apostrophes, (8) omission of words, (9) wordiness, and (10) lack of standard usage. (xxi)

There is no indication as to why the 19th edition includes more detail about the text's history, but even this additional detail raises a number of questions about the methodology Hodges employed. The following sections address the questions raised by what we know and do not know about Hodges' methodology.

5.8 Who Marked the Papers, and Where Were They From?

First, the 19th edition makes the claim that papers were marked by professors "from various regions from the United States" (xxi). The "To the Instructor" section of the 1st edition of the

HHH identifies those who marked the papers as “representative instructors—men who have been trained and who have taught English in as widely scattered parts of the country as Massachusetts, New York, Illinois, Colorado, North Carolina, Texas and California” (Hodges iii). It is not clear what the instructors are representative of, though. This detail, however, provides us with another way to think about location and its role in this text. The editors do not give readers any reason why it is noteworthy that professors (perhaps more accurately labeled “instructors” if we rely on Curry’s work) were from different regions, but given the attention that the relativity of marking grammar errors has received in scholarship⁴⁶, perhaps this detail is included to suggest that those marking the 20,000 papers at UTK were more reliable because they came from different regions. There is no way to know the motivation for including that detail, however. Thus, the question remains why this detail is worth mentioning in the Preface. This little bit of detail does not offer any specific detail about the instructors’ credentials, though. Not knowing who these people were or what their professional experience and education were makes it impossible to know if they were reliable sources for marking papers. It is also worth noting that the papers were marked by only men, which raises the question of why were only men marking the papers, and does that create any sort of gender bias in the results?

5.9 Who Compiled the Data?

One of the most revealing sources on Hodges’ methodology is Kenneth Curry’s *English at Tennessee: 1794-1988*, a book detailing the history of the English Department at UTK. Curry, a former faculty member of the English department at UTK, says that in 1921, Hodges became responsible for the department’s Freshman English program, a move that delighted many as the previous professor responsible for the program was not well-liked by students or faculty (85). In

⁴⁶ I will take up this topic more fully later in this chapter.

his new role, Hodges implemented a system of writing, correcting, and conferencing. In this system, students wrote two themes a week, submitted them to their instructor, conferenced with the instructor, and eventually turned the papers back in, corrected and in folders, where they became part of the basis for Hodge's book (Curry 85). This system is important and relevant because the papers kept in those folders would be the source of the 20,000 papers that Hodges would analyze and tabulate for his book, a book he felt was needed because of the confusing and irrelevant material that appeared in handbooks at the time. Though this detail is important in understanding Hodges' methodology for what would become the handbook, it lacks the sort of detailed statement of methodology that often accompanies current scholarship. In some ways, it raises more questions than it answers.

What we do know is that many sources confirm that Hodges' research was based on 20,000 student papers. Yet it is not clear how the data from those papers materialized into the taxonomy Hodges created. One source on the subject is Curry. Presumably relying on what he knew as a member of the UTK English faculty, Curry describes the work that took place to compile the data for Hodges' book. Curry says that he "heard that students (work-study students⁴⁷) did much of the statistical tabulation of the folders" (86). Another source on this subject is Debra Hawhee, who offers the following insight into Hodges' data compilation: "The first three steps of Hodges' data collection were completed in this manner: the students made errors, the instructors found and marked them, and the students collated and recorded them" (510). As mentioned in chapter three, she goes on to say that the student folders were collected by their teachers and then kept in "The Theme Vault." An actual vault, "The Theme Vault" is where the 20,000 student papers were kept, and errors were tallied. From these tallies, Hodges

⁴⁷ There is no note of whether the students were graduate or undergraduate students.

created his taxonomy for the handbook “that he claimed represented ‘all matters needed by freshmen’” (511). The takeaway here is that Curry says that work-study students tabulated the folders, which makes sense because Hawhee is likely talking about students recording their own errors. But the process is still a bit confusing. From what I can tell, the process worked as follows:

Step 1. Students make errors.

Step 2. Teachers mark the errors.

Step 3. Students tabulate their own errors.

Step 4. Students return their tallies to their teachers.

Step 5. The teachers submit the tallies to the vault where student workers mark a larger tally.

Step 6. The tally eventually (though there is no detailed account of how or by whom and with what standards) becomes the taxonomy.

Step 7: The taxonomy becomes one of (if not the) the defining features of the *HHH*.

Hawhee’s research provides further evidence of Hodges’ methodology. Her research is based on her work with the John C. Hodges’ Collection at UTK’s John C. Hodges Library as well as her access to his personal and professional papers, which helped her provide detail in addition to Curry’s about Hodges’ research and methodology. She explains his methodology as follows:

Hodges’ extensive research led him to believe these 35 rules [the taxonomy found in the *HHH*] accurately reflected the 35 most common grammatical errors students make. During the 1920s and early 30s, Hodges and 16 other Tennessee freshman English instructors used a coded system to mark errors on student themes. When the students received the marked-up themes, they were to

systematically record all the errors, as directed by the *Manual of Instructions for Freshman English*, a syllabus-style manual written by Hodges and required for all first-year writers at the University of Tennessee. [...] The *Manual* presented two pages of sample error entries, along with precise instructions for theme correcting [...] The *Manual* directed the students to first classify and then correct the errors on the appropriate sheets, thus producing, at the end of the term, a summary of errors made on all the themes. (510)

This information provides some clarity on Hodges' methodology, but as much of the other available information on his process, it raises more questions (or concerns) than it answers. First, it was never made clear whether the 20,000 papers were written by 20,000 students, or whether students had more than one paper in the collection. This distinction matters. If Student A contributed, say, 20 papers out of the 20,000, then he is going to skew the results if he has a problem with subject-verb agreement. If he does not understand subject-verb agreement and has 20 papers in the collection, then his errors are going to make subject-verb agreement seem like a more prevalent problem than it may have been when the group is considered as a whole. It seems likely that students had multiple papers in the Vault. Hawhee uses "themes" in describing the methodology, which suggests that students likely had more than one paper in the collection of 20,000, but what was the ratio? How many students wrote the 20,000 papers? Furthermore, why was 20,000 the magic number? The number is often mentioned, but it is never explained why that number is so meaningful or why it is the number Hodges used.

Also, though Curry says students wrote two themes per week (85), it is unknown, again assuming that students contributed more than one paper to the Vault, how much time passed between each contribution. If students contributed two themes in the same week, for example,

why would there be any reason to think that their error patterns would change? If a student did not grasp a grammar concept, such as comma splices, would they not just repeatedly make comma splices, increasing the number of comma splices that show up in the error count? In other words, it would be helpful to know if a student contributed a paper, then received instruction on comma splices, and then wrote another paper. Curry notes that students had conferences with their teachers to talk about their errors, but the timing of those conversations in relation to when papers were contributed to the Vault is unknown.

Another problem that becomes apparent when considering what we know about Hodges' methodology is that, according to Hawhee, "When the students received the marked-up themes, they were to systematically record all the errors, as directed by the *Manual of Instructions for Freshman English*." This means that students were responsible for recording errors. They had directions for how to do so, but what evidence is there that their recordings were accurate? To be fair, as someone who has seen the John C. Hodges Collection, I can attest to his meticulous nature; I have no doubt that he provided detailed instructions. However, I am as Type A as he seems to have been, and I have also provided what I thought were foolproof instructions to students who could not or did not follow them correctly. They are students; they are learning, so it stands to reason that they might make mistakes. The point here is that if students were a part of compiling the data, how do we know their data was accurate?

In all fairness, though, Hodges' approach is a logical one for a director of a freshman composition program who is trying to identify the grammatical failings of the students in his department and who is hoping to create uniform standards within a department. However, is such an approach valid beyond a single institution⁴⁸? This is an important question to ask when

⁴⁸ Connors and Lunsford will acknowledge this when they try to recreate Hodges' study.

considering Miles's steps for identifying neighboring institutions in a carceral network, particularly the physical location where textbooks are produced. In other words, the *HHH* came out of UTK as Hodges tried to create uniform standards for composition in his own department, so what he found in his research may only be applicable to UTK students in the 1920s and '30s even though the text still exists in a form much like the original.⁴⁹

5.10 Who Wrote the Papers?

What is more interesting than what *is* said in the Preface of the 19th edition of the *HHH* is what is *not* said. What is not said is that the papers were written by students from different regions. There is nothing to suggest that the students came from various backgrounds or various regions (of the state or of the country). This is an important omission because the basis of the taxonomy is that it addresses grammar errors that are common, apparently despite location. That is not a reliable assumption, though. All one needs to do to realize that common grammar errors vary from region to region is to visit another region in the United States. Most people who travel see this fact as soon as they leave their home state. My husband, for example, is from Virginia and cringes at how often he hears people in North Georgia say “had went.” He never heard that construction when he was growing up in Virginia. This example is an important one because it shows how easy it is to come up with an example of grammar errors (at least sometimes) being prevalent in a given location. Its relevance here is that the grammar mistakes of students at UTK in the 1920s and '30s are still, 78 years later, determining what grammar concepts students are learning across the country.

