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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE PUNCTUATION PRACTICE IN THE 1957
COUNTY AGRICULTURAL AND HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENTS'
REPORTS AT MONTANA STATE COLLEGE

by

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B.A. Brown University, 1951

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Master of Arts

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

1960

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM, PROCEDURE, AND LIMITATIONS

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this investigation is to determine how closely actual punctuation practice follows the punctuation rules given in handbooks of English. In instances where the practice deviates from the rules, the problem is to determine whether the schools are justified in spending the time to teach the rules in question. In the case of the practice agreeing with the rules, the problem is to determine if there are any reasons for this other than convention.

Importance of the study. Punctuation rules are arbitrary devices to aid in reading. These rules are not consistent in all handbooks of mechanics, and many of them allow individual leeway which they call acceptable. This study attempts to compare the rules on which handbooks agree in general with the actual practice of these rules. It is felt that knowledge of these results will help in the instruction of punctuation by pointing out deviations from the rules that are becoming common usage.

II. PROCEDURE

Consensus of rules. Fifteen handbooks are used as authorities. They are as follows:

College:

- Baldwin, Howard M., Herbert L. Creek, and James H. McKee. A Handbook of Modern Writing, 1937.
- Craig, J. Forest. English Grammar, 1948.
- Dean, Howard H. Effective Communication, 1955.
- Kierzek, John M. The Macmillan Handbook of English, 1939.
- Woolley, Edwin C. and Franklin W. Scott. College Handbook of Composition, 1937.

High School:

- Brewton, John E., Lois McMullan, and Myriam Page. Essentials of Communication, 1948.
- Hodges, John C. Harbrace Handbook of English, 1941.
- Smith, Ellen and Leona McAnulty. Third Book Essentials in English: Laboratory Method, 1946.
- Stoddard, Alexander J. and Matilda Bailey. English: Fourth Course, 1948.
- Tanner, William M. and Frank J. Platt. My English: Fourth Course, 1941.

Secretarial:

- Doris, Lillian and Besse May Miller. Complete Secretary's Handbook, 1951.
- Hutchison, Lois Irene. Standard Handbook for Secretaries, 1944.
- Loso, Foster W., Charles W. Hamilton, and Peter L. Agrew. Secretarial Office Practice, 1937.
- Monro, Kate M. English for Secretaries, 1944.

Other:

United States Government Printing Office Style Manual, 1945.

Most of the material used for examples of punctuation usage was written by graduates of Montana State College. Therefore, the

English and secretarial handbooks were selected with the help of the English Department and the Commercial Science Department, respectively, of Montana State College. The high school texts were chosen from the curriculum laboratory at Montana State College and from Bozeman High School. While there is no guarantee that the writers of the material have used one of these books, it seems likely as the books were published from five to thirteen years ago when many of the writers of the material used in the study were in high school or college. Furthermore there is little variance in the rules from one handbook to another. The rules selected for this study apply to (1) compound sentences, (2) series, (3) introductory elements, (4) internal clauses and phrases, and (5) the colon and the dash. The consensus of the rules is given at the beginning of each respective chapter pertaining to these five cases.

Selection of material. The material used was the 1957 County Agricultural Agents' and Home Demonstration Agents' Reports filed in the Cooperative Extension Service at Bozeman. These reports come from the county offices and contain factual reporting of the results of the Extension Service in the respective areas. This material was selected because it is relatively free from editing influences and represents the practice of the writer.

The agents are mostly graduates of Montana State College with B.S. degrees. The dates of graduation from college range from 1922 to 1957 with the median in 1948.

The one editing influence involved was the secretaries who typed

the reports. No description of the secretaries was available as the hiring is by the county offices and the turnover is large. They seem to be a heterogeneous group ranging from high school graduates to older college graduates. There is internal evidence in the reports, however, which indicates that the editing influence is slight. In many cases where the County Agricultural Agents' and Home Demonstration Agents' reports were typed by the same secretary, the punctuation practice varies. Even with the recognition of the secretaries' influence, the result is still current practice although the writers may not be defined precisely.

In addition to the reports, five magazines were examined for punctuation. They were Atlantic, Harpers', The New Yorker, The Saturday Evening Post, and Saturday Review. The pages used were taken from sections reflecting the format policy of the publisher. The specific sections are listed under the procedure in Chapter VIII. This material represents accepted standards of punctuation and enhances the study by enabling comparison between it and the reports.

Method of research. Forty-six county reports, twenty-nine of which had sections by both the County Agricultural Agent and the Home Demonstration Agent, were examined. From these seventy-five sections two typewritten pages from each were examined for instances where the five punctuation cases under study occurred. A record of the practice in each instance was made, and examples were copied down for illustration of the variety of practices.

Four or five pages from each periodical supplied sufficient examples of each punctuation case under study. The results were tabulated in the same manner as those of the reports.

III. LIMITATIONS

Area and writer. This study is limited to a particular area, Montana, and a certain type of writing. It is a hypothesis that these writers are a representative sampling of this area. The results of the study should be used with the area limitation in mind.

Subjectivity of punctuation. The meaning of a sentence determines the punctuation to be used in many cases. For instance, for may be a coordinating conjunction between independent clauses or a subordinating conjunction connecting an adverb clause to the sentence. In some cases its actual use may be in doubt and the punctuation required in question. As a general rule, when this occurred in the research, the writer's choice of punctuation was considered acceptable. Other punctuation rules such as placing a comma after a long introductory prepositional phrase are subjective in the interpretation of long. Before the sections dealing with the cases studied, a precise definition of the interpretation used will be given to make the study as objective as possible.

Style of writing. The style of the individual writers determines the internal punctuation to a degree. A short, choppy manner of writing which tends to make separate sentences of each clause circum-

vents certain problems but is not very good style. Chapter II will present examples of style found in the reports and its relation to punctuation.

Organization of paper. Following Chapter II, successive chapters take up the cases of punctuation practice studied. These chapters contain the consensus of rules and the findings of the research with examples. The study concludes with the summary, conclusion, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER II

THE STYLE OF THE REPORTS

An examination of the type of writing found in the County Agricultural and Home Demonstration Agents' reports is helpful in this study of internal punctuation. The types of sentences used and the length of the sentences determined, in part, the amount of internal punctuation used. This chapter gives an overall look at the various styles found in the reports and provides perspective useful in dealing with individual sentence problems in the following chapters.

I. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Style. Style refers to the mode of sentence construction characteristic of individual writers. It is limited to sentence structure because this paper is concerned principally with the internal punctuation of the sentence.

Simple sentence. A simple sentence contains one main clause and no subordinate clauses. A main clause is a group of words containing a subject and a predicate, either or both of which may be compound, and expresses the principal thought of the sentence. A subordinate clause is a group of words containing a subject and a predicate used as a noun, adjective, or adverb.

Multi-clause sentence. A multi-clause sentence contains more

than one clause. If the sentence contains two or more main clauses, it is a compound sentence. If it contains two or more main clauses and one or more subordinate clauses, it is a compound-complex sentence.

II. THE STYLES FOUND

The County Agricultural and Home Demonstration Agents' reports vary in style. The words per sentence, determined from a typewritten page of each report studied, ranged from seven to thirty-one words per sentence. The median and mode were eighteen.

Several of the reports contained short, choppy sentences, most of which were simple and required little internal punctuation. Two examples of this style are the following:

One of the leading pests to control in apples is the codling moth. It is difficult to determine when to spray. A series of codling moth traps were placed in 6 different sections of the country. This year the results were not too good. The codling moth did not show up in the traps. However much damage was evident.

(BB, p. 14)¹

The Fergus County Grain Growers Association sponsored an exhibit at the Moccasin Field Day. Slides were shown on wheat quality. Information on varieties and the Grain Growers Association was exhibited also.

A drill box survey was made in the County. 36 representative samples were collected. The Grain Growers Association is financing the text.

(H, p. 31)

The readability of these reports could be improved by the use

¹Letters refer to the 1957 County Agricultural and Home Demonstration Agents' reports. The letter code may be obtained from the author of this study.

of multi-clause sentences. However, the internal punctuation of these reports, when considered sentence by sentence, was usually relatively better by the standards of the authorities than that of reports with more multi-clause sentences because the opportunities for punctuation were fewer.

A few reports contained long sentences with clauses and phrases. These generally required internal punctuation of some kind. Two examples of this type of report follow.

In company with Extension Specialist Paul Orcutt, one day's assistance was rendered to a beef rancher on the subject of establishment of a feed lot on his ranch for the purpose of dry lot feeding cattle produced on the ranch. This is the most recent step in the process begun three years ago with this man to tighten up his ranch organization and management for the purpose of decreasing income. This process has involved a change in production plan from a cow-calf ranch operation, for which the ranch is poorly suited, to a plan more closely allied with utilization of irrigated meadows on the home ranch.

(JJ, p. 25)

. . . The corn on the Peterson place grew a height of approximately eight feet, however it was hit by hail on September 10th and destroyed with the exception of the stalks. On the Huggins place the corn had a good start, however it was not irrigated until August and most of the corn was stunted and dry by that time. The corn on the Kindsfather place was destroyed by livestock. All of these trials were placed in cooperation with the Montana Experiment Station and it was hoped some information could be gathered. If corn trials are undertaken this next year, we will have a site where we will be sure of regular cultivation and irrigation to give the corn every opportunity to mature to its fullest possibility within the county.

(CC, p. 2)

The first two sentences in the first selection contain long phrases and are simple sentences. The second selection contains multi-clause sentences except for the third one. The punctuation of the first two

sentences in the second passage is questionable as a comma is placed before the conjunctive adverb however which joins the clauses. This construction is discussed in Chapter III.

The sentences in most of the reports were somewhere in between these two extremes. The median number of words per sentence was 18 with 75% of the reports falling between 14 and 21. According to one study, grade school pupils' sentences average 11 or 12; high school pupils', 17 to 19; and college students', in the low 20's. The study also says that rapid narrative and general writing often contains shorter sentences.² Therefore the length of the sentences in the report follow the general pattern.

Throughout the following chapters confusing sentences will be used as examples. The following passage, however, is a good example of sentence constructions found in a few of the reports.

. . . All the training that a 4-H member gets, will be an adjustment to her future living as all her homework is based on information that will be obtained thru Home Improvement. Such phases as color - color combination in walls, rugs, drapes, paints or wallpaper, furniture and all things pertaining to the house and clothing were discussed. Arrangement of furniture, in relation to space in the room, regardless of what room was being discussed. All furnishings were discussed.
(MM, p. 53)

The sense of the first sentence is confused partly because of the comma between the verb and the noun clause used as a subject. The future tense will be obtained should read has been obtained. Rewrit-

²Porter G. Perrin and George H. Smith, The Perrin-Smith Handbook of Current English (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1955), pp. 210-211.

ing, not punctuation, is needed to correct sentences like this and the third sentence. Possibly that sentence should be punctuated to read as follows: "Arrangement of furniture in relation to space in the room, regardless of what room, was being discussed." However, the past passive progressive tense is not in keeping with the past passive tense of the preceding and following sentences. The sentence, as it stands, is a sentence fragment not containing a complete thought.

The style for the most part was suitable for the factual narrative reporting found in the reports. The examples cited in this chapter were extremes, and the majority of the reports were written in an acceptable style.

CHAPTER III

PUNCTUATION OF COMPOUND SENTENCES

I. DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

Independent clause. An independent clause is a group of words with a subject and a predicate that contains a complete thought and may stand alone. It is sometimes referred to as a main or principal clause.

Coordinating conjunction. A coordinating conjunction, sometimes referred to as a pure conjunction, connects words, phrases, or clauses of equal grammatical rank. In a compound sentence it connects two independent clauses. The common coordinating conjunctions are and, but, or, and nor; some texts also include for, yet, and so.

Conjunctive adverb. A conjunctive adverb connects two independent clauses and modifies the clause which it introduces. The most common conjunctive adverbs are also, indeed, besides, moreover, therefore, accordingly, however, nevertheless, consequently, still, then and now.

Comma splice. A comma splice is the use of a comma where a stronger punctuation mark is needed. In a compound sentence a comma splice is the separation of the clauses with a comma instead of a semicolon or a period.

II. CONSENSUS OF THE RULES

Compound sentences may be divided into two classes: those with and those without a coordinating conjunction between the independent clauses. All the handbooks studied stated a rule similar to this one:

The complete statements expressed in the independent clauses of a compound sentence are ordinarily separated by commas if they are connected by a coordinating conjunction: and, but, for, or, nor, yet, so.¹

There are two exceptions to the rule. One is that the comma may be omitted if the clauses are short and closely related in thought. Eleven of the fifteen handbooks contained this exception. The U.S. Printing Office handbook and one college, one high school, and one secretarial handbook omitted it. The other exception is that a semi-colon should be used before the coordinating conjunction if the independent clauses are long and have internal commas. All of the texts except one high school and one secretarial contained this rule.

In the case of compound sentences without a coordinating conjunction, all of the handbooks contained rules similar to the following:

Between two principal clauses not joined by a pure [coordinating] conjunction, a semicolon is necessary. Between principal clauses joined by one of the conjunctive adverbs however, therefore, moreover, etc., a semicolon is necessary.²

¹Howard H. Dean, Effective Communication, (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1953), p. 565.

²Edwin C. Woolley and Franklin W. Scott, College Handbook of Composition. (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1937), p. 236.

The exception to this rule was that if there were three or more short independent clauses in a series, they may be separated by commas. This exception was omitted in the U.S. Printing Office handbook and in two secretarial and four high school handbooks.

The problem of the comma splice was specifically referred to in the five college handbooks and two of the high school texts. The mildest comment was as follows:

It is permitted occasionally in short, closely related sentences but is a treacherous use to be allowed sparingly and then only quite consciously by those experienced in writing.³

Most of the texts condemned it completely. The most severe criticism was this one: "The comma fault . . . is assumed to be an infallible sign of illiteracy."⁴

There was much agreement on the punctuation of compound sentences in the handbooks. Omission of the exceptions was the main difference.

III. FINDINGS IN THE REPORTS

There were 260 compound sentences in the reports studied. These were treated in a variety of ways by the writers.

Eighty-nine of the sentences conformed to the rules perfectly. Of these, 77 had a comma with a coordinating conjunction, and 12 con-

³J. Forest Craig, English Grammar (Columbus: Long's College Book Company, 1948), p. 123.

⁴John M. Kierzek, The Macmillan Handbook of English (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939), p. 144.

tained a semicolon with an adverbial conjunction or no conjunction. These 89 sentences were found in 38 of the reports. However these same reports contained 96 questionably punctuated compound sentences. Very few of the selections were consistent in conforming to the rules, but many were consistent in non-conformity. It is interesting that these 38 reports, or 51% of the total studied, contained 185, or 71%, of the compound sentences found. This seems to indicate that the writers who did conform to the rules were the ones who used compound sentences more.

Of the remaining compound sentences 132 were joined by a coordinating conjunction with no comma. This constitutes over half of all the compound sentences found. Since many of these had short and closely related clauses, they would be acceptable to some of the authorities. Some examples of this type are as follows:

There were three heads of wild oats found and these were rogued out.

(F, p. 17)

Five bids were received and the top bidder was 1.33 cents above the next high bidder.

(PP, p. 3)

Vivian Zook of Red Lodge was the winner and she won a trip to the State 4-H Club congress in Bozeman on Dress Revue.

(F, p. 54)

There is no possibility of misreading any of these sentences. The last example is clear in meaning although it is fairly long. It could be written, "Vivian Zook of Red Lodge, the winner, won a trip . . ."

Many of the compound sentences that had no comma before the

coordinating conjunction were confusing. In most cases the subject of the second clause could be misread as part of a compound object of the first clause. Three examples follow:

Assistance has been given to a number of county farmers in the feeding of cattle and a group of farmers from the county attended the Cattle Feeders Day that was held this fall at Montana State College.

(D, p. 2)

Weed control practices are the responsibility of the individual operators and the committee recommended that more emphasis be placed on annual and perennial weeds.

(E, p. 11)

4 percent death loss was withstood by the owner and the operator was to receive 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ a pound for the gain.

(22, p. 38)

The underlining was added by the writer of this study. In these sentences the reader who glances at the underlined phrases must re-read and consider the sentence. In each one a comma before the and would clarify the meaning. These examples contain possible compound objects of prepositions, but the same misreading could come from direct objects or from predicate adjectives as in the following sentence:

15 infestations were properly treated and inadequate or no treatment was applied to 3 infestations.

(H, p. 13)

A number of sentences joined compound objects with a comma and a coordinating conjunction. As there were twenty-six of these sentences, there is a possibility that some writers confused this construction with a compound sentence. The next three sentences are examples of this.

Several persons have told her that it "set them to thinking" about their own methods, and the improvements they could make.

(J, p. 17)

Mrs. Mildred Scott of the Armstead Club presided during the

opening meeting, and the business meeting.
(A, p. 13)

The area was heavily infected with *Camnula* hoppers, and other species including the red-legged hopper.
(A, p. 22)

These are all simple sentences and do not need punctuation.

Only 12 of the 260 compound sentences contained semicolons in this construction. Two examples of the comma splice with adverbial conjunctions follow.

The interest in keeping home accounts in Duster County has decreased, however, there are several homemakers who do keep accounts and four 4-H club members are using the 4-H account book to keep a record of their spending.
(G, p. 53)

On the Huggins place the corn had a good start, however it was not irrigated until August and most of the corn was stunted and dry by that time.
(CC, p. 15)

The main difference between these examples is the placing of a comma before and after however in the first sentence and the placing of one comma before however in the other. In the first example the meaning is not clear as however may be read with either clause. In the second example the meaning is clear as however is read with the second clause.

The use of a comma with no coordinating conjunction or a conjunctive adverb was rare. The writers of the reports used some kind of conjunction with almost every compound sentence. This sentence is one of the few exceptions.

A new County Extension Office was organized in July of this year, the people of the County have been quite receptive to Extension work and have given the County Agent much help in

getting started.

(EE, p. 1)

There is no confusion here as there are no other punctuation marks. If the clauses had internal commas, the use of a comma to separate could easily be misleading.

Five examples of compound sentences with neither a comma nor a conjunction between the clauses were found. In the following example two vertical lines are inserted to indicate the two places where the sentence could be divided. With no punctuation it is difficult to divine the writer's meaning.

The year was good|as far as agriculture is concerned|it is estimated that a county average of about 30 bu. of spring wheat per acre was harvested.

(EE, p. 1)

There were a number of examples of misplaced commas in compound sentences. The comma in this next example does nothing but confuse the reader.

There has been much trouble in threshing the alfalfa, due to fall moisture and many fields still remain to be threshed.

(EE, p. 1)

If the comma were placed before the and, the meaning would be clear. In all of the sentences only the following had the comma after the coordinating conjunction.

The value increases 10 percent for a maximum of 4 times during the period of the insurance and, thus, it has enabled us to at least return the cost of the lost animal to the member and provide in part for the feed he has used.

(EE, p. 30)

There is the possibility that thus was set off parenthetically, but since normally there is no pause before thus, it seems likely that the first comma belongs with and and should precede it.

The dash was used twice to separate the clauses of a compound sentence. Both examples are given here.

No takers were forth coming - we will try again.
(MM, p. 54)

The second day was devoted to individual problems - each woman brought from her home something she had - with which she had to live - and worked out a color harmony from that for her room or rooms.

(JJ, p. 21)

This use of the dash, although frowned upon by some authorities, did separate the clauses so that there was no misunderstanding.

Of the compound sentences in reports studied, less than half were punctuated according to the strictest rules. The omission of the comma before and in constructions where the subject of the second clause could be misread as part of a compound object was the most common practice that led to confusion. There were enough sentences that needed proper punctuation to clarify the meaning to indicate that something should be done in English instruction to correct this. Recommendations are made in Chapter IX.

CHAPTER IV

PUNCTUATION OF ITEMS IN A SERIES

I. CONSENSUS OF THE RULES

The main problem in the punctuation of items in a series is whether or not a comma should be placed before the conjunction connecting the last two items. Four of the handbooks, one college, one secretarial, and two high school, specifically mention that the omission is acceptable. The omission is qualified by each of the four texts by statements similar to the following:

When the last two of the items in a series are connected by a coordinating conjunction, the comma before the conjunction is often omitted. This practice is more common in informal and journalistic writing than in technical writing.

.....
The comma should never be omitted, however, if there is any possibility of confusion without it.¹

One of the high school texts that mentioned the omission as acceptable did it in this way:

You will find that some excellent writers depart from this rule and omit the comma before the final and. Their punctuation of the series cannot be said to be incorrect.²

Some of the handbooks that did not have a rule or exception allowing the omission of the comma did not positively call for it. The

¹Dean, p. 614.

²Alexander J. Stoddard and Matilda Bailey, English; Fourth Course (New York: American Book Company, 1948), p. 406.

following is an example of this:

In a series of the form a, b, and c, ordinarily use the comma before the conjunction.³

The use of ordinarily allows individual interpretation as to whether or not to omit the comma. Other texts were more positive as shown in this rule:

Use a comma to set off the members of a series including the last member, even though the last member is preceded by and.⁴

Eight of the handbooks had rules calling for a semicolon to separate items in a series if the items were phrases or clauses with internal commas. Five of these texts also called for it if the items were long, and one, if emphasis were desired.

A corollary to the rule for the punctuation of a series in one of the secretarial handbooks is important as it applies to the punctuation practice in the reports. It reads as follows:

BUT do not use a comma between two parallel constructions joined by a conjunction.⁵

The authorities agree generally that the comma should be placed before the conjunction joining the last two items of a series. Four permitted, and a few others, by not positively calling for it, did

³Howard M. Baldwin, Herbert L. Creek, and James H. McKee, A Handbook of Modern Writing (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), p. 70.

⁴Craig, p. 73.

⁵Lillian Doris and Besse M. Miller, Complete Secretary's Handbook (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1951), p. 301.

not forbid the omission of the comma if clarity were not sacrificed.

All of the texts except one college, two secretarial, and two high school contained a rule similar to this one:

Use commas to separate consecutive adjectives preceding the noun they modify when the adjectives are coordinate in meaning.⁶

A test of coordinateness is whether and placed between the adjectives reads naturally. If it does, they are usually coordinate.

II. FINDINGS IN THE REPORTS

There were 356 series in the pages studied. The most frequent punctuation practice was the omission of the comma before the conjunction connecting the last two items. This was found in 164 cases with 146 series containing the comma before the conjunction. The remaining series were punctuated in a variety of ways which are discussed in this chapter. In the 75 report sections studied, 34 were consistent in the omission or inclusion of the comma before the conjunction and 41 were inconsistent. Of the 34 consistent sections, 13 included the comma and 21 omitted it.

The following three examples show inconsistency. The first two contain two differently punctuated series within the same sentence, and the last example is two sentences of similar construction from the same page:

⁶Kierzek, p. 214.

Workshops were held in Hilger, Grass Range, and Cheadle; Danvers, Winifred, Heath and Flatwillow Home Demonstration Clubs held special meetings.

(N, p. 44)

Prepositioning utensils, storage, and budgeting of time, energy and money were discussed.

(II, p. 56)

The nominating committee was Mrs. Henry Jappe, Mrs. Charles Behrens, and Mrs. Ernest Schultz, Jr.

.....
The fair committee appointed was Mrs. Adam Johnstone, Mrs. Angus Merrill, Mrs. Lee Curry and Mrs. Edith Tanner.

(H, p. 8)

In each example there is one series with the comma before the preposition and one series without the comma. The only confusion in these series is found in the first example. There is a question as to whether or not Heath and Flatwillow represents one or two clubs. A comma before the and would clarify this.

For the most part the omission of the comma before the conjunction did not cause any confusion. In a few cases, however, the meaning was obscured. There were several sentences like the following in which the modifier of the item before the conjunction may also modify the last item if the comma is omitted.

Winter injury and winter kill of trees, small fruits and shrubs were greater than usual.

(M, p. 21)

The Lampstand Sewing Chest, Carved Spice Shelf and Toy Chest were on display during the annual Farm and Home Week, January 30-31 and February 1-2.

(N, p. 45)

In the first sentence small may or may not modify shrubs. A comma would clearly limit its modification to fruits. Carved in the second

example may or may not modify Toy Chest, and there is also a possibility that the Carved Spice Shelf and Toy Chest is one piece of furniture. A comma would clarify the sentence.

The next sentence shows how the last item of a series may be interpreted as part of a compound object of a preposition when the comma is omitted.

Project lessons held this year were on buying furniture,
accessories in home and salads.

(V, p. 4)

Here salads together with home may be read as a compound object of the preposition in meaning accessories in salads as well as in the home were included in the lessons.

Another example of confusion arising from the omission of the comma before the conjunction is this sentence:

Grass seed production, namely Intermediate, Crested and Russian Wild Rye is on the increase in the County.

(N, p. 31)

The seed to which Crested refers may be Crested seed, Crested Wild Rye, or Crested and Russian Wild Rye. A comma would eliminate the last possibility. The setting off of a phrase by only one comma is a problem that is discussed in Chapter VI.

Only one example of full punctuation of a series was found. This involves not only a comma before the conjunction connecting the last two items but also a comma after the last item.

The agent, Livestock Specialist N. S. Jacobsen, and Marketing Specialist Dean Vaughan, held a cattle feeder marketing demonstration at the Laurence Ranch.

(AA, p. 1)

Semicolons were used in twenty-two series. The most frequent usage was in listing a series of names with titles as in the following:

Other speakers were Larry MacDonald, N. P. Railway Agricultural Development Agent; Art Shaw, Extension Agronomist; Bob Rasmusson and individual farmers.

(I, p. 25)

There is no punctuation before the conjunction; however, the meaning is clear.

Semicolons were used in other series which contained internal commas as in these sentences:

Four 4-H club members judged livestock at the State 4-H Club Congress, one receiving a blue award; two, red awards and one a white award.

(R, p. 28)

The lesson was divided into three parts: First, School financing and the foundation program; second, parent-teacher relationships and third, the greater university system of Montana.

(G, p. 53)

As in the first examples of semicolons used to punctuate series, there is no punctuation before the conjunction. In the first sentence the comma between one and a white award needed to indicate an ellipsis is omitted; however, it is used in the previous item.

In some sentences a semicolon was used in a series where a comma would suffice. The following sentences are examples of this:

Business items discussed included the Home Demonstration Scholarship; Delegate Fund; the State Home Demonstration Council Meeting; Scrap-History Book and County Home Demonstration Project.

(F, p. 21)

Clothing classes judged were patterns for a school dress; hems (on cotton skirts made by members); and shoes for school.

(PP, p. 52)

The first sentence has a series of items with no internal punctuation separated by semicolons. There are parentheses within one item of the series in the last sentence, but a comma would clearly separate the items.

Two sentences in the reports with series that needed a semicolon for clarification are as follows:

A special meeting was held in the Cascade community to discuss control of the grasshopper on range land, attended by Dr. Pepper, State Entomologist, Skyway Flying Service, and the Extension Agents.

(E. p. 43)

Building Toy Chests were Mrs. Nina Hage, Mrs. Dorothy Linhart, Mrs. Josie Barta of Danvers, Mrs. Opal Jackson and Mrs. Margaret Jackson of Coffee Creek.

(N. p. 45)

In the first example there is a question whether Dr. Pepper, State Entomologist is one or two persons. If it represents one person with his title, a semicolon should follow Entomologist. If it represents two people, rewording the series with Dr. Pepper at the end would clearly indicate this. The first two ladies in the next sentence may or may not reside in Danvers as the sentence stands. A semicolon after Danvers would clarify the meaning assuming that the first three ladies do live in Danvers. However, rephrasing the list of names to read Mrs. Nina Hage, Mrs. Dorothy Linhart, and Mrs. Josie Barta of Danvers and Mrs. Opal Jackson and Mrs. Margaret Jackson of Coffee Creek would seem better.

There was one example of dashes instead of semicolons used with commas in a series.

Fair winners were Egly Country Club - first, San Souci - second, Knees Triple F - third, and Waltham - fourth.

(H, p. 8)

As the meaning is clear, this practice seems acceptable.

In the pages studied there were eight series of coordinating adjectives separated by commas as in this sentence:

This was good, clean seed and provided a source of seed for farmers who wished to replace their Yogo acreage with Cheyenne.

(F, p. 17)

Good and clean modify seed with equal strength and should be separated by a comma. Commas were used between modifiers before a noun in some compound sentences where they should have been omitted according to the authorities. Here are two examples:

Twenty-four, one rod square plots of different mixtures and spray material was put on leafy spurge spraying.

(PP, p. 3)

The agent will work with and through this group to conduct a more, effective educational program in the production, storage, and marketing of wheat and other small grains.

(P, p. 17)

Twenty-four modifies the whole phrase one rod square plots. Furthermore and does not fit naturally between twenty-four and one. In the second sentence more modifies effective and is not coordinate with it.

Punctuation was used between a series of only two items in twelve sentences. These sentences show this construction with a comma and semicolon respectively:

Mrs. Mildred Scott of the Armstead Club presided during opening ceremony, and the business meeting.

(A, p. 13)

Miss Loughhead also conducted a "Meat Cookery" leader training meeting with thirty-one women attending this representing nineteen clubs; and two women representing two 4-H clubs.
(R, p. 51)

No punctuation is needed in these sentences. This next example may be similar to the above examples:

Fertilizer plots were carried out on irrigated alfalfa and barley, and on dryland barley and intermediate wheatgrasses.
(D, p. 1)

If this sentence contains a series of two items irrigated alfalfa and barley and dryland barley and intermediate wheatgrasses, there is a comma between two items connected by a conjunction. There is the possibility that intermediate wheatgrasses is a third item, but the comma should still be omitted as there would be a conjunction between each item.

A number of series were constructed and punctuated in confusing ways. This sentence is one example:

The weed board and weed committee, the presidents of the County Farmers Union and County farm [sic] Bureau were invited, but only three were present.

(n, p. 14)

Here there is a conjunction and between the first two items and a comma between the last two, assuming that the presidents of the County Farmers Union and County farm Bureau is one item. If presidents refers only to County Farmers Union, and County farm Bureau is a fourth item, the construction is very confusing, but this is probably not the case as presidents is plural and each organization very likely has only one president.

The following sentence is another variation:

They are completely organized with a chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary and six members.

(Y, p. 5)

Since vice-chairman is followed by a comma, the vice-chairman and secretary are probably two officers. In this case there is a series of four with a comma between the first and second items, a comma and conjunction between the second and third, and a conjunction between the third and fourth.

The last example of the punctuation of a series is this sentence:

Agents sampled 14 fields of hay ranging from dry to irrigated, non-fertilized to heavily fertilized, some put up as dry, loose hay; baled; silage and forced air dried.

(M, p. 23)

The commas and semicolons do not clarify the meaning here. This is an example of a sentence that needs rephrasing.

Most of the punctuation of items in a series by the County Agricultural and Home Demonstration agents was acceptable as far as clarity is concerned. Of the 356 series, 146 contained the comma before the last item and most of the others were not confusing. However, there were a number of confusing and awkward sentences that punctuation could clarify.

CHAPTER V

PUNCTUATION OF INTRODUCTORY CLAUSES AND PHRASES

I. CONSENSUS OF THE RULES

An introductory clause is generally a transposed adverbial clause used at the beginning of a sentence. As the subordinating conjunction comes first, punctuation is sometimes used to separate the introductory clause from the main clause. One secretarial and four high school handbooks contain rules that require the comma after the introductory clause. The rules are similar to this one:

Use a comma to separate an introductory adverbial clause from a principal clause.¹

The other texts stated the rule with a modifier such as ordinarily or usually and added exceptions, such as the following:

The comma may be omitted if it would break up a very close thought connection, provided its omission does not affect clearness.²

and:

The comma after an introductory adverbial clause is sometimes omitted, particularly in informal writing, when the clause is short and when it leads smoothly into the rest of the sentence.³

The United States Printing Office manual and one college handbook do

¹Foster W. Loso, Charles W. Hamilton, and Peter L. Agnew, Secretarial Office Practice (Cincinnati: South Western Publishing Company, 1937), p. 263.

²Baldwin, p. 74.

³Dean, p. 611.

not have a rule pertaining to introductory clauses; however, the latter has the following rule:

[Use a comma] To set off any expression from another to which it might be erroneously joined in reading.⁴

This would require a comma after an introductory clause where the omission would affect clearness.

Except for the high school texts, the consensus is that a comma should usually be placed after the introductory clause but that it may be omitted if the clauses are short or closely related in thought and the omission does not cause misunderstanding.

Only two handbooks, both high school, contained rules without exceptions stating that a comma should be placed after an introductory phrase. The other texts gave situations where the comma should be used and indicated that it should otherwise be omitted. The introductory phrases that should be followed by commas, according to the texts, are those that are long; contain a participle, gerund, or infinitive; are not closely related in thought; and would cause misunderstanding if not punctuated.

The following passage contains the general consensus of punctuating introductory clauses and phrases:

In punctuating modifiers that precede the main clause you must depend on your good sense as well as on rules. You must decide whether or not the sentence will be clearer with the introductory modifier set off. Length of clause alone will not tell you when to use a comma and when not to use it. Frequently very

⁴Craig, p. 74.

short clauses are set off for emphasis. Adverbial phrases, as a rule, are not set off, partly because they are shorter than clauses, and partly because they are closer in meaning to the main clause. But remember that punctuation groups words not only for clearness but also for rhetorical effect.⁵

II. FINDINGS IN THE REPORTS

There were fifty-two introductory clauses and 239 introductory phrases in the pages studied. The length of the clause or phrase seemed to determine the punctuation. The mean length in words of the punctuated introductory clauses and phrases was 8.43 and 6.04, respectively, and of the unpunctuated introductory clauses and phrases, 6.42 and 4.37, respectively. Therefore, there was a tendency to punctuate the longer ones and not to punctuate the shorter ones. However, the range of the number of words in punctuated clauses and phrases was 2 to 16 and 2 to 18, respectively, and in non-punctuated clauses and phrases was 2 to 11 and 2 to 20, respectively.

The relation of the length in words of the clause or phrase to the punctuation is shown in the following table:

<u>Length in Words</u>	<u>Number of Introductory Elements</u>	
	<u>Punctuated</u>	<u>Not Punctuated</u>
2-3	56	53
4-7	55	37
8-11	43	13
12+	26	3

⁵Kierzek, pp. 215-216.

In each group the number of clauses and phrases followed by a comma is larger than the number of those not punctuated; however, the percentage of the clauses and phrases followed by a comma increases sharply as the length increases.

The consistency within the reports was difficult to judge as clarity and closeness of thought as well as the length of the clause or phrase determines punctuation. The objectivity of the latter, if it were the sole determinant of punctuation, would make it easy to determine consistency, but the subjectivity of the other determinants causes the difficulty. However, some reports contained inconsistencies in parallel structure as the following examples show:

On August 23, three farmers toured two infestations of leafy spurge.

On September 26 four weed control plots were put on the John Nelson farm on leafy spurge.

(H, p. 14)

These sentences were on the same page of a report, and the introductory phrases are of parallel nature. This inconsistency was found on most of the reports which had many introductory clauses and phrases.

The following sentences are examples of short introductory phrases:

At these meetings a number of contacts were made - re: trees, insect control, lawns, and sewing.

(GG, p. 54)

In turn, the project leaders before presenting the lesson to their clubs also searched for ideas and at least five clubs made a party and entertainment file which can be used by any member.

(KK, p. 52)

Because the phrase at these meetings is short and closely related, it does not need a comma after it. However, phrases of this structure were punctuated more often than not in the reports as is seen in the table on page 32. Most of the short, two to four word phrases and clauses were similar to this example. The second example contains a two word phrase at the beginning of the sentence followed by a comma. Here the phrase is short, but it is not closely related in meaning. In turn is more a device of connecting the sentence to the sequence of action in the paragraph than contributing to the meaning as At these meetings does in the previous example. Therefore In turn is rightly followed by a comma even though it is only two words in length.

With longer introductory clauses and phrases, the tendency was to use a comma regardless of relationship. Here are two examples of sentences with introductory phrases of six and eight words respectively:

As a result of these contacts, G. A. Carlson, of Edgar ordered 16 bags of seed from the Hartley Branch station.

(F, p. 17)

As a result of our Yeast Breads Workshops we had some very nice exhibits at the Fair, so we had one of our members show how we judged a loaf of bread and also a wonderful angel food cake.

(A, p. 15)

Both of the phrases are closely connected in thought as they explain the action of the main clauses and neither requires a comma for reasons of clarity. The omission of the comma in the second sentence does not cause confusion, but as a pause is generally made after a phrase of that length, a comma would not be objectionable and would clearly

separate the phrase from the main clause.

The following examples are two of the few sentences containing long introductory clauses and phrases that were not followed by commas:

Since their [sic] is no beauty operators association in Carbon County it was necessary to contact the operators directly.

(F, p. 54)

After going over some of the general principles of furniture arrangement and making scale cut outs of their own furniture the women were given an opportunity to put the principles to practice on their own "problem rooms".

(JJ, p. 39)

Neither sentence needs a comma after the introductory clause or phrase for clarity, but with introductory elements this long, a comma to separate them from the main clauses would make the sentences easier to read quickly.

The most objectionable punctuation practice of introductory elements was the omission of the comma which resulted in confusion. These three sentences show this quite clearly:

The last day the class met a financial statement was made and each person was convinced they had made garments for about 1/3 purchase price.

(P, p. 31)

Through the use of news letters, news articles and personal contact operators were informed of the recommended varieties of corn and alfalfa for this area.

(K, p. 13)

In addition to the poor quality of the hay ranchers along the Creek also felt that production was falling off especially on their sub-irrigated meadow where production once was fairly constant.

(Q, p. 13)

In these sentences met a financial statement, personal contact operators.

and poor quality of the hay ranchers may be incorrectly read together as a result of the omission of the comma. In each case the reader may be obligated to stop and examine the sentence before he understands the writer's meaning. The following is an additional example of this. In this sentence a two word introductory clause that is related in thought to the main clause is followed by a comma for clarification.

When applicable, consumer references are lent or given to them and pointers provided for their own decision.

(SS, p. 59)

The comma prevents applicable consumer references from being read together.

One example of the dash being used to separate an introductory phrase from the main clause was found.

At the Program Planning Committee meeting - Farm and Home Policy was discussed.

(MM, p. 54)

Most of the introductory clauses and phrases in the County Agricultural and Home Demonstration Agents' reports were followed by a comma. The comma was used increasingly as the phrases and clauses were longer.

CHAPTER VI

PUNCTUATION OF CLAUSES AND PHRASES

I. CONSENSUS OF THE RULES

The authorities examined agreed quite closely on the punctuation of clauses within a sentence. Most of the rules read as follows:

A non-restrictive clause should be set off by commas;
a restrictive clause should not be set off by commas.
A non-restrictive clause is a clause the omission of which would not change the meaning of the principal clause. (If it can be omitted, it should be set off by commas.) It is explanatory or parenthetical, giving additional information about a word that has already been limited or that needs no limitation. A restrictive clause is a clause the omission of which would change the meaning of the principal clause. It limits a word that has not already been limited or defined.¹

Although all of the texts had a rule similar to this, there were differences of terminology and of qualifying statements. The term restrictive was also referred to as essential and identifying. Some of the texts limited the rule to adjective or relative clauses, which are the same, as a relative clause is an adjective clause through definition. One of the latter texts added that adverb clauses usually were set off, and another stated that they were usually not unless they were introductory. The majority did not distinguish between adjective and adverb clauses.

¹Woolley and Scott, p. 248.

There was more disagreement on phrases than on clauses. Eight of the authorities, including all categories, contained a rule for phrases similar to that cited above for clauses. Two more, one college and one secretarial, qualified the rule by using usually. Three, two college and one high school, substituted inserted sentence elements, adjective modifiers, and participial phrases respectively for non-essential phrases. The remaining two texts, one college and one high school, had no rule for the punctuation of phrases.

The general consensus is that non-restrictive clauses and phrases should be set off by commas.

II. FINDINGS IN THE REPORTS

There were 292 clauses and phrases in the pages studied. This does not include one or two word appositive phrases denoting title, of which there were many, following a proper name. Ninety-one of these were non-restrictive and were set off by commas. There were 146 restrictive clauses and phrases not punctuated. Thus, 237, or 81%, of the clauses and phrases were acceptably punctuated according to the consensus of rules. Of the remaining ones, eighteen restrictive clauses and phrases were set off by commas, twenty-one non-restrictive ones were not set off, and sixteen clauses and phrases, both restrictive and non-restrictive, were punctuated with only one comma.

The following sentences are examples of correctly punctuated elements:

Most of this hay is on native meadows, some of which have never

been broken. One of the problems which occurs in the county is the lessening each year of production on these native meadows.

(A, p. 20)

Several weed demonstration tests, using different kinds and rates of chemicals, were carried on by the County Agents and Weed Supervisor to help collect important information on control of perennial weeds.

(E, p. 44)

Information in regard to this control should be made available to the people earlier in the year.

(W, p. 9)

The first selection contains two sentences from the same report, the first with a non-restrictive clause and the second with a restrictive clause. The clause some of which have never been broken gives only added information about native meadows, and since it does not limit it in any way, it is non-restrictive and set off by commas. The clause which occurs in the county limits the broad category problems to those in a specific area and is essential and not punctuated. The second selection displays a non-essential, punctuated phrase using different kinds and rates of chemicals which gives more information about tests. The phrase in regard to this control in the last sentence restricts the broad category information and is not set off.

The most common error in the reports was the setting off of restrictive elements and non-punctuation of non-restrictive. The following sentences are examples:

Most of the wheat obtained was Cheyenne wheat which replaced a large acreage of Yogo.

(F, p. 17)

One grower, whose fields were rejected in 1956 because of ring rot, obtained new seed and no ring rot was found in his field

this year.

(I, p. 28)

The clause which replaced a large acreage of Yogo merely gives added information about Cheyenne wheat which is already limited by the proper adjective Cheyenne. It should be set off by commas as a non-restrictive clause. On the other hand, the clause whose fields were rejected in 1956 because of ring rot limits the class of growers to a specific group and, being restrictive, should not be punctuated.

Another common error was using only one comma to set off clauses and phrases where two were required. This occurred with both restrictive and non-restrictive elements as the following examples show:

Henry Johnson, who lives North [sic] of Joliet seeded 7 acres of Certified Cheyenne winter wheat in the fall of 1956.
(F, p. 17)

Many who dreaded using a locker full of game meat, now say they can really enjoy preparing tasty dishes.
(KK, p. 51)

The clause who lives North of Joliet is non-restrictive since the proper name Henry Johnson is restrictive in itself. Therefore it should be set off by commas; however, the comma after the clause is omitted. The restrictive clause who dreaded using a locker full of game meat limits many and should not be set off, yet a comma follows it. This did not cause any confusion in these particular sentences. but in some cases it could.

This sentence contains a phrase set off by only one comma:

Robert Brastrup, County Agent from Joliet and Pete Jensen, County Agent from Sheridan, Wyoming, were the judges for the showmanship and the beef and hogs.

(C, p. 37)

The comma after Brastrup may serve two purposes. It may be separating items in a series which means three people, Robert Brastrup, the County Agent from Joliet, and Pete Jensen were the judges. It may also be a comma setting off the non-essential appositive phrase County Agent from Joliet with the second comma omitted. In this case there are two judges, Robert Brastrup and Pete Jensen.

The fact that many writers were inconsistent in their punctuation of clauses and phrases could cause confusion in a sentence like this:

Roy Inbody of Collins produced about 7 acres of Rescue spring wheat which passed field inspection.

(OO, p. 25)

As it stands the clause which passed field inspection is not set off and therefore restrictive. This implies that more than seven acres were produced but that only seven passed inspection. A comma after wheat would set off the clause, making it non-restrictive and implying that seven acres were produced and all passed inspection. This report and most of the others were not consistent, and the reader, not knowing whether a comma belonged after wheat or not, can not be sure of the meaning.

This last example is correctly punctuated; yet the clause is misplaced in the sentence:

We brought one hundred and forty-two bushels of Centana wheat into the county, which was let out to seven certified growers, making ten thousand bushels of centana available for this next years planting.

(RR, p. 30)

The non-essential clause which was let out to seven certified growers most probably gives added information about Centana wheat not county,

but by placing it next to county, the writer implies that the county was let out to seven farmers.

The punctuation of clauses and phrases in the reports was good with 81% of them punctuated acceptably according to the authorities. Only a few of the remaining clauses and phrases were constructed and punctuated in such a way as to cause confusion.

Here the colon introduces one item which could easily be expressed in a direct statement such as The fertilizer applied was 50" per acre of 11-48-0.

Another awkward sentence containing a colon is this one:

The nine members are divided into three committees: namely, [sic] Agriculture, Rural Youth, and Community Development.
(Y, p. 5)

The namely; is unnecessary as it is implied in the colon. One text stated that a "colon is usually used when the word 'namely' is missing but could be mentally supplied."²

The semicolon was used in some cases where the authorities demand a colon. The following sentence displays this:

There were six entries in the dress revue; one wool costume, one wool outfit for school, and 4 washable outfits for school.
(PP, p. 52)

The list of items in apposition with entries should be introduced by a colon.

The colon was used to introduce lists in the reports and in no case did its use cause misunderstanding although some awkward sentences arose from its use.

The dash. There were twenty-four dashes in the pages studied. Seventeen of these were used to separate a statement and a following summary or explanation. The remaining dashes were used in a variety of ways. As mentioned in the preceding chapters, two were used to

²Lois Irene Hutchinson, Standard Handbook for Secretaries (New York: McCraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1944), p. 229.

CHAPTER VII

THE COLON AND THE DASH

I. CONSENSUS OF THE RULES

Use of the colon. There were two rules for the colon which applied to the writing in the County Agricultural and Home Demonstration Agents' reports. All of the authorities used cited a rule calling for a colon after a word introducing a list, enumeration, or long, formal quotation. Most of the texts noted that the items in the list or enumeration should be appositives.

The other rule found in all but two of the texts, one secretarial and one high school, was that a colon should separate two clauses when the second explains, expands, supplements, amplifies, or interprets the first. The wording varied but the rules stated essentially the same thing.

Use of the dash. The dash was more controversial, and, in one case, rules on its use overlapped the territory of the colon. Although no instance of the dash being used to indicate an abrupt break in the thought of the sentence was found in the reports, the authorities all cited this as a main use of the dash.

A second use was to set off parenthetical material. Twelve of the texts, all but two college and one secretarial, contained this rule with various reasons for the dash instead of a comma. The most common reasons were to make the setting off more conspicuous, to

clarify the meaning in the case of internal commas, and to indicate looser connection.

Nine of the texts had a rule calling for a dash to separate a concluding clause which summarized, intensified, or interpreted the preceding clause from that clause. Two college, two secretarial, and two high school handbooks did not contain this rule. In this case it would seem from the consensus of rules that a colon or a dash would be acceptable.

Three high school and three secretarial texts warned against using the dash in statements similar to the following:

Use the dash sparingly and use it intelligently. Do not adopt this slovenly rule: When in doubt as to the correct punctuation, use a dash.¹

II. FINDINGS IN THE REPORTS

The colon. There were fifty-five colons in the reports. All of them involved the introduction of material, usually a list. An example of this use is this sentence:

4-H judging classes were set up in home improvement as follows: center pieces, color schemes for bedrooms, study lamps, and bath towels.

(G, p. 52)

There were examples which indicated the writer was not sure of himself in using the colon as in this sentence:

Fertilizer was applied as follows: 50# per acre of 11-48-0.
(F, p. 18)

¹William M. Tanner and Frank J. Platt, My English: Book IV (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1941), p. 113.

separate compound sentences, one to separate items in a series, and one to separate an introductory phrase from the main clause. The others were used in questionable ways.

The most common use of the dash is shown in these sentences:

The time was apparently not good—too much canning, berry picking, and haying in process.

(JJ, p. 33)

The lesson was given in two parts - the first by the project leaders and the second by the Home [sic] agent.

(F, p. 53)

The Game Warden was invited to give information on hunting technique - killing and dressing of game and care before it reaches the home-maker.

(OO, p. 74)

In most cases the dash was made with one hyphen spaced on either side. Only a few typists used two hyphens as in the first sentence. These sentences show the dash being used to separate a statement which summarizes or explains the preceding from that statement.

Although the dash was generally used alone, in the following sentences it is used with a comma and a semicolon, respectively:

After lunch, a period of recreation was enjoyed, - Elizabeth Rife leading in some games and contests, and Lura Penwell leading in some songs.

(A, p. 14)

Radio time has been given us since our new station came on the air;—7:45 Tuesday a.m. since February.

(A, p. 13)

The comma and semicolon are superfluous here as no emphasis is needed in either case. The construction is acceptable in the case of emphasis

according to Woolley and Scott.³

The dash was used in questionable ways in some sentences. In this next example it is used where a comma would suffice:

It is estimated that approximately 75% of this is Yogo winter wheat - the remainder being Cheyenne, Hebred and other kinds of wheat.

(K, p. 21)

The reason for the dash in the following sentence is questionable:

In one case we started with a piece of linoleum, and the other we started from a piece of drapery fabric - did walls, floors, big furniture, windows and accent colors.

(JJ, p. 37)

It would seem that the conjunction and would do as well.

The last example is this sentence with three dashes:

The second day was devoted to individual problems - each woman brought from her home something she had - with which she had to live - and worked out a color harmony from that for her room or rooms.

(JJ, p. 21)

The first dash separates the clauses of a compound sentence. The other two dashes apparently set off the non-restrictive phrase with which she had to live which modifies something.

The dashes in the reports were used mainly to introduce a statement which summarizes or explains the preceding clause. In a few instances it was used in lieu of other marks or in a questionable way, but its use did not cause confusion in any sentences.

³p. 262.

CHAPTER VIII

PUNCTUATION FINDINGS IN RECENT MAGAZINES

I. PROCEDURE

A number of recent periodicals were examined in order to find how the rules of the previous chapters were handled in publications. Five magazines were used—Atlantic, Harper's, The New Yorker, The Saturday Evening Post, and Saturday Review. Enough pages from 1957 issues were used to find adequate examples of the punctuation in question; four or five pages were sufficient in each case. In order to obtain writing reflecting the periodical's format policy in punctuation, the pages used are not from contributed articles with by-lines. In Atlantic the selections used are the reports from various places, such as "Washington Report"; in Harper's, the "Editor's Easychair"; in The New Yorker, "Talk of the Town"; in The Saturday Evening Post, the editorial page; and in Saturday Review, the editorial page. The dates and pages of the issues used are as follows:

Atlantic: July, pp. 4, 6; Aug., pp. 4, 8; Sept., pp. 4, 8; Oct., pp. 4, 8; Nov., pp. 4, 8.

Harper's: July, pp. 10, 12; Aug., pp. 12, 14; Sept., p. 14; Oct., pp. 14, 17.

The New Yorker: Nov. 23, p. 43; Nov. 30, p. 41; Dec. 7, p. 41; Dec. 14, p. 33; Dec. 21, p. 19.

The Saturday Evening Post: Nov. 2, p. 10; Nov. 9, p. 10; Nov. 16, p. 10; Nov. 23, p. 10.

Saturday Review: Sept. 7, p. 22; Sept. 14, p. 28; Sept. 21, p. 22; Sept. 28, p. 24.

All of the above are 1957 issues.

II. FINDINGS

Compound sentences. There were 134 compound sentences in the pages examined. The punctuation conformed to the rules very closely; 69 were separated by a coordinating conjunction preceded by a comma, 45 were separated by semicolons, 11 were separated by a coordinating conjunction without punctuation, and the remaining 9 included one comma splice, 5 coordinating conjunctions preceded by semicolons, and 3 coordinating conjunctions preceded by a dash. No compound sentences separated by a semicolon and an adverbial conjunction were found. Of the 11 sentences separated by a coordinating conjunction and no punctuation, most contained short clauses which were closely connected in thought.

There was variation among the individual periodicals. The Saturday Evening Post contained relatively few compound sentences, 12 of the 134, yet had 4 of the 11 compound sentences separated by a coordinating conjunction without punctuation. Atlantic, The New Yorker and Saturday Review contained 54 of the 69 compound sentences separated by a comma and a coordinating conjunction, the other 7 separated by only a coordinating conjunction, and 20 separated by semicolons. Harper's used semicolons in 24 of the 35 compound sentences found.

The punctuation of compound sentences in the periodicals conforms quite closely to the rules. Of the 134 sentences, 114 employ either

a coordinating conjunction and a comma or a semicolon. Of the other 20 constructions, only one comma splice, found in the New Yorker, violates the rules of the authorities outwardly. No confusing sentences were found. These findings indicate that the periodical publishers feel that punctuation is desirable between the clauses of compound sentences. Reasons for this could be that compound sentences are usually long and a break between the clauses is desirable and that the comma prevents the reader from placing the beginning of the second clause in with the first clause.

Items in a series. Series were punctuated in a variety of ways. Of the 129 series in the pages examined, 73 were separated with a comma and a coordinating conjunction between the last two items, 5 were separated with a coordinating conjunction with no punctuation between the last two items, 4 contained just two items separated only by a comma, 9 contained 3 or more items separated only by commas, 6 contained just two items separated by a coordinating conjunction and a comma, 7 separated with semicolons, one used and between each item, and 19 separated series of coordinating adjectives with commas.

The 5 examples of a coordinating conjunction with no comma between the last two items were found in one magazine, The Saturday Evening Post. The other 4 periodicals used the comma in all 74 series of three or more items with a coordinating conjunction between the last two items.

Six sentences in 2 magazines, The New Yorker and Harper's, had two elements separated by a coordinating conjunction and a comma as

in the following sentence:

For Cozzens has never been fully recognized by two groups on which a lasting literary reputation depends: (a) the mass reading public, and (b) the main critics.

(Harper's, Sept. 1957, p. 14)

The comma does emphasize the separation and may have been used for that purpose. Although this construction did not lend to any confusing sentences, it was specifically condemned by one authority (p. 21).

Of the 129 series only the 6 in the preceding paragraph and the 5 with no comma before the coordinating conjunction did not conform to the rules. The reason for retaining the punctuation between the last two items is to prevent the connecting of the modifier of the item before the conjunction to the last item. An example of a series which needs the commas is the following:

Indian employment records are good and perhaps a little better than those of their fellow workers on absenteeism, contact with police, and alcoholism.

(The Saturday Evening Post,
Nov. 23, 1957, p. 10)

Without the comma contact with could be read with both police and alcoholism. In this case the latter, instead of being an independent item in a series, would be part of a compound object of the preposition with.

Introductory clauses and phrases. Seventy-nine introductory adverbial clauses were found. Seventy-two were followed by a comma. The 7 not followed by commas were all found in the Saturday Review. The average length of the punctuated introductory clauses was 11.17 words although some of them were as short as three words. The 7

unpunctuated clauses in the Saturday Review averaged 7.6 words in length. In the same magazines there were 16 introductory clauses averaging 12.6 words in length followed by commas. The practice of punctuating introductory clauses in the periodicals conformed with the rules quite closely with the possible exception of the Saturday Review. The reason for following the rules so closely is probably to prevent misreading as the introductory element is out of order in the sentence, really belonging to the predicate which comes second in natural order.

Of the 121 introductory phrases, 84 were followed by commas and 37 were not. The average length in words of the punctuated phrases was 6.12 and of the non-punctuated 4.05. This compares closely with the figures of 6.04 and 4.37 from the County Agricultural and Home Demonstration Agents' reports. Although on the average the punctuated introductory phrases were longer, there was inconsistency within articles. The following example displays two consecutive sentences from a report:

In ancient days, the word possessed . . .
 In later years it has become . . .
 (Harper's, Nov., p. 12)

The construction is similar, but the punctuation is different.

The New Yorker failed to punctuate only two of twenty-one introductory phrases. The other magazines averaged about nine or ten unpunctuated introductory phrases which amounted to about thirty per cent or better. In every case the average length in words of the punctuated phrases was longer than the unpunctuated.

The punctuation of introductory phrases was the most inconsistent practice noted in the periodicals. Many of the commas following introductory phrases could have been omitted with no change in clearness. The authorities were not specific on the punctuation of introductory phrases. Only two of them stated rules calling for commas after introductory phrases in every case. They were more insistent on the comma after an introductory clause. This indicates the possibility that periodical publishers do follow the rules of punctuation set up in handbooks as all of the introductory clauses in four of the periodicals were punctuated. The reasons for clauses being punctuated more uniformly than phrases are probably the length and the construction. Introductory clauses are usually longer than phrases; in both the periodicals and the reports this was true. The longer the introductory element, the more likely the chance of confusion as to where it ends and the sentence begins. In the construction of the clauses, a verb is necessary. This makes the element more complex and may explain the need of a comma. Some phrases contain verbals and noun clauses, but these are generally the longer ones and are usually punctuated.

Clauses and phrases. No examples of punctuated restrictive clauses nor unpunctuated non-restrictive clauses were found. The periodical writing contained fewer adjective clauses and phrases than the reports. The type of information generally found in adjective clauses and phrases were frequently condensed into adjectives or

introduced with dashes, colons, and parentheses. The adjective clauses and phrases used all followed the rules found in the handbooks.

The colon and the dash. The colon was used most extensively by Harper's. This periodical used 11 of the 23 found. Colons were used for supplementation, interpretation, and formal quotes in Harper's. All of the colons in the magazines were used for these purposes and conformed to the rules.

The dash was used frequently by all of the magazines except Atlantic. There were 60 dashes which were used to introduce parenthetical material, to indicate abrupt breaks in thought, and to intensify or interpret the previous thought. It was used in place of a comma to set off material which could have been included in non-restrictive clauses and in place of colons to interpret the previous statement. In no instance did its use sacrifice clearness; on the contrary, its use was effective in emphasizing or clarifying meanings in many places. This frequent use of the dash was condemned by six of the authorities cited, but nonetheless appears to be gaining in acceptance. Possibly this is because there is no rational reason for not using it as it does the job.

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

I. COMPOUND SENTENCES

Summary. The consensus of rules for the punctuation of compound sentences is that the clauses should be separated by a comma and a coordinating conjunction or by a semicolon with a conjunctive adverb or no conjunction at all. The comma before the coordinating conjunction may be omitted if the clauses are short and closely related. If the clauses are long and have internal punctuation, a semicolon should be used in place of the comma before the coordinating conjunction.

There were 260 compound sentences in the County Agricultural and Home Demonstration Agents' reports. Only 89 (34%) of them conformed strictly to the rules. Of the sentences not conforming to the rules, 132 (51%) separated the clauses with a coordinating conjunction and no punctuation. Some of these contained short, closely related clauses and would be considered acceptable by the authorities. On the other hand, several of these compound sentences were confusing as the omission of the comma led to improper joining of compound elements within the sentence. There were 27 comma splices and five sentences with neither a comma nor a conjunction between the clauses. Some of these were confusing.

The sections of the magazines examined contained 134 compound sentences, 114 (85%) of which conformed to the rules. The remaining

sentences were all clear and for the most part consisted of short, closely connected clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction with no punctuation.

The fact that the periodicals adhered quite closely to the rules could be explained either by convention or by some practical justification of the rules. From the examples of confusing sentences found in the County Agricultural and Home Demonstration Agents' reports, it is possible that the rules pertaining to the punctuation of compound sentences have some justification in clarity. Because it contains at least two independent clauses, a compound sentence is often long, and the marking of the separation aids the reader in dividing the sentence properly. Not pausing at this spot may lead to the incorrect reading of compound elements such as the joining of an object of a preposition at the end of the first clause with the subject of the second clause. This is illustrated in Chapter III.

Conclusion. The rule calling for punctuation between the clauses of a compound sentence seems justified on the basis of this investigation. The County Agricultural and Home Demonstration Agents' reports omitted the punctuation in over half of the compound sentences, and in several cases the meaning was confused. The compound sentences in the magazine articles used punctuation between the clauses except when the clauses were short and closely related and when there was no chance of misunderstanding the meaning. These results imply that convention alone is not the reason that the rule for punctuating compound sentences

is followed in the periodicals. Clarity of meaning may be sacrificed by the omission.

When a coordinating conjunction was used, a comma sufficed to separate the clauses clearly. Although the use of a comma with a conjunctive adverb rarely confused the meaning, the example on page 17 is one case where this result occurred. A semicolon would have corrected this. The writers in the sections of the periodicals examined used the semicolon liberally between the clauses of compound sentences, especially with conjunctive adverbs. The rule calling for a semicolon between the clauses of a compound sentence when there is a conjunctive adverb or no conjunction seems justified by the findings.

In conclusion, the consensus of rules for the punctuation of compound sentences is justified by the fact that clarity may be sacrificed if the rules are not followed. Although in many cases where the rules were not followed, the meaning was not weakened; there were enough examples of confused meaning in these sentences to justify the teaching of these rules in the schools.

II. SERIES

Summary. The main problem in the punctuation of a series is whether to place a comma before the conjunction connecting the last two items or not. The consensus of rules from the handbooks is that the comma should be used. Some texts allowed the omission if there were no misunderstanding, but the consensus is that the comma should be used.

As in the punctuation of compound sentences, the writers of the County Agricultural and Home Demonstration Agents' reports differed from the writers of the periodical articles. In punctuating series of the form a, b, and c; 146 of 310 (47%) of the series in the reports contained the comma before the conjunction; 78 of 83 (94%) of the series in the periodicals contained the comma. The punctuation in the magazines conformed more closely to the consensus of rules. Furthermore, three magazines containing sixty-one of the series of the form a, b, and c used a comma before the conjunction in every case.

In the reports there were examples of confused meaning in the series in which the comma before the conjunction was omitted. As in the case of the punctuation of compound sentences, clarity of meaning in addition to convention justify the use of the comma.

Conclusion. Although omission of the comma before the conjunction in the series of the form a, b, and c generally does not lead to misunderstanding, there were sufficient examples where it did in the County Agricultural and Home Demonstration Agents' reports to justify the following of these rules in the schools.

III. INTRODUCTORY CLAUSES AND PHRASES

Summary. The consensus of rules for the punctuation of introductory clauses is that a comma should be placed after the clause unless it is short and closely related in thought to the main clause. If there is any possibility of misunderstanding the meaning of the

sentence without the comma, it should not be omitted. The consensus of rules concerning the punctuation of introductory phrases is that a comma is not ordinarily placed after the phrase unless it is long, contains a verbal, is not closely related in thought to the main clause, or unless the omission would cause misunderstanding.

The pages from the County Agricultural and Home Demonstration Agents' reports contained 52 introductory clauses, 40 (77%) were followed by a comma. Of the 79 introductory clauses in the sections examined from the periodicals, 72 (91%) were followed by commas. The reason that the rule for punctuating introductory clauses is followed so closely is probably because an introductory clause is generally long. It also contains a verb which may be incorrectly connected with the main clause if not separated from it by a comma. The length seems to be related to the punctuation as in the reports the punctuated introductory clauses averaged 3.48 words in length and the non-punctuated, 6.42 words in length. The punctuated introductory clauses in the magazines averaged 11.17 words in length and the unpunctuated, 7.6.

Of the 239 introductory phrases in the reports, 145 (61%) were followed by commas. In the periodicals 84 of 121 (69%) introductory phrases were followed by commas. As in the case of introductory clauses, the length was related to the punctuation. In the reports the punctuated introductory phrases averaged 6.04 words in length and the non-punctuated, 4.37 words in length. The figures for the magazines were 6.12 and 4.05, respectively. In this case the punctu-

ation of the reports and magazines was in fairly close agreement.

Conclusion. There was more agreement between the reports and the magazines in the punctuation of introductory clauses and phrases than in the punctuation of compound sentences or series. As several of the sentences in the reports were confusing, increased care in the use of the comma in this construction should be taught in the schools to prevent misunderstanding.

IV. CLAUSES AND PHRASES

Summary. The consensus of the rules is that non-restrictive clauses and phrases should be set off by commas.

The clauses and phrases in the magazines all followed the rules. In the reports 237 of 292 (81%) of the clauses and phrases conformed. The exceptions to the rules were punctuating of restrictive elements, non-punctuating of non-restrictive elements, and using only one comma to set off an element. The use of one comma to set off a clause or phrase is confusing as the reader may wonder about the one comma and stop to reread the sentence. In one example (p. 41) the setting off of a clause could change the meaning of a sentence. If the writer were inconsistent in punctuating this construction, there is no way to determine the intended meaning.

Conclusion. In most cases where the rule for punctuating clauses and phrases was not followed, there was no confusion provided two commas were used to set off. However, in at least one example

inconsistency in the punctuation of clauses and phrases resulted in inability to devine the writer's meaning. As the possibility of confusion exists, the rule for punctuating this construction should be taught in the schools.

V. THE COLON AND THE DASH

Summary. The consensus of rules for the use of the colon is that it may be used to introduce a list, enumeration, or long, formal quotation. The consensus of rules for the use of the dash is that it may be used to indicate an abrupt break in thought, to set off parenthetical material, and to set off a clause which summarizes, interprets, or intensifies the preceding clause. Six of the texts warned against overuse of the dash.

The County Agricultural and Home Demonstration Agents' reports and the periodicals used the colon to introduce lists or enumeration of preceding material. The only malpractice was the use of semicolons in place of colons in the reports.

The dash was used much more frequently in the periodicals than in the reports. In both places it was used mainly to set off material that explained or gave additional information to preceding statements. In both the reports and the magazines, particularly in the latter, the dash was used where commas or other marks would suffice. However, in no place did its use cause misunderstanding.

Conclusion. The colon is used in accordance with the rules, and

there is no apparent difficulty in using it. The dash is used in many constructions which six of the texts condemn. However, since it is being used by the periodical writers and since its use does not hinder understanding, it appears that rules limiting its use are not valid.

VI. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Further study could overcome two of the limitations of this thesis. Examination of material from different sections of the country other than Montana would provide a broader view of the use of internal punctuation. The use of different types of material would further broaden the study.

If a similar study were made over a long period of time, a specific group of college graduates such as County Agricultural or Home Demonstration Agents could be studied for use of punctuation over a span of years. This study would have the advantage of being able to show specifically what texts were used by the group. It would be interesting, too, to see if age and nativity of the writer caused any change in the use of punctuation.

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Broadwater	Madison	Powder River
Fallon	Meagher	Silver Bow
Judith Basin	Mineral	Toole
Liberty	Musselshell	Wibaux
Lincoln	Park	

County Agricultural and Home Demonstration Agents' Reports (1957) from the following counties:

Beaverhead	Flathead	Ravalli
Bighorn	Gallatin	Rosebud
Carbon	Glacier	Sanders
Cascade	Hill	Sheridan
Chouteau	Lake	Stillwater
Custer	Lewis and Clark	Sweetgrass
Daniels	Missoula	Teton
Dawson	Pondera	Valley
Deer Lodge	Roosevelt	Yellowstone
Fergus	Richland	