

WELCOME TO THE CLUB: AN ARCHIVAL INQUIRY INTO THE DEWEY LABORATORY SCHOOL AS RHETORICAL EDUCATION

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WELCOME TO THE CLUB: AN ARCHIVAL INQUIRY INTO THE
DEWEY LABORATORY SCHOOL AS RHETORICAL EDUCATION
BY
KRYSTEN MANKE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTORATE OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
ENGLISH

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

2019

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DISSERTATION
OF
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UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND
2019

ABSTRACT

This project contributes to scholarship extending the traditional scope of rhetorical education. Specifically, this dissertation recovers educational practices and ideas from records documenting the early years of the University of Chicago's Laboratory School, an experimental elementary school founded and directed by the American pragmatist John Dewey. Researchers have employed John Dewey's pragmatic philosophy to gain insights into progressive, student-centered composition and rhetoric instruction. However, the field has neglected Dewey's actual pedagogy as a source for insights into rhetorical education. Using archival analysis methods, this dissertation recovers educational practices from the Laboratory School that were not recognized as rhetorical during their use but which exemplify contemporary definitions of rhetorical practice. Specifically, this study finds that Dewey's Laboratory School taught literacy and rhetoric and that students' learning in these areas benefited from the School's emphasis on embodied learning. By attending to archival records of the Laboratory School, this dissertation demonstrates that Dewey's own pedagogical practices can inform contemporary thinking about progressive, student-centered composition and rhetoric instruction. In addition, this study suggests that pedagogical techniques tried out in the Laboratory School can inform contemporary thinking about teaching embodied rhetoric. Finally, this work helps to illuminate the value of experimental pedagogies for educators today.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to Jeremiah Dyehouse, for your endless enthusiasm and consistent approachability across our very own seven-year pedagogical experiment. Thank you also for handing me that first copy of *The Dewey School* and for all the important books you've lent me since then. This project certainly could not have happened without your extensive guidance, your many readings, and your boundless enthusiasm for the subject matter. Finally, while not dissertation related, thank you for always keeping an eye out for interesting projects and writing opportunities for me.

Collaborating with Karen Shea on the Alice Dewey chapter has been a high point in my academic career!

Thank you also to the fantastic cohort of women at the University of Rhode Island – for the great memories and conversations in Roosevelt 311, for your hospitality in homes around New England, for your attendance at my wedding, and for the work you have done and continue to do each day as educators, parents, spouses, and friends. Thanks in particular to Karen Shea, who is a fantastic collaborator, a magnificent friend, and who has a superhuman ability to send calming vibes and sound guidance over email.

I am also incredibly thankful for the intellectual community that was established at the University of Rhode Island at the time of my arrival to their PhD program – their fingerprints may be seen throughout this project. To Kim Hensley Owens, Nedra Reynolds, Libby Miles, and Mike Pennell, thank you for helping me to grow so much

and for the roles your awesome scholarship had in this project! And a special thanks to Bob Schwegler, for that class in archives that answered such an important call and set me on such an interesting path.

This project would not have been possible without Nate, my incredibly supportive husband, who plied me with snacks, movies, and encouraging words throughout a long process. Thank you for driving up to Rhode Island without fail every weekend for years while I pursued this goal. Thank you for hugging me during many less than confident moments along the way. Thank you for letting me borrow your sweatpants and flannel shirts to complete my “dissertation writing ensemble” these last five years. You can’t have them back.

Thank you also to Steph, the best and most supportive friend a person could ask for. You’ve endured my many dissertation-related rants, made countless cups of tea, folded my laundry, done my dishes, and have generally been there every step of the way. You are a beautiful jellyfish, and an even more beautiful soul!

Finally, an enormous thanks to my family for keeping me pointed toward the light at the end of the tunnel and for thousands of kindnesses, small and large, along the way. Thank you for letting me bounce ideas off you, for enduring all states of frazzled, for helping me move to and fro and finally into a house with Nate, for making sauce and offering advice and encouragement and unwavering support at all hours of the day and night. Look guys, I did it!

PREFACE

As a feminist, pragmatist rhetoric and composition scholar, I am pleased to say that this study represents the intersection of my principal intellectual interests.

Feminism has been a core part of my identity both personally and academically. When I arrived at the University of Rhode Island in 2012, it was with a cohort of seven other women, and this academic *kairos* meant that our course material, research interests, and professional development was infused with feminist theory and practice. During coursework, my cohort and I were fortunate to meet with scholars including Cheryl Glenn and Jacqueline Jones Royster, and our own professors regularly contributed to conversations about maternal and material rhetorics. On a personal level, this group of women continually supported one another in all endeavors – whether papers published, jobs accepted, houses bought, or babies had. We built our lives alongside our academic careers, and I will never be able to think on what I have learned without simultaneously bringing their faces to mind.

Also while completing graduate coursework, I had the unique opportunity to immerse myself in pragmatism, first through a seminar course and then through independent study. I appreciated Deweyan pragmatism for its open-minded, problem-solving and pluralistic attributes. Dewey spent much of his career disputing dualities and offering up instead a multitude of alternative possibilities. His work was also perpetually of the present, and since Dewey knew the present always changed, he tried to adapt his philosophy accordingly. Because he was cultivated open-mindedness, Dewey also allowed his ideas to be shaped through his contact with the people he engaged with personally and professionally, and I respected this willingness to be

shaped by his contemporaries. In his growing theory of pragmatism, Dewey acknowledged the complex and difficult reality of everyday lived experiences and based his philosophy on helping people generate unique and situational problem-solving techniques and mentalities in response. As a whole, pragmatist ethics is marked by a commitment to connecting theory with praxis and is distinctly “naturalistic, pluralistic, developmental, and experimental” (Seigfried, *Pragmatism* 7). In these ways, pragmatism seemed to share a fundamental connection to pragmatism, and the features they shared were also those that resonated with me.

Yet there was a major problem with the intellectual *rapprochement* in which I set out to participate. Deweyan pragmatism is not an inherently feminist endeavor, which meant that my interests alone were not enough to cement a connection between the two traditions. In the robust and far-reaching history of pragmatism, Jane Addams is the only woman recognized in a canon that is otherwise, with only very slight and recent exceptions, largely and conspicuously comprised of privileged white males. While the question was posed over 20 years ago as to why pragmatists failed to address feminist issues, few have taken up the gauntlet to answer that question (Seigfried, “Where” 10). In order to take on any project that claimed feminist and pragmatic underpinnings, I had to both acknowledge and to some degree reconcile the inherent complications of practicing both approaches together.

The University of Chicago Laboratory School provided a helpful site to begin exploring the potential alignments between pragmatism and feminism. While Dewey had developed the idea and secured the initial funding for the Laboratory School, it was a group of principally women educators who translated Dewey’s theories into

practicable pedagogy. These women consistently worked to enact curriculum that would constructively reconfigure students' learning processes and prepare them more adequately for life as American citizens. They perpetually revised the curriculum to ensure it met the needs of the particular individuals in each class. Through their teaching, these educators also critically informed Dewey's thinking about education. During the years that Dewey ran the Laboratory School, his publications consistently built off of the pedagogical activities he observed. Later, seminal publications such as *How We Think* also revealed the extent to which Dewey's pedagogy and pragmatism was continually informed by the work done by Laboratory School educators. In current contexts, many of the Deweyan works that scholars still consistently employ today were inspired by the work of the women at the Laboratory School. Underscoring that fact helped me to establish a feminist take on the project.

Dewey, to his credit, demonstrated consistent respect and support for these women who simultaneously interpreted and shaped his thinking. While education was one of the few accepted professional provinces of women at the time, far less common was the encouragement to experiment based on what they thought was pedagogically valid. Ella Flagg Young, an educator at the Laboratory School, demonstrated to Dewey "that what was crucial for good teaching were opportunities to think and experiment within a context of frank exchange and full respect" (Seigfried "John Dewey's" 38). In this way, educators at the Laboratory School operated with unconventional autonomy as they designed and redesigned their curricula. In my study into the Laboratory School, I was perpetually impressed by how much freedom

teachers had and the depth of their commitment to teaching as they took on the difficult task of translating Dewey's nascent pragmatism into working pedagogy.

Even the records and reflections of the Laboratory School were defined by the women who carried out the experiment. Alice Dewey was largely responsible for preserving the records of the Laboratory School and served not only as the school's principal, but also the archive's principal architect. When John Dewey set out to compose a retrospective text about the experiment, he tapped Katherine Camp Mayhew and Anna Camp Edwards for their expertise, and their extensive meetings and correspondence indicated an ongoing respectful relationship. While Dewey contributed to the planning of *The Dewey School*, he has no byline in the final text. Immersing myself in records of this the seven-year experiment confirmed for me that pragmatism and feminism could enjoy productive intersections that led to more practicable and responsive pedagogy.

More broadly, Dewey's staunch support of women in all avenues of his life also helped begin to underscore for me the potential connections between feminism and pragmatism. While completing this project, I also had the chance to co-author a chapter that explored Alice Dewey's influence on John and her potentiality as a central figure in the pragmatic canon. John Dewey's relationship with his wife provided his first inspirations as a budding feminist – it was Alice who perpetually sought to open John's mind and bring it into contact with present social issues so that “things which had previously been matters of theory acquired through his contact with her a vital and direct human significance” (Rockefeller 150). A former student of Dewey's also remembered years later how “Mrs. Dewey would grab Dewey's ideas – and grab him

– and insist that something be done” (Durst 13). In *The School and Society*, John Dewey describes the Laboratory School specifically as a joint undertaking with his wife, Alice, and writes that “the clear and experienced intelligence of my wife is wrought everywhere into its texture” (Dewey xiii-xiv). Ten years later in *How We Think*, Dewey reinforced his “fundamental indebtedness” to Alice, “by whom the ideas of this book were inspired, and through whose work with the Laboratory School, existing in Chicago between 1896-1903, the ideas attained such concreteness as comes from embodiment and testing in practice” (Dewey, *How* iv, 83). Alice Dewey’s influence on her husband, and his ready recognition of it, indicates both the beginnings of a practicing pragmatist (in Alice) and a practicing feminist (in John).

Such feminism is particularly reinforced by the relationships Dewey cultivated with the women in Chicago during the turn of the century. As this dissertation will address, Dewey credited Jane Addams with teaching him about women’s rights and repeatedly lauded her work at the Hull House as an inspiration for his growing pragmatism and for the workings of the Laboratory School. Dewey also remained politically active in a number of arenas including “women’s suffrage, women’s right to higher education and coeducation, unimpeded access to and legalization of birth control, and just wages and worker control of the conditions of work for women as well as men” (Seigfried, “John Dewey’s” 48). In these ways, Dewey demonstrated how pragmatism and feminism aligned functionally under the headings of pluralism and open-mindedness.

Again, it was my hope not to focus on Dewey’s contributions to the Laboratory School and his feminist habits, but the hard-won pedagogical contributions of the

women who practically ran the experiment and *their* feminist takes on pedagogy. That said, in this preface I also wish to extol the work Dewey did to create, at the turn of the 20th century, an environment that empowered women with intellectual freedom and pedagogical flexibility. I further wish to highlight the feminist mindset of a man who allowed his thinking to be profoundly shaped by the work of the women around him. Put in the simplest terms: the women of the Laboratory School took on incredible work, and Dewey did well to see it.

In the process of seeing for myself the pedagogical contributions these women made, I have made many discoveries. When I began the initial stages of research in the archives, I hoped to find interesting teaching strategies and usable frameworks that could extend our understanding of how rhetorical education had unfolded in another unlikely historical site. I was curious and somewhat uneasy about what the nontraditional literacy practices had accomplished (or not), and I was excited about the prospect of encountering a truly experimentalist ethos in the classroom. What I did not expect was the embodied rhetoric that I saw emerging out of the invitational strategies that teachers employed to introduce the occupational curriculum. This focus emerged after much reflection, and I hope that the work presented here aids educators in developing usable embodied curriculum for writing and rhetoric classes.

In closing, I return to the academic environment within the Writing and Rhetoric Department at the University of Rhode Island and to the people who helped me to establish the philosophical interests that drove this project. Throughout our time together, we worked independently and together to apply rhetoric to the things that mattered in our own lives – motherhood, comedy, ESL education, cooking, race,

conservation, and more. As I think back on the many hours we spent dwelling in Roosevelt 311 and the many projects that emerged from our conversations there, I realize that this is the kind of environment I have been trying to articulate for rhetoric and composition students today – and that’s the kind that I observed in the Laboratory School. My study was performed to recover strategies, practices, and mentalities that might help today’s educators build the kind of class that allows students to use the things that matter in their own lives to propel their rhetorical learning. In engaging with this scholarship, I hope that readers also find inspiration and encouragement as they build pedagogies that allow students to operate with intellectual freedom and cultivate the skills to enact purposeful change in their worlds. Empowering students is no easy work. We need all the help we can get, and we need it wherever – and whenever – we can find it. In my study of these archives and in the context of my own graduate education, I found that an experimentalist ethos combined with a robust community and an attentiveness to both discursive and embodied strategies had a profound impact on what could be accomplished through rhetorical education. With this in mind, I invite readers to explore this archival inquiry into The Laboratory School.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Clubhouse Project: A Problem to be Solved

In January 1900, the Dewey Laboratory School experienced problems associated with the exponential growth it had seen in the four years since opening in 1896. A progressive-era experiment in pedagogy based on John Dewey's emerging pragmatic philosophy, the Laboratory School had opened with twelve students and two teachers. By 1901, enrollment had reached 140 students aged 4-14 and the staff included 23 teachers and 10 graduate teaching assistants – mainly composed of women. After its initial opening, the Laboratory School's location had expanded from the attic of a teacher's residence to a building on Kimball Avenue and again to another “dwelling-house” on Ellis Avenue in Chicago (Mayhew and Edwards 56). This new space had more accommodations including a kitchen for children to cook in and a larger outdoor space. Even still, students and teachers alike struggled with space and facilities in the increasingly popular new school. Instructors and administrators admitted that students learned in noisy conditions and with frequent interruptions, and that the “lack of a library, lack of quiet, lack of beauty, lack of adequate space for club meetings, all made it impossible to carry out many individual and group plans” (Mayhew and Edwards 249). While the Laboratory School had grown dramatically in a few short years due to popular interest in its unconventional pedagogical methods, it was unclear whether the school could sustain that growth with its available resources.

The School had emerged out of the motivations of the Progressive Education Era, one facet of the larger Progressive movement that had marked the late 1890's to mid 1920's in America. As a whole, Progressivism was marked by social and eventually political reform, and various facets of the movement responded to unfolding issues related to gender, race, labor, education, and citizenship. Particularly in urban, industrializing locales, the people active in the movement sought to create the conditions that would allow citizens to function in a democratic society and that responded to what were seen as some of the dehumanizing consequences of industrialization. Specifically, they wanted to promote the ability to work together to solve problems and enact positive change. In Chicago, the movement was already particularly active when Dewey arrived in issues of labor reform, women's suffrage, and, increasingly, education. For its part, the Progressive Education Movement was characterized by "the notion that each individual has uniquely creative potentialities, and that a school in which children are encouraged freely to develop these potentialities is the best guarantee of a larger society truly devoted to human worth and excellence" (Cremin, "John Dewey" 164). As a key contributor to the movement, Dewey asserted that a truly progressive education "requires a searching study of society and its moving forces" in order to create a school "that will send into society people able to understand it, to live intelligently as a part of it, and to change it to suit their visions of a better life" (Cremin, "John Dewey" 167-168). The Laboratory School would come to represent Dewey's attempt to cultivate a learning environment that would prepare students to contribute to various aspects of society.

Because the school had been fashioned with the goal of creating, as Dewey explained, an “embryonic society” for urban, industrial democracy, students were well-positioned to forge solutions to the shared problem of scarce, crowded spaces (*School* 32). Throughout their time at the Laboratory School, students had learned skills in relation to the opportunities those abilities created within their school community. On a day to day level, for example, they had learned how to cook to provide lunch for their peers, and they had planted and tended gardens with the goal of using their harvest for those meals. When they began to amass successful dishes, students worked together to draft their recipes and learned how to bind books in order to create a more formalized collection of their culinary explorations for their peers. Work like this, as well as woodworking, metalworking, sewing, and more, had allowed students to work productively together across different ages and in multiple groups. As time went on, students began to develop particular interests and began to form clubs to explore those likings together. Two student-run clubs – the debate club and the photography club – were particularly active at the school and eventually came together to articulate a shared problem as well as a collaborative solution. The debate club wanted a space of their own so they could meet and carry out their affairs with relative privacy (a much sought after commodity). The photography club wanted a different kind of space: a dark room in which to develop the pictures they took with the pinhole cameras they had been building throughout the year. Together, these groups conceived the idea of a clubhouse – a space the students themselves might build that would respond to both their needs.

The project was not only self-initiated on the part of the students, but also self-guided. For their parts, (largely women) teachers exercised continual caution to avoid too much or too little direction so that students could exercise agency in solving the problem before them (Mayhew and Edwards 232). The entire structure, from the hole dug for the foundation to the shingles laid on the rooftop, was built by students' hands. The work required a great deal of effort, and it apparently produced a fair amount of frustration, but it also perpetually captivated the children's imaginations. Thirty years after attending the Laboratory School, a former student referred in a letter to the learning associated with the clubhouse as "one of the most interesting classes he ever had."¹ Another alumna remarked:

The building of the Club House, more than all the books I have read, than all the beautiful buildings I have seen, more than any other experience in my life has helped me to see and appreciate architecture. Helping with my own hands in the real and practical work, you get far more out of that than out of books.

(Mayhew and Edwards 265)

This former student also noted that the skills she had learned in conjunction with the clubhouse project including carpentry, weaving, and sewing, were especially helpful during her wartime efforts in the Red Cross because she was trained to do things with her "mind and eyes and hands together" (Mayhew and Edwards 405). When people

¹ Footnote in Chapter IX draft. Box 17, Folder 3, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

asked where she learned to use her hands so easily, she “acknowledged that it was all due to the Dewey School and to Dewey’s ideas.”²

Throughout its construction, the clubhouse project required students to operate as a self-sufficient group capable of solving its own problems, and the project epitomized the curricular themes that defined the Laboratory School: a school that functioned as a community, activities that focused on learning by doing, and the introduction of formalized knowledge in conjunction with student interest. Through these sustained construction efforts, this study finds, the clubhouse project also demonstrates a fascinating example of rhetorical education by providing a unique, authentic and immersive situation in which students had to operate collaboratively and constructively in a problem-based heuristic to succeed. Educators noted in their reflections of the clubhouse project that the process “furnished ample material for discussion.”³ As students considered both the situation and the potential modes of response, they grew more invested in expressive abilities. Specifically, they began to see how the ability to express themselves facilitated a more direct course of action toward their desired ends. Students collaborated to decide on each element in clubhouse design and construction. Details ranging from where the structure would be built to the architectural style to placement of doors, windows, fireplace, stairway to what would go into the house to who would be allowed in the house meant that students continuously needed to advocate for what they wanted, to explain why certain

² Letter from Josephine Crane Bradley, former student at the Laboratory School. Box 18, Folder 1, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

³ Footnote in chapter IX draft. Box 17, Folder 3, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

elements were important, and to navigate increasingly complex social conditions as the ranks of the club increase in both age and interest. They had to collaborate, compromise, and come to a shared understanding in order to move forward productively to get their clubhouse finished.

While those older students who had started the project initially maintained a possessive mindset about the clubhouse, they eventually realized how much more swiftly the work would progress if they extended an invitation to students throughout the school. Ultimately, boys and girls regardless of age were encouraged to contribute, and anyone who helped could enjoy the clubhouse when it was finished without the initiation fees or yearly dues that members otherwise paid. In the process, the two clubs that initially collaborated to build the clubhouse had expanded and formed committees that oversaw different aspects of construction and eventually began to organize social activities (see Figure 1). In addition to the ongoing activities of the debate club and photography club, students organized presentations and speakers that aligned with their current interests – often, professors at the University of Chicago whom the children had persuaded to come and speak on some particular topic like geology.⁴ In the year that students had in their clubhouse before the Laboratory School moved again to a different facility, they found consistent opportunities to explore their interests and gain critical skills together. Both its construction and its usage highlighted the special abilities of a group of young people who had developed the

⁴ Group Report. Box 1, Folder 6, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

mindsets and habits of a working community.

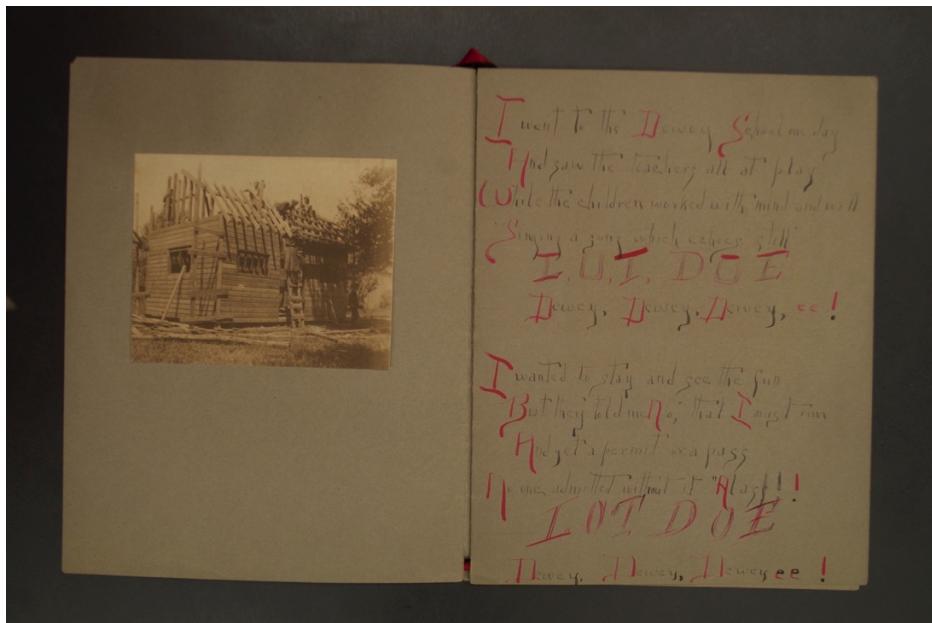


Figure 1. Pamphlet by Harriett Harding, student. Box 21, Folder 7, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

The clubhouse project represented one of the most vivid expressions of the Laboratory School pedagogy in practice and, by today's definitions, helps to characterize the project as rhetorical education. As this study will show, archival records of the work done by women educators at the Laboratory School suggest novel techniques for using embodiment and invitational, communicative strategies to teach rhetoric. If rhetoric can be characterized as the purposeful use of words and images to motivate a change in thinking or action, rhetorical education may be understood as the cultivation of habits and strategies for that end. Classical conceptions of rhetorical education focus on helping students develop the means to persuade an audience to adopt their viewpoint regarding some particular situation. More recently, feminist rhetorical scholar Jessica Enoch has advocated for an extended definition for rhetorical education that includes "any educational program that develops in students a

communal and civic identity and articulates for them rhetorical strategies, language practices, and bodily and social behaviors that make possible their participation in communal and civic affairs” (Enoch 167). Here, Enoch shares a vision for rhetorical education marked by contemporary feminism.

Within this definition, Enoch also cites bodily practices and behaviors alongside discursive activities to highlight broadened areas of focus for contemporary rhetoric and composition scholars. In recent years, embodiment has been increasingly studied in the rhetoric and composition field. As a champion of rhetoric’s physical expressions, Debra Hawhee highlights how the actual, physical embodied features of rhetoric have often been repressed since ancient times despite essential connections, leaving scholars unable to observe and analyze potentially useful rhetorical activities and pedagogies throughout history (Hawhee, “Rhetorics” 156). Only in the last twenty years has this connection been discussed in more explicit terms with the proliferation of postmodern and feminist discourse in the field (Patterson & Corning 5). During the initial resurgence of embodiment at the beginning of the 21st century, scholars focused mainly on Foucaultian readings of the body in rhetoric that showed how the body has been used primarily as a construct and “inscribed...for purposes of interdisciplinary power and persuasion” (Patterson and Corning 8). This postmodern interpretation taps into the embodied functions of rhetoric by raising consciousness about the ways in which “one always speaks from a particular place in a social structure” (Jarratt and Reynolds 47). Using this definition, scholars have raised awareness about the power structures that have oppressed or empowered particular groups in various social situations.

For example, rhetorical scholars James C. Wilson and Cynthia Lewieki-Wilson explore how exclusion has been an automatic factor of disability for well over 2000 years, and use their work to call into question the binaries of opposition created by the ideas of abled vs. disabled (2). From the embodied rhetoric that Christianity employed by “casting disability as corporeal testimony of sin and punishment” to the “cries of reverse discrimination, exclusion, or injury...from the seemingly displaced, nondisabled group that identifies itself as the norm,” Wilson and Lewieki-Wilson raise consciousness about critical issues circulating disability studies today (6-15). Elsewhere, Jay Dolmage focuses on helping the field to “recognize rhetoric as the circulation of discourse through the body” in order to link disability studies with rhetoric in ways that will positively impact quality of life (5).

Postmodernist, feminist interpretations of embodied rhetoric have also led to attention to the rhetoric of maternity and birth. Kim Hensley Owens considers how women exercise feminist rhetorical agency both before, during, and after childbirth through the use of birthing plans. The embodied rhetoric involved in creating this plan allows women to advocate for their bodies over time and in situations where they are often ignored (*Writing Childbirth* 2). The practice of breastfeeding has also received considerable attention in terms of how both mothers and babies are represented in the scientific, medical, cultural, social, and historical discussions about nursing (Koerber 3). Feminist scholars have also considered maternal, embodied rhetorics through the ways in which breast pumps have functioned as technology that allows a woman to express both professional and maternal identities in spaces that did not previously acknowledge nursing bodies (Jack 208). These examples make clear how postmodern,

feminist interpretations of embodied rhetoric have routinely focused on advocacy and empowerment for historically-repressed groups.

In the last few years, feminist interpretations of embodied rhetorics have extended beyond the evaluation of power structures. For the purposes of this study, I have chosen to employ a recently solidified definition of embodied rhetoric that focuses increasingly on how bodies create rather than how they dominate. This classification of embodied rhetoric “supports our discipline’s movement beyond seeing the body in binary terms as either objectified or subjectified” and instead seeks to help researchers and educators “*recontextualize* bodies and experience the physical body as an entity with its own rhetorical agency” (Johnson et al. 39). In this reinterpretation, rhetoric does not just function on behalf of the body or affect the body; the body itself – and what each of us choose to do and make with our bodies – is rhetorical. The constructive lens for embodiment draws from recent turns in both everyday rhetorics and participatory critical rhetoric. Scholars Martin Nystrand and John Duffy explain that everyday rhetorics help “situate us in our worlds: they shape our ideas about ‘the way things are,’ who we are, where we belong, and guide what we talk about and what we say (and don’t say)” (ix). Everyