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Negotiating Genre: Emergence and Development of "The Research Paper" in First-Year Composition, 1912-1962

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

NEGOTIATING GENRE: EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF “THE RESEARCH
PAPER” IN FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION, 1912-1962

By

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ABSTRACT

This project explores the emergence and development of researched-writing in first-year composition as it is represented in *English Journal*, *College English*, and Indiana University Archives circa 1912-1962. By analyzing this corpus according to instructors' purposes for, problems with, and approaches to researched-writing, this thesis offers a more nuanced perspective on early researched-writing instruction that challenges the dominant current-traditional narrative and considers how this history might be used to inform and shape other historical investigations into classroom genres, as well as current research on and approaches to researched-writing instruction in first-year composition.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motivations

Studying researched-writing¹ in first-year composition began, for me, as a way to improve my teaching. Through this exploration, I became interested in the history of the genre, and how understanding its history might affect instruction. However, as I read histories of researched-writing in first-year composition, I noted two dimensions that troubled me. One was the general dependence on textbooks and larger socio-cultural shifts in higher education to explain the emergence and development of researched-writing. I read this as a dissonance, because while my teaching is influenced by national socio-cultural factors as well as the textbooks I use, I do not view them as the only, or even most significant, influences on my teaching. Rather, my instructional practices have also been shaped by the institutional environment in which I was trained, and by my perceptions of success and failure in the classroom; additionally, I imagined that past instructors have been similarly influenced. The second dimension that troubled me in histories of researched-writing is how previous instructional approaches are seen as tainted by current-traditionalism, and are therefore in need of reform. Both of these dimensions diminish the agency and mute the voices of past instructors; the first by emphasizing sources that reveal large-scale trends rather than institution- and classroom-based enactments of researched-writing, and the second by flattening past instruction to fit within one ideology.

¹ For the purposes of this study, I use the term “researched-writing” because “research paper” often has too limited a meaning, since source-based writing assignments in the early part of the twentieth century have been variously called “long themes,” “library papers,” and “term papers,” while in more recent years they have been described as “multi-writing,” “I-Search,” and “research essays.”

Therefore, this thesis attempts to trace the emergence and development of researched-writing in first-year composition curricula from 1912-1962 via institutional and journal archives, in order to re-evaluate prior histories and discern how instructor purposes for, problems with, and approaches to researched-writing helped create, shape, and sustain researched-writing pedagogy. In order to accomplish this, I found it helpful to draw on key concepts from rhetorical genre theory, particularly the contention that all texts (even apparently a-rhetorical academic “exercises” like first-year researched-writing) are forms of social action that are constituted by and constitutive of the rhetorical situations in which they operate. Additionally, this project aims to demonstrate that understanding the history of classroom genres has value for current instruction beyond reforming the wrongs of the past. Although further investigation into researched-writing in light of more recent interest in multimodal and digital classroom genres might seem passé, evidence suggests that researched-writing in various forms is still prevalent in first-year composition. Carra Leah Hood’s 2009 survey² on the status of the research paper in first-year composition reveals that 86% of the schools who responded to her nationwide survey all require a research component in their first-year composition course(s). Thus, if the majority of first-year composition instructors teach researched-writing, it seems important to continue attending to its instruction. Of course, researched-writing was not always ubiquitous in first-year

² Hood’s survey extended from April 2008 – April 2009, and was sent to the WPAs at four-year co-ed, secular, liberal arts, public and private colleges and universities. Out of 750 e-mailed surveys, Hood received 166 usable responses. The survey was intended to be an update on Ambrose N. Manning’s 1961 survey and James E. Ford and Dennis R. Perry’s 1982 survey on the status of the “traditional” research paper in first-year composition; the earlier surveys had found that the traditional research paper was taught in 83% and 78% of institutions surveyed, respectively. Hood’s survey found that only 6% of institutions have traditional research paper assignments, but this finding is problematic, since, for instance, her definition of the traditional research paper excludes argumentative researched-writing, which is the single largest “alternative” research assignment genre she describes, assigned at 36% of the institutions represented in her survey.

composition. In the early development of the first-year composition course at Harvard,³ short themes were assigned, consisting of “brief two or three paragraph sketches” not explicitly drawing on outside sources (Brereton 11). How, then, did researched-writing become an integral aspect of first-year composition?

1.2 The Influence of Disciplinary Histories

Because the answer to this question implies a reconstruction of past events—a tracing of causes and effects performed across time and space to explain a current phenomenon—it carries with it all of the epistemological problems associated with historiography. Which historical facts are pertinent, and who determines this? What kinds of texts might be read, and through what lens? Albert Kitzhaber took up these challenges in his 1953 dissertation by exploring developments in mid- to late-nineteenth century rhetoric instruction, in what was “the first book-length historical study of this subject” (Gage vii). He accomplished this feat by drawing from a wide range of primary texts, including journal articles, textbooks, rhetoric manuals, grammar handbooks, and committee reports, all read against the backdrop of larger historical developments in higher education.

Kitzhaber read changes in rhetorical theory in the context of “the chief trends in American higher education” (1) because, he argues, “rhetorical theory and practice in the colleges reflected, in the main, the emphases that marked English studies and higher education generally through these fifty years” (49). Kitzhaber’s analysis led him to pronounce a final judgment on the legacy of this rhetorical history, stating that “In the twentieth century, as the narrower tendencies of the nineties set the tone for composition instruction, rhetorical theory

³ While I acknowledge that Harvard was not the only institution of higher education providing instruction in composition in the late 19th to early 20th century, the school did exert significant influence on composition curricula during this period, and can serve as more than a simple anecdotal example.

atrophied” (223). This dismal assessment of rhetoric in the early twentieth century reverberates throughout histories of researched-writing, because it provided historians with a powerful narrative that enabled them to portray this classroom genre as rooted in a period of rhetorical atrophy and therefore it, and the pedagogy supporting it, are also rhetorically impoverished. However, Kitzhaber’s work also wielded a positive influence through his argument for historical perspective in shaping current practices: “If a teacher is to have any perspective on his subject, he must know the tradition that lies behind it, know the place of himself and his times in the tradition, and, through this knowledge, be able to put a proper value on new developments in his subject as they appear” (Kitzhaber 226). Of course, since Kitzhaber’s work, other scholars have investigated the history of Rhetoric and Composition in the United States.

James Berlin’s history of writing instruction builds on Kitzhaber, adding a focus on journal articles as a site for disciplinary construction, and emphasizing the competing epistemological perspectives underlying every argument for how writing “should” be taught. Berlin acknowledges that, although there is usually one particular ideology dominant in any given moment, “the exclusion of all other rhetorics is never completely achieved” (4-5). While Berlin allows for a plurality of perspectives, his emphasis on the distinctions between “current-traditional rhetoric” and “social-epistemic rhetoric” also contributed to the perspective that compared to the nineteenth and second half of the twentieth century, the first half of the twentieth century was, in higher education, a rhetorically stunted time that emphasized mechanical correctness and objectivity over rhetorical awareness and creativity. Additionally, Berlin explicitly links researched-writing to current-traditionalism, arguing that “the research paper represented the insistence in current-traditional rhetoric on finding meaning outside the composing act, with writing itself serving as a simple transcription process” (70). Furthermore,

Berlin describes the emergence of researched-writing in first-year composition as one of “a number of changes” introduced during 1920-1940, but “none of them were substantive” (70). Both of Berlin’s claims about researched-writing, however, are problematic, because of the 109 *English Journal* and *College English* articles from 1912-1962 listed in his works cited, only one is primarily about researched-writing. Berlin mentions that after the 1930s, “no year of *English Journal* passed without a number of articles on approaches to teaching the research essay” (70), but apparently these numerous articles did not influence his depiction of current-traditional pedagogy enough to warrant direct incorporation. Thus, while it is not my intention to dismiss the current-traditional pattern that Berlin identified in the early twentieth century, I do wish to question how effective it is in understanding the history of researched-writing instruction.

Although Berlin and Kitzhaber provided models for writing history in the service of reform and contributed to the perception that early twentieth century researched-writing instruction was steeped in problematic notions of originality and correctness, perhaps the most significant disciplinary history for the history of researched-writing in first-year composition is Robert Connors’ *Composition-Rhetoric*. This is not because Connors’ methodology was particularly innovative,⁴ but because Connors wrote one of the first mainstream histories to spend any significant time explicitly considering the history of researched-writing (a mere 6 pages in a 374 page work). In his most concentrated section, Connors identifies three major trends to explain the emergence and development of researched-writing: early twentieth century composition instructors’ desire to move away from personal writing (321); the increasing importance of intellectual property rights (322); and the allure of being able to evaluate writing on objective criteria—“the minutiae of formats, footnotes, bibliographies, citation forms, and so

⁴ Pavel Zemliansky was influenced by Connors’ attempt to avoid writing a revisionist history because it would “relegate your work to the realm of the Historically Interesting” (21).

on” (322). Connors supports these assertions by his knowledge of larger educational trends and by specific examples and quotes drawn from a few early twentieth century textbooks.

Most of the historical studies described thus far significantly draw on larger socio-cultural developments in higher education to explain specific curricular changes, and develop persuasive narratives that put a wide range of practices and motivations into a few broad categories. While those socio-cultural developments should be taken into account, and broad categories can provide helpful ways to interpret a wide variety of historical activities, relying on them too heavily can negate the agency of the people enacting those curricular changes, and obscure how they create, sustain, and transform what is taught and how. John Brereton identifies the 1970s to 1990s as a period in which research into the history of Composition and Rhetoric was heavily influenced by Kitzhaber’s study as well as a dismissive attitude towards “current-traditional” composition instruction in the first half of the twentieth century (xii-xiii). It is this potential glossing over of historical nuance, and equating pedagogical theory with practice, that Brereton sought to curtail with his collection of archival documents published in *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875-1925: A Documentary History* (xii-xiii). Since then, many scholars have taken up the challenge to explore the history of Rhetoric and Composition via overlooked documents in the archives of a wide variety of institutions; this activity has shed light on the many practices, pressures, and individuals at work in enacting the history of Rhetoric and Composition.

1.3 Grand Narratives of the History of Researched-Writing

While interest in what archives have to offer is true for the field writ large, it has not yet affected our understanding of how researched-writing came to be such a prolific genre in first-

year composition curricula in the United States. The history of researched-writing was directly explored primarily during the late 1990s and early 2000s, and like other histories written during that period, they generally depict larger historical developments as the causal factors. Perhaps the most frequently mentioned factor is the importation of the research ideal from German universities in the mid- to late-nineteenth century.⁵ While several scholars allude to or directly explore the significant influence of the 19th century Germanic model of higher education on researched-writing in first-year composition (McDonald; Zemliansky; Ballenger; Davis and Shadle), David Russell's 1991 *Writing in the Academic Disciplines* contains one of the earliest and most extensive explorations of this aspect of researched-writing's history (others had only briefly mentioned the history of researched-writing, like Berlin's single paragraph in *Rhetoric and Reality* [70]). Russell explains that American universities originally drew on a British model of education, wherein the thesis was an "agonistic oral performance" completed near the end of an undergraduate or graduate degree; however, during the late 1860s and early 1870s under Germanic influence, the thesis became a textual display of knowledge that also required an original contribution. Thus, by the late nineteenth century the research paper was an extended piece of discipline-specific, source-based writing that was assigned primarily in advanced courses. Additionally, since earlier required courses are often designed to prepare students for their later coursework, the research paper also began to trickle down to first-year courses and secondary schools, separated from the disciplinary contexts in which it arose (Russell 79-90).

The majority of the other factors that have been associated with the origins of the researched-writing in first-year composition derive from or are closely related to the Germanic

⁵ Connors states that between 1815-1915 roughly ten thousand Americans went to Germany for higher education, including "such future American university presidents as Angell of Michigan, White of Cornell, Gilman, Dwight, and Porter of Yale, Eliot of Harvard, Folwell of Minnesota, Hall of Clark, and Barnard of Columbia" (175).

research ideal. Although Robert Connors in *Composition-Rhetoric* does not explicitly mention the Germanic research ideal as a contributing factor to the development of researched-writing in first-year composition, he does place significant emphasis on teachers' desires to move their students away from writing based on personal experience towards developing a "research attitude" that values objectivity and intellectual property rights.⁶ On the other hand, James McDonald argues that the positioning of first-year composition as a service course led to the idea that it could provide students with instruction in presumably generic "writing skills" and, when upper-level courses began to emphasize researched-writing, with generic "research skills" (140). Additionally, the explosion in new knowledge produced in part because of the Germanic research ideal led to an increase in the growth and development of libraries. Ever larger libraries made evaluating and using sources an increasingly complex task, since students suddenly had more sources written on their subject than they could possibly read in the time allotted for research in first-year composition courses; as a result, the growth of libraries led to the perception that all students needed explicit instruction in information literacy (McDonald; Ballenger; Zemliansky). And, of course, the prevalent influence of textbooks on instructional practice contributed to the spread and development of researched-writing in first-year composition curricula⁷ (Ballenger; Connors; Zemliansky). My research project seeks to investigate the emergence of researched-writing in first-year composition from a slightly different angle. I am interested in exploring the textured nuance of the early history of

⁶ Connors explains that "These concerns were just a formalization of the growing concern with intellectual property that had become a notable part of nineteenth-century publishing law and jurisprudence. With the research paper we see the final end of the old idea of the intellectual commons. All information now has an owner, who must be paid the proper sort of rent. If the rent is not paid, the trespasser is guilty of 'plagiarism,' which grew by 1890 into a serious concern for teachers" (321-322).

⁷ Ballenger states that Charles Sears Baldwin's popular 1906 textbook, *A College Manual of Rhetoric*, is "the earliest textbook I've found that deals at length with writing essays based on research" (31).

researched-writing instruction in order to develop a richer understanding of how the emergence and development of a genre are perceived and facilitated/resisted by the parties involved.

1.4 Exploring the Importance of Source Material

The purpose behind exploring this “textured nuance” is partially a matter of reform – of rethinking how our discipline represents the early history of researched-writing instruction and why it is represented thus. More specifically, because researched-writing historians have been strongly influenced by Kitzhaber’s and Berlin’s depictions of early twentieth century pedagogy, as well as by evidence of rhetorically impoverished approaches to researched-writing in textbooks and some journal articles, they have generally glossed over the wide range of practices and experiences associated with researched-writing that could be gleaned by examining the perspectives of instructors who did not necessarily publish articles, as well as by considering a richer collection of journal articles. It is important to consider unpublished accounts because, as Arthur Applebee has noted in his history of English instruction, there can be “a surprisingly large gap between educational thought, as expressed at conferences and in the professional literature, and educational practice as it actually transpires in the schools” (29-30). By turning to institutional archives to find unpublished accounts of researched-writing in first-year composition classrooms, I seek to understand how early twentieth century instructors understood, resisted, and constructed researched-writing in first-year composition as a genre.

This is not to say that unpublished texts should now be privileged over textbooks or journal articles; rather, they are an effective and previously neglected means to round out our understanding of the theories and pedagogies that comprise researched-writing instruction in first-year composition’s multivalent past. In each major type of primary source (institutional archives, journal articles, and textbooks), there is a unique perspective offered. Institutional

archives permit us to explore the effects of unique institutional environments and faculty on the local development of the genre. Journal articles provide insight into the growing body of professional knowledge and experimentation that grew out of local and individual needs and interests to potentially influence or address others' needs and interests. Before the 1950s the connection between classroom practices and journal articles in particular appears especially close (at least in *English Journal* and *College English*), since most of the articles do not cite other writers and are rather structured as a report of their classroom practices than participation in an ongoing scholarly conversation.⁸ And finally, textbooks, by their sales figures and subsequent revisions, can delineate mainstream viewpoints on researched-writing instruction (or at least the viewpoints mainstream enough that they can sell).

While each source-type offers a new viewpoint, it is textbooks that have dominated our understanding of early 20th century researched-writing instruction in first-year composition.⁹ The privileging of textbooks in histories of researched-writing can be traced back to Connors' *Composition-Rhetoric*, wherein he states that "Before 1950, the teaching of rhetoric and writing in American colleges went forward with very little influence from journals at all. During the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries, composition-rhetoric was overwhelmingly shaped by one great force: textbooks" (69). Connors attributes the power of textbooks during this

⁸ During the late 1940s and early 1950s this began to change, presumably due to the increasing professionalization of composition instruction as a result of the establishment of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. Of course, as closely related as journal articles and classroom practices might be, they are still not quite the same as unpublished documents in institutional archives, since they still had to pass through the gatekeeping process of journal publication.

⁹ Ballenger bases his in-depth analysis almost exclusively on textbooks, Russell's chapter on researched-writing draws on a range of textbooks, journal articles, and institutional archives, and McDonald as well as Davis and Shadle do not base their claims on primary research but rather on their own observations and the primary research of others. Although Zemliansky relies on journal articles, he cites Connors' *Composition-Rhetoric* as a shaping influence in how he approached his project. This influence is most clearly seen when Zemliansky traces the current-traditional influence still at work in contemporary textbooks and identifies a few that offer alternative approaches. Thus, although Zemliansky attends to journal articles, he still perceives textbooks as one of the most important factors driving pedagogy.

period to composition instructors' lack of adequate preparation for composition teaching, thus making them essentially subservient to textbooks (70). While I do not deny Connors' argument that ill-trained and inexperienced instructors are more likely to rely too heavily on textbooks, it is also likely that instructors in the early part of the twentieth century were capable of exerting more agency over their courses than Connors gives them credit for, and traces of their agency can be seen most clearly in institutional archives as well as journal articles. Institutional archives provide more direct insight (albeit still mediated) into how instructors actually enacted their pedagogies. Journal articles, when read in tandem with institutional archives, can be read as motivated instructors sharing pedagogical innovations arising from perceived imperfections in their unique institutional situations, rather than as simply either confirming the pedagogical record preserved in textbooks or presenting an interesting anomaly.

Additionally, while Connors' explicitly stated reason for privileging textbooks is that they are the dominant force shaping pedagogy during the period, there may be another reason why historians of researched-writing have been so interested in textbook approaches to researched-writing instruction. Besides Connors' history, there have been five other texts to address the early history of researched-writing instruction in first-year composition: David Russell's *Writing in the Academic Disciplines, 1870-1990: A Curricular History* (1991), Bruce Ballenger's *Beyond Notecards: Rethinking the Freshman Research Paper* (1999), Robert Davis and Mark Shadle's "Building a Mystery: Alternative Research Writing and the Academic Act of Seeking" in *College Composition and Communication* (2000), James McDonald's "Coming to Terms with the Freshman Term Paper" in *Reforming College Composition: Writing the Wrongs* (2000), and Pavel Zemliansky's dissertation, "Genuine Training in Academic Discourse or an Artificial Construct?: Reconsidering the Past, Present, and Future of the College Research Paper"

(2002). A recurring viewpoint that has emerged from these histories of researched-writing instruction is that the majority of composition textbooks and pedagogies in the past and even in the present promote a current-traditional view of research, which entails promulgating a problematic notion of originality and emphasizing the importance of gathering and correctly attributing information to the neglect of examining how information can be used rhetorically to create meaning. While there certainly were (and still are) rhetorically reductive approaches to teaching researched-writing, the findings of my research indicate that this perspective may have been less prevalent than these historians suggest. As John Brereton has noted, “A term like ‘current-traditional’ by its very nature lumps together a vast array of practices in the interest of making a larger point. And it discourages us from looking at a whole range of educational practices that were occurring in those supposedly weak composition courses that proliferated for nearly a century” (xiii). It is my aim to “un-lump” some of the early approaches to researched-writing instruction, to closely explore “the detail, the everyday fabric of history as lived by the student, the teacher, and the general public” (Brereton xiv), so that we can gain a deeper understanding of how classroom genres are discursively maintained by the primary agents involved. This is not to say that I am now going to write the “true” history of researched-writing, but rather that I will construct a usable past that values and attends to some aspects that have been neglected in previous histories.

1.5 The Flattening of Reform

Although these historians contribute to composition studies’ knowledge of the history of researched-writing instruction, the majority of them used their histories to establish the need for reform in how researched-writing is taught in first-year composition.¹⁰ This approach is

¹⁰ For instance, Russell advocates for uniting academic researched-writing with its native disciplinary contexts where it can thrive more organically; there are no general “research skills.” Ballenger, on the other hand, argues

admirable in many respects, but I fear that the goal of figuring out what was wrong with past approaches in order to create a better approach can influence historians to flatten the past in ways that support their argument for reform, which provides another explanation for why historians of researched-writing have been so interested in textbooks—they offer the most reductive perspective on past pedagogies. I do not mean that historians consciously chose to focus on the legacy of textbooks solely to create a reductive past in need of reform, but that the desire to propose a new way of teaching has a way of shaping which aspects of the past are examined and how they are understood. Thus, while Russell, Ballenger, McDonald, Zemliansky, and Davis and Shadle all wrote histories of researched-writing, they must also be understood as belonging to the long history of investigations into and proposals for changes to researched-writing instruction in first-year composition.

While my thesis is not an attempt to articulate a new pedagogical approach to researched-writing instruction, it does carry pedagogical implications. My thesis calls for a more widespread recognition that the genres we teach carry with them histories of institutional and classroom-based negotiation and development, while also bearing the imprint of more widespread socio-cultural shifts in higher education. Analyzing the activities and legacies of the many individuals involved in the emergence and development of researched-writing in first-year composition may

that while traditional approaches to researched-writing in first-year composition are problematic, the “research essay” can address many of those issues by acknowledging students’ level of expertise/knowledge and by emphasizing a more subjective, inquiry-based focus. Alternatively, McDonald does not necessarily advocate for a particular approach to researched-writing instruction, although he does state that it would be more useful to teach freshmen how to use research for a variety of genres than to teach them one “research paper.” Davis and Shadle, building off of previous arguments for new approaches to teaching research in first-year composition, advocate for what they later term “multi-writing”—an approach to research that spans genres, media, and disciplines, flavored by a postmodern preference for the exploration and amplification of mysteries rather than thesis-driven arguments (440). Finally, Zemliansky advocates for a series of principles in researched-writing instruction: 1) a series of research-based writing tasks rather than one research paper, 2) instruction in how to use a greater variety of tools (specifically computer-related) and approaches to gathering data, 3) a pedagogy based in both social-constructivism and expressivism, and 4) a rhetorical emphasis on purpose and audience rather than correct form.

provide insights for current attempts at intervening in researched-writing pedagogy. The majority of prior research done on researched-writing instruction in first-year composition has been in the form of journal articles that were not grounded in researched-writing's history. Although not every article needs to re-inscribe the history of researched-writing, attempts to improve researched-writing instruction could be better served by greater attention to the history of the genre. James Ford claims in his introduction to *Teaching the Research Paper: From Theory to Practice, From Research to Writing* that the edited collection, published in 1995, is the first book-length treatment of researched-writing, and argues that "Almost none of the 200-plus articles published up to 1982, and relatively few since then show any awareness at all that anyone else had ever addressed the topic under discussion" (5). Although this description doesn't apply quite as well to more contemporary research, more attention could be paid in creating new approaches to what has already been attempted in this area, even as far back as the 1910s.

1.6 Intersections between Rhetorical Genre Theory and History

Aside from crafting a multilayered history of researched-writing instruction in order to fill in the gaps of extant histories, this study is guided by work done in rhetorical genre theory, since it looks at the emergence of a particular genre not just in terms of its formal conventions, but also as a form of social action, which can serve as "an index to cultural patterns" and demonstrate how students were instructed "to participate in the actions of a community" (Miller 165). However, because accessing student researched-writing can be quite difficult, another option for gaining insight into the genre is examining instructors' perspectives on student researched-writing, since how they understand the genre and its conventions will shape student writing via assignment sheets, conferences, assigned reading, and in-class instruction. Investigating instructors' purposes for, problems with, and approaches to teaching researched-

writing assignments allows us to consider how instructors in the first half of the twentieth century imagined the kinds of discursive action (and thus roles) available to college students in researched-writing.

However, one problem with a historical study of researched-writing informed by rhetorical genre theory is that some scholars have questioned the rhetorical nature of many genres taught in first-year composition, arguing that they are somehow inauthentic. Although richly theorizing how classroom genres operate as genres is outside the scope of this historical project, I do believe that it is necessary to at least briefly address this issue in order to justify my approach. For instance, Liz Wardle challenges the idea that all classroom genres are full-fledged genres by describing the majority of genres taught in first-year composition as “mutt genres,” since they are taught outside of their natural contexts and become what Lynne Tamor and J.T. Bond termed “pseudotransactional”¹¹ – classroom exercises rather than genres accomplishing transactional purposes. Richard Larson, in perhaps one of the most widely cited articles on the research paper, describes research papers as “a non-form of writing,” claiming that “research paper” is “a generic, cross-disciplinary term” that “has no conceptual or substantive identity” (Larson 813). While I agree with Larson that the term “research paper” is often too vague to be particularly useful (much like “current-traditional”), I do think that classroom genres ought to be considered genres in their own right, even when they are problematic and/or ill-defined. This position is due to my interpretation of Carolyn Miller’s conception of genre as social action, whereby genre is the “rhetorical means for mediating private intentions and social exigence; it motivates by connecting the private with the public, the singular with the recurrent” (163).

¹¹ Although Lynne Tamor and J.T. Bond coined the term “pseudotransactional,” it was a result of synthesizing James Britton’s conception of certain kinds of classroom writing as being “pseudo-informative,” “pseudo-conative,” and “dummy runs.”

Classroom genres fit within this definition because even though research-based writing genres assigned in first-year composition are not “naturally” occurring (meaning that most of them do not occur outside of the classroom and a student would most likely not be motivated to compose in them if s/he were not enrolled in a course), they are still examples of typified discursive responses to recurring rhetorical situations (as genre is commonly defined), albeit in a somewhat unusual way.

Simply put, teachers of first-year composition are responding to the exigencies of the various expectations that their department, their discipline, their institution, and their larger culture place on them as teachers of first-year composition, in conjunction with their own goals/purposes, when they create assignment prompts. The genre (or “meta-genre”) of the assignment prompt, in turn, provides an exigence for students to respond to. Students’ responses constitute a form of social action because they seek to influence their audience (their teacher) in believing that they are capable of inhabiting the roles and performing the rhetorical moves that the assignment prompt called for. If classroom genres are not genres, then it becomes more difficult to make the case that resumes, cover letters, scholarship application essays, statements of purpose for graduate programs, or grant applications are, since these are also genres that elicit via “prompts” of various kinds performances that are intended to demonstrate identities and abilities that the audience desires to see enacted (typically as a prerequisite to giving some kind of reward, e.g. good grades, jobs, money). Thus, although it is strange and complicated, classrooms constitute full-fledged rhetorical situations, and their various genres are used to mediate specific types of meaningful social action. Anis Bawarshi argues that what he calls the “genre function” is not limited to texts more traditionally conceived as belonging to a genre. Rather, he holds that the genre function “constitutes all discourses’ and all writers’ modes of

existence, circulation, and functioning within a society, whether the writer is William Shakespeare or a student in a first-year writing course, and whether the text is a sonnet or a first-year student theme” (338). Ultimately, every text is constituted by its genre and can only convey meaning because of its relationship to other texts. And, perhaps even more importantly, “genres are implicated in the way we experience and enact a great many of our discursive realities, functioning as such on an ideological as well as on a rhetorical level” (Bawarshi 339). Therefore, since considering the “genre function” of all discourse illuminates how it functions on an ideological level, attending to the historical development of classroom genres and the discourses surrounding them provides insight into earlier pedagogies in ways that exploring larger socio-cultural developments cannot.

In the case of classroom genres, one interesting avenue of genre analysis is in seeking to make explicit the kinds of identities and abilities that are being called forth by the audiences of student writing. However, it is not enough to analyze current genres; it is also important to consider the prior forms of the genre and earlier discourses surrounding it, since they can provide insight into the particular values and activities of the time, as well as provide us with a richer understanding of how the genre came to have its current form. This approach is not without precedent in our field; David Russell laments in his article “Rethinking Genre in School and Society: An Activity Theory Analysis” that:

these tacit traditions of student writing have rarely been studied, much less from a historical perspective. In this study I view the various kinds of student writing as genres, typified responses to the activity of a particular institution, discipline, or profession, which have changed along with the educational and professional environments of which they are a part. (19)

Kathryn Fitzgerald examined “the genres employed in a set of student papers written over a hundred years ago to question the possible social effects of generic expectations and limitations on student writing” (116). Although Fitzgerald did not have access to the original assignment prompt that guided the students in her sample, she was able to make persuasive claims regarding students’ construction of what their teacher “wanted” from them, because she understood student writing as “at once both a site of experiment and knowledge-construction and as something else: as a cultural product; that is, as a product of the intense efforts of the schools to socialize students according to certain cultural standards” (118). Fitzgerald’s understanding of student writing is a lens through which I can read my archive; however, unlike Fitzgerald I do not have access to a rich set of student researched-writing from the early twentieth century. And yet, we can learn about the development of genres not only by looking at the genres themselves, but also by looking at the discourse surrounding genres, and how they shape the ways genres are perceived and enacted, because they too can provide insight into the cultural standards being reinforced through instruction in various types of researched-writing.

1.7 Guiding Questions and Concerns

Thus, there are three primary research questions that this study addresses:

- 1) What can institutional archives and journal articles contribute to our current understanding of the history of researched-writing instruction in first-year composition?
- 2) What are the theoretical and pedagogical implications for instructors’ purposes for, problems with, and approaches to researched-writing instruction in first-year composition from the first half of the twentieth century?
- 3) How might greater attention to the history of researched-writing in first-year composition inform our current pedagogical practices?

Understanding the history of researched-writing in first-year composition is valuable because, as Bawarshi argues, “Antecedent genres . . . play a role in constituting subsequent actions, even acts of resistance” (341). There have been numerous attacks on teaching researched-writing in first-year composition; for instance, Carra Leah Hood states that “scholarship since the 1980s has provided evidence of ongoing complaints about the traditional research paper assignment,” and yet in spite of this history of complaint, researched-writing persists. Perhaps the problem is that the reception and implementation of alternative research genres are too strongly influenced by students’ and teachers’ previous experiences with the apparently monolithic research paper, the antecedent genre that newer forms of alternative researched-writing assignments are constructed in resistance to. Amy Devitt asserts that genres should be chosen and integrated into the classroom thoughtfully, because “When writers take up a genre, they take up that genre’s ideology. If they do it unawares, then the genre reinforces that ideology. When teachers select genres to use in the classroom, then, they are selecting ideologies that those genres will instill in students, for good and bad” (339). To take that claim even further, if deep changes need to be made to the curriculum, it is imperative that both the ideological *and* historical nature of genres be taken into consideration; it is not enough to propose that students should write “research essays” or “multi-writing” without also considering the web of historical relationships in which those genres are enmeshed. Michael Apple asserts that “The theories, policies, and practices involved in education are *not* technical. They are inherently ethical and political, and they ultimately involve – once this is recognized – intensely personal choices about what Marcus Raskin calls ‘the common good’” (xx). If the inherently ethical and political nature of even the most minor pedagogical choices is accepted, then it becomes important to examine those decisions critically *and* historically.

I agree with Kathryn Fitzgerald that one of the values of historical research (among many others) is its current cultural power “to enable us to critique still current practices from an outsider’s point of view” (116) – an aspect of historical research that earlier historians of researched-writing have also utilized. By portraying past instruction in researched-writing as being enmeshed with a current-traditional ideology, historians were able to critique current problematic practices as vestiges of a current-traditional history, and persuade their fellow teachers and scholars that it is time for a change. While this was a productive critique in that there have been and still are reductive approaches to researched-writing, the historical perspective enabling the critique has the potential to limit how we define and understand the problems associated with first-year researched-writing. Because it establishes a progressive narrative, once we reject the last vestiges of current-traditionalism, we should presumably have solved the problem of researched-writing. However, by understanding the past differently, we may also gain new perspectives on the present. Thus, through answering my three primary research questions, I hope to also provide a critique of contemporary practices. In answering my first question, I aim to simultaneously cause researchers to consider devoting more attention to not only researching and articulating best practices for our field, but to examining the historical and current roles that institutional environments and instructor perceptions play in how and why our current best practices came to hold their privileged positions. The critique embedded in my second question is one that has been gaining traction in our field: archival documentation of student, teacher, and administrative perspectives poses challenges (explicit and implicit) to an over-reliance on grand narratives in the conceptualization of our field, particularly the over-use of “current-traditional” as a category to describe anything distasteful in current and historical composition instruction. Finally, through my third question I hope to encourage composition

instructors to continue to reflect on the genres they choose to include or exclude in their classrooms, and more specifically to critically examine the kinds of values and assumptions those genres communicate to their students.

1.8 Outline of Subsequent Chapters

In Chapter Two I argue for the importance of drawing on institutional and journal archives, outline how I selected and analyzed my corpus, and explain how my methodology intersects with and diverges from previous approaches to historicizing researched-writing as a genre. Thus, Chapter Two establishes the value of looking at both unpublished institutional archives and published journal articles, as well as the importance of systematically analyzing a historical corpus in order to diminish the likelihood that a few texts dominate the narrative. This allows me in the next three chapters to share the findings of my analysis, beginning in Chapter Three with delineating instructor purposes for researched-writing. Those purposes are read alongside and in contrast with current explanations for why researched-writing became an established genre of first-year composition, ultimately concluding that while there are a variety of purposes for teaching researched-writing, they all seem to be motivated by an ethic of care with the differences arising from the variety of ways in which instructors define students' needs. In Chapter Four I turn my attention to the various kinds of problems with researched-writing that instructors articulated, and examine how those problems are related to instructor purposes for and approaches to researched-writing instruction. I argue that the problems instructors identified arose from multiple sources (the nature of the assignment itself, students' uptake, other instructors' perspectives, and available resources), and that rather than being solely an indication of the vexed relationship composition instructors have had with the genre, the problems instructors identified also served as exigences driving pedagogical innovation. Chapter Five

describes and analyzes various approaches to teaching researched-writing, while simultaneously arguing that these diverse approaches challenge homogenous depictions of twentieth century composition instruction and remind us to re-examine past approaches not only to determine how we should move away from them, but also to see what legacies we might want to continue building on and developing further. Finally, in Chapter Six I summarize my findings, indicate potential areas for further research, and provide a few examples of how attending to the history of researched-writing in first-year composition could inform current pedagogical and theoretical problems.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

In the style of their preeminent disciplinary predecessors, histories of researched-writing have focused on published texts and the inexorable pressure of larger cultural and institutional changes. Russell's work focuses primarily on the influence of the Germanic research ideal in restructuring the university and its subsequent influence on the introduction and development of researched-writing in freshman English courses (70-90). Ballenger insightfully explores the notions of research promulgated by composition textbooks, considering the implications for how we define the purposes for freshman researched-writing and its appropriate modes of discourse (20-46). McDonald argues that it is impossible to address the problems of the research paper without also dealing with the problematic role of first-year composition itself, since their histories are bound up together (139). Davis and Shadle explore the contrast between how the research paper has historically been described and how they view it as being actually enacted and perceived by students (423-426). Finally, Zemliansky, in perhaps the most complete and current history of the research paper, analyzes the archives of *English Journal*, *College English*, *CCC*, *Educational Administration and Supervision*, *School and Society*, *Catholic Educational Review*, *Journal of General Education*, *Research in the Teaching of English*, *Composition Studies*, and the *Journal of Teaching Writing* in order to develop a background against which he could critically read more recent textbook approaches to teaching the research paper (3). However, missing from these histories is the more recent emphasis on the wide variety of student, teacher, and administrator writing that can be found in institutional archives. This is, of course, more a reflection of the historiographical practices of their time than it is a defect in their scholarship.

Nonetheless, the general absence of archival research on the history of researched-writing does present a limitation in our understanding.

2.2 A Dual Archive: Finding Nuance in Indiana University and *English Journal*

To that end, my research will explore the emergence and development of researched-writing instruction via the Department of English archives and faculty collections at Indiana University. Additionally, my archival research is enhanced by a close analysis of the nature and evolution of the scholarly discussion regarding researched-writing as it is represented in the archives of *English Journal* from 1912–1962.¹² This dual focus recommends itself because it helps to recreate the multidimensionality of history, while also allowing me to test my assumptions about the archive against the record provided in published articles and vice versa.

Indiana University was selected for this study because of its rich history of composition instruction, its wealth of archived materials, and the relative accessibility of the documents. Additionally, Indiana University offers a unique perspective on early twentieth century researched-writing instruction. On the one hand, it appears to have been fairly typical. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Indiana University was a relatively recently formed land-grand institution of higher education; Stith Thompson, the first director of first-year composition at Indiana University (1921), received his PhD from Harvard. In 1895 the English program at Indiana University was considered so typical that a description of it was included in a report commissioned by the literary magazine *The Dial*, and published as *English in American*

¹² This fifty-year period was selected because it roughly coincides with the time that researched-writing in first-year composition began to be more prevalent. The beginning date selected is 1912 because it marks the first issue of *English Journal*, and the end date is 1962 because it is just after Ambrose N. Manning's 1961 survey showing that a majority of colleges/universities assign researched-writing in first-year composition. Prior to 1912 there are only a few scattered references to researched-writing; for instance, Bruce Ballenger points to Charles Sears Baldwin's 1906 *Educational Review* article as "the first and most influential public voice for the freshman research paper" (31), while Zemliansky argues that by the end of the 1920s, the research paper had become a "defined genre" of college writing (7). On the other end, by the 1950s the amount of articles published on researched-writing in Freshman English dramatically increased (Zemliansky 8).

Universities, by Professors in the English Departments of Twenty Representative Institutions (reproduced in Brereton 166-168). On the other hand, Indiana University had several unique features that illustrate the importance of institutional dynamics in understanding curricular developments. For instance, Indiana University's composition program bore the legacy of Frank Aydelotte, who during his time as an associate professor at Indiana University from 1908-1915, was the first to introduce the "idea course"¹³ as an alternative to Harvard's theme-based composition course (Brereton 16-17). Thus, Indiana University provides an excellent example of how an institution's curricula are simultaneously shaped by the activities of other institutions while also cultivating unique practices and legacies.

In terms of document selection, the parameters of my research were fairly open; they included any documents mentioning researched-writing, which ultimately included memos, assignment descriptions, and syllabi. I tried to select a sufficient array of archival documents so as to effectively accomplish the aims of this project, which includes "keep[ing] the past a plural and contested resource" (Carr et al. 20), but archival documents directly referring to freshman researched-writing are scarce. My primary documents are from the perspective of department administrators and teachers, since archival and institutional restrictions made it difficult for me to acquire documents reflecting early twentieth century student perspectives on researched-writing assignments in first-year composition. Thus, while my archival research at Indiana University yielded a wealth of resources, it is by no means exhaustive. When I began this study I had hoped my corpus would be balanced between institutional and journal documents, but as I compiled my dual archive, I found that institutional documents explicitly discussing student researched-writing were few and far between. However, I decided to keep the dual focus because the

¹³ According to Brereton, it "consisted of close analysis of important essays, a sort of literary nonfiction course with the emphasis upon the structure of the ideas, definitely not the style, and rarely the effect" (16-17).

institutional documents I found were so rich and offered compelling (albeit anecdotal) evidence for what researched-writing pedagogy might have looked like at the institutional level.

Although this project could have focused entirely on Indiana University, it is beneficial to not become so narrowly focused on one sphere of activity that its larger context is forgotten; for this project, the larger context is the pedagogical activities occurring at other institutions of higher education across the United States. As David Gold articulates, future historiographic research needs to and will “increasingly seek to locate pedagogical practices within their wider spheres of historical development, better understand the interplay between local and global patterns, and acknowledge the mixed goals and hybrid forms that most often mark classroom practice” (22). There are multiple ways to provide a larger context for the institutional activities at Indiana University, such as wider shifts in higher education as a whole, composition pedagogy as circulated by textbooks, or articles in any of the small number of journals dedicated to education in the first half of the twentieth century. However, the articles published in *English Journal* seemed the best option because it is often considered one of the earliest journals in Rhetoric and Composition, and because, as Maureen Goggin argues, “Professional literature and the apparatuses that maintain it are important objects of inquiry because among the function that academic journals serve, perhaps the most important, yet the least understood, is that of gatekeeper, of authorizing and authoring intellectual and institutional pursuits” (xv). As a gatekeeper, *English Journal* published articles on researched-writing that fit within what was deemed appropriate and useful for the publication. What that means seems to be fairly broad, although distinctly practical in orientation. Leila Christenbury, in “A Brief History of *English Journal*,” states that “almost every editor would either solicit or publish articles that were similarly specific, pointed, and which contained calls for reform and change and used research to

underscore their ideas.” Furthermore, Brereton argues that *English Journal* and its parent organization, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), had “distinctly pedagogic aims that fostered a Midwestern, egalitarian attitude toward education rather than the Eastern elitist approach” (24). Thus, although a range of approaches to teaching researched-writing were published, there was a distinctly pedagogical, can-do, problem-solving orientation in *The English Journal*’s articles. Furthermore, although Zemliansky did a fairly comprehensive broad study of the research paper in academic journal articles, there are quite a few articles he did not discuss from the *English Journal* because they were not explicitly focused on the research paper. However, these small comments or asides can also reveal important perspectives.

In addition to articles from *The English Journal*, I also analyzed articles published in the college edition of *English Journal*, which was published from 1928-1938, and *College English*, beginning with its initial publication in 1939. Originally my analysis was limited to articles in *English Journal* due to its early publication date and its focus on all levels of English education. However, soon after its initial publication in 1912, *English Journal* became primarily a journal written by and for high school English teachers (as it is today). In 1928 W. Wilbur Hatfield, the journal’s owner and 40-year editor, began publishing a college edition with a few articles geared towards increasing college-level readership, which then became *College English* in 1939 (Hook 84). This decision may have been prompted by a few NCTE members deciding to break off and found the College English Association (Hook 123). Thus, while there are articles published in *English Journal* on college composition (and high school composition in relationship to college composition), it is necessary to look at the larger family of publications *English Journal* was associated with in order to remain focused on instruction in researched-writing in the first-year college composition classroom.

2.3 A Coding Matrix

Besides attending more closely to the resources available in institutional archives, this project differs from previous historical accounts of researched-writing instruction in delineating an explicit methodology for analyzing its corpus. While previous research into the history of researched-writing articulates guiding research questions or concerns, the authors do not describe a consistent methodology, which obscures their principles for selection, and naturalizes their interpretations. Additionally, previous histories of researched-writing have been largely incremental, based on scarce, selective evidence. However, as institutional archives become more widely available due to better data curation practices and increasing digitization, it is possible to develop a methodology more closely tied to the archive, such as inductive coding. In order to more systematically address my research questions, I chose to code both the articles from *English Journal* and the archival materials from Indiana University according to the *purposes for*, the *problems with*, and the *approaches to* researched-writing they articulate or represent. I settled on this taxonomy at first as a result of inductive observation of patterns in how researched-writing was discussed in journal articles; authors often felt they needed to describe or defend why researched-writing is taught, how they were teaching it, or how it should be taught differently (and sometimes they would do all three). Although closely coding texts based on inductively created categories is a methodology more typically associated with ethnographic fieldnotes than with historiography, the methodology aided me in seeing other narratives beyond current-traditionalism or the Germanic research ideal. Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw offer a series of questions to guide the beginning of the coding process in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, and I found two of them to be particularly useful in reading historical texts: “How do members talk about, characterize, and understand what is going on?”

What assumptions are they making?” (177). these kinds of questions focused my attention on instructors’ context-specific articulations of researched-writing, enabling a more textured picture of researched-writing’s development to emerge. Thus, my categories arose from the rhetorical moves I saw instructors making, and when applied systematically, allowed me to identify trends that both reinforce and subvert current understandings of researched-writing’s history.

Analyzing *purposes for* researched-writing attends to the various rationales offered for why researched-writing should be taught in the first place; they explain the perceived value of researched-writing. For instance, Norman J. Whitney at Syracuse University in 1928 states that one of the primary purposes of researched-writing is to teach students how to use library resources: “We even aspire to a term paper based on research as a means of teaching methods of library investigation and the organization of thought” (“Ability Grouping Plus” 563). Exploring *problems with* researched-writing illuminates the various kinds of resistance to researched-writing instruction that have challenged the reasons for why it should be taught, or specific approaches to how it is taught. For example, Annette Cummings in her 1950 article “An Open Letter to Teachers of English” lamented the age-old issue of plagiarism by asserting that “when 50 per cent or more of the papers handed in are examples of the most flagrant plagiarism and reaction against the underlying purposes of the paper, I am driven to an analysis of the situation, which leads me to the conclusion that researched-writing has no place in the undergraduate curriculum” (38). And finally, identifying a variety of *approaches to* researched-writing reveals the ways in which researched-writing instruction responds to (or fails to respond to) *purposes for* and *problems with* researched-writing. Angell Matthewson, in his 1941 article “Long Compositions Based on Research,” describes his variety of approaches to improving the quality of freshman researched-writing; one option “is to have each writer read and explain a prospectus

for his paper before a seminar group, at which the instructor is present in the capacity of competent critic. The members of the group, however, will probably offer the most frank and valuable criticism” (461-462). Thus, while each category interpolates the others to some extent, they each represent a different way of reading the corpus.

During my first reading of the texts, I identified any passages that discussed researched-writing. I entered those quotes into a three-column spreadsheet, identifying the *source* of the quote, including a *transcript* of the quote, and writing my initial *thoughts on or reactions* to the quote. After these quotes had been entered into a spreadsheet (one for Indiana University materials, and one for journal articles), I re-read each of my entries and color-coded them according to *purposes for*, *problems with*, or *approaches to* researched-writing as follows:

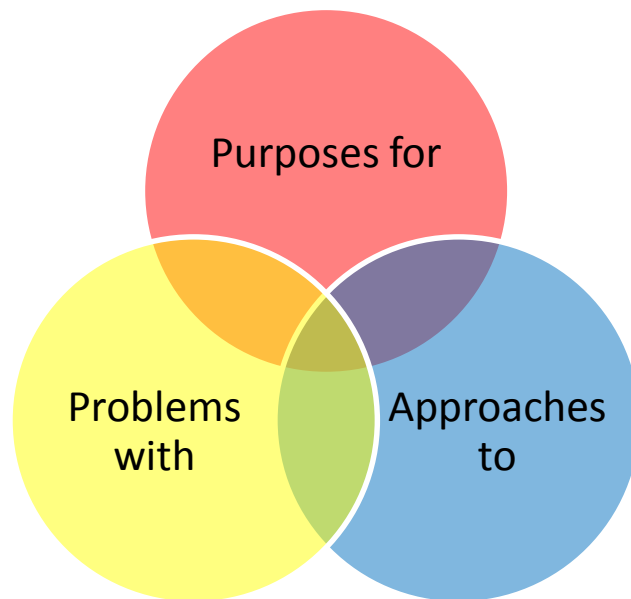


Figure 1. Venn Diagram of Coding Matrix

The majority of the passages belonged to only one category or another; there were some instances where the passage conveyed aspects of two of the categories, and was therefore coded

as such, using the secondary colors green, orange, and purple (see Appendix 1). If I found a quote did not quite fit into any of those categories, I moved it into a separate document of general research notes, since it could still provide useful contextual information.

2.3.1 Identifying Purposes for Researched-Writing

Materials coded as *purposes for researched-writing* explicitly or implicitly addressed possible reasons for why researched-writing should be taught in first-year composition. They ranged anywhere from a casual reference that researched-writing is supposed to serve as an introduction to academic writing, to a fully developed argument that the purpose of researched-writing is to teach students how to interact with sources. This category could include proposals for new purposes for researched-writing, but it would not include arguments for why the old purposes are not useful (that would be coded as *problems with researched-writing*), nor would it include suggestions for how those new purposes could be practically enacted in the classroom (that would fall under *approaches to teaching researched-writing*). In other words, purposes for researched-writing reveal the many different ways in which composition teachers justified to themselves and others the need for researched-writing instruction.

2.3.2 Identifying Problems with Researched-Writing

Materials coded as *problems with researched-writing* explicitly or implicitly challenged how and/or why researched-writing is taught in first-year composition. They could range anywhere from a casual reference that researched-writing is a difficult genre to teach, to an explicit argument that the traditional research paper (however they are defining the genre) is flawed and should either be reformed or done away with. This category could include attacks on specific purposes for or approaches to teaching researched-writing, but it would not include

suggestions for how those problems might be rectified (either through new purposes or approaches) – those suggestions belong in one of the other two categories. It is important to grasp the full range of problems associated with research-based writing instruction in first-year composition in order to demonstrate that researched-writing has been considered a problematic genre for quite some time, but also to show the variety of issues scholars have had with researched-writing instruction.

2.3.3 Identifying Approaches to Researched-Writing

Materials coded as *approaches to researched-writing* explicitly or implicitly suggested how, at the time, researched-writing was or should be taught, including the expected conventions of researched-writing in first-year composition. They could range anywhere from a casual reference that the typical research paper consists of 2,000 words, to a fully outlined lesson plan or semester-long sequence of assignments and activities. This category could include suggestions for a new approach to teaching researched-writing, but it would not address the underlying purposes for that particular approach, nor would it specify the problems associated with older approaches to teaching researched writing, as they would fall under the other two categories. Identifying approaches to researched-writing illuminates the pedagogical creativity and limitations of the past, as well as the relationship between how instructors understand purposes for or problems with researched-writing, and how they actually enacted those abstractions.

2.4 Conclusion

It is my goal, as Gretchen Flesher Moon articulates in her introduction to *Local Histories: Reading the Archives of Composition*, to avoid constructing a single narrative of the history of researched-writing, “but rather to extend, challenge, complicate, and thereby enrich the narrative as it has thus far developed” (Moon 3). Thus, while I intend to challenge the over-reliance on

current-traditionalism and the Germanic research ideal for explaining how researched-writing emerged and developed, my focus is on re-populating the past with the individuals and institutions who discursively produced and maintained the need for researched-writing in first-year composition. Of course, avoiding the construction of a grand narrative does not mean I am completely neutral in how I select and analyze texts; as Moon states, “We necessarily read the past from where we stand now” (11). Therefore, in the spirit of transparency, I offer a few of my underlying assumptions. First, I assume that the past is inherently multiple and fragmentary, with constellations of agents, legacies, and institutions co-evolving and co-constituting one another in complex ways; therefore, history is always partial, and always informed by the interests and values of the age in which it is written. Second, archival documents are a rich resource of texts that can provide insight not only into *what* was happening at a given moment in time, but also *why*, because they bear the imprint of socio-cultural attitudes and roles. And third, narrowly focused histories that do not claim to be complete nor representative of the whole can, nevertheless, draw our attention to people and practices that might otherwise be ignored or forgotten, and thereby aid us in developing more robust theories. With these assumptions in mind, the next chapter will share findings from the category of *purposes for researched-writing*, demonstrating that there were a variety of motivations driving instruction in researched-writing, and yet that variety appears to be informed by one over-arching pedagogical ethic.

CHAPTER THREE

PURPOSES FOR RESEARCHED-WRITING

3.1 Introduction

Previous historians of researched-writing have focused on the influence of larger socio-cultural trends such as the Germanic research ideal (Russell; Davis and Shadle; Zemliansky), a current-traditional emphasis on correctness and objectivity (Connors; Ballenger; Davis and Shadle; Zemliansky), and the massive expansion in library resources and infrastructure in the early twentieth century (McDonald; Zemliansky). While those material and ideological pressures do affect how instructors justify their pedagogical choices, those choices are also influenced by their perceptions of what students need practically, emotionally, or intellectually. In a 1957 *College English* article entitled “The Freshman Research Paper: Hope at Last?”, Eric Steel asserts that “The fervor with which English instructors cling to the research paper while fads and philosophies come and go indicates their conviction that a good term paper, like good government, is a thing well worth striving after” (365). Although the specific forms researched-writing takes have (somewhat) shifted since 1957, this statement still holds true. Steel attributes to researched-writing a durability that is actively maintained by the “convictions” of instructors, convictions that, despite other upheavals, appear to constantly result in the same effect—the maintenance of researched-writing in first-year composition. Thus, instructor perceptions and values play a key role in the emergence, maintenance, and evolution of classroom genres.

3.2 Preparing for the Ever-Present Future: The Utility of Researched-Writing

Although it may seem obvious that any curriculum is justified by how it will (purportedly) prepare students for future coursework or jobs, researched-writing appears to hold a unique relationship to this type of rationale; because researched-writing in first-year

composition is not meant to fulfill its larger generic purpose, its existence must be justified in some other way. Typically, the purpose for doing academic researched-writing is to produce new knowledge within a given field (Russell; Davis and Shadle; Ballenger). Since first-year college students are significantly constrained by their level of background knowledge and time allotted for research, their researched-writing can be perceived as not contributing anything new, and rather constitutes an opportunity for students to learn how to go about a set of research *activities*, without necessarily resulting in a valued *product* of research. Freshman researched-writing is valued, from this perspective, not for the writing that is composed, but for the possibility that the process students undergo in its production will cultivate in them valuable knowledge or abilities.

There are multiple dimensions of the preparation rationale in Indiana University's archive and in *English Journal* and *College English* that are not explored in larger-scale histories. Russell argues that the downward pressure of the Germanic research ideal led instructors at lower levels to begin teaching researched-writing so their students would be prepared for it when they encountered it again in the future (91). Furthermore, according to McDonald, the susceptibility of first-year composition to the pressure of what is being done in upper-level courses is due to the unique service nature of first-year composition, wherein it must always justify what it does by its value to upper-level coursework (139-140). While many instructors viewed researched-writing as preparatory for writing similar genres in future coursework, others understood utility differently. Some instructors believed that the preparatory function of researched-writing was only valuable for some students; other instructors argued that it benefited *all* students in their future jobs, academic or not; some maintained that it prepared students for future coursework, even if those future courses did not require researched-writing; and others maintained that it had immediate value for students in addition to future value.

Russell and McDonald's contention that researched-writing in first-year composition was specifically intended to prepare students for upper-level coursework is corroborated early on in the twentieth century. A 1914-1917 Indiana University "Memoranda for Instructors" teaching English 7,¹⁴ explicitly argues that what is taught in first-year composition courses should prepare students for their other courses: "a course which is the substratum of every other course in a university should deal primarily with the *organization of material* and *the thinking out of serious problems*. Freshman composition should certainly prepare for the sort of writing required in courses in literature, history, economics, philosophy, and science, which the student will shortly elect" (7).¹⁵ While "organization of material" and "thinking out of serious problems" are rather vague and seem as though they could be applied to multiple classroom genres, the phrase "collection and arrangement of materials" first appears in the description of a set of long themes intended to introduce students to library use.

The preparation argument also appears in the first *English Journal* article to directly address researched-writing. In his 1917 article "Roast Beef Instead of Hash," George Starr Lasher details an experiment he attempted in his University of Michigan "Freshman rhetoric" course (664). Lasher replaced the "inevitable" themes on "My First Big Football Game" and others like it with a semester-long investigation into students' vocational aspirations. This

¹⁴ At the time, English 7 was a two-semester composition course that had replaced English 2, an introductory literature course, in 1906 (Gray 67-68). It is unclear who authored the document; it might have been Will David Howe, who was the chairman of the English department at IU from 1906-19. At this point there is no official director for Elementary Composition (Stith Thompson was the first director, holding the position from 1923-36). Additionally, at the top there is a handwritten note that reads, "I thought you might like to see this, since it gives a fair notion of what we try to do in English 7" and is signed by R.A. Rice, an associate professor of English at the time.

¹⁵ This argument appears again at Indiana University from 1956-1957, indicating that it is a recurring way of justifying researched-writing: "In the third semester (W103) you will be required to apply in an intensive way the skills you have gained earlier to important and useful types of writing, such as formal correspondence, reports, memoranda, abstracts, and - for your immediate use - examination essays and the factual investigative paper, the latter being kinds of writing which you will constantly be called upon to submit in other courses" ("Your Work in Composition" 7).

research culminated in a “long theme” of 2,500 words “discussing a vocation in its relation to the individual writer and carefully analyzing its demands and the individual's ability to meet them” (667). He justified this experiment by arguing that in the required freshman rhetoric course (and specifically in source-based writing) “there is a hope that this training will function in the preparation of theses, reports, and other forms of expression demanded in history, sociology, psychology, and various collegiate courses” (Lasher 665). While Lasher clearly believes that instructing students how to “secure material, organize it logically, and express it clearly” (664) will help them be successful in future situations calling for researched-writing, he also believes that the assignment could have immediate value for students, since it might help them clarify their career goals and develop a plan for reaching them. Lasher’s concern for student perceptions of the project’s immediate value is reflected in his decision to ask his students to complete a questionnaire at the end of the semester on their perceptions of specific aspects of the course; he reported that overall, out of sixty-two respondents, “Fifty-four considered the study worthwhile; four asserted that it had not proved valuable to them although they felt that it had to most of the students, while three others voted it a sheer waste of time. One was doubtful” (672). Although Lasher doesn’t seem to believe that one of the purposes of freshman research is to create new knowledge in a disciplinary sense, he does view it as potentially providing students with an opportunity to synthesize knowledge from external sources with self-knowledge in order to create a text that has the potential to shape their life goals and trajectories.

Additionally, arguments for researched-writing’s future utility are not limited to the college composition course. Angell Matthewson, a high school English teacher at Central High School in Trenton, New Jersey, wrote an article for *English Journal* entitled “Long Compositions Based on Research,” where he presents an extended argument for why high school

seniors should be required to write a “long composition,” and then details how that project might be accomplished. Matthewson recommends first having students analyze their interests, and then, once they have determined what they are writing about, he recommends organizing the students into panels, where they might orally present the fruits of their research. Matthewson then provides them with feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of their oral presentations, which is intended to help them further develop their thinking on the subject for when they actually write their “long compositions.” Although Matthewson provides justification along the way for specific components of his proposed approach to researched-writing, he ends his article with the preparation argument:

When this procedure has been completed, the result in many cases will still not be very original, but the pupil will be sure to have derived certain advantages from doing it.

Perhaps the greatest of these will be that, if he goes to college, requirements for writing theses there will not come as a great shock to him. Having done something similar in the secondary school, he will be able to perform the task creditably in college. This type of writing provides excellent mental discipline for any pupil, whether he eventually goes to college or not. The ability to plan a course of action over an extended period of time, to gather information, to digest and organize it, to write it, to interpret its meaning clearly, and finally to authenticate every item used is a process which will probably be useful to the pupil later on in life no matter what vocation he enters. (Matthewson 462)

There are several things interesting about this quote. First, because it is not in the context of a first-year composition classroom, it undermines the strength of McDonald’s claim that the rhetorical limitations of the research paper are uniquely tied to first-year composition’s service nature; that service orientation appears in high school as well. Perhaps, then, when researched-

writing is taught and the end-goal is not the production of new knowledge within a given field, then it is of necessity a service-oriented genre, providing students with the opportunity to begin to develop an understanding of how to textually interact with and use the ideas of others, essentially trying on the mindset of a researcher by creating new knowledge for themselves without fully inhabiting the role by creating new knowledge for other researchers within a specific discipline. Second, the author is not just focused on how researched-writing can serve students' future writing activities in higher education; he believes there is something inherently beneficial in the act of constructing researched-writing.

However, belief in the manifold future benefits of researched-writing was not a universal perspective; Annette Cummings, an instructor at Dearborn Junior College, wrote in 1950 "An Open Letter to Teachers of English" for the Round Table section of *English Journal*, refuting the idea that the research paper could provide useful experience for anything outside of the work done in graduate school. She explains the problems she has experienced with the genre in lower-level coursework by arguing that "the very nature of research is such that it can be handled only by the type of mind that is concerned—from its own motivation—with a highly specialized subject and method" (Cummings 39). Thus, Cummings' belief in the inherently specialized nature of academic researched-writing leads her to conclude that it is not beneficial for students who do not plan to go on to graduate school, and therefore has no place in freshman level coursework: "We must face the fact that not every undergraduate is being prepared for a life dedicated to research in the graduate school" (Cummings 39). W. Arthur Boggs, an instructor at Portland State College, makes a similar argument in a 1958 open letter published in *English Journal*; however, he does not advocate for researched-writing's banishment from first-year composition. Published in the "Shop Talk" section of *English Journal* and entitled "Dear

Principal” (and it really was originally sent to a high school principal in Portland), Boggs actually argues that researched-writing belongs in college composition; however, his argument is similar to Cummings’ in his contention that teaching researched-writing in high school actually hinders students from learning it in college, since they are only able at the high school level to produce a document that is “a hodge-podge of poorly assorted opinion, poorly organized, poorly written, poorly documented” (86). Like Cummings, but shifting the argument down a level, he dismisses the idea that researched-writing could be useful for anyone who does not go to college: “Nor is the argument valid that many students will not go to college but still will need to know how to prepare a research paper. People in business who need to know how to prepare research papers are either taught to do so on the job, or their education in a regular college composition course is financed by the company” (Boggs 87). Both Boggs and Cummings believe in the preparatory value of researched-writing instruction; they just don’t believe it is equally necessary for all students, since they define its function in a narrow utilitarian sense as preparing students to write other very similar pieces of academic researched-writing in the future (and therefore only the students who will actually write those future genres need instruction in researched-writing).

Three issues later in *English Journal* in 1958, Katherine Burton responds to Boggs’ critique of teaching researched-writing in high school. A faculty member of Wheaton College, Burton reports that after querying local high schools, she found that the one assignment nearly all the schools unanimously assign is a 2,000-word research paper at the junior level, and a 3,000-word research paper at the senior level. Burton does not directly address Boggs’ argument against teaching researched-writing in high school, but rather obliquely defends its continued presence in high school by appealing to consensus opinions. Burton summarizes a conversation

on the subject of researched-writing at the School and College Conference on English in 1958, saying that “The high school teachers agreed that their students find the paper a rewarding kind, and the college teachers agreed that it is a good experience for students to get started on these papers while still in high school” (292). Burton also draws on personal, anecdotal knowledge of student perceptions of researched-writing in high school, stating, “I have found that not more than two students in a class of twenty report that they have never written a library paper before college; these students feel handicapped” (Burton 292). While Cummings and Boggs are stirring the waters of dissent against researched-writing instruction in *English Journal*, Burton holds to her position, believing that it reflects the majority viewpoint. Apparently, for Burton it is enough that most people agree researched-writing at the high school level is beneficial, and therefore Boggs and Cummings’ concerns don’t need to be directly addressed.

Finally, while researched-writing is frequently constructed as being necessary for preparing for college level, upper-level, or graduate coursework, it is not always because it will help students construct researched-writing in the future. In a 1947 article in *College English* entitled “The Language Areas,” Charles Ranous argues that knowing how to write a research paper will enable students to do it again “as a means of gaining content in university courses” (154). Ranous does not expand on what he means by this, but he appears to be arguing that researched-writing provides a structure wherein students can synthesize and make meaning out of their course content.

3.3 Cultivating the Curious Researcher: The Affect of Researched-Writing

Besides a concern for students’ preparation for the future, there are purposes for researched-writing articulated at Indiana University and in *English Journal* and *College English* that arise from the relationship between instructors and students. As instructors interact with their

students, their perceptions of how students feel about the course can inform how they approach their instruction, and even affect their purposes for teaching particular assignments. Thus, after the preparation argument, the next most frequently offered purpose for instruction in researched-writing is its ability to inspire students' personal interest in educational topics and the activity of research. In Indiana University's "Memoranda for Instructors" (1914-1917), there is a section detailing the kinds of subjects suitable for student themes. It breaks them into two types: themes based on personal experience, and themes requiring investigation to answer a question on a subject about which "every educated man should have a well-informed opinion" (5). It is argued that although subjects for researched-writing may be based in personal interest "the ultimate test of their value and suitability is whether or not they *become* matters of personal interest" (6). This perspective seems contrary to the depiction of early "current-traditional" researched-writing as a dry performance of grammatical and bibliographical correctness.

Doug Angus, a faculty member at St. Lawrence University, wrote a 1948 *College English* article entitled "Avoiding the Pseudo-Research Paper." In this article, Angus calls for more robust researched-writing instruction, since learning to write formal research "is one of the most important moments in the student's entire college career, and the teacher has a great responsibility to see that it is both an interesting and a practical experience" (191). Here, students must not only know *how* to do research, but also feel *engaged* in the activity of research (and therefore invested in what higher education has to offer). Although Zemliansky spends considerable time in his second chapter discussing Angus's article and praising it for attention to the "rhetorical aspects of composing instead of the minutiae of citing and documenting" (46), he also undermines the impact of Angus's article by emphasizing that it is an exception to the norm and instead chooses to characterize the majority of the writers during the 1930s and 1940s as

treating the research paper as “an old and quite annoying problem” or a “necessary evil” (30), although he provides little direct evidence from the journals for this assertion. Depicting early twentieth-century conversations in this way supports Zemliansky’s overarching contention that researched-writing is a historically problematic genre that needs to be updated by aligning it more with the values and best practices of expressivist or social-constructionist theories.

However, I contend that Angus’s interest in creating a research-based assignment students can feel invested in is not a rare exception, and that perhaps this purpose is more widespread than has been previously realized. The interest in students’ engagement with research often centers on satisfying, appealing to, or inspiring students’ curiosity. Ballenger argues that in the 1930’s there was a shift in composition textbooks away from exploratory exposition meant for a general audience to the view that researched-writing is exclusively “the product of serious scholarship, a distinct genre with a specialized audience whose purpose is to extend and build knowledge” (34). Ballenger later in his book uses this shift as a launching point for a call to return to a more expository (rather than argumentative), general (rather than specialized), and exploratory (rather than thesis-driven) approach to research, an approach he then turned into a composition textbook entitled *The Curious Researcher*. However, exploratory researched-writing did not disappear after the 1930s, only to re-emerge at the turn of the century; there are quite a few instances of instructors who use the term “curious” and its cognates after the 1930 shift in textbook approaches that Ballenger sees, which further indicates the limitations in using textbooks as the definitive source for the pedagogy of an earlier period.

For instance, Cecilia Hotchner at Hunter College sought to call forth something akin to Ballenger’s “curious researcher” in her short article “A Research Exercise for Freshman Composition,” published in *College English* in 1949. In this article, she proposes that students

should be eased into research by writing a short encyclopedia-style researched essay on the origins of a famous saying. Her justification is that “the students really enjoy the little research that is required because, probably for the first time, they sense the need to satisfy their own curiosity,” a curiosity aroused because the quotations “have become distinctively their own” (Hotchner 340-341). Three years later in 1952 at the University of Washington, Seattle, Janna Burgess concurs with the view that research should inspire curiosity. In her *College English* article “An Overall-Class Subject for the Research Paper,” Burgess articulates the belief that it is important to guide students in the selection of a viable research subject, because it “should also be one whose value the students could recognize and that would appeal to their curiosity” (210-211). And again, Barbara Alden, a faculty member of Wells College, claims in a 1953 article in *College English* that researched-writing provides a way for students to investigate and write on subjects they are “curious about” (49). The emphasis on students’ interests and curiosity seem quite antithetical to the teacher-centered dimension of current-traditional researched-writing instruction. I do recognize that allowing students to pursue their own interests can fit within current-traditionalism because it allows students to avoid confronting and deeply exploring subjects that might challenge their worldviews; at the same time, the recurring concern about student perceptions, experiences, and feelings does buck the stereotype of current-traditional pedagogy.

One explanation for why the desire to engage students’ curiosity may have emerged as a purpose for researched-writing is that it could serve as an antidote to the dry reproduction of rote form that was a holdover from past and contemporaneous theme writing (a current-traditional genre if there ever was one), where the teacher provided the subject and students were expected to come up with something to say. This practice was problematic enough when students wrote

about their own perspectives on the subject, but its underlying issues became even more apparent when students were required to incorporate sources. Since students had no larger purpose than to write about the subject (something, anything), their use of sources served as a replacement for their own ideas, resulting in a “patchwork quilt” (Stewart 406) of quotations, with students taking the “easy way of compilations” (Arms 24), or outright “cribbing” (Fleece 273).

3.4 Learning to Research, or Learning to Library?

Another purpose quite often stated that could potentially serve to counteract random source use is teachers’ desire to encourage students to learn how to think more deeply and coherently through researched-writing. In one of the few sources in my corpus addressing the purposes of researched-writing instruction from the 1920s,¹⁶ Cora Dolbee claims that the “interpretation of quoted or cited ideas is also new and worthy training in both thought and expression” (221). Thus, according to Dolbee, requiring students to understand and make use of sources expands their thinking in ways that other available genres (namely, experience-based theme writing) don’t seem to offer. Although there is overlap between teachers who desired to inspire their students’ curiosity and those who wanted to develop the rigor of their thinking, the two motives did not always coincide, since students could feel engaged with their research, and yet not think about their research in ways that were considered intellectually sophisticated.

For instance, in 1936 Rachel Salisbury asserts in her *English Journal* article “The Psychology of Composition” that the kind of thinking promoted by researched-writing is not necessarily the rich interplay between sources and students’ thoughts that Dolbee suggests; rather, researched-writing has ascended in prominence because it fulfills “the demand for

¹⁶ It is not entirely clear why there were so few sources on researched-writing’s purpose in the 20s and 30s, it may be due to a period of perceived stability for the genre, wherein it is assumed that the value of researched-writing instruction does not need to be articulated, and practices are instead quietly proliferated in composition handbooks.

objective thinking” better than “the more subjective compositions of the older curriculums” (357). Salisbury’s claims quite clearly supports Davis and Shadle’s contention that historically, researched-writing is bound up in “modernist ideals of expertise, detachment, and certainty” (418). Furthermore, Connors attributes part of the spread of the research paper as a genre in freshman composition to early twentieth century teachers’ desire to “transcend the personal writing that occupied the early stages of any course” (321). Researched-writing, then, was sometimes promoted because it could potentially train students to always be subservient to published texts and validate their perspectives by seeing if there are authorities who can provide support.

However, that is not the only way in which thinking was discussed in the first half of the twentieth century. Often, “thinking” is simply used to mean being able to purposefully and coherently organize a piece of researched-writing in a way that is intelligible to a reader. Additionally, in a 1952 *College English* article entitled “A New Kind of Argumentative Term Paper,” Herbert Michaels proposes a different vision for the kind of thinking researched-writing can facilitate. First, he asserts that the typical approach to researched-writing is to have students try to find as many sources as possible that support their viewpoints and thereby create “propaganda.” He then addresses this approach by saying that “This experience would be fine if our major objectives were to train Machiavellian politicians or to develop salesmen for South Sea Island real estate. But if we are trying to create the kind of mind that can puncture the windbags of humbugs or that can triumph intellectually over the lyrics of the latest popular song, we are proceeding wrongly” (Michaels 209). Thus, for Michaels, researched-writing can potentially provide the opportunity for students to become critical consumers of texts, able to analyze and refute them.

Nine months later, Dorothy Hockey argues in her *College English* article “Thwarting the Ventriloquistic Freshman” for a perspective similar to Michaels. Hockey claims that students have an “unconscious attitude of submissiveness before printed authority” and must be taught to evaluate the claims of their sources by testing the author’s “opinions by the evidence offered for them” (29). Although it is unclear what kinds of criteria Hockey has in mind for evaluating evidence, her approach is robust because it relies on the student’s ability to analyze the relationship between evidence offered and conclusions drawn, rather than on determining whether a source is inherently credible or not based on who wrote it or where it was published. Elizabeth Wright also sought in her 1956 *College English* article “Teaching the Documented Paper” to encourage her students to read sources critically. Her perspective on critical thinking is not necessarily to have students evaluate the quality of the source’s internal evidence, but rather to read sources against one another, in order to learn how to recognize “propaganda techniques” (Wright 238). Thus, while on the one hand there was a tradition in the first half of the twentieth century of arguing that researched-writing can counteract subjectivity because it requires students to check their thinking against textual authority there was also another discourse that viewed researched-writing as an opportunity to help students become more critical of the texts they read, thereby empowering students rather than dominating them.

Besides advocating for researched-writing instruction in order to teach students particular ways of thinking through and with source material, there was a less abstract reason for the (apparent) necessity of researched-writing instruction. According to Russell, Davis and Shadle, McDonald, Zemliansky, and Connors, the enormous expansion of libraries that took place in the twentieth century necessitated instruction in how to navigate and make use of the increasingly vast resources available, and also necessitated increasing control of students’ research process

and citation practices, since it became ever easier to plagiarize material from works like biographies and encyclopedias. The development of libraries helped enable the ubiquity of researched-writing assignments in first-year composition by providing a clear, practical reason for their existence. However, they do not attend closely enough to the diversity of ways in which the connection between instruction in library resources and researched-writing in first-year composition can affect the genre. When the writing is made subservient to the tool, it may result in students who know how to use the library for future coursework, but it would seem to strip the writing of its vitality. The issue of how instructors present library use to their students is, of course, bound up in ideological perspectives, but it is also directly tied to how instructors define the purpose of the genre in their classrooms.

Norman Whitney in his 1928 *English Journal* article “Ability Grouping Plus” describes the system at Syracuse University of grouping students by ability into either Group C, the “lame duck” students (559) who start with a grammar course, Group B, the average students who start with a composition course, or Group A, the advanced students who start with a literature course. As each student passes their current course, they move up to the next level course, so that all students are required to take the literature course. What is of note regarding researched-writing in Whitney’s article is when he states that in the Group B (composition) course, “We even aspire to a term paper based on research as a means of teaching methods of library investigation and the organization of thought” (563). In Whitney’s formulation, researched-writing is primarily a vehicle for learning how to use the library, rather than the library as a resource for enabling researched-writing.

However, this perspective is rejected by Haskell Block and Sidney Mattis, when they argue in their 1952 *College English* article “The Research Paper: A Co-operative Approach” for

a closer working relationship between librarians and first-year composition instructors. They argue:

Emphasis is not on library materials for their own sake but rather on the approach to these materials as a necessary part of systematic research methods. The good librarian, like the conscientious teacher, knows that the research assignment serves to do much more than to inculcate standards of mechanical correctness; this assignment, if properly carried out, can make it possible for the student to conduct investigations carefully and intelligently. (Block and Mattis 213)

While they provide instruction in “such research tools as the card catalogue, encyclopedias, general and special bibliographies, union lists, and periodical indexes” (Block and Mattis 213), the end goal is for students to be able to make full use of library resources, not just know what they are or how to properly cite them. Additionally, Donald Thackrey cautions in a 1959 *College English* article simply titled “A Freshman Research Paper” that while one of the responsibilities of the Freshman English class is to ensure students receive some instruction in library use, the researched-writing assignment “should not bear the burden alone of carrying freshman students through the door of the library” (188), indicating an early Writing Across the Curriculum consciousness that desired to shift some of the instructional weight born by Freshman English courses to the curricula in other disciplines.

3.5 The Transformative Power of Researched-Writing

Finally, there are a few other less common purposes for teaching researched-writing that are worth acknowledging because they focus less on what researched-writing instruction enables students to do and attends more to how researched-writing might affect the roles students inhabit, and how researched-writing might change their perspectives on and engagement with civic issues

or literature (which could arguably be instantiations of the second most frequently described purpose: inspiring student interest). Leone McBrayer, Head of the English department, and Aletheia Lindsey, a teacher of English, at the Roseville, California Joint Union High School claim in their 1944 *English Journal* article “Co-operative Reports on Current Topics” that in their college-preparatory class, one of the most valuable aspects of requiring students to conduct researched-writing is the opportunity it provides them to share what they have learned: “These reports always prove to be the best of the year. Each student has collected a wealth of material on a specific topic for which he alone has been responsible and therefore appears before his group as an authority, able to answer almost any question put to him by the class” (423). While McBrayer and Lindsey do not elaborate on why it is so valuable for students to appear before the class as an authority, the absence of an explanation implies that they view the opportunity for students to be authorities or experts on their research subjects is inherently gratifying and desirable for students.

Jeffrey Fleece, a faculty member at Western State College in Colorado, goes even further in his 1952 *College English* article “Teacher as Audience,” by arguing not only that it is desirable for students to inhabit the role of expert to their peers, but also in their relationship to their teachers. By gathering knowledge on a particular subject, Fleece contends, a student is able to consider “himself enough of an expert to comment” (273) on the subject, thereby potentially producing higher quality writing than previously accomplished. Fleece believes “The difference in writing skill stems in large part from the student's knowledge that his research has endowed him with facts and ideas which will be new to the teacher” (Fleece 273).

However, some teachers would prefer students not become experts on just any interesting topic, but rather gain knowledge on subjects that could contribute to their civic participation and

awareness. Even as early as 1914 this can be seen in the “Memoranda for Instructors” at Indiana University, where the writer lists a series of subjects suitable for researched-writing, many of which are focused on current events or local issues, and justifies those specific subjects, particularly the question “What is War?” by arguing that it is students’ “duty to the world now and to the future to try by many means to understand the matter more personally and more thoroughly” (6). How students would be expected to answer this question is not entirely clear from the memoranda; however, one of the required texts is *College and the Future*, a composition reader written by Richard Ashley Rice who was an Indiana University faculty member at the time. Rice’s text consists of a collection of essays, and the last three sections of essays in the book are intended to help students grapple with their “Place in the World.” In the bibliography section that provides recommended resources for further study if students wish to take up a research question associated with that section, there are quite a few texts grappling with the issue of war, including Edmund Burke’s “Reflections on the Revolution in France,” William James’s “The Moral Equivalent of War,” and G. Murray’s “Is War Necessary?” (Rice 373). Given that during 1914-1917 World War I was ravaging Europe and Woodrow Wilson had not yet brought the U.S. into the war (he would do so on April 6, 1917), the issue of understanding the nature of war and developing a moral reasoning for when participation in a war is justifiable was a pressing current issue, and considered to be a suitable subject for freshmen researched-writing.

Angell Matthewson makes a similar claim in his 1941 *English Journal* article when he argues that “social research” is the best area of inquiry for freshman researched-writing, since “The more they think about these matters before reaching voting age, the better will they be equipped to solve the problems of the future” (460). Of course, not all instructors are so civically

minded. Unsurprisingly, there are some who believe that the proper focus of first-year composition should be on literature, and that researched-writing provides a unique opportunity to have students engage deeply with a work of literature and thereby perceive its value more fully. What *is* surprising is that there weren't more of those arguments present in the archive at Indiana University and the journal articles from *College English* and *English Journal*; the promotion of reading and appreciating literature is the least common purpose for researched-writing to appear, which, of course, could be due to the perception that little argument needed to be made for that purpose for researched-writing, since many instructors probably already had their students write their researched-writing assignments on literary texts. William Bleifuss wistfully imagines in his 1953 *College English* article "Introducing the Research Paper through Literature" that "Upon recognizing the importance to creative writers of accurate observation, knowledge, intellectual honesty, and awareness of the social milieu, even a nonliterary composition student may well change his whole attitude toward literature, especially if he considers himself a 'realist' who is interested in 'truth' and not the 'gloss of fiction'" (403). Similarly, Robert Hunting argues in an article published in the same issue of *College English* that a literature-based approach to researched-writing "directs the student's attention to one of the most interesting, and legitimate, kinds of research: research that, because it grows out of the reading of a given artistic masterpiece, will enrich the experience of reading that masterpiece. The instructor ought to insist on this point" (405). What is remarkable about Bleifuss's and Hunting's perspectives is not that they wanted students to write their researched assignment *on* literature, but that they believed one of the purposes of their literary approach to the researched-writing assignment was to change how students *perceive* literature, whether it is literature in general (Bleifuss) or one work of literature in particular (Hunting).

Thus, while in many ways examining instructors' purposes for researched-writing reinforces Connors, McDonald, Ballenger, Russell, and Davis and Shadle's overarching claims that the pervasive influence of the Germanic research ideal, the current-traditional emphasis on objectivity and correct format, and the need for instruction in how to use growing library resources shaped the emergence and development of researched-writing in first-year composition, there are also some interesting divergences that indicate something significant. Although instructors respond to and operate in the context of larger cultural shifts and values, many of them do so simultaneously within an ethic of care that hopes to:

- prepare students for the future writing situations they may face,
- cultivate students' engagement in pursuing questions of significance to themselves and others,
- guide students in using sources to shape their own thinking and/or critically evaluate textual claims,
- help students make full use of the ever-growing information housed in libraries,
- enable students to experience the pleasures of inhabiting the role of expert,
- and provide opportunities for students to become deeply knowledgeable on significant subjects.

Very few sources, even dating back to the earliest part of the twentieth century, argued that correctness of form in researched-writing should be emphasized more than or to the exclusion of meaning-making. While that seems to be the attitude communicated in handbooks, rhetorics, grammars, and style guides, it does not appear to have been the norm among teachers—or at least among the ones who cared enough about freshmen researched-writing to write about it. How teachers understand and enact this ethic of care has certainly changed over the years and

varies from instructor to instructor, but the impetus to think about multiple dimensions of students' needs has not.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROBLEMS WITH RESEARCHED-WRITING

4.1 Introduction

Although many composition instructors in the first half of the twentieth century had lofty goals motivating their researched-writing instruction, they also perceived a variety of problems with the assignment. While other historians have noted such problems, they often don't specify what those problems were, only generally stating that researched-writing has been considered problematic for quite some time. Ballenger in particular describes an attitude of "disappointment" accompanying the assignment since its inception, and claims that researched-writing "has generated a legacy of complaint among composition instructors and their students that is probably unmatched by any other single writing assignment" (4). While I cannot speak to the level of complaints regarding researched-writing as compared to other genres, it is clear that many instructors in the early twentieth century did have problems with instructing students in researched-writing. Zemliansky at least does give a brief overview of the problems he saw early twentieth century instructors articulating, but he frames them as contiguous with current problems, because "many of the problems with the traditional research paper facing teachers and students now may have to do with the assignment's stubborn reliance on the tenets of current-traditional rhetoric" (83).¹⁷ In this statement, Zemliansky distills the diversity of problems articulated in researched-writing's past to a particular ideology, current-traditionalism. However, researched-writing's legacy of complaint is remarkably diverse, albeit with clear patterns of

¹⁷ Zemliansky states that "The problems listed in the works from the first half of the century will probably be very familiar to those of us who teach research now: lack of real content in the student papers; low motivation of students and teachers; empty stock topics that are assigned year after year; essays using broad generalizations based on very limited research, etc." (42-43).

recurring issues. There are four main areas where instructors have historically found problems in researched-writing instruction: with the assignment itself, with students, with themselves/other instructors, or with their available resources. These areas for potential problems indicate that how classroom genres develop are not dependent only on the ideological background of the assignment, but also on how students react to the genre, how instructors approach teaching the genre, and the kinds of resources available.

4.2 Problems with the Assignment

The most frequently discussed problem with the assignment itself is essentially a concern that researched-writing in first-year composition is fake research, because it is often quite different from the specialized research in upper-level curricula. Zemliansky briefly mentions that one of the problems identified by instructors in the first half of the twentieth century is “lack of real content in the student papers” (42); I concur. It seems that the major complaint is that students don’t know what to do with their source material, and therefore often fall prey to simply stitching quotes together. In one of the few instances of problems being discussed in the 1910’s (and one of the few examples of problems being openly identified in Indiana University’s archive), it is noted that sometimes, student writing devolves into “trite paraphrases of lecture notes and textbooks” (“Memoranda for Instructors” 7).

Other instructors wax eloquent, and at times even histrionic in their articulations of this problem, describing researched-writing in first-year composition as a “hodgepodge of other samplings from the research efforts of other people” (Angus 192), the “active teaching of hypocrisy” (Cummings 38), a “pastiche” (Bleifuss 401), an attempt to do “the most effective propaganda job possible” (Michaels 208), a “patchwork quilt” (Stewart 406), “unwieldy blocks of quotation, yoked by violence together” (Eldredge 229), or “a river of quoted brilliance

dammed occasionally by a student-produced sandbar” (“What the Colleges Expect” 406).

Dorothy Hockey at Western Reserve University put it most bluntly in her 1952 *College English* article “Thwarting the Ventriloquistic Freshman”:

Certainly the most discouraging freshman research paper to contemplate after weeks of preparation is the one made up largely of quotations. The student who submits the paper has not really used source materials; he has not really written a paper. He has merely demonstrated diligent persistence in copying. Viewed from a distance, the paper looks like a piece of patterned verse. Viewed more closely, as the disheartened instructor realizes that it must be, it resembles nothing so much as a ventriloquist's performance set down on paper. The student has made his sources his ventriloquist's dummy. The ventriloquist himself gives us only the prompt lines, the framework of the performance; the dummy carries the burden of the show. Unfortunately the student, unlike the stage performer, does not write both parts; he writes only the prompt lines. The result we all know--those papers we keep putting on the bottom of the stack. If we should die before we finish this set of research themes, we shall at least have been spared that ordeal here below. (Hockey 24)

A more nuanced statement of the problem can be found in George Arms' 1943 *College English* article “The Research Paper.” Arms, an Assistant Professor of English at Mary Washington College, eloquently states that:

To me the research paper is a real center of freshman English in that, like little else in much college work, it gives an opportunity to set up a problem and find a solution. But to invoke the name of research when this is not actually done is to impose a boring task upon the students and at the same time to discredit the research activities of their

teachers. Let instructors choose whether they will have research papers or not, but let all draw the line at the cribbed dossier on sulfa compounds, the shabby compilation of radium uses. (Arms 25)

In Arms' article, he clearly articulates that when students simply stitch source material together, it is due to a deeper underlying rhetorical issue—students produce this pseudo-research typically because they have not actually sought to “set up a problem and find a solution” (25). Other instructors also identify deeper issues driving students' (mis)use of sources, like inadequate support from textbooks or instruction (problems that I will soon deal with more fully).

Although many instructors saw the researched-writing assignment as perpetuating a sickly view of research, they also recognized that this might be due to underlying issues and therefore did not automatically write off the assignment. A few instructors realized that perhaps the reason why researched-writing might teach students a pretense of research is that far too often there is no clear audience for the students' writing. Doug Angus argues in 1948 that “The research paper must appear as a useful work to the student if he is to make a worth-while effort. He must feel that there is a need, however slight, for the particular information he is gathering, that it has never been gathered in quite this pattern before, and that he is writing for a possible audience” (192). In his 1957 article “The Freshman Research Paper: Hope at Last?”, Eric Steel argues that “What makes so many term papers bad, of course, is that they are not written to be read by anyone in particular” (365). For both Angus and Steel, a rhetorical focus on audience gives students' a sense of purpose and a reason for using sources in particular ways to achieve specific effects.

Additionally, because some students struggled with how to make use of their sources, another problem instructors saw is that researched-writing assignments do not always effectively

fulfill one of their primary purposes: to teach students how to think clearly. Zemliansky saw this problem as “essays using broad generalizations based on very limited research” (43). However, the kinds of problems with student thinking instructors identified were more diverse than not providing sufficient support for their claims. Herbert Michaels, a proponent of using researched-writing to help students think more critically, argues that what is currently being done in this area is insufficient. He claims that “the usual pattern is for him to select one of his own prejudices, to consult all the periodicals and books which support his point of view, and to reword their ideas or quote from them slavishly” (Michaels 208-209). Here, the problem isn’t that students don’t find sufficient evidence to support their claims—instead, he argues that the problem is students *only* read and use the sources supporting their claims, thereby making their researched-writing essentially “propaganda” (Michaels 208). Bleifuss, who feared student writing might be “a pastiche” (401) rather than real research, lists several issues in student thinking with and through sources that instructors must guard against:

one of the most challenging is to get the student to work out his own organization, for time and again, as we know, he mechanically follows the organization of one of his sources supplemented with new material from other sources. Another worry is that erroneous information will slip through unchallenged. Equally difficult to detect are the student's misuse of sources, misinterpretation of content, and distortion of information because of failure to understand the bias of the author or the context. (Bleifuss 401)

While Bleifuss considers the variety of ways in which researched-writing requires critical and methodical thinking, he also views it as a burden instructors must bear, since they have to detect problems in student writing in order to address them.

Another highly problematic aspect of the researched-writing assignment for instructors was determining what students should research, since theme writing had already established the precedent for writing on many different kinds of subjects in composition courses. Could it be a broad topic, akin to theme writing or journalism, or must it have a limited, specialized scope, like upper-level research? Could students select subjects for themselves, or should instructors intervene? These are the types of concerns instructors grappled with, and yet the only problem related to subject-matter that Zemliansky identified was “empty stock topics that are assigned year after year” (43). While some instructors recognized this problem, there were quite a few other subject-related issues. For instance, at Michigan State College in 1941, W.L.T. Fleischauer argues in “A Solution for the Teaching of the Investigatory Paper” that students tend to either chose subjects “too broad in scope” like “Plastics” or overly specialized and outside the instructors’ area of expertise, like “The Moscow Sewage System” (76). Additionally, Fleischauer believes when students select too wide an array of subjects for their researched-writing, instructors are not able to provide helpful models of research since it would only be applicable for some of the students (76).

Doug Angus concurs that students selecting broad topics is an issue, and even links it to the problem of pseudo-research: “The immaturity of the freshman mind does not require that we have the freshman do a spurious imitation of research, but that we take the necessary care to help him find a subject sufficiently simple and limited in scope to be within his capacity for genuine research” (Angus 194). Thus, for Angus, a students’ ability to do “genuine research” hinges on finding a suitable subject, one limited in scope. Janna Burgess also agrees in her 1952 *College English* article “An Over-All Class Subject for the Research Paper” that the strength of researched-writing is dependent on the quality of the subject the student chooses:

In teaching the research, or library, paper in freshman composition I have found that the choice of material to write on is a more serious problem for many students than the study of methods of procedure. In fact, only when the student finds, accidentally or with help, a subject that seems vital does this research and writing become vital to him--something more than a routine task to be worked through for a grade. The problem that I faced each quarter, then, was somehow to help each individual to find a subject that meant something to him. (Burgess 210-211)

However, Hargis Westerfield, a PhD student and composition instructor at Indiana University from 1946-1949 (Gray 224), argues in a 1948 *College English* article on "Limiting Research Paper Subjects" that the problem isn't lack of student interest or motivation. In fact, for Westerfield, the problem is allowing students to select their own subject. When he did allow them to choose, "The papers revealed a triviality and a narrowness of interest hardly worthy of a liberal-arts college. Few students ever faced the great questions of our day. Girls wrote on 'Vitamin C' and 'Nylons'; men wrote on 'Arc Welding' and 'Butchering Hogs'" (Westerfield 41). At Georgia State University, Kenneth England concurred, arguing in his 1957 *College English* article "The Use of Literature in the Freshman Research Paper" that "one is hard put to it to discover that the readings and writings are the better because the student had ostensibly selected what he was interested in" (367). Thus, for Westerfield and England and other instructors, while allowing students to select their own subjects might seem a viable option for inspiring student interest, it may come at the cost of exploring subjects that might challenge students' perspectives and help them participate in a wider range of civic or intellectual activities.

4.3 Problems with Students

Besides identifying issues with the assignment itself, instructors also articulated problems that arose from their students in response to the assignment. The most frequently discussed problem regarding students was, unsurprisingly, plagiarism. What is surprising is the variety of instructor responses to this problem, demonstrating again the complexity of classroom genres. Students reacting to the assignment by plagiarizing influence how instructors perceive the genre, and these perceptions in turn influence how instructors teach the genre to their students, in an ever recursive chain of interactions. In fact, Connors argues that student plagiarism was one of the factors involved in the emergence of the research paper as a genre, since “the teacher of the late nineteenth century became aware of how easily a student could come up with an essay essentially cribbed from secondary sources. The research paper as a genre was part of the answer to that problem” (321).¹⁸ While the growing use of formal citation formats are intertwined with instructors’ attempts to prevent plagiarism, it seems unlikely that assigning researched-writing was primarily prompted by the desire to prevent plagiarism, since other kinds of assignments continued to be taught right alongside researched-writing, and in fact plagiarism is often discussed as a problem unique to researched-writing. Instructors’ descriptions of the plagiarism problem were often hyperbolic, with the English Department experiencing “horror when it discovers plagiarism” (Daniels 403), fraternity files viewed as “insidious repositories of collegiate knowledge” (Rogers 36); and that “always haunting the instructor is the specter of

¹⁸ In a footnote, Connors notes that “The concept that students could plagiarize in their themes was not found anywhere until after 1870, when teachers began to be concerned, stung by the quick dependence on secondary sources into which students fell if given the opportunity. As early as 1878, David J. Hill inveighed against plagiarism, as ‘breaking a moral law’ (*Elements of Rhetoric and Composition*, 15). In general, however, textbook authors did not deal in depth with plagiarism in their books until this century, when we begin—especially after 1920—to hear the familiar drumbeat that ‘plagiarism is as dishonest as any other form of theft’ (Thomas et al., *Composition for College Students*, 626)” (Connors 345).

plagiarism” (Bleifuss 401). For Annette Cummings, the problem of plagiarism is sufficient cause to question whether researched-writing even belongs in first-year composition (38).

Other instructors believe plagiarism stems from other underlying problems, and if those problems were addressed, then plagiarism would be reduced. Elinor Yaggy, in her 1957 *College English* article “The Shorter Research Paper,” argues that the length of the assignment is the real problem, since it overwhelms students and can lead to plagiarism because “Few freshmen have the background to handle long, complex problems” (369-370). Thus, for Yaggy, students don’t plagiarize because they’re lazy—they do so because of insufficient preparation and support. Edgar Daniels, an assistant professor at Bowling Green State University, wrote the only article in *English Journal* or *College English* prior to 1962 to focus exclusively on the problem of plagiarism. In “The Dishonest Term Paper,” Daniels argues that plagiarism is a serious issue, because it “does much to demoralize the whole student body. For the cynical attitude of many students toward their college experience is often due not so much to inefficient teaching as to carelessness in the control of written work, allowing the best grades to go to the most adroit cheaters” (403). Like Yaggy, Daniels views instructors as having a role in the prevention of plagiarism—if they were more attentive to student writing, they would catch instances of plagiarism, which would remove the incentive to plagiarize and deter students’ cynicism. However, Daniels’ emphasis on the problem of instructors not catching plagiarism differs from Yaggy’s hope that instructors can *prevent* plagiarized writing from even being submitted for a grade. And yet, Daniels’ more punitive perspective does allow for “unconscious plagiarism . . . if it occurs only here and there” (403).

An issue closely related to the problem of plagiarism was the level of group work or outside help students should draw on. In this regard, there are two relatively extreme

perspectives. On the one end of the spectrum, Angus suggests that most “modern research” projects are collaborative efforts, and it is problematic that freshman research is generally not collaborative (194). At the other extreme is the problem of whether allowing students to draw on outside help gives them an unfair advantage over other students. Daniels argues that “we should recognize clearly that the question is not whether outside help may be beneficial to a student of composition, but whether it impairs the fairness and accuracy of the grade which he receives for the paper” (404). Thus, Daniels admits that outside help may be beneficial to students, but there are concerns that might take greater precedence, namely, how it might affect grades. This puts the focus of the assignment not on the valuable processes and ways of thinking students might acquire that will aid them in the future, but on the need to keep grading fair. Thus, the problem of plagiarism in the mid twentieth century was at times viewed as a moral issue; as an inherent problem in researched-writing in first-year composition; as stemming from other instructional issues; and as affecting other pedagogical decisions like group work.

Although in the early- to mid-twentieth century there was the expected problem of students plagiarizing, instructors also saw students’ abilities or level of preparation as a potential obstacle to researched-writing, as well as students’ negative feelings towards the assignment. In addition to holding counter-productive views of plagiarism and its relative importance, there are some instructors who call into question the ability of average students to conduct specialized research at all. Annette Cummings argues in her 1950 *English Journal* article that:

In the first place we must realize that not all people are innately capable of consecutive, logical reasoning. In attempting to teach logical thought to those who, however, can and should be trained as logical thinkers, surely there must be more appropriate methods based on the use of personal experience and observation. To assign reading for vicarious

experience and information is to promote educational values, but to assign to the inexperienced mind highly specialized topics for investigation in the hope of indoctrinating intellectual integrity is to expect the miracle of creating something out of nothing. I leave that one to God. (Cummings 39)

Because Cummings believes that most students are incapable of the kind of thinking researched-writing seems to require, she thinks they shouldn't be taught it at all. Additionally, she argues that "the pressure upon the unscholarly mind to turn out a piece of scholarly research inevitably results in the wholesale theft of paragraphs from pamphlets, articles, and books, accompanied by a footnote reference which is designed to cover only one sentence" (Cummings 39). Thus, for Cummings, students writing pseudo-research and the issue of plagiarism are directly rooted in students' inherent inability to create robust researched-writing, not in ineffective teaching practices or problematic views of researched-writing, and therefore researched-writing should simply be abolished from first-year composition.

A milder example of this low perspective of students' abilities is in Edna Anderson's 1953 *College English* article, "Bungalow 108." At Los Angeles City College, Anderson states that she feels sympathy for students who desire to write a research paper on a complex text like Plato's *Dialogues*, but she believes them to be incapable of effectively accomplishing the task. Anderson attributes their inability not to an innate deficiency, but to being "handicapped" by lack of prior preparation, presumably in high school (396). Instead of simply refusing to allow students to do their researched-writing on Plato's *Dialogues*, she "enlisted the help of the entire class, asked members to bring the Pocket Book editions of Plato, and after three periods of class discussion made ideas clear enough so that the Plato-lovers were satisfied" (Anderson 396). Although this class discussion was intended to deter students from writing their research on

Plato's *Dialogue*, it is remarkable that Anderson was willing to devote so much class time to ensuring students were satisfied. She simply states, "To me it is very important that not a hint or a suggestion on the part of a student should go unheeded" (Anderson 396).

Anderson is not the only instructor that sees students' feelings/desires as a place for potential problems to arise. Since many instructors are concerned with their students feeling engaged with or curious about their research projects, they also recognize that students' adverse feelings towards research poses a problem. There are quite a few instructors during the fifties who believe that students hate researched-writing. Zemliansky calls this problem "low motivation" (42), but instructors seem to believe that students' negative attitude is much more serious, saying that for students, preparing the assignment is "a nightmare" (Thoma 49), and describing the assignment as the "one-great-chore which exhausts freshman and instructor more surely than it exhausts the library's resources on the volcanoes of Hawaii or Swedish holiday cookery" (Eldredge 228); as a "joyless project, inexplicably required by a malevolent instructor, mechanically undertaken by a sullen student" (Baskett 101); or even as "The bane of freshman composition courses" (Thackrey 186).

In "Motivating Freshman Composition: The Freshman Magazine," Edgar Stanton wrote one of the earliest articles describing student resistance to researched-writing. At Converse College in 1940, "the required two-semester composition course was the standard, uninspiring, theme-a-week, grammar-through-research-paper grind that students endure principally because there is no other pathway to sophomoredom" (Stanton 41). Thus, many instructors believed that students survived researched-writing as a matter of necessity, and sought to address student dislike for the assignment. However, not all instructors who recognized student aversion to researched-writing saw it as an ongoing state. In 1956 Sam Baskett describes seeing "students'

hackles rise at the first mention of the hated words, *term report*” (99), but he further argues that this condition does not remain constant, since students “in retrospect may consider that writing the ‘long’ paper has been a valuable exercise” (99). While Baskett believes students’ feelings towards research can change, he also acknowledges the need to address students’ initial concerns.

4.4 Problems with Instructors

In addition to recognizing problems associated with the assignment or their students, instructors also identified themselves or other instructors as posing potential obstacles to researched-writing. There are quite a few sources that believe instructors, under certain conditions, are not able to provide students with adequate feedback and thereby limit students’ development in researched-writing. The two primary obstacles to high quality feedback are labor issues and areas of expertise. Some instructors hesitate to assign researched-writing because of how labor-intensive it is to make sure it’s done right. John Ragle, a high school teacher in Springfield, Vermont, argued in his 1954 *English Journal* article “Studying the Novel with College-Bound Seniors” that although he believed in the benefits of researched-writing instruction for high school students, he hesitated to assign it, because he knew he “could not give all of the reports full and efficient readings from all points of view. Like all English teachers, I do not like to assign written work which I cannot properly correct” (Ragle 430).

Additionally, some instructors felt that when the subject matter of the researched-writing was outside the area of their expertise, they weren’t able to provide adequate feedback. As early as the mid-1910s this was articulated as a problem at Indiana University in a “Memoranda for Instructors.” In response to the possibility that instructors could use “the subject-matter of other courses,” the writer states that the problem is instructors cannot give the sort of attention they

should to themes on subjects with which they may not be immediately intimate” (7). On the other hand, Barbara Alden, a faculty member of Wells College, claims in her 1953 article in *College English* that while allowing students to write on subjects outside of the instructors’ expertise does pose some challenges, these issues can be overcome. In cases where students write on subjects the instructor is not familiar with, problems include difficulty in pointing students “to the appropriate source materials; how to teach them to organize such materials into a coherent and unified composition; and how to read the papers intelligently once the materials have been put together” (Alden 49). According to Alden, the problem of helping students organize their writing and any difficulty in reading the finished product should be easily overcome by the English professor. For the problem of providing students with feedback on how to find appropriate sources, Alden argues that the labor should be outsourced—instructors ought to direct their students to librarians or other faculty members, because “it should be regarded not only as legitimate but as necessary to use all the assistance available from one’s colleagues and especially from the members of the college library staff” (49). Thus, although some instructors felt that either the labor required or the expertise needed for certain subjects hindered their ability to provide adequate feedback to their students, others felt that these issues could be overcome.

Besides struggling to provide adequate feedback, some instructors’ felt that when instructors over-emphasize formal elements, student learning is detrimentally affected. Connors argues that instructor interest in the formal elements of researched-writing was one of the primary factors that drove it to prominence. This is because “it presented teachers with a grateful mass of practical formal material for which they could hold students responsible—the minutiae of formats, footnotes, bibliographies, citation forms, and so on” (Connors 322). However, there were some instructors who criticized this trend. Some instructors recognized that among their

ranks (particularly among textbook/handbook authors) there was a tendency to over-emphasize the formal elements of researched-writing (proper citation format, rigid outlines, etc.) to the detriment of the aspects of researched-writing that make it robust and worth doing. Angus was one of the most eloquent opponents, arguing that the English teacher has believed a fallacy purveyed by textbooks:

This fallacy is that his job is merely to acquaint his students with the mechanics of research and the floor plan of the university library. If an impressive stack of conventionally correct bibliography and note cards have been submitted, and if the formalities of footnoting and quoting have been followed, the teacher is satisfied and grants the coveted 'A.' This stress on the formalities and neglect of the essential spirit of the assignment is just about the most effective way conceivable of destroying once and for all whatever inclination the student may have to pursue this all-important form of intellectual inquiry. It is a practice contrary to the most basic educational theory. (Angus 191-192)

In addition to Angus's outcry, G. Robert Carlsen, an associate professor of English Education at the University of Texas, wrote an article in *English Journal* in 1956 on students' transition from high school into college. Carlsen had "the interesting opportunity of working with a group of thirty-five young men, freshmen or sophomores at our university, as a study adviser" (400). As a result of those meetings, Carlsen determined that "no matter how accurately they knew the form that footnotes take, or the 'correct' form of outlining, my advisees were still not prepared for college problems" (400). Like Angus, Carlsen believes that teaching students how to correctly format researched-writing is insufficient.

William Murphy at Union College subtly critiqued *The Harbrace Guide to the Library and the Research Paper* by Donald A. Sears in his 1956 review in *College English* by stating that “The section on 'The Technique of the Research Paper' covers all mechanical matters from choice of topic to finished paper. The sample essay on Johnson, however, demonstrates an exercise of judgment and a grace of style whose secrets are not revealed in the instructions” (425). Murphy recognizes that addressing various mechanistic processes does not necessarily entail high-quality researched-writing. Cecil B. Williams, a professor at Oklahoma State University and new editor of *College Composition and Communication*, reviewed twenty-nine textbooks in his 1959 *College English* article “‘In Wand’ring Mazes Lost’: Composition Texts.” His analysis of those texts reveals their shortcomings, particularly in the area of emphasizing formal aspects to the detriment of more important issues (which he finds especially problematic because they are inconsistent in their recommendations for even basic issues like citation format). Williams, Murphy, and other instructors’ critiques of composition textbooks further undermines the narrative that early- to mid-twentieth century researched-writing instruction was overwhelmingly current-traditional, since that narrative is heavily based on textbooks, which many instructors felt did not reflect their views on researched-writing.

4.5 Problems with Resources

Although I have treated problems with textbooks as a problem arising from the ranks of composition instructors (since many of them were authored by English professors), they could also be considered a resource problem. However, what is more clearly a resource problem is issues with the library. Because one of the purposes for teaching researched-writing is to introduce students to library resources, it is an important area of researched-writing pedagogy from which some problems arose. It was felt at times (particularly at the high school level) that

there weren't enough resources available to support student research—either not enough sources on a particular topic, or a few resources would be unavailable because other students had checked them out. It was even argued that researched-writing at the high school level should not be taught, since “the high schools rarely have the library resources for proper research” (“What the Colleges Expect” 406).

At the other extreme, as libraries continued to grow and expand (particularly at the university level), it was felt that the amount of available resources on any given topic were unwieldy and could even cause some freshmen to believe that since they had a lengthy bibliography, their researched-writing was high quality. Arms argues that library resources available were “in most cases rather enormous for freshman research. The inferred impetus for the student to glory in sheer bulk of bibliography had its consequence in a lack of selection and evaluation” (22). Thus, an excess of library research posed not only a problem in terms of helping students learn how to navigate library resources, but also because it encouraged them to be satisfied with the length of their bibliographies, rather than their quality.

Finally, quite a few instructors felt that the problem with researched-writing was not with the nature of the assignment, students' abilities/practices, instructors' overwork or emphasis on formalism, or even in the quality of library resources or textbooks. Rather, some instructors felt that students simply needed researched-writing broken down into smaller steps with assistance provided along the way. Lee Steinmetz, an assistant professor at Eastern Illinois University, argues in his 1959 *College English* article “The Freshman Research Paper: A Classroom Approach” that:

For some time I have been concerned with what has seemed to me a shortcoming in the way the freshman research paper is often taught. I refer to the process--in which I have

indulged--of announcing to a class that a research paper is to be due thirteen weeks hence, and then saying little more about it in class beyond the customary remarks concerning the virtues of note taking and the availability of the *Reader's Guide*. This method, as I know from experience, frequently results in papers which leave more than much to be desired. (Steinmetz 24)

Simply turning students loose armed with a composition handbook and perhaps a trip to the library, Steinmetz acknowledges, is not nearly enough to prepare students to write quality research. Since the most frequently mentioned purpose for teaching researched-writing is its future utility, it seems likely that any problems encountered in achieving this purpose would be the most frequently discussed issue. However, since instructors often had no way of measuring their students' later success with researched-writing, this specific problem is not directly mentioned, except in the context of one instructor's early concern with the problem of transfer. In 1951-1952 Frances Eldredge¹⁹ interviewed thirty-seven directors of the freshman writing course as a Faculty Fellow under the federal Fund for the Advancement of Education,²⁰ and spoke to an unspecified number of "professors of history, economics, political science, sociology, psychology, art, and some of the sciences in the same thirty-seven colleges" (228). While Eldredge states that "Students across the country told me this year that outlining and 'learning how to write a source theme' are the two procedures from 'freshman comp' which have meant most to them in their later work in college" (228), their professors avow that "juniors and seniors have forgotten whatever they once may have learned about gathering a bibliography,

¹⁹ An instructor at Rockwell College in Illinois at the time of writing, but then joined the faculty at the Pennsylvania College for Women in Pittsburgh by the time the article was published in January 1954

²⁰ The fund was created in April 1951 "for the purpose of experimenting and pioneering in education" (Murphy and Von Stoephasius).

making usable notes, and handling documentation consistently” (229). Eldredge concludes that the reason why students are not adequately prepared for upper-level researched-writing, is that they aren’t given enough opportunities to practice and learn, both within the composition classroom, and in their other freshman and sophomore level coursework (229).

Thus, although there is a long history of complaint associated with researched-writing in first-year composition, those complaints are complex, arising from issues associated with the assignment itself, students, instructors, and available resources (with overlap between the categories, since problems in one area were often related to problems in another). Additionally, while instructors’ purposes for researched-writing did seem to affect how instructors perceived the genre’s problems, there is not always a clear relationship between the two categories. Often, it is actually the desire to *improve* pedagogy that drives the complaints. It is interesting to note that very few problems with researched-writing were articulated prior to 1940. This later emergence of criticism may have been a by-product of the critical consciousness arising from the emerging field of Rhetoric and Composition—writing pedagogy was becoming not only something to be shared, but also developed and improved. And, like historians of researched-writing, many instructors in the early twentieth century felt that pedagogical advancement depends on first identifying problems to be resolved. Some instructors felt that the problems associated with researched-writing in first-year composition were insurmountable so the genre should be abandoned from the curriculum altogether. However, the vast majority used the problems they perceived in researched-writing instruction as exigencies for developing and sharing new approaches to its instruction.

CHAPTER FIVE

APPROACHES TO RESEARCHED-WRITING

5.1 Introduction

As a result of identifying problems with researched-writing, and motivated by their purposes for researched-writing, instructors in the first half of the twentieth century developed a wide variety of approaches to researched-writing. However, this diversity has largely been unacknowledged by researched-writing historians, characterizing it instead by the current-traditional stereotype of dry routine focused on correct form and objectivity. McDonald even argues that researched-writing is essentially (as of 2000) taught the same way it was in the 1930s, when students were simply told to “choose a subject and narrow it, compile a bibliography, take notes, write an outline, and finally compose the theme paying close attention to the conventions for documenting quotations and paraphrases to avoid plagiarism” (McDonald 138). While the current-traditional emphasis on correct form and objectivity did significantly influence how the genre emerged and developed, there were still quite a few instructors who did not simply tell students to find a subject to research, narrow it, go to the library, and then record their findings. There were specific components of researched-writing that instructors regularly had to grapple with in their endeavors to teach freshmen how to write research, and subsequently created a variety of approaches to meet those needs. Re-examining all of these past approaches may help us see our current approaches anew, and consider whether any lingering practices are due to their effectiveness or are linked to still-current problematic perspectives on freshmen and their researched-writing.

5.2 Naming a Genre: Salient Features and Interchangeability

Although it might not seem like it matters very much whether instructors called their researched-writing assignment a “research paper” or a “long theme,” the sheer variety of terms used indicate the fluidity of the assignment, and contradicts the homogeneity with which early researched-writing has been depicted. Additionally, the multiplicity of terms used can illuminate which genre features were perceived as the most salient at different times and by different instructors. Unsurprisingly, the term “research paper” is by far the most frequent term used, with 42 of the 84 sources in my corpus using the phrase. However, “research paper” is not the earliest term used to describe researched-writing in first-year composition. “Research paper” first appears in 1934 in *English Journal*, in a brief review (really more of a summary than a review) of the textbook *Modern English Composition* by James C. McCloskey, where it is stated that the text contains “rules for the preparation of the research paper” (“Review of *Modern English Composition*,” 620). It is interesting to note that the textbook is willing to boldly proclaim that it has the “rules” for this genre, while the term used to describe the genre was not, at this point, commonly used (at least not at Indiana University or *English Journal*). This indicates, perhaps, that while instructors gave researched-writing a variety of names, when a different term was used, they all understood it to mean roughly the same thing: a piece of writing that explicitly draws on sources outside the writer’s personal experience.

While “research paper” became the most popular term for researched-writing, the very first term used to describe researched-writing in first-year composition is the “long theme,” appearing in the 1914-1917 Indiana University “Memoranda for Instructors,” and in the first article that mentions researched-writing in *English Journal*, George Starr Lasher’s 1917 “Roast Beef Instead of Hash.” There are two aspects of this first term used to describe researched-

writing that are quite interesting. One is that the theme is considered to be very closely related to researched-writing, which indicates that the (often a-rhetorical) theme is an antecedent genre to researched-writing in first-year composition. Additionally, it is interesting to note that the “long theme,” as well as the next term (chronologically speaking) used to describe researched-writing, the “term paper,”²¹ both refer to the length of either the assignment itself or the amount of time allotted to working on it. This may be partially due to the gradually emergent sense that what students do in those assignments differ from the themes based in personal experience, but they did not yet have a way to describe those differences, other than by the length of time and space that are typically allotted for researched-writing. Something else to consider is that early instructors of researched-writing may have identified the genre more as an extended theme than as an introduction to the kinds of researched-writing done in graduate school.

The next term to appear was “the library paper” in 1928, demonstrating the early importance of the relationship between researched-writing in first-year composition courses and libraries. Cora Dolbee is the first to use this term in *English Journal*, and it appears that she uses it because the length of the assignment is no longer its distinguishing characteristic. There are two long papers in her course, and “Of these two special assignments one is a library paper based on reading, and the other is an experience paper, the material for it coming from the student's own life” (Dolbee 221). In 1930, both “the investigative theme” and “the report” appear in *English Journal*,²² the first terms used to describe freshman researched-writing that begin to get

²¹ First appearing in *English Journal* in 1924 in Whitney's “Ability Grouping at Syracuse,” which is the second article in *English Journal* to mention researched-writing.

²² They actually both appear in the same article, Vera Lighthall's “Experimenting with a Teacher's Course in English,” which details the curriculum used to train future high school English teachers in a “Methods of Teaching” class at Northern State Teacher's College in South Dakota. What is interesting is that not only do these two different terms appear in the same article, they also appear in the same paragraph, along with “term paper,” demonstrating how interchangeable these terms were perceived to be: “As a final exercise of the term, each student prepared a report on a topic of individual personal interest or appeal. We discussed the standards for a

at the rhetorical purposes that are supposed to shape what students actually do—investigating or reporting. After the “research paper” appears as a term in 1934, the term “research theme” appears (1936),²³ and then the documentary theme (1947),²⁴ the investigative paper (1948),²⁵ the long argument (1952),²⁶ the footnote paper (1953),²⁷ and research stories (1957).²⁸ These terms indicate the importance of citation to the genre (“documentary” and “footnote”), the increasing move away from “theme” towards “paper” (which is also accompanied by an increasing use of the term “research,” which may indicate a shifting affiliation of the genre away from themes towards a nascent academic research article), as well as an indication of some of the discursive modes that might be expected: argument (the “long argument”) and narrative (“research stories”). However, any interpretation of these terms as reflecting attitudes toward or expectations for researched-writing from freshmen must be taken as loose indications of shifting perspectives, since some of the sources used some of the terms interchangeably, for instance, in one sentence calling the assignment the research paper, and in the next calling it a documentary theme.

In addition to the variety of terms used to describe researched-writing in first-year composition, there was quite a range in how long the researched-writing assignment was supposed to be, which further illustrates the variety of practices occurring in the early twentieth century. As indicated by the terms used to describe the genre, one of the early distinguishing

satisfactory term paper, and reviewed a recent article on the investigative theme, then proceeded to work as individuals for a period of three weeks” (Lighthall 812). It is interesting to note that the first time more rhetorically sensitive terms are used in *English Journal*, it is in the context of an upper-level course preparing students to teach English rather than in a first-year composition classroom, although these terms do appear in those articles.

²³ In Rachel Salisbury’s “The Psychology of Composition” in *English Journal*.

²⁴ In Elsa Chapin’s “One Freshman, One Class, One Nation” in *English Journal*.

²⁵ In Fred Eikel, Jr.’s “A Theme Project for Freshman English” in *College English*.

²⁶ In Janna Burgess’s “An Over-All Class Subject for the Research Paper” in *College English*.

²⁷ In Marion F. Stewart’s “The First Footnote-Paper” in *College English*.

²⁸ In Eric M. Steel’s “The Freshman Research Paper: Hope at Last?” in *College English*.

characteristics of the genre is its greater length, at least compared to the short in-class or weekly themes assigned. In the fifties and late forties, however, there was a push to have shorter researched-writing assignments of 300-500 or 500-1000 words; sometimes these shorter assignments were intended to replace the long assignment, or in other cases help prepare the student to write a longer research project. However, by far the majority of sources recommend or describe assigning researched-writing projects of either 1000-2000 words or 2000-3000 words, and that is true whether it is in 1917, or 1962. Thus, attempting to discern what a typical piece of researched-writing looked like in the first half of the 20th century is difficult, since the majority of my corpus does not even mention how long the assignment was supposed to be, or many of their generic expectations.

5.3 Suitable Subjects: What to Write About, and Who Decides?

Although instructors did not always spell out what they meant by “research paper” or “long theme,” they were particularly prolific about what constituted a suitable subject for student research. Connors claims that researched-writing subjects in the early twentieth century were entirely different from earlier subjects in composition classrooms:

Typical subjects included ‘The early history of football,’ ‘The Canning Club movement in the United States,’ ‘Helium Gas and the Dirigible,’ and ‘The Beginnings of Chain Stores in America.’ These are new kinds of subjects for American students, notable for their difference both from the abstract subjects of a century before and the experience-based assignments that research assignments were a response to. Research writing does not at all assume that students can say anything valuable about War, or Parenthood, or even Prudence, the most difficult of virtues. Gone were the classical allusions, commonplace book knowledge, and conception of knowledge existing in an intellectual

commons. Neither do these new assignments assume that experiential knowledge from students can go very far in constructing valid responses. (Connors 322)

However, there was a much greater variety of approaches to settling on suitable subjects for freshman researched-writing than Connors implies, and the lines between abstract subjects, research subjects, and experiential subjects are often quite blurred. Some sources were rather vague and just gave general guidelines; for instance, the syllabus for English C101c at Indiana University states that it must be “a subject on which there are a sufficient number of books in the library to give you all the information that you need” and “Your subject should be one in which you are interested” (Hale 13).²⁹ During the 1940s to 1950s the suggestion for students to choose something that they are interested in is frequently repeated (Matthewson; Dias; Burgess; Alden; Redman; Yaggy). It might be assumed that the instructors emphasizing student interest as a criterion for subject selection would also be the ones who view the purpose of researched-writing as cultivating curious researchers who are engaged with the process of research. While this is true (for instance, Matthewson, Burgess, and Alden are concerned with the affect of researched-writing), there are also some instructors who emphasize the importance of students choosing subjects they are personally interested in, and yet they also believe researched-writing’s primary purpose is preparing students for future coursework or jobs (Matthewson views this as one purpose among others, whereas Dias and Redman only have the preparation argument as their

²⁹ English C101c is the third semester elementary composition correspondence course offered through the Division of Adult Education and Public Services at Indiana University; the syllabus was found in the Will T. Hale papers and is undated. Hale was on the faculty of Indiana University from 1913-1950, and again as an interim professor from 1956-57; the Division of Adult Education and Public Services at Indiana University began in 1945, and English C101c became English W103 sometime after 1950 (in the Will T. Hale collection there is a document titled “Directions for Using the 1950 Edition of The Technique of Composition,” which clearly states that W103 was formerly C101c). Thus, the syllabus is most likely from sometime during 1945 to 1950.

rationale). This divergence demonstrates how different motivations can sometimes lead to similar practices.

George Arms, an assistant professor of English at Mary Washington College in Virginia, also weighs in on how to determine suitable subjects for student researched-writing in his 1943 *College English* article, “The Research Paper,” by gesturing towards the social nature of research. Arms states that “no subject is possible for research unless intelligent opinion differs on the solution of the problem or unless the student is willing to buck the unanimous consensus” (23). Thus, in Arms’ perspective, the suitability of a subject is not dependent primarily on the narrowness of the topic or the availability of library resources on the subject, but rather on the pre-existing conversation surrounding the subject and how the student wishes to intervene in that conversation. Arms’ emphasis on what has already been said in other sources is directly tied to his view that the primary purpose of researched-writing is to sharpen student’s critical thinking; in order to craft a “well-defined problem,” (Arms 24), students have to carefully consider what has already been said so they can discern what still needs to be said.

Connors is not the only one to simplify the nature of early 20th century freshman researched-writing subjects; Zemliansky argues that “Referring their students to the library in search of the subjects for their writing, writing teachers tacitly acknowledge the impossibility of finding suitable content for students’ writing within the composition class itself” (88). While many instructors in the past (and in the present) did not view freshman composition classrooms as having a unique subject of its own, there are also several examples where instructors sought to find a subject for the composition classroom that was deemed to be more natural to it than writing about topics in the sciences, for example. Of course, the most popular one was literature, since that is where the majority of composition instructors had expertise. In a 1928 *English*

Journal article, Donald M. Alexander demanded that the paper be about the work of literature itself, and should avoid being a compilation of biographical information about the author or the work's historical context (569). Other literary options included topics such as "American local color, dialect in the short story, social propaganda in contemporary drama, books about New Jersey, fiction with the hometown for its setting, modern American biography, poets of the Midwest, American pioneer novels, the historical novel of today, American newspaper columnizing, and the like" (Matthewson 459-460). One instructor emphasizes the value of literature as a suitable subject for research not because of what it can do for the student, but because typical freshman topics of the time like "sulfa compounds" and "new uses for radium" are outside English teachers' area of expertise and they are therefore not "learned enough to deal with them" (Arms 23). Other instructors concur that literature can be a worthy subject (among other suitable options), not because students should become well-versed in literary interpretation, but because it provides them with a primary source to study that the instructor is familiar with (Angus; Bleifuss; Stewart; Hunting; England; Steinmetz).

What is interesting to note is that among those who advocate for literature as the most suitable subject for freshman researched-writing, none of them articulate a belief that researched-writing's primary purpose is to introduce students to library resources. Rather, the purposes motivating instructors who advocate for literature as a subject for freshman researched-writing include a belief in the intellectual rigor provided by research (Matthewson; Arms; Stewart), the satisfaction of curiosity (Angus; Steinmetz), the transformative power of research to change perspectives (Matthewson; Bleifuss; Hunting), and the utility of research for preparing students for the future (Matthewson).

On the other hand, instead of studying literature, other instructors believed that suitable research subjects should reflect the current events (Chapin; Michaels; Burgess; Wright; Thackrey) and the interests of the time: “Before the war these were historical and contemporary topics from the English, history, and civics courses. At present the topics chiefly pertain to the war and to world affairs” (McBrayer and Lindsey 421-422). Interestingly, of the instructors who advocate for a current events focus, none of them explicitly view preparing students for future writing situations as the purpose motivating their instruction in researched-writing. On the other hand, several sources advocate for the practical value as well as the inherent interest for students in researching potential vocations (Matthewson; Rogers; Emery). Other “practical” options include further developing a project already assigned in another concurrent class (Matthewson 459), or performing some sort of social research, because “Young people have been solving social, political, and economic problems theoretically for a long time, and there is every reason for encouraging them to continue to do so” (Matthewson 460). Of all the sources in my corpus, Matthewson provides the widest range of suitable subjects for freshman research, which may be a reflection of his broad understanding of the purposes for researched-writing, which includes the utility of researched-writing for future coursework or even jobs, the intellectual rigor it provides, and the potential transformative power it holds for students who become knowledgeable about civic issues.

Another more civically-minded subject suggestion is researching topics related to other countries like China (with topics including “exiled universities, some issues between the Communists and the Nationalists, industrial co-operatives, position of women past and present, democratic development in partisan China, and primitive farming”) or India (with subjects suggested like “village life, purdah, the maharajah, public health, village industries, the dance,

Pakistan, moneylenders, the caste system, symbols in Indian art, and Siva temples”) (Falk 199-200). Another instructor sought to bridge the (apparent) divide between personal interests and wider social issues by requiring his students to research “a racial or national minority in the United States or of a foreign population problem” (Westerfield 42). All students should be interested in this area “because they were all members of minorities or interested in some neighboring minority” and it connected to wider social issues because “The students have seen how Germany's failure to solve her minority problem had led to Hitler and war; they could see that our own failure might result in dictatorship, also” (Westerfield 42). Globally oriented research projects were quite popular (Grover; Yaggy).

Historians of researched-writing have also criticized the role of instructor intervention in student subject selection. Zemliansky claims that the current-traditional belief that texts have stable meanings, which writers can definitively extract, led to the classroom practice of teachers insisting “on knowing the subjects of student writing in order to be able to check the accuracy of source interpretation” (89-90). However, like the diversity in subject types, there are also differences of opinion in the early 20th century on the role of the instructor in guiding students to make their selections. Not all of my sources are explicit about how subjects are chosen, but of those that are, the most frequent approach, which appears in texts with authors motivated by all different kinds of purposes, is for the instructor to define the general subject area of allowable research, but then allow students to choose their own specific topics within that area (Heed; Westerfield; Block and Mattis; Kerr; Burgess; Rogers; Michaels; Bleifuss; Stewart; Emery; England; Thackrey; Kerner). The next most frequent approach is to allow students complete freedom in subject selection (“Memoranda for Instructors,”; Alexander; Matthewson; Chapin; Alspach; Burgess; Wright; Steel; Evans). Another approach that is a reversal of the most popular

approach is to allow the student to select the research subject, but the instructor has to approve the selection (Whitney, “Ability Grouping” ; McBrayer and Lindsey; Hale; Angus; Hunting; Redman; Yaggy), which appears to be the practice that Zemliansky describes. In both the first and the third approach I have listed, subject selection is essentially a collaborative project between the teacher and the student; the major difference is at what point the instructor intervenes—at the beginning, by defining the broad subject area, or in the middle, by confirming for their students that the subjects they have selected are feasible. Finally, the most extreme approach is for the instructor to directly choose the subject for the student (“Memoranda for Instructors”; Alexander; Eikel; Hotchner; Anderson; Evans; Daniels). While there are a range of purposes motivating instructor approaches in each of these categories, it is worth noting that none of the instructors in the last two categories (which exert the most control over subject selection) articulate a perception that one of the purposes of teaching researched-writing is to sharpen students’ critical thinking (either in the current-traditional sense of objectivity, or in the more rhetorical sense of critical evaluation and use of sources).

The more directive approaches to subject selection may have been motivated in part because some instructors questioned the value of the broad topics typically suggested in handbooks, like “Noah Webster, penicillin, obscure diseases, and Buddhism” (Angus 192), believing that it was not possible to even just take one of those subjects and sufficiently narrow it to create a more suitable subject. Those topics are considered to not be suitable partially because they are too broad, and partially because they will just drive students to general reference works like encyclopedias and biographies, since they are so removed from students’ immediate experience and access. Instead, it is suggested that they might more profitably study “the life of a local citizen of some fame, in which the student would have access to primary sources, such as

letters, diaries, records, etc.” (Angus 192). Other instructors also suggested the value of researching local subjects (Kerr 204) and severely limiting the scope of the research topic to formulate an original thesis so that students will not just compile what others have said (Saalbach 507). Another instructor sought to limit the focus of her students’ research and thereby ease them into it more gently by assigning them to research the history and origins of “a famous quotation with a slight moral” (Hotchner 339). The emphasis on the selection of a limited subject where students can have direct access to the object of study marks an important shift in suggested subjects because it is less focused on finding something to write about that is of personal or social value, and instead considers whether students have access to primary sources that can become the object of analysis; when they only work with authoritative sources that are doing the work the student is attempting to do (but with more time, expertise, and access to resources), it becomes difficult for students to find something to say that hasn’t already been said.

At times, the sheer number and variety of subject suggestions can become overwhelming and make it seem as though everyone just developed their own idiosyncratic way of helping students discover suitable subjects. However, there are two main categories of suggestions: subjects that are oriented towards enabling students to enter into the knowledge-making enterprise of academic research, or subjects that are focused on content mastery, requiring students to formulate a position on and demonstrate an understanding of a particular issue (with the further subdivision that the issue should be of personal interest or of wider social interest, and sometimes both). The subjects more oriented towards literature or civic participation tend towards the latter, and the subjects focused on primary sources tend to focus on academic knowledge-making, although there is certainly some cross-over between the two. In either case, two primary motivating factors behind robust subject selection are the desire to engage student

curiosity and the hope that deeply engaging with research questions and source material can transform students' perspectives by allowing them to experience what it's like to be an expert, and change their perspectives on a discipline, a community, a current event, or a different culture.

5.4 Documentation and Format: Making it Look Like Researched-Writing

After the general preoccupation with figuring out what students in first-year composition should be writing about, the next most frequently discussed pedagogical practice is how to teach proper documentation and formatting, which fits quite easily with previous historians' characterizations of early researched-writing as being both motivated and shaped by a current-traditional preoccupation with correctness (in format, citation style, and grammar). Quite a few sources only mention that instructing students in how to properly document their sources is something they do, and fail to go into any further depth on how that task is accomplished (Whitney, "Ability Grouping"; Dolbee; Matthewson; McBrayer and Lindsey; Hale; Chapin; Angus; Eikel; Alspach; Michaels; Hunting; Ragle; Grover; Tovatt, Jewett, and Wolfe; Wright; "Your Work in Composition"; England; Thoma; Jumper; Evans; Kerner). In the introduction to a 1959 article reviewing a wide range of recently published textbooks for first-year composition, Cecil Williams sums up the situation by saying that "Many books in discussing documentation pay lip-service to the *MLA Style Sheet*, but hardly any of these are consistent with its prescriptions in their recommendations, and the whole area of documentation is left embarrassingly chaotic" (313). Thus, although handbooks in the first half of the 20th century imply a level of certainty and consensus in how they present the proper way for freshmen to format their researched-writing, this was not necessarily the case.

Additionally, while there was great deal of confusion in the first half of the 20th century regarding how to teach documentation, some instructors developed their own approaches in order to make the activity more meaningful and effective. An early approach motivated by the purpose of preparing students for future coursework, as well as by hoping to help them learn how to make use of library resources, was to have students write a “descriptive bibliography,” wherein instructors could see not only how the sources are formatted, but also check to ensure that students have read and understood their sources, and, in some cases, to suggest other sources they may find useful (Lasher; Heed; Thackrey). Another instructor goes even further and suggests that in order to help students become more critical of their sources, “an 'evaluative' rather than 'descriptive' bibliography may be the surest way to obtain such a result” (Arms 24). The first more detailed description of approaches to teaching documentation and formatting appears in 1949:

At Hunter College all incoming students are provided with a printed booklet entitled *A Guide to Good Form in Writing*, which explains in detail the mechanics of the research paper, with special emphasis on the preparation of the bibliography and the writing of footnotes; I devote one period to an analysis of the *Guide* and to a discussion of note-taking and the use of bibliography cards, to the difference between direct quotation and paraphrase, and to the importance of accuracy in all phases of research. (Hotchner 339)

Here it can be seen that perhaps one of the primary uses of assigned handbooks is to aid teachers in the instruction of documentation and formatting; it also appears to be only one small part of the instruction provided on researched-writing (in this case, only occupying “one period”). It is also in this source that the infamous notecard first appears, a method for structuring bibliographic research that is frequently used thereafter. Another instructor, instead of relying on

one handbook, has students examine several different “accepted research style sheets” in order to “ground them in the mechanics of research” and make “them realize that there is more than one 'right' method to do a meticulous task” (Emery 408).

A fairly robust approach to teaching library research as well as documentation was developed at Queens College, with an intensive collaboration between instructors of first-year composition and librarians:

The librarian assigns the preparation of a working bibliography, made up of individual note cards containing full entries in proper form and indicating sources for all items included. In this way, the librarian can see at a glance what research tools the student has employed. At the time the assignment is made, the librarian urges members of the class to consult him or his colleagues freely while working on the preparation of their bibliographies. (Block and Mattis 214)

In Block and Mattis’s approach, the librarian is not just a resource that students may sporadically draw on if they so choose; rather, they are an integral part of the classroom, giving assignments and providing feedback alongside the instructor. Another thoughtful approach to documentation instruction appeared in the form of lower stakes short assignments designed to provide students with practice in formal documentation styles and identify any major issues earlier on (Kerr; Bleifuss; Stewart; Yaggy; “What the Colleges Expect”).

What is interesting to note about these various approaches to instruction in documentation is that while, on the one hand, proper documentation is a very widespread concern (because of the number of sources that mention it), and yet on the other hand there are very few sources that detail their approach, indicating that it was not a pedagogical practice that had been very deeply considered or developed. Of the approaches that were developed, some of

them are still in use today (specifically scaffolding with shorter assignments, and the use of annotated bibliographies). This supports the stereotype of current-traditional pedagogy being particularly focused on the minutiae of proper format, while also undermining it, because the instructors that appear to have thought more thoroughly about the best ways to teach it developed practices that were intended to guide students in understanding how to conduct bibliographic research in ways that were conducive to meaning-making.

5.5 Making it Meaningful: The Power of Audience

Another approach to researched-writing instruction that undermines the current-traditional stereotype is the widespread interest in helping students find purposes for their research beyond simply fulfilling the course requirements and obtaining their desired grades. The earliest instantiation of this approach appears in 1917, when George Starr Lasher briefly mentions that “My idea was to make each individual feel that he had a special problem and was responsible for working it out” (668). Other instructors, motivated by many different purposes, concur that it is important to encourage students to feel responsible for their research (Eikel; Hotchner; Block and Mattis; Kerr; Burgess; Rogers; Bleifuss; Emery; Thackrey). Besides the abstract goal to help students develop a sense of ownership for their research problems, there is also the idea that allowing students to select their subjects will provide them with an internal motivation to find out more, since the information itself will be valuable to them (Matthewson). Douglas Angus would agree that it’s important to let students select a subject that they are motivated to find out more about, but he adds on other criteria for making researched-writing more inherently valuable for students:

A purposeless assignment remains always just an assignment, never a labor of love. The research paper must appear as a useful work to the student if he is to make a worth-while

effort. He must feel that there is a need, however slight, for the particular information he is gathering, that it has never been gathered in quite this pattern before, and that he is writing for a possible audience. If he can feel that certain local publications might be interested in printing his paper, or that a local group might be interested in reading it, or that it might be worth depositing in the university library, he will attack his research problem with industry and enthusiasm. (192-193)

Besides advocating for an approach to researched-writing that will enable students to conduct original research that could potentially be read by an audience outside of the classroom, Angus also requires students to do their researched-writing collaboratively, because he believes it will lead students to be more conscientious about how they conduct their research, since they know that if their “particular contribution is below standard, the total effect is spoiled. It would be difficult to find a more effective stimulus or a more natural discipline than this” (194).

Similarly, Elizabeth Kerr emphasizes the importance of students feeling like they have a specific audience they are writing for besides the teacher and for her, it does not have to be an audience outside of the classroom. Having students write for each other, she believed, provided enough of an incentive: “An essential feature of the whole plan was class evaluation of the results. Students were stimulated by the fact that they were writing for their classmates and could address themselves to a definite group of readers on their own level” (Kerr 205). Also in 1952, Janna Burgess advocates for the use of peer review in order to provide students with a wider audience to write for; according to her, this “brought about genuine enthusiasm in at least some students whose papers showed a knowledge of both subject matter and the process of research and writing, and I avoided getting papers that were completely dead” (212). However, in 1957

Eric Steel critiques the classmates-as-audience approach, arguing that it is too artificial to have any impact on students' mindset. He analyzes the situation thus:

What makes so many term papers bad, of course, is that they are not written to be read by anyone in particular. In vain does the instructor enjoin his students to write for him or for their classmates. The students sense the unreality of the situation and resort to passive resistance. To be readable, a term paper must be written for a *real* audience, and preferably one which the writer regards with mingled fear and compassion. Fear of its censure and even ridicule will make him bend every sinew to avoid these; compassion for its ignorance and immaturity will induce him to do all in his power to make his paper simple, clear, and interesting. In short, the ideal audience for a college freshman should be a group of eighth-graders, and having just graded a batch of term papers directed at such a group, this instructor feels it probably is. (Steel 365)

Steel admits that writing for eighth-graders (who, in his approach, also supplied suggestions for potential research subjects) is unusual, and reveals that he did encounter some resistance to the idea from his students. However, he says that this soon passed because "For the first time these freshmen found themselves wanted as writers. They were surprised and flattered!" (Steel 365).

What is significant about the attempt to provide students with opportunities to write for purposes and audiences beyond the limits of the course is that it indicates instructors' sensitivity to the problematic nature of an a-rhetorical research project devoid of any purpose other than producing something that looks like researched-writing. Additionally, they not only recognized this problem (and did not blame the problem on their students), they sought to overcome the problem by creating structures that enabled students to transcend the constraints of the rhetorical situation of the classroom.

5.6 Plagiarism: Morality, Responsibility, and Avoidance

Yet, in spite of all the rich pedagogical activity surrounding researched-writing, one area in which my corpus does present a generally stereotypical current-traditional approach is plagiarism. Zemliansky argues that the obsession with plagiarism is a by-product of the current-traditional emphasis on objective textual meaning (along with instructor attempts to control student interpretations of their sources), even going so far as to say that “teaching students to avoid plagiarism and to acknowledge sources correctly frequently became the rationale behind research paper instruction” (90). At Indiana University, the plagiarism policy in 1917 declared that not obeying proper documentation formats “will be regarded as dishonesty, and will be reported to the Committee on Student Affairs” (“Memoranda for Instructors” 11). The moralistic tone is typical of the time, with instructors pontificating in *English Journal* that “We have to set up the proper attitudes about plagiarism. Most youngsters do not want to steal, and they are susceptible to instruction on the subject” (Redman et al. 167). While the equation of plagiarism with moral failure regularly occurred, there are some differences between how plagiarism is described at Indiana University and how it was sometimes described in the journal articles. And this is not just true of 1917; even in 1957, this harsh statement appeared:

Having someone write your paper for you, copying someone else's paper, copying from a newspaper, magazine, or book (in fact, appropriating facts, ideas, or opinions extensively from any source, published or unpublished, without accrediting it) is simple dishonesty. Plagiarism is the term usually applied to this un-acknowledged use of other people's writings. It is a form of theft, but worse still it is a way of stupidly sabotaging your own education and cheating yourself of the training you probably desperately need. You will feel the cheat most, of course, later on when it is too late for you to repair the damage to

yourself. Furthermore, the University has strict regulations governing cheating and you may find yourself before the Dean of Students and faced with serious disciplinary action.

(“Your Work in Composition” 13)

In contrast, journal articles describe specific precautions taken to attempt to prevent plagiarism; for instance, after the semester is over, the papers “are collected and destroyed to prevent their reappearing the following year” (McBrayer and Lindsey 423). There are also examples of more nuanced perspectives, wherein the instructor takes some responsibility for the occurrence of plagiarism:

It was not until after I had assigned a paper on the general subject of inflation that I realized it is not such a burning issue to a student as it is to the head of a family. When two students began their discussions by copying without credit the same page of their economics textbook, I could blame myself at least partly. Their cribbing came from desperation as well as laziness; they could think of nothing they knew about inflation that I did not know better. (Fleece 273)

Similarly, P. Burwell Rogers argues in 1952 that assigning students an area of research they will be genuinely motivated to understand can help curtail plagiarism, explaining that the project then becomes “so vital to each student that he has little or no inclination to refer to those insidious repositories of collegiate knowledge—the ‘fraternity files.’” (36). Another method suggested for curtailing use of the legendary fraternity files is to assign subjects that could not possibly have been written on before (Yaggy 370).

However, the instructor taking responsibility for preventing plagiarism also led to some potentially counter-productive pedagogical practices, with the instructor taking more and more control of the project, and spending much of their time and energy constantly checking over the

students' work to ensure that no transgressions have occurred (Stewart), as Zemliansky also noted. The desire to prevent plagiarism is even listed as a reason to not have researched-writing be taught in high school, since apparently high school teachers are not able to sufficiently supervise the project to ensure that it doesn't occur (Hunting 146). Thus, plagiarism is discussed even in the first half of the 20th century in ways that go beyond the simple punitive approach. Additionally, it is quite clear that learning how to avoid plagiarism is perceived as an important component of researched-writing instruction, and expecting students to distinguish between their own ideas and someone else's is assumed to be an unproblematic requirement. The more nuanced perspectives on plagiarism tend to be primarily motivated in their researched-writing instruction for students to feel engaged with researching, whereas the more hardline approaches to plagiarism tend to view the future utility of researched-writing instruction as its primary purpose.

Finally, there are a few additional resources that some instructors endeavored to make available to their students that reveal a more social perspective on research than is usually attributed to the period. These include the use of model texts (Matthewson; McBrayer and Lindsey; Hale; Hook, Thorp, and Hall; Hunting; Williams), allowing students to use interviews as sources (Lasher; Angus; Kerr; Rogers; Emery), and encouraging students to seek help from librarians (McBrayer and Lindsey; Hale; Block and Mattis; Emery; Alden) and/or peers (Angus; Kerr; Bleifuss; Emery; Wright; Steel; Steinmetz; Daniels). Of course the ways in which these social activities were enacted were still most likely often inflected with a current-traditional sensibility in that they located the source of knowledge in an objective reality that could be discovered by an individual or society, but not created by them. However, this does not mean that many of their pedagogical approaches to teaching researched-writing are not creative

solutions to intuitively sensed problems; in fact, many of these practices are still in use, and while it may be due to the inertia of change, some of it may be because they are effective responses to the continually recurring problems encountered in the rhetorical situation of the classroom.

Thus, from examining instructors' purposes for, problems with, and approaches to researched-writing, it is readily apparent that "current-traditionalism" is not an adequate description of researched-writing pedagogy in the first half of the twentieth century. Zemliansky states that "By the late 1920s, the freshman research paper became a defined genre of college writing, complete with a set of required surface features and discourse conventions" (7); however, based on the variety of perspectives represented in my corpus, it is not clear to me that this genre has ever achieved stasis beyond a general consensus that students should be explicitly taught how to use sources in their writing. Thus, while Rhetoric and Composition scholars may rail against the "traditional research paper," it seems uncertain that this construct ever existed in any coherent form outside of textbooks. Admittedly, the persuasiveness of this and other claims that I have made is hampered by the gaps in my archive (particularly at the institutional level), but the purpose of my study was never to tell the whole story of early researched-writing instruction, or even completely tell one sub-section of it. Rather than finding a complete archive, as might have been done for a more traditional project, I attempted to use history as a lens to understand the nature of early researched-writing instruction in first-year composition, and from that understanding formulate an argument using historical evidence that could speak back to other histories of researched-writing. Determining if my argument was persuasive is not for me to decide, of course, but I hope at the very least that I have done justice to the perspectives of past instructors, revealed how complex and robust an activity the teaching of researched-writing

is and has been, and demonstrated that researched-writing pedagogy's past, present, and future deserve further attention.

CHAPTER SIX

IMPLICATIONS AND AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

If composition pedagogy intends to build *on* and not only *away* from past approaches, then it is imperative to develop a richer understanding of that pedagogical past. Connors asserts that “The question of writing assignments is uncomfortable for many teachers because it presents such a clear mirror of one’s individual philosophy of education” (327). However, embracing this discomfort is necessary to consider how classroom genres, the primary vehicles for student learning in a composition classroom, enact our pedagogies, and how we convey those genres to students via our pedagogies. Thus, one area for future research is to write histories of other first-year composition classroom genres, to trace the imprints of their previous forms and ways of being taught, in order to better understand their current pedagogy. Additionally, as archives continue to become more accessible, another area for future research is to write more narrowly-focused histories of institution-based researched-writing pedagogy. For instance, this could be accomplished by tracing back a particularly interesting approach to researched-writing articulated in a journal article in order to understand the institutional context within which it emerged, and to more closely explore how the interplay between specific student demographics, unique faculty dynamics, and administrative approaches affects researched-writing pedagogy.

In my research I noted that as the field of Rhetoric and Composition began to more fully emerge with the establishment of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, there was an accompanying spike in the number of articles written on researched-writing in *English Journal* and *College English*, and the appearance of specific statements regarding problems with researched-writing. Future research could more richly theorize what the relationship is between problem-finding and discipline-building, and consider why some

problems are taken up, and others are forgotten. And finally, other historiographers might consider ways to write disciplinary histories that do not primarily rely on reforming the present by denigrating the past. There are other ways to make use of disciplinary histories of course, but in my research, I sought to attend to the more innovative aspects of the past so that we might consider if it's possible to address the problems of the present by building on the solutions of the past. What is particularly useful about the historical perspective is that it draws our attention from more immediate concerns, like how to prevent plagiarism, and instead focuses our attention on big picture questions, like "Why do certain problems never seem to go away?" or "Does my pedagogy have a long-term positive effect on my students' researched-writing?" and even, "How do my interactions with my students, my personal values, and my institutional environment affect my purposes for, problems with, and approaches to researched-writing?" These questions are not easy to answer, but they are inextricably intertwined with the legacy of the past, the problems of the present, and visions for the future.

Thus, I hope that my research can not only indicate areas for future historical research, but also shed new light on problems in contemporary researched-writing pedagogy. In Carra Leah Hood's 2010 survey on the status of the research paper in first-year composition, she found that while researched-writing is widely taught, there are many different genres used to convey research instruction. Hood believes that this phenomenon is a response to scholarly critiques of "the traditional research paper" that have proposed alternative assignments. If this is the case, it refutes McDonald's argument that major changes to researched-writing cannot effectively be made until the purposes of the composition course are more clearly defined (145). While I partially agree with McDonald in that having a clear sense of purpose for the course as a whole will enable instructors to make more informed decisions regarding purposes for researched-

writing, I believe that Hood's research demonstrates that researched-writing pedagogy has been and is responsive to scholarship proposing new approaches.

But what are the primary approaches to researched-writing that have inspired the diversification in researched-writing genres that Hood identified? Using the purposes identified from my corpus, it seems that there are two major groups: texts that have focused on the affect of student researched-writing, and those that have focused on the utility of researched-writing. Texts that are motivated by the desire to encourage students to feel engaged in the process of research include Ken Macrorie's *The I-Search Paper*, Bruce Ballenger's *The Curious Researcher*, and Robert Davis and Mark Shadle's *Teaching Multiwriting: Researching and Composing with Multiple Genres, Media, Disciplines, and Cultures*. Although each of these texts take somewhat different approaches and define their researched-writing genres differently, they are in the tradition of previous instructors who believed that inspiring students' interest in researched-writing was a matter of primary importance. On the other hand, there are quite a few texts that, while they also want students to feel engaged in research, focus more on the future utility of researched-writing by endeavoring to make freshman researched-writing more closely aligned with the discourse practices of academic research. Texts in this vein include Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater and Bonnie Sunstein's *Fieldworking*, Wayne Booth and Gregory Colomb's *The Craft of Research*, Lisa Ede's *Work in Progress*, and Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's *"They Say / I Say": The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*. By various means, each of these texts attempt to open up for students the sometimes opaque rhetorical practices of academic research in the hope that students might learn to make similar rhetorical moves.

While both groups of purposes for researched-writing build (consciously or not) on rich traditions of instructor motivations and approaches, they do not adequately address two very old

problems: students arbitrarily using sources without an understanding of the purposes that should drive their use, and the activity of topic narrowing.³⁰ Joe Bizup’s proposed rhetorical vocabulary, offers a very promising way forward that instructors could continue to build on and integrate into other approaches to teaching researched-writing. Bizup’s approach is remarkable, because it draws students’ attention to the different ways in which academics rhetorically *use* sources: to provide background information, to exhibit, to engage in argument, or to provide a guiding methodology/theory, which Bizup helpfully distills into the acronym BEAM or BEAT. Not only has Bizup crafted a memorable vocabulary for research that is applicable across disciplines, it also provides a way to explain to students the need for an object of analysis in order to create new knowledge—all academic research has an exhibit source, the thing that is analyzed in order to be understood more fully or in a new way. So many instructors in the past (and, I imagine, in the present) have lamented that students created “patchwork quilts” of sources, and a few insightful instructors recognized that the problem often was that students had no primary sources. That realization was a marked step forward, but Bizup’s vocabulary goes even further by helping students understand that sources are not *inherently* primary or secondary—they only become so through how researchers use them. Additionally, by requiring students to have at least one exhibit source, Bizup’s approach resolves much of the difficulty involved in convincing students that their proposed research subject is too broad in scope—the exhibit naturally provides limitations on the scope of the project, since it can only be applied so far.

However, one issue with the BEAM vocabulary is that it is most applicable to academic researched-writing. What about approaches like Ballenger’s, that are more exploratory and directed to a more general audience? Again, I think past traditions might provide some insight. In

³⁰ Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein’s *Fieldworking* does the best in this regard, since students are personally gathering their primary sources through qualitative field research.

the myriad of different types of subjects proposed as suitable for freshman researched-writing, I identified two main types: those focused on knowledge-making, and those focused on content-mastering. Bizup's vocabulary is most helpful for researched-writing driven by the imperative to make new knowledge, whereas exploratory researched-writing like Ballenger's is more akin to content-mastering. Within content-mastering there are two sub-types: mastering classroom content in order to demonstrate an ability to understand and formulate a position on a topic of significant disciplinary interest (the majority of researched-writing assignments in undergraduate courses in other disciplines), and mastering a specific area of civic discourse in order to intervene in the conversation by providing an insightful synthesis (Ballenger's approach). Although I believe that both knowledge-making and content-mastering approaches are viable options for researched-writing instruction in the first-year composition classroom, the differences between the two should be made more transparent to students.

Additionally, in the name of transparency, a productive area of future research is delineating the consensus views of the field on researched-writing, beginning with the start of the twentieth century. Currently, one widely used articulation of goals for first-year composition is the WPA Outcomes Statement. In this statement, there is not a single major section that is devoted exclusively to the use of research in writing. Rather, it is sprinkled through several different outcomes. For "Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing" there are two outcomes that relate to researched-writing. Students should "Understand a writing assignment as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources" and also should be able to "Integrate their own ideas with those of others." For "Knowledge of Conventions," students should "Practice appropriate means of documenting their work" and for "Composing in Electronic Environments" students ought to be able to

“Locate, evaluate, organize, and use research material collected from electronic sources, including scholarly library databases; other official databases (e.g., federal government databases); and informal electronic networks and internet sources.” The problem with all of these particular outcomes is that they are more current-traditional than the majority of journal articles on researched-writing pre-1960. This is problematic, because not only do the outcomes not reflect the best that early twentieth century instructors had to offer, they also do not reflect the major shifts that composition studies has made since the early twentieth century, and the plethora of research that has since been done on effective researched-writing instruction.

One emerging way to address this problem may be the growing interest in threshold concepts. According to Jan Meyer and Ray Land, threshold concepts are not the same as core concepts; they each open up a “new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something” (1), without which learners cannot continue to progress in a disciplinary way of thinking. Meyer and Land also delineate some of the key characteristics of threshold concepts. They are **transformative** (causing a significant shift in perspective), **troublesome** (i.e. counter-intuitive to students), **irreversible** (it is difficult for people to think in the same way as they did prior to learning the threshold concept), **integrative** (students can make connections in the discipline in ways that were previously unavailable to them), and **bounded** (they serve “specific and limited” purposes) (4-5). Building on this articulation of threshold concepts, Liz Wardle on her blog has begun to attempt to define some preliminary threshold concepts for first-year composition that primarily address: the importance of conceptions of writing; the mediating, contextual nature of texts; and the recognition that people use a variety of processes in creating texts which are situational (i.e. influenced by variations in audience, context, and purpose).

However, thus far her threshold concepts do not yet attempt to articulate how students should conceive of the relationship between sources and writing, as well as affiliated concepts. In order to accomplish this, I believe that threshold concepts drawing on the rich history of researched-writing instruction in composition studies (including recent developments) will be more likely to succeed than ones that are only rooted in a handful of new approaches to researched-writing instruction, since they are less likely to be accused of being merely faddish. However, currently it would be difficult to accomplish this, since there are a plethora of scholarly articles since the 1960s that grapple with and propose ways to teach researched-writing, but no systematic exploration of the various perspectives contained in them. Additionally, it is not enough to simply list the various approaches to teaching research-based writing; an investigation of the motives driving the approaches is called for, since threshold concepts are the complex ideas that pedagogical practices seek to convey.

Finally, besides indicating problematic areas of researched-writing instruction that need to be further addressed and providing a basis for developing historically-rooted threshold concepts, my research indicates another potential area for research in contemporary researched-writing instruction—the problem of future utility, or, as it is currently discussed, the problem of transfer. The most frequently stated purpose for researched-writing instruction in first-year composition in the early- to mid-twentieth century is that it will prepare students for their future coursework. In more contemporary scholarship, this claim is known as transfer—the idea that what students learn in one context might be transferred to another context where the knowledge is called for. However, as we now know, transfer is not as automatic or easy as was previously assumed. Thus, since the future utility of researched-writing has been and is still a primary motivating factor in its instruction, it would be beneficial to develop a better understanding of

what it is, exactly, that we hope will be transferred from researched-writing instruction to new contexts, and to conduct empirical research to determine the success of various approaches in accomplishing those purposes, like Kathleen Blake Yancey, Liane Robertson, and Kara Taczak's research in *Writing Across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing*.

While each of the areas for future research that I've identified could certainly build on the best practices of the past, it is also important to keep in mind that not all past practices are worth building on. When we read about Joseph Rogers at St. Louis University in 1953 giving his students a pre-made outline into which they must make their research fit, or about the rigidly moralistic perspectives on plagiarism prevalent during the period, it is clear that there are some aspects of the past that should be left behind. However, even these more negative examples of researched-writing pedagogy are important to attend to because they are reminders of the importance of resisting totalizing narratives; it has not been my aim to create a new narrative of twentieth century researched-writing pedagogy as robustly rhetorical and creative, but rather to attend to the nuances of the past in order to resist the easy explanation of current-traditionalism. Even as we aim to improve researched-writing pedagogy by developing new approaches, it is important to remember that current researched-writing practices are similarly complex. Classroom genres represent the intersections between a multitude of genres that inform and influence the "final products"—written feedback, conferences, lectures, in-class discussions with instructor/peers, out-of-class discussions with peers, students' prior genre knowledge, textbooks, and scholarly discussion in journals. In historical research it is difficult (and in some cases impossible) to recover all of these genres, but the closer we attend to this ecology of discourse, the richer our theorizations of past, present, and future researched-writing will be.

APPENDIX A

SCREENSHOTS OF SAMPLE CODING FROM *ENGLISH JOURNAL* AND INDIANA UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

	A	B	C
11	Cummings, Annette. "An Open Letter to Teachers of English" <i>The English Journal</i> Vol. 39, No. 1 (Jan., 1950) pp. 38-39	"Dear Fellow-Members of the Teaching Profession: For some time I have been concerned with the active teaching of hypocrisy through the medium now known as the term paper or research paper" (Cummings 38).	a teacher at Dearborn Junior College; letter published in the Round Table section of <i>English Journal</i>
12		"Every year I preach the value of intellectual integrity and the importance of truth in the scientific method" (Cummings 38).	
13		"Every year I resort to more thought, care, and preparation in motivating the research paper, borrowing methods from superior teachers and keeping an open mind as to the very purposes of the assignment" (Cummings 38).	
14		"So, when 50 per cent or more of the papers handed in are examples of the most flagrant plagiarism and reaction against the underlying purposes of the paper, I am driven to an analysis of the situation, which leads me to the conclusion that the research paper has no place in the undergraduate curriculum" (Cummings 38).	
15		"The application of the scientific method to the study of literary history and sociology was introduced into American education as a result of the impact of German and European science in the latter part of the nineteenth century" (Cummings 38).	
16		"One must grant the validity of the factual investigative process so applied when directed by the truly scientific mind. Such study is necessarily of the most highly specialized nature. To expect the average American undergraduate to handle the tools for a specialized process in which he has little interest is to pervert the ideal of objectivity in intensive scholarship" (Cummings 38).	

	A	B	C
30	Indiana University Your Work in Composition: Some Information and Counsel About the Program in Elementary Composition 1956 - 1957	Describing the sequence of courses in composition: "In the third semester (W103) you will be required to apply in an intensive way the skills you have gained earlier to important and useful types of writing, such as formal correspondence, reports, memoranda, abstracts, and - for your immediate use - examination essays and the factual investigative paper, the latter being kinds of writing which you will constantly be called upon to submit in other courses." (7).	This quote is interesting in that it provides perspective on a purpose for teaching the "investigative paper" in FYC: preparation for future investigative papers in other classes. It also demonstrates an approach to researched-writing: learning how to use the library, evaluate evidence, document sources, and process/formulate conclusions regarding data. What is also unique so far about this document is that it is not written for teachers, but for students.
31		"In connection with the investigative paper you will be thoroughly instructed in exploring and exploiting the resources of the library; you will study some of the principles of clear thinking and evaluating evidence, together with representative procedures of documentation; and you will be taught how to interpret, digest, organize and formulate conclusions about a sizeable body of data" (8).	
32		"Having someone write your paper for you, copying someone else's paper, copying from a newspaper, magazine, or book (in fact, appropriating facts, ideas, or opinions extensively from any source, published or unpublished, without accrediting it) is simple dishonesty. <u>Plagiarism</u> is the term usually applied to this un-acknowledged use of other people's writings. It is a form of theft, but worse still it is a way of stupidly sabotaging your own education and cheating yourself of the training you probably desperately need. You will feel the cheat most, of course, later on when it is too late for you to repair the damage to yourself. Furthermore, the University has strict regulations governing cheating and you may find yourself before the Dean of Students and faced with serious disciplinary action" (13).	This particular description of plagiarism is interesting in how it paints the action as a criminal/immoral behavior (theft, cheating), but at the same time it also emphasizes that the student is ultimately harming him/herself more than anyone else.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sarah Marshall was born in Santa Monica, California, and has lived in Montana, New York, and Florida since then. After graduating from Nyack College in 2011 with a Bachelor's degree in English and a minor in Drama, she worked a variety of office jobs before discovering that the wonderful field of Rhetoric and Composition existed. She graduated from Florida State University with her Master's degree in Rhetoric and Composition in the summer of 2015, and will teach composition and freelance edit in Philadelphia while she plans where she wants to be next. Professionally, she is interested in the history and future of researched-writing instruction in first-year composition, rhetorical genre theory, transfer, and writing assessment. Personally, she dabbles in nutritional science, theology, graphic novels, science fiction, and education reform.