Given the power those students' errors have had on what subsequent students have learned, I contacted UTK to ask for demographic information about its students in the 1920s and 1930s.

⁴⁹ This is a controversial point that I will return to later in this chapter.

Such information is not readily available as schools were less likely to keep such information at the time, but a librarian suggested I check the UTK yearbooks from those years. The yearbook from 1921⁵⁰, the year Hodges began teaching at UTK, lists the names of its 359 freshman students. It also lists their high school and hometown. Of those 359 students, only 12 (about 3%) students are from outside of Tennessee. Many of those 12 are from states such as Florida or Mississippi, and one was from as far away as Ohio (87-92). I did not see any students from as far away as California or New York, which means the errors are limited to what Tennesseans were making at the time. This information reveals that the students, unlike the 19th edition's claim about the instructors, were not from across the country; therefore, the writing samples were not from across the country.

This lack of variety in student writing samples is problematic in at least two ways. First, the errors in the students' writing occurred in the first half of the twentieth century. Robert J. Connors and Andrea Lunsford have argued that errors are time-bound. They argue that "In almost no other pedagogical area [composition errors] we have studied do the investigators and writers seem so time-bound, so shackled by their ideas of what errors are, so blinkered by the definitions and demarcations that are part of their historical scene" (396). They cite studies after Hodges that show significant changes in error patterns between 1950 and 1980, also pointing to Shaughnessy's research in the 1970s that presented new information about student error (397). Thus, the errors Hodges identified in his research may have been accurate at the time of his research, but they may not be accurate now. Furthermore, the second major issue with the group of students used for Hodges research is that as Lunsford and Connors also point out, many of the error frequency studies conducted around the time of Hodges' often included "too regional a data

⁵⁰ The subsequent yearbooks do not all contain students' hometowns, so I chose this year as one example because it includes students' hometowns, and it is the year Hodges began teaching at UTK.

sample” (397). Debra Hawhee took up this issue in 1999 and described it as “universalizing the particulars⁵¹.”

5.11 Students’ Permission?

Before leaving the topic of the students included in the study, however, it is important to consider the treatment of the students who wrote the 20,000 papers. As has been established throughout this dissertation, there is no detailed description of Hodges’ methodology that would satisfy our modern expectations for research methodology. One of the many ways this creates ethical issues is that there is no way to know if students gave their permission to have their work included in Hodges’ research. What we do know makes it sound as if the students were not given a choice. They had to write the papers and return them to their instructors, and there is no indication that they had the choice to opt out. By modern standards, this is unacceptable. The Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) has issued a Position Statement titled “CCCC Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Research in Composition Studies.” The section on obtaining informed consent says that researchers should explain “the purpose of research and its possible benefits” as well as “why the participant was recruited.” The informed consent guidelines also say that researchers should tell participants what the researchers “plan to do with the information or data obtained from participants.” These guidelines also place an emphasis on the importance of participation in a study being voluntary by students, even going as far as to say that “participants may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which they are entitled.” To be clear, these guidelines were not available to Hodges, so it is unreasonable to expect that he would have adhered to them. Yet the book continues to be published even though it is built on the work of students who likely did not

⁵¹ This point leads to other important and overlapping issues and is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

know how their work would be used and who were not voluntary participants, a situation that violates our modern expectations for treatment of research participants.

On the other hand, someone might still be compelled to argue that it is not fair to expect Hodges to have taken such steps in 1941, and that is a fair argument. It was a different time with different standards and different expectations. However, the taxonomy of the 19th edition is, according to its preface, based on the work of Hodges, and the most recognizable component of the book—the taxonomy found inside the front cover—is the “taxonomy [that] still underpins the overall design and organization of nearly every handbook on the market today” (xxi). That includes the current *HHH* as the taxonomy of the 19th edition is nearly identical to that of the 1941 taxonomy. If everyone who uses the *HHH*, or one of the many other handbooks available today, is benefitting and learning from the original research in the book, doesn't it matter whether or not those students whose worked formed the basis of the taxonomy consented to have their work included? This is not a case of saying something like, “Hodges shouldn't have done that in 1941.” The issue is that the book is still being sold—and in high volumes—and influencing other handbooks, so shouldn't we be concerned with where the taxonomy came from?

If we again use Miles' framework and think of the carceral network in action, particularly by following the money trail, this becomes even more troubling if we stop to consider how much money this book has made. The current edition is listed on the publisher's website for a hefty \$120 for each new book⁵². The book has been around for almost 80 years and is considered the best-selling textbook of all time, so there is no question that a lot of people involved with the text

⁵² There are cheaper options available if one wants to purchase an ebook or subscribe to Cengage Unlimited. The \$120 price is for a new physical copy of the book.

are profiting handsomely⁵³. The money trail surrounding this book will be discussed later in this chapter, but while on the subject of students who wrote the papers that helped Hodges create the taxonomy, it is worth noting that those students are not being paid for their part in the book. Of all the money that has been made on this book, shouldn't those students who work helped create the original text have been remunerated for their part? At the very least, shouldn't they have given their permission for their work to be a part of Hodges' research?

To put this in perspective, let me offer a current example of how student work makes its way into a textbook. A former professor of mine has been working on a textbook for years. I agreed to pilot her work because I've used parts of it, and it is outstanding. Someone from her publishing company contacted me about seeing a demo of the new online text and asked me about using it in one of my classes. It has not worked out for me to do it, but while talking to the publishing representative, she said she would pay me for my role in providing feedback on the text, but more importantly, she agreed to pay my students for their time and their feedback on the text. I also know that my former professor has offered to pay any student whose work she includes in the text. That only seems fair, but there is no indication that those students at UTK while Hodges conducted his research received any compensation for their work even though their work provided Hodges a means for organizing his text.

5.12 What Role Did the Government Play?

The money trail here also extends to the government. Many sources tout that the original edition received some sort of federal grant. However, there is nothing published or included in

⁵³ In my research for this dissertation, I was reminded that I have profited from the *HHH*. I do not remember doing any kind of consulting or offering feedback, but apparently I did because I saw my name in an edition from several years ago. I wish I had not, but at the time, I did not understand the system I was participating in, an example that shows how easy it is to be complicit in the carceral network of textbook publishing without realizing the implications. When publishers email and offer instructors \$50 or \$100 to review a book, it often seems harmless to comply.

the Hodges' Archive at UTK that details the federal funding that Hodges received. It is unclear whether he was asked to complete the study or whether he set out to complete it and was then able to obtain the governmental funding. The difference here matters. If he was asked to complete the study, then the government may have set parameters for the work he did, and those parameters could have limited the ways he approached his study. It may have also created biases, perhaps even confirmation bias, if the government wanted the study to have certain results. If, on the other hand, he proposed the study and then obtained funding, by our modern standards, the book should include a detailed statement on what he planned to study and how he went about implementing his research. No such statement exists.

5.13 Ma & Pa Kettle Try to Replicate Hodges' Research

There are other issues with Hodges' methodology. Throughout at least the last 40 years, scholars have questioned Hodges' methodology. About fifty years after Hodges' research, two major figures in rhetoric and composition, Robert Connors and Andrea Lunsford, set out to recreate Hodges' methodology so that they could determine whether or not student error patterns had remained consistent. They set out to analyze 20,000 papers, as Hodges had done, but quickly found the task daunting and impractical. They reduced the sample size to 3,000 and enlisted the help of 50 TAs, instructors, and professors to help analyze the student papers. The results of their study indicated that error patterns had changed, but more importantly for my purposes, their study revealed problems with Hodges' methodology. They claimed that "However Hodges may have constructed his study, his results fifty years later seem problematic at best" (397). In creating their study, Connors and Lunsford determined that the ideal sample would be random and would not come from one school, both characteristics unlike Hodges' study. As previously mentioned, but as is also relevant here, they also realized a significant challenge in identifying

formal grammar errors is that errors are time-bound. Connors and Lunsford say that “teachers’ ideas about error definition and classification have always been absolute products of their times and cultures” (399). This raises the question of how reliable Hodges’ work is now almost 80 years later. If, as Connors and Lunsford ably argue, attitudes about grammar are bound up with their current moment, is it realistic to assume that a handbook resulting from a study done in the 1920s and 1930s is still able to meet our modern needs?⁵⁴

In trying to replicate Hodges’ work, Connors and Lunsford identify many other problems and questions worth considering in determining the reliability of Hodges’ study. In creating their own study, Connors and Lunsford realize that teachers mark different “errors” and weight them differently. They argue, “teachers’ ideas about what constitutes a serious, markable error vary widely” (402). Joseph M. Williams also addresses this topic in his fascinating work, “The Phenomenology of Error.” He says,

I am often puzzled by what we call errors of grammar and usage, errors such as *different than*, *between you and I*, a *which* for a *that*, and so on. I am puzzled by what motive could underlie the unusual ferocity which an *irregardless* or a *hopefully* or a singular *media* can elicit. [...] I am puzzled why some errors should excite this seeming fury while others not obviously different in kind, seem to excite only moderate disapproval. And I am puzzled why some of us can regard any particular item as a more or less serious error, while others, equally perceptive, and acknowledging that the same item may be in some sense an “error,” seem to invest in their observation no emotion at all. (414)

⁵⁴ To be fair, there are many who argue yes to this question. The book is now in its 19th edition and has gone through several editors and many updates. The previous chapter of this dissertation addressed the question of how much the text has been updated throughout its almost 80 years, but it is important to acknowledge here that the current edition does not look exactly like the first, but its organizing strategy is still Hodges’ taxonomy.

Williams' observation, like Connors and Lunsford's, again points to the difficulty and subjectivity of creating a taxonomy of grammar errors. Why do some people find certain errors more problematic than others? And why do some errors get one person's attention but not another's? If the business of marking grammar errors is so subjective, how can one study—such as Hodge's—be seen as reliable? Is the study not mostly reflective of Hodge's biases and preferences?

5.14 How Did Hodges' Raters Know What to Mark, or How Did He Maintain

Consistency?

If it is indeed difficult and perhaps problematic to universalize the marking of grammar errors, how did Hodges' ensure consistency in what was marked in the 20,000 papers he utilized? In other words, if different teachers are marking errors, and there were different teachers marking papers in Hodges' study, were they given any guidelines as to what they should mark? Hawhee's research suggests that there were guidelines: "The *Manual* [*Manual of Instructions for Freshman English*] presented two pages of sample error entries, along with precise instructions for theme correcting" (510). If the teachers had and followed the guidelines for error marking, then Hodges' taxonomy tells us more about what errors were most problematic for him because he chose the limits; he decided which errors would be marked (and which would not) and ranked them according to their severity. In other words, his research does not tell us what errors were actually most common in the student papers; it tells us what errors he most commonly identified. If the instructors did not have guidelines, there is no way to be certain that people consistently looked for (and found) the same errors.

5.15 The Problems with Error Counts

Another issue with Hodges' methodology is the use of error counts. Connors and Lunsford point out that their study showed interesting possibilities for research in terms of the number of errors present versus the number of errors marked (404), which again raises question about the system Hodges used. Hodges' raters looked for teacher marked errors (405), which is problematic given that teachers do not mark the same things. Did his teachers mark every error they saw, or did they only mark the errors they found most problematic? This is an important question because the marking of grammar errors is a highly subjective practice unless instructors are given specific guidelines for what to mark. As Connors and Lunsford observe, "Teachers have always marked different phenomena as errors, called them different things, given them different weights. Error-pattern study is essentially the examination of an ever-shifting pattern of skills judged by an ever-shifting pattern of prejudices" (399). If error patterns are so unstable, what steps did Hodges take to make his research as stable and objective as it might be? What steps could he take given the inconsistency of error patterns and the subjectivity of error marking? Perhaps there were steps Hodges took to ensure reliability of his results, but there are no records detailed enough to answer this question.

The problems with error counts are not limited to Hodges' work with errors. The problems with error counts were addressed even before Connors and Lunsford tried to recreate Hodges' research. As long ago as 1963, Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd Jones, and Lowell Schoer, discovered problems with error counts. In their oft-cited *Research in Written Composition*, in which they articulate practices for writing-related research, they considered over 500 writing-related studies that had been completed, including the practice of error counts, which were worth addressing because they were so dominant in mid-twentieth century research about writing.

Among their findings are that error counts, or frequency counts as they label them, are “simply counts of grammatical and mechanical ‘errors,’ omitting attention to purpose and main idea, supporting material, organization, and style” (205). In other words, error counts ignore what we might now call the rhetorical situation. They fail to consider that an “error” might be a stylistic choice and instead only count that it is there. Sentence fragments, for example, can be used stylistically, but an error count would disregard the rhetorical impact of the fragment (maybe it makes a powerful statement), and instead simply count it as wrong. Braddock, Jones, and Schoer also note that error counts present problems such as what we would now call confirmation bias: “The tendency in any frequency count is to find what one is looking for” (205). That is a logical point. How could one find anything other than the grammar mistakes he has decided are noteworthy? Furthermore, could one find what he/she is *not* looking for? In other words, would some instructors not find some errors because they do not know them to be errors? Or perhaps a person could simply miss errors. I, for example, tend to miss dangling modifiers (unless they are funny).

Though Braddock, Jones, and Schoer’s work offers many other compelling points on this subject, perhaps the other most relevant conclusion is that for an error count to be meaningful, the count should consider the number of words in the writing being considered. Braddock, Jones, and Schoer offer this example and explanation:

All things being equal, if a person tabulated apostrophe situations in 200,000 words, he would find twice as many situations as if he had examined 100,000 words. To overcome this difficulty, some investigators reported their results by listing the errors in rank order of frequency⁵⁵. But this procedure had two

⁵⁵ This is how Hodges organized his taxonomy.

shortcomings. It hid the actual frequency behind the rank; a reader could not tell whether an error of the first rank was much more prevalent or barely more prevalent than an error of the second rank, etc. It also hid the actual frequency in cases where many errors increased or decreased from grade to grade or before and after an experiment even though the relative frequency, or rank, remained fairly consistent. (206-207)

These observations offer much room to criticize the way Hodges' research was conducted. There is nothing in Hodges' taxonomy that shows how often each grammar mistake was made in the 20,000 student papers. Such a ranking system is not essential to the book itself, but it is essential to anyone who wants to decide if Hodges' methodology is reliable, and there is no such information available. His work was revolutionary in its time, but even two decades later when Braddock, Jones, and Schoer identified new and improved ways to conduct research about writing, the *HHH* continued to be published based on research methods that were no longer considered credible.

5.16 “Universalizing the Particulars”

Considering the way errors are marked provides us an opportunity to return to the carceral network of location by again considering the marking of errors at UTK. After the errors marked in 20,000 UTK student papers left the Vault, they became the taxonomy, the grammar sections that organized the *HHH*. This is a major move because now the taxonomy, created at UTK, by a UTK professor and based on the writing of UTK students, is going to reach a much wider audience. Hawhee argues that this move made “the individual errors, taken together, *bec[o]me* a collective. Hodges universalized the particulars: by examining the ‘bodies’ of Tennessee students’ writing, he grafted their most common ‘flaws’ onto the national student body” (511).

Though she makes this point for other reasons, it is relevant here because it reflects the change in location when Hodges' research made its way into the *HHH* and subsequently composition classrooms across the United States. Now the mistakes of students in Tennessee have become the basis for instruction, specifically grammar instruction, for students across the country. Hawhee identifies the problem inherent in this move when she argues that "Hodges viewed the student writing he examined as representative of all student writing, not just in the 1930s, but throughout most of the century" (511-512). This idea is confirmed in the work of Connors and Lunsford as well as Curry, who as previously mentioned, said the text provided "the essentials of any course in Freshman English" (86). This claim is a bit difficult to accept as the text is based on a student population who was as much as 97% Tennessee natives; it is hard to know how their mistakes are representative of other times and places. It is also hard to accept that their mistakes transcend time and place.

In this context, Hawhee identifies problems with Hodges' effort in "universalizing the particulars." She says that "Hodges' sampling produced an obvious slant in the earlier editions of the *Harbrace*" as well as "a strong desire to eradicate specifically the Appalachian dialect" (512). If part of Hodges' goal was to reduce the presence of an Appalachian dialect in UTK students' writing, he confirms Connors and Lunsford's arguments that error-marking is time and culturally bound while also negating any argument he could have made for his taxonomy being universal. In other words, if his first edition sought, as Hawhee argues, to get rid of Appalachian constructions such as "could of" for "could have," he is focused on the errors of a specific group of students and not some sort of universal grammar errors that might occur elsewhere, yet his book is still intended to provide "the essentials of any course in Freshman English" (Curry 86). In other words, his research, as Connors and Lunsford argued, is too limited. Merola also

addressed this by arguing that the population of UTK around the time of Hodges' work was "mostly white, middle to upper class, and male," a sampling that is problematic because

by taking their error sampling from this white upper and middle class male grouping, the pool of errors contained and corrected through this handbook has a fixed imaginary realm. Certain errors would not occur within the 'representative' twenty thousand themes. As this handbook does not include them, it does not recognize as writers the kinds of students who would make them. (265)

If his research is based on Tennessee students in the 1920s and 1930s, and if error-making is time and culturally bound (as Connors and Lunsford and others have argued), then how might the text fail to meet the grammatical needs of students in 2019 in say, Pennsylvania? If the grammar patterns had changed in 1988, when Connors and Lunsford tried to replicate the study, what chance is there that they have not again changed now, thirty years later?

5.17 "Fixing the Hicks"

Another thread related to location, an important, related issue, is Hodges' choice to get rid of particular errors, what Hawhee called "Fixing the Hicks." She claims that "Hodges' sampling produced an obvious Appalachian slant in the earlier editions of the *Harbrace*" (512). She cites Rule 19f of the textbook, which deals with "illiteracies" that are defined as "the crude expressions of uneducated people." The point she is making is that certain errors reveal a person's class and education (or lack of). She draws on Joseph Williams' work that convincingly argues that, in some contexts, grammar errors are treated as social errors, and that is the case in the *HHH*. Hawhee says, "The treatment of grammatical and diction 'errors' as faulty social behavior works with the etiquette rules and social propriety to demarcate classes of people, be they racial, socioeconomic, or geographical" (512). In other words, the use of certain words or

speech patterns will reveal someone's class, race, or hometown, and in so doing, will allow others to judge the person. The implication in a definition such as illiteracies being "the crude expressions of uneducated people" is that readers of the *HHH* want to be seen as educated people, the further implication being that the *HHH* can help readers become (or at least sound and write) like the educated people they hope to be.

Appearing uneducated was not just a concern in the *HHH*. At the time of its initial publication, a concern with literacy, or, more accurately, illiteracy, was playing out in other parts of the country, which likely led to what is included in the *HHH*. Michael Harker, citing the Michigan Committee on the Articulation of High School and College English's *Preparation for College English: An Interpretation of College Entrance Standards in English*, argues that being seen as uneducated or illiterate was a concern in the 1930s as colleges began seeing increased enrollment (73, 79). He notes that "With increased enrollments came an increasingly diverse student body" (74). In this time of change and educational reform, one result was high schools in Michigan began sending their students' papers to English faculty at the University of Michigan for feedback (Harker 74-75). Though the details of this partnership are interesting, what is most relevant here is the result of the college faculty's response to the papers. Harker says that the Committee laments the poor spelling in the papers that indicate "'fundamentally bad attitudes,'" which "contribute to the 'total accumulation of errors, toward producing an impression of illiteracy'" (79). He further notes that the result of those responses to the paper lead the high school teachers to address those concerns. Harker says that "Above all, in embracing and implementing the suggestions and views of the committee, a way of instructing students that allows them to avoid the appearance of illiteracy is what is most at stake" (79). Avoiding the

appearance of illiteracy seems to also be what also influenced Hodges' approach to grammar in chapter 19 of the *HHH*.

The prescriptive approach to grammar in section 19 of the 1st edition includes usage and expressions that are common, at least to me though they might well be “the crude expressions of uneducated people.” However, almost 80 years after Hodges wrote the 1st edition, people are still using them. I was surprised to see how many of the words and phrases included are expressions that I have heard (and, in some cases, used) all my life⁵⁶. One is the use of “some.” The 1st edition explains that “some” is “colloquial when used as an intensive or with the meaning *somewhat* or *a little* (230).” The example given is that one should write, “He is making an excellent race.” That version is given to correct someone who would say, “He is making some race (230).” As a Southerner, I disagree with this reading. Maybe the first one is somehow more correct, but those two sentences say two different things. An “excellent” race suggests that the candidate⁵⁷ is performing well. If he is making “some” race, he might be doing well, but he might also (and more likely) be keeping things interesting by using unorthodox campaigning strategies, or perhaps he is leading the polls when no one expected that to happen. Either way, the preferred sentence and the colloquial sentence do not say the same thing⁵⁸. Grammar corrections, such as that one, suggest a misunderstanding of local grammar, and in my reading, fail to consider audience. In certain conversations, my audience would better understand me if I said, “He is making *some* race.” A book that tells students that saying that such a use of “some”

⁵⁶ I lived in Tennessee for the first 35 years of my life. I may not be a good judge of any of this, though. I was in my late 20s before I realized (after my friend from Colorado pointed it out) that for some people, “fixin” exclusively means to repair something. Such audiences are not accustomed to those of us who say things such as, “I am fixin to go to the store.”

⁵⁷ I don't actually know if this example is referring to politics, but the point of the example is the word some, so I am not sure the context even matters.

⁵⁸ Hawhee makes a similar point when she takes issue with “He has sold the dog” vs. “He has done sold the dog” (522), which I agree say different things.

is incorrect does them a disservice by minimizing the complicated choices involved in communicating effectively.⁵⁹ Furthermore, such an approach to grammar instruction could be fairly labeled as “classist” and even “elitist,” but maybe more important, such grammar prescriptions make it possible to argue that Hodges (and those who wrote similar texts) were actually attempting to “fix the hicks.” In other words, texts like the *HHH* attempt to initiate students into a certain class. Winterowd criticizes the *HHH* for doing so. He writes, “The devastation wrought by this doctrine of usage is, of course, incalculable, for it has condemned and proscribed the native dialects of millions of students in American colleges, contributing significantly to racial and class prejudice” (60-61). That is a powerful statement and a troubling reality.

As evidence that writing instruction could be used for a purpose such as “fixing the hicks,” Crowley, in *The Methodical Memory*, draws on the work of Evelyn Wright and Donald C. Stewart to point out that in the late nineteenth century, an unspoken goal of writing instruction was to socialize students (137). Citing Wright, Crowley maintains that elementary school teachers of the time “were held ‘responsible for saving children from grammatical-rhetorical sins by which their personal character was judged’” (137). If looking at the situation from only that angle, it might be easy to argue that the schools were simply teaching a particular objective; in this case, correct grammar. However, those objectives, much like Hodges’ in the *HHH*, reflected cultural biases. As Crowley argues, “language arts instruction was efficiently (because silently) geared to include those whose manners and class it reflected. Those whose manners were not

⁵⁹ In case I have not made this point strongly enough, let me offer another example. My mother is what many people have called “very Southern” or even “country.” My husband can tell when I am on the phone with her because he swears that my accent and speech patterns change. He says my “i’s” get very long.

middle-class either adapted or were excluded” (137). It is also worth noting here that John C. Hodges was born in 1892, so he was educated in the time Crowley is describing.

Such an attitude was not limited to elementary-aged students. Drawing on the work of Donald C. Stewart, Crowley again argues that the late-nineteenth-century’s rigid attitudes about grammar and structure had less to do with correctness and more to do with class. She quotes Stewart who argued, “late nineteenth-century composition theory and practice was less a response to the social and educational needs of the time and more a reflection of a select class’s wrong-headed attitudes about the importance of usage and superficial editorial accuracy” (137). Again, Crowley points out that such attitudes were not explicitly stated in current-traditional textbooks, but the message was clear nonetheless. According to Stewart correct usage was often equated with being an “educated person” (qtd. In Crowley 137), which also means a person of a certain class.

Someone might want to argue here that just because some current-traditional texts and some writing instruction were classist does not mean that Hodges’ text was also classist. In response, I would first point to Hawhee’s section on “Fixing the Hicks,” and then I would point again to Crowley’s argument above. In her discussion of both elementary textbooks and college textbooks that were attempting to socialize students, she mentions, *A Manual of English Composition*, published in 1907, and written by Gardiner, Kittredge, and Arnold. The book is discussed in the context of texts as arbiters of middle-class style (and grammar), but what is most relevant and important here is one of the text’s authors is Kittredge, one of Hodges’ dissertation readers. There is, of course, no way to know specifically how Kittredge, as a professor and dissertation reader, might have influenced Hodges’ thinking, but it is worth noting that he was a

significant part of Hodges' education, and he did publish at least one current-traditional text that sought to socialize students as middle-class writers.

5.18 Hodges' Education & The Money Trail

Previously, I quoted Libby Miles who argues, "Flowing among these institutions, then, are common systems of knowledge and power production, which both creates and perpetuates the normalizing function." Considering the physical locations surrounding the creation of the *HHH* begins to reveal the knowledge and power structures at work not just in the book itself; it also eventually leads to the knowledge and power that are normalized in composition classrooms where the text is used. As sources such as Hawhee, Crowley, and Stewart point out, a text that is aimed at teaching students grammar has the potential to normalize a certain class of speech and writing patterns. A prescriptive grammar text will show, as my example of "some" does, students that there is a correct way to use language. In the case of the *HHH*, the text shows that students who want to speak correctly will have to remove those markers that might betray students as members of something other than the desired class. This issue is a complicated one, and it is one that rhetoric and composition as a field is still addressing.

In considering the systems of knowledge and power production as they relate to grammar and education, it is worth revisiting the knowledge and power structures at work in Dr. Hodges' education. It is important to briefly return to the ideas, texts, and professors who influenced his thinking as they are most likely what influenced his writing of the *HHH*. As noted in the microhistory, Hodges went to Harvard and worked with professors who were experts in their fields. However, their fields, Chaucer, Celtic Literature, and Shakespeare, were only loosely related (at best) to composition in general and grammar in particular. The work Hodges completed in his coursework and dissertation did not set a clear trajectory for what would

become his most notable professional contribution, the *HHH*. Instead, Hodges went to the most elite university in the country and studied literature. Though that is a commendable achievement, it did not provide a direct path to the work he ultimately did when he created the *HHH*. I want to again say that this is not to say that he had the opportunities to study composition that are available now; he did not. Though he seemed to have a genuine interest in improving composition instruction, all he had were the prevailing theories of the time. He applied them and created a text that set the bar high for what it was. The issue here is that we, as teachers and researchers in composition, have access to years of research and scholarship to guide our pedagogical choices, so why does a text based on the earliest available information remain a bestseller?

5.19 If We Know Better Now, Why is the Text Still Popular?

So, why does the text remain if our theories and research are more complex and more nuanced now; why does a text that defies our current knowledge remain popular? This section considers those questions. As the beginning of this chapter notes, the overarching reason is that the conditions that initially made *CTR* appealing still exist. Composition classes are still often taught by contingent faculty or faculty whose training is in a field other than composition. In some places, composition classes are still too large. Though faculty are unlikely to face composition classes with hundreds of students as they were at Harvard in the late-nineteenth century, some of the classes are still too large. As John Warner, writer and composition teacher, noted in a recent interview,

People who have the kind of job that I used to have, a writing instructor off the tenure track, have student loads that are often double the recommended disciplinary maximums, which is 60 students a semester split between 3 sections

of 20. That's the absolute maximum recommendation. And it is hard to find even a single nontenured instructor or many tenured instructors who have 60 or fewer, maybe at some of the very elite places but not where most of us work.

As further evidence, at my own institution, in the fall, I taught 4 writing classes and had over 100 total students. Our English 1101 classes had a cap of 28 last semester. Some of us teach several sections of that class, making it the norm to end up with over 100 students whose writing we must read and respond to. In situations like that, instructors have to find ways to make the workload manageable. One of the ways that sometimes happens is that people resort to exclusively or mostly marking grammar errors. Situations like these are the situations that make a text like the *HHH* appealing. With its taxonomy of letters and numbers, instructors have a clear system to use to mark papers. They can get through papers more quickly by making marks like "27b" in the margin, which sends a student to that section of the handbook to identify what error "27b" indicates. That is much easier than responding to content.

This brief example is just one of the reasons instructors turn to a text such as the *HHH*. Another reason is the sentimental attachment I discussed in chapter three. Some instructors used the text when they were students, which gives the text an ethos or familiarity that provides instructors with confidence in their approach to teaching composition. There is no question that the book appeals to a certain teaching demographic. And the publishers are fully aware of this. There is no doubt that the publishers want to appeal to composition instructors. They seem to be straddling the fence between old and new; keeping Hodges' original taxonomy likely appeals to those who have been in the field longer. I can only speak to this anecdotally, but I can say that when I began working on this research, the oldest faculty member in my department (who has since retired) is the one who would talk to me about the text and could tell me the letter and

number for any section in the first 30 chapters of the book. However, that traditional approach is likely less appealing to new teachers, like I was when I first encountered the book in 2005. But the 19th edition has made an effort to appeal to faculty like my younger self. Chapters 31-42 move beyond the 30 traditional grammar chapters. The later chapters address topics such as the rhetorical situation and composing arguments. Chapters 43-45 offer advice for multilingual writers. These are good, useful additions to the book.

For me, however, I still wonder why, in such a crowded textbook market, this book remains a bestseller. There are many better, cheaper books available to students. There are also many free grammar resources available online. So why does the book persist? From the publisher's perspective, it is hard to imagine any other genuine reason than the book is profitable. And there are a lot of people who are profiting from the proliferation of this textbook.

5.20 Who Profits?

The easy answer to why this book still exists is that the book makes money, which returns us to the money trail. As stated repeatedly, it is the best-selling textbook of all time. Why wouldn't the text's current publisher, Cengage, continue to publish the text if it sells so well? If we return to Libby Miles' framework, one way to answer the question of why the book still exists is by following the money trail. It is likely that the book still exists because there are a lot of people and institutions who are profiting from this textbook's continued production.

One institution who profits from sales of the *HHH* is UTK. According to Curry, in his will, Hodges directed the royalties from the *HHH* (called the *Harbrace College Handbook* at that time) to the Better English Fund at UTK, a fund Hodges created and funded before his death. When he died in 1967, the fund had \$200,000. The John C. Hodges Collection at UTK, housed in the John C. Hodges Library, contains a newspaper clipping from the July 11, 1967 edition of

the *Summer Beacon*. The clipping, which appears to be an obituary of sorts, says that \$165,000 of the money that was in the Better English Fund came from Hodges and his textbook royalties. Interestingly, the obituary notes that “Dr. Hodges refused to let it be known during his lifetime that he had given money to the University.” It is clear from reading Hodges’ personal letters and his obituaries, all of which mention the *HHH*, that his intention was to financially support the UTK English Department, and he did not want to receive praise or attention for it. He seems to have been genuinely concerned with doing what he thought was good and helpful.

Reading Curry’s account of Hodges’ financial contributions alongside the personal/professional letters included in the John C. Hodges Collection makes the details of the royalties’ situation a bit confusing. There is a letter from 1947 where Hodges mentions the fact that the state of Tennessee has adopted the textbook, and he would like to put the royalties back into education, clearly indicating that he donated some or all of the royalties before he died. Curry’s account makes it sound like he did not donate the royalties until his will was enacted, but that does not seem to be the case. Either way, UTK, at least since Hodges’ death but most likely long before, has received royalties from the book. Curry notes that as of 1987 (when he was writing his book), the fund had approximately \$2 million (107). What is interesting to note is that Curry says that

after the publication of the Handbook in 1941 and its adoption by the Department as a textbook for Freshman English, Hodges set aside the royalties which would accrue to him from the sale of the Handbook on the UT campus. Later he added to the fund the royalties that would come from the sale of the Handbook at other colleges in the state. (107)

Again, Hodges seemed to want to do something good with the royalties, but here I am struck by the fact that UTK and other Tennessee schools adopted the book. Is there an ethical issue with a college campus requiring a textbook that they directly financially benefit from? This is a complicated question, one that is not easy to answer, but it is one that should be considered when students have to spend money on textbooks for which the college profits.

UTK still has first-year writing courses that require students to use a version of the book⁶⁰. According to the departmental English 101 syllabus at UTK, students are required to purchase and use the *Writer's Harbrace Handbook*. Interestingly, though the book has a slightly different name, the contents are largely the same. The book contains 27 chapters on grammar with the main difference being the order in which they are presented. The grammar chapters are in the same order as they are in the *HHH*; however, the grammar chapters do not begin until chapter 21. The first 20 chapters are about writing (the rhetorical situation, drafting essays, multimodal composing, etc.). There is no explanation for why the order of the contents is different or why the name is slightly different. The foreword from the composition direction does, however, explain that it is the same book. He notes that the first edition was published in 1941 and says "the latest version" (the one required at UTK) was released in 2016 even though the book in which that appears has the name the *Writer's Harbrace Handbook* whereas the *HHH* was in its 19th edition as of 2016. The arrangement of the UTK edition (which has the John C. Hodges' Library on the cover) may be explained when the composition director says, "While early versions of the *Harbrace* generally assumed that good writing amounted to correct grammar and mechanics, later versions reflect expanded views of writing" (n.p.). Perhaps the

⁶⁰ The book now has several offshoots, among them are titles such as *Harbrace Essentials*, *Writer's Harbrace Handbook* (yes, this is a different version of the traditional *HHH*), and the *Harbrace Guide to Writing*.

reorganization of the text is to emphasize those “expanded views of writing,” but there are still more grammar chapters than writing chapters.

The Writer’s Harbrace Handbook is required along with a text titled *Rhetorical Choices: Analyzing and Writing Arguments*. According to the standard syllabus and the campus bookstore website, students are charged for these books as part of their school fees though they may opt out of those charges if they have purchased the books elsewhere. The point is, though, that students are required to pay \$85.03 for the *Harbrace* book (which also includes access to digital course materials), and UTK will earn money from that purchase. Is this problematic? To be fair, there are plenty of courses on college campuses where instructors have students purchase and use texts or materials they have created. However, it is hard to believe that any of them bring in the kind of profit that the *HHH* does, which makes it fair to ask if UTK is having students use the *HHH* because it is the best text available, or is it required because the school profits?

Again, to be fair, the Better English Fund, the direct beneficiary of the *HHH* royalties, appears to do a lot of good. According to the UTK English webpage, the Better English Fund, or the Hodges Fund as they call it, “supports many initiatives including graduate student fellowships, research assistantships, summer research grants, faculty professional development, library acquisition, lectures and conferences, and community outreach.” Even a quick Google search turns up numerous awards students have received from the Hodges Fund. In researching this award and the UTK English 101 textbook requirements, I stumbled upon a connection between the two. In 2017, a graduate student won 2nd place in the John C. Hodges Awards for Creative Writing. I happened to see the student’s name again when I was looking through required English texts on the UTK bookstore’s website. This semester, he is teaching a section of English 101. One of the required books for the class is the *Writer’s Harbrace Handbook*. As I

said previously, the book is required by the department; there is nothing to indicate it was the graduate student/instructor's choice to use the book. However, he is benefitting from his students buying that book⁶¹. Is this not a serious conflict of interest? To be clear, I am not faulting the graduate student. He seems to be doing what is required of him. The point, however, is that if students⁶² who are also teaching classes at UTK are benefitting from the sales of the textbook, what reason do they have to question the use of it in their classes? Perhaps the folks at UTK truly believe in the book itself and the good it is doing for the department and students of the department. But is this not, in at least some ways, blatant bias?

The good from all of this is that graduate students are getting support that they likely desperately need. But the situation is complicated. The *HHH* has done a lot of good for not just graduate students, but likely all students at UTK. The campus library is the John C. Hodges Library, a large, beautiful library built from the *HHH*'s profits. However, the question remains whether or not students should be required to buy the book, and at the heart of that question is what is the motivation when UTK requires the book? Are students being required to buy the book because it is the most reliable for teaching them what they need to know as English students, or are they required to buy it for nefarious reasons? The answers are complicated, but that is also why the carceral network is a useful framework. Thinking of all the intertwined institutions and locations involved in the production of this text make it clear that while there are many questions about who benefits from the text, the answers are not always easy.

⁶¹ I was unable to find whether he received a cash prize. Some of the press releases for the Hodges' awards include how much money students were given, but the press releases for the 2017 awards do not.

⁶² The student is a PhD student.

5.21 Protecting the Brand

One of my greatest sources in this research has been Hawhee's 1999 *CCC*'s article about the *HHH*. She did thorough research and wrote a fascinating article about the history and problems of the textbook. Hawhee was a graduate student when she wrote that article. With just this little bit of information—the article was written by a graduate student and published in *CCC*, likely the most respected journal in our field—this article carries a lot of ethos. That is all without even reading the article, which as I said, is a compelling, thoughtful, and thorough piece of scholarship. However, in June 2000, after Hawhee's article had been published in February 1999, *CCC*'s published three responses to Hawhee's critical piece on the *HHH*. The responses were written by Thomas Broadbent, who was the editor of the 10th edition of the *HHH*, John Bell, an English professor from New York City Technical College, and Winifred Horner, a well-known and respected rhetoric and composition professor and scholar and also an editor of the *HHH*.

The responses were harsh, to say the least. Each one had a similar structure: each began by finding something to praise about Hawhee's research. Then each moved on to scathing criticism of what she had written. I say what she had written and not the article itself because her name is mentioned repeatedly in these "responses." This is noteworthy because it seems the criticism, if there is going to be any, should be on the research and the arguments Hawhee presents. Without even delving deeper into the criticisms of Hawhee's work, it is important to point out what is happening. A graduate student, Hawhee, who wrote a paper for one of her classes, wrote something strong enough that it was published in *CCC*, perhaps our field's most respected and referenced journal. Then, a little over a year later, the journal publishes not one, but three critical responses to an article they saw fit to publish. Why would *CCC* have *three* established

professionals/scholars negatively respond to the work of one graduate student? Furthermore, why would they choose three people who had vested interests in the textbook to be the ones to respond? What does this suggest about the field's attachment to or investment in the text? It is clear that someone wanted to protect the reputation of the book. It raises the question of whether the field can objectively decide whether or not the textbook is worthy of use in our composition classrooms. Even more disturbing, it raises the question of whether there are too many people whose pockets are being lined by the publishers to make that decision. It is important to point out here that since those responses were published in 2000, no one has written another critical article of the textbook. So why has this book continued to be protected?

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 CTR, the *HHH*, and Public Attitudes About Writing

There are still other reasons why the *HHH* exists, and there are other reasons why writing instructors are drawn to both the *HHH* and CTR. I opened chapter three of this dissertation by telling stories of people who have fond memories and emotional connections to the *HHH*. Though those stories are anecdotal, they are powerful. Those kinds of connections are likely one reason for the continued commercial success of the textbook. Those fond memories of the book may also be a reason CTR still exists; some people, like those I mentioned in chapter two and like Rowlands' students, have a nostalgic attachment to grammar drills and English classes where they completed tasks such as diagramming sentences. This is what some people believe an English class is. I know this, as do many of my colleagues, from experience. When I meet someone and tell the person what I do for a living, the response, more times than not, is something like, "You teach English? I'll have to watch my grammar around you!" I never correct people and tell them that I take a rhetorical approach to teaching writing. I do not explain that my

classes address purpose, audience, and context before grammar. I usually just laugh and say, “Don’t worry. I am not on the clock.” What is most interesting to me about these kinds of exchanges is the way people reveal what English means to them when they assume that if I teach English, I must teach grammar. Sometimes people assume I teach literature, but most often, they assume I teach grammar.

6.2 Popular Press Articles about Writing

This assumption that English classes equal grammar instruction is important because it has the power to influence the way we teach writing. Like some other fields, writing instruction is one of those that people feel comfortable expressing opinions about how it should be done, whether or not they have training in composition. This is apparent in the regular articles that appear in public press about the state of writing instruction. Perhaps the first such argument in recent years came in 1955 when Rudolph Flesch published *Why Johnny Can’t Read*, a text that is still referenced when people take up the topic of writing instruction. Maybe the most well-known of these articles, however, is the 1975 *Newsweek* article, “Why Johnny Can’t Write.” There are many more recent articles that not only discuss the same topic; they also reference the original in their titles. In 2011, the *New American* published, “Why Johnny STILL Can’t Read.” In 2012, *HuffPost* published, “Why Johnny Can’t Read: Redux.” Articles like these tend to take on education in general, but there are many that tackle college composition directly. In 2012, *the Atlantic* started a debate section called “Why American Students Can’t Write,” a section that contained articles debating whether or not students can write. In 2014, *Psychology Today* published “Why Can’t College Students Write Anymore?” In October 2016, the *Chronicle* published Joseph R. Teller’s, “Are We Teaching Composition All Wrong,” with the subtitle, “Students Understand Why Barbie is Sexist, but They Can’t Make Their Case in a Coherent

Essay,” a subtitle that tells far more about the author’s stance than the title does. These titles are just some of the articles that take up this debate; there are many others.

Many of these articles go as far as blaming current writing instruction. One such article, “Why so Many College Students are Lousy at Writing — and How Mr. Miyagi Can Help,” appeared in *the Washington Post* on April 27, 2017. The article opens with Valerie Strauss observing,

There are a lot of students who enter college as lousy writers — and who graduate without seeming to make much, if any, improvement. It is true in the arts as well as the sciences, anecdotally evidenced by some of the blog post submissions I get from a wide range of people whose jobs would suggest they can communicate well in writing but, as it turns out, not so much.

She uses this passage as a means of providing context for the article that follows, an article written by John G. Maguire, who has taught writing for many years. The thesis of Maguire’s article is that students cannot write. He argues that

the main problem, I think, is that the colleges are not really trying to teach students to write clear sentences. Not anymore. First-semester writing courses now cover rhetorical strategies, research, awareness of audience, youth civic activism — everything except the production of clear sentences.

He also makes the strange argument that some people teach rhetoric because it is easier than teaching style: “The composition profession evades the teaching of writing, I think, because the job seems impossible these days, especially in 14 weeks. How can you get them to write well when half the students in your classroom can’t find the subject and verb in a sentence? Much easier just to talk about rhetorical strategies.” I have never heard anyone else say that teaching

rhetorical strategies is easy, but regardless, Maguire has a number of solutions for the problem. The basic one is that we need to get a text like *Strunk & White* and teach style. He also recommends using Rudolf Flesch's *The Art of Readable Writing*, a book Maguire has created a course around. Maguire, though he does not mention it in this article, has also solved the problem by writing a book on college writing, which is available for purchase on his website. Though he eschews rhetorical strategies, it would be helpful for readers of his article to know about bias and vested interest so that they may realize that Maguire's argument is at least in part self-serving as he has a book to sell.

Though there are many articles that make points like Maguire's, I bring up his for two reasons: the responses it got from those who teach composition and those it got from readers of *the Washington Post*. The Writing Program Administration's listserv was bombarded with messages about this article for days, and the messages were full of outrage over the article's central thesis that students cannot write and the claim that those of us who teach writing need to quit covering topics such as rhetorical strategies and focus on real skills, such as how to write a sentence. Such a response from people who teach writing is not particularly surprising. Of course they would defend their own pedagogy.

I was, however, surprised by the public's response. The Facebook comments on the article as well as the comments on the article's page on *the Washington Post's* website include many people who agree with Maguire. Posts included comments such as, "Interesting how many comments on here defend the status quo in education. I work at a college, and the fact is that our student can not [*sic*] write, so maybe it's time to try something new rather than just defend the processes that don't work?" and "The proposed solution though sounds very good to me. Break it down to 'how to write a sentence,' scaffolding the learning process, and emphasize readability.

That seems likely to be an effective strategy.” On the Facebook post of the article, one commenter observes, “Reading classic, not boldly ‘old’ literature; and asking instructors to insist on good grammar,; [sic] hate to do it, bit [sic] DIAGRAMMING. My 8th grade English class, in which we copied English rules and diagramming LITERALLY from a blackboard. No person on [sic] my class is a poor writer.” Another commenter claimed that “The teachers don’t write. Every teacher should be able to present a self made [sic] example of what they ask of their students.” These are just a few of the responses that agreed with the article. There are also many comments—on Facebook and *the Washington Post* page—that strongly oppose what the article proposes. However, what is most surprising to me is that people who read the article, particularly people who do not teach writing, feel so strongly that writing should be taught through current-traditional rhetoric, an approach that emphasizes form and grammar over content and rhetorical exigence.⁶³

6.3 Rhetoric and Composition’s Response

Many scholars and teachers from rhetoric and composition have responded to these articles that beg for a current-traditional approach to teaching composition. In January 2017, Doug Hesse, a prominent and respected scholar in the field of rhetoric and composition, responded to Teller’s “Are We Teaching Composition All Wrong,” with “[We Know What Works in Teaching Composition](#).” Hesse argues that these complaints about student writing go back as far as 1878 when Adams Sherman Hill, a rhetoric professor at Harvard said, ““Everyone who has had much to do with the graduating classes of our best colleges has known men who could not write a letter describing their own commencements without making blunders which would disgrace a boy

⁶³ At the risk of sounding like a jerk, I have to point out that their arguments lack much ethos given how error-riddled they are. How is it convincing to argue for CTR when it has clearly failed its proponents?

twelve years old.’” Hill’s complaint is not surprising given that the first compulsory college composition classes were offered at Harvard; the consensus then was that students could not write well. Hill’s complaints have persisted to our current moment. Rhetoric and composition scholar, Linda Adler-Kassner, points to articles such as “Grammar is Making a Comeback; Poor Writing Skills Among Teens and a New Section of the SAT Fuel Return to Language Basics,” published in 2006, and “Students Fall Short on ‘Information Literacy,’ Educational Testing Service’s Study Finds,” also published in 2006, (Adler-Kassner 1) as evidence of this recurrent theme of poor student writing. She, however, wrote *The Activist WPA* to create a new narrative, one that presents a counter narrative to those articles claiming students cannot write any more.

Hesse and Adler-Kassner are not the only ones from rhetoric and composition responding to these claims of poor student writing. There were many people defending both students and teachers as I read through the posts responding to “Why So Many College Students are Lousy at Writing,” and the responses continued elsewhere online. Steven Krause, for example, wrote a blog post entitled, “[That Horrible and Strange Article about Writing by John G. Maguire](#),” and *the Washington Post* published John Warner’s response to Maguire, “[We are Teaching Kids How to Write all Wrong — and no, Mr. Miyagi’s Rote Lessons Won’t Help a Bit](#).” However, in spite of these responses to cries for pedagogies of writing that favor a formalist, grammatical, traditional approach to teaching grammar, the cries for current-traditional rhetoric continue in popular press. Adler-Kassner argues that opposition to these cries might say things like “students are astoundingly knowledgeable about composing in contexts that some teachers know relatively little about” or “it might be worth questioning the criteria by which ‘quality’ is being determined” (1). These things are not said, Adler-Kassner argues, (or do not receive attention if they are) because such arguments “do not fall within the rather tight frame currently surrounding

discussions of education more generally” (Adler-Kassner 1). If this is true, what can those of who teach college composition do to change the public narrative on the quality of student writing? Perhaps an even more important question, since many of us are working hard to juggle so many parts of our personal and professional lives, is why should we become activists for our students and for the work we do?

6.4 Practical Ways to be an Advocate

I work full-time, and even when I am not at work, work takes up a lot of my psychic space. Most people I know in academia, especially in English departments, live this way. We think a lot about the work we do, and we talk about it a lot, even outside of work. I, like my colleagues, have a life outside of work that I try to maintain in spite of what my work demands of me. This struggle to balance work and life is common for most of the people I know who teach. If this is the case, why should those of us who teach composition, particularly those of us who specialize in rhetoric and composition, add more to our busy lives and become activists for our work? To me, the answer is simple. If we do not speak up for ourselves, no one else is going to. The people who write articles saying that we are not teaching what or how we should and that students cannot write are not going to suddenly give us the benefit of the doubt. Worse than all of that is that if we do not speak up, people like John Maguire and Stanley Fish, as well as people commenting on their articles, are going to continue to demand CTR in writing courses. This sort of popular demand for CTR may also influence adoption of texts like the *HHH* because it is CTR-based. Thus, we need to speak up for the work we are doing and not just when articles come out and say that we are not doing it. We need to find ways to be proactive and share the good work we do before we are doing it only to defend ourselves. In an ideal world, we would

all have the time and opportunity to write articles for popular news outlets and explain what we do and why it matters. Unfortunately, that is not the case for many of us.

Fortunately, there are those among us, such as Doug Hesse, Linda Adler-Kassner, and especially John Warner, who are able to do that. John Warner, for example, has just published *Why They Can't Write: Killing the Five-Paragraph Essay and Other Necessities*, a book intended for teachers, students, and anyone who cares about writing and writing instruction. The book is thoughtful and accessible and defends the work we do in writing classrooms. He makes smart arguments such as, “In reality, every piece of writing is a custom job, not a modular home, and by steering students toward the five-paragraph essay, we are denying them the chance to practice real writing by confronting the choices writers must make” (29). We need people like Warner, but we can’t all be the ones to do that work. For those of us who cannot do this, for whatever reason, perhaps the best thing we can do—for our students and our communities—is make our classrooms sites that teach students how they can use writing to improve their lives and the lives of those around them. In doing so, we can offer students the kind of authentic writing for which Warner advocates; this is a way to approach composition contrary to the prescriptive approach offered by CTR and texts like the *HHH*.

6.5 Composition and Activism

One way to show students the power of writing is to have them do “real writing.” They can use this “real writing” to help themselves and others. Some might call this a form of activism, and there are some who argue that composition teachers are inherently (or should be) activists. Ellen Cushman, for example, argues that academics, or public intellectuals, need to contribute to the communities in which they teach. She says that she suspects that “academics have yet to realize their full potential in contributing to a more just social order” and that “The public

intellectuals I have in mind combine their research, teaching, and service efforts in order to address social issues important to community members in under-served neighborhoods” (Cushman 329). Cushman makes this argument in the context of a service-learning project she undertook with some of her students. The project involved her students volunteering at a local YMCA where they worked with children and helped promote literacy activities. She makes a compelling argument for how the classroom can become a site for community activism, and many other teachers across the country have enacted similar service-learning projects to the benefit of the students and the community.

Unfortunately, some of us may not be at an institution or in an ideological space to take on a project like this as a means of showing the positive work that comes from our students and our classrooms. I admit that I was a bit overwhelmed when I first read what Cushman proposed. My biggest concern was thinking about how my students might respond to being in a situation like volunteering at the YMCA or somewhere like a local food bank. My institution is a commuter campus, and over 90% of the students receive financial aid. Given that my students are almost all local, and given how many of them receive some form of government aid, what would happen if I took them to a food bank, and their own families were there to receive assistance? It could easily happen, and what if my students were embarrassed by working in places where they receive assistance? Though an uncomfortable situation for my students was my main concern, I had others. How would I find the time to revamp (or create a class) to take such an approach? Would my institution support this work? How would my students respond? What ties do I have to the community that would help me develop a similar project? And these were just some of the questions I had. I bring this up to say that I can see how someone could be fascinated by Cushman’s work in theory, but overwhelmed by it in practice.

For me, what I am learning is that the best way to deal with this is to put the power in the students' hands. Instead of requiring them to volunteer or participate in an initiative of my choosing, I have begun letting them find their own problems to solve. There are two major assignments in my ENGL 1101 classes that I created to help students solve their own problems, and ideally, see how writing can help them do that. The first assignment asks students to write an essay applying for one of the school's Foundation scholarships. We are lucky to have a Foundation with generous donors who want to help our students succeed, but for years, I heard that few students applied for the scholarships. At the same time, in my own classes, I regularly heard stories of students trying to juggle work and school, and in some cases, students were just trying to manage the stress their families faced in paying for their education. One day it hit me that I could help my students by making the hardest part of the scholarship application process—writing an essay—part of our coursework. The responses from students have been overwhelming. For the first time in my 15 years of teaching, I have had students ask me questions about revising their essays, even when they were not required to do so. Students have also told me that it makes them feel differently about the institution knowing that it wants to help students pay for college. Others have relayed stories of the stress facing them and their families as they navigate how to pay for college, so they are grateful to work on the scholarship essays. Though I can only report on the assignment's results anecdotally, I can say that students' responses to the assignment were far different than what I have seen from students when they were writing something that was only for class. They took the assignment seriously, and many wanted to use their work to apply for the scholarship.

Another assignment I have created is essentially a problem/solution paper. However, it requires students to make some significant choices about themselves and their communities. For

the assignment, students must identify a problem facing a community (their school, their neighborhood, their jobs, etc.) to which they belong. After writing to prove that their chosen topic is a problem for the community, they must then identify the audience who can help them address the problem. They must also decide what form—essay, blog, or letter, for example—their writing should take based on their chosen audience. It is, of course, up to the student whether he/she follows through and mails or shares the proposal, but this assignment has the power to improve life for the student and the community. The most powerful letter I have received for this assignment was from a dual enrollment student who plays football at his high school. He realized that some of his teammates (and their siblings) do not have enough food to eat at home. Seeing this problem and wanting to help, the student wrote a moving letter to his principal asking for his help in solving the problem. Though the student's argument was strong overall, maybe the most surprising part of his proposal was how practical it was. He did not ask for large amounts of money or resources; he identified resources that were already available and created a plan for how to connect students with those resources. Even more compelling was that he proposed a way to do all of this that would not embarrass students who need food.

My point in detailing these assignments and how one student responded is to say that there are ways to have students become activists in their own lives without my having to worry about the political or social implications involved in my choosing a place for them to volunteer or my choosing a topic for the students to research. In my approach, students are responsible for their own choices, and as a result, most of them are more invested in their work. What is more important to me, however, is that my students leave my class with their own writing that they can use improve their lives. Also important is that I am not prescribing grammar or form to them; I am, as Warner advocates for, having them “practice real writing by confronting the choices

writers must make” (29). They must decide how to approach their writing based on their purpose, audience, and context. I am not asking them, as some writing instructors do⁶⁴, to write an essay on why they do or do not enjoy picnics. Such assignments waste students’ time by forcing them to write about things they do not know or care about. Instead of seeing English class as an artificial practice in writing they will never use, the goal is for my students to see the power of writing. I often quote Lloyd Bitzer and tell my students, “The world presents imperfections to be modified by means of discourse – hence the practical need for rhetorical investigation and discourse.” I cannot think of a better way to teach writing than to give students the opportunity to see how writing can change their lives.

6.6 An Alternative to CTR

Most simply, the problem with CTR is that it does not provide students with exigence, a situation or problem that encourages or forces someone to write. It also removes invention by not allowing them the opportunity to make decisions about how to write. With the kinds of artificial forms and concerns that CTR promotes, students are asked to see writing as something they have to do in a classroom, but it often has no real impact on their lives. It is certainly possible that having my students write scholarship essays or propose solutions to problems in their communities may not impact their lives either, but it is up to each student to decide whether or not he/she wants to influence change through writing. The student has to decide that what he/she has written is worth sharing, but even if students decide not to share their work from 1101, maybe they will learn from the experience and use it another time they are facing a problem. This is important to consider in light of articles like Maguire’s because having students take their work to their communities provides an opportunity to show others what they are learning and

⁶⁴ I know people who have assigned this exact topic in ENGL 1101.

doing in school. It is a way for students to show others that what they are learning in the classroom has the potential to improve lives.

What I am proposing here is not a new idea; others, under the label of “public pedagogy” have proposed it in great depth. In *Public Pedagogy in Composition Studies*, Ashley J. Holmes provides composition instructors with theories of public pedagogy and how they might be used in the composition classroom. She argues that

Going public with composition pedagogy by working within diverse places beyond the classroom offers students the opportunity to consider where and how power circulates within society, how it impacts democracy, and what possibilities there are for using writing and rhetoric to move toward social change and positively contribute to one’s surrounding community. (35)

There is a compelling argument here for the ways students can benefit from working in spaces outside of the classroom. She further argues that “Inviting students to go public welcomes riskiness and messiness in the processes of composing and community engagement: possibilities that I see as potentially productive for student learning” (23). In this context, she acknowledges the differing views on “real world contact zones” (Ellen Cushman, Challon Emmons) versus classroom-based contact zones (Mary Louise Pratt) and offers a middle ground approach that has students working in both the real world and the classroom. She notes that “The traditional classroom space is, not surprisingly, what separates our courses from everyday life, and thus, we need traditional classrooms as places to make sense of our public experiences” (27). I would add to that argument by saying that the kinds of assignments I described ask my students to bring the public experiences they already have to the classroom.

My approach is just that: one approach. Because of the many years of scholarship the field of rhetoric and composition now has, we have access to a wealth of research and ideas that can productively and constructively influence and shape out composition pedagogy. Though there is not space here to cover all of our many options, I want to offer a little bit about what public pedagogy has to offer as a means of encouraging writing instructors, particularly those who want to move away from a CTR-based pedagogy, to think about the students they serve and consider the ways that “real writing” or public pedagogy might be the best alternative to CTR. My point here is not to offer a full treatment of public pedagogy, though there is plenty to say on the subject. This is not a cop out; instead, the goal here is not to take public pedagogy and turn it into a specific prescription for writing instruction after I have criticized an approach that is too prescriptive. Whereas CTR removes exigence, invention, and the need to meaningfully address audience, public pedagogy presents opportunities to reintroduce these components to students in writing courses. As Holmes argues,

I believe broadening the scope of our pedagogies also holds an important key to demonstrating for students –future members of our local publics—that the world is our classroom, that we can bring our academic perspectives to bear on our everyday, public issues and that these public issues have import in our study and discussions with academic space. (160)

By asking students to complete writing assignments that might actually serve them or their communities—now or in the future--instead of assigning projects that they complete and never think of again is a way to counteract the negative effects of CTR and textbooks like the *HHH*. When students write based on their own exigencies, they are more likely to be invested in their work, and they are more likely to do their best work. The work they do also serves as an

opportunity for them to demonstrate to their communities how what they are learning in college can benefit others. This approach, as opposed to writing articles about the good composition does, is a way of enacting the show, don't tell that we often encourage our students to do. In other words, instead of telling the world that our classes are doing something worthwhile, when students make their work public, they are showing others what rhetoric and writing can bring to the community.

“Designing and implementing public pedagogies in our composition courses and programs provides us with an opportunity to reeducate publics beyond the academy about the relevance and importance of institutions of higher education today, not as cordoned-off ivory towers but as engaged campuses.” –Ashley J. Holmes

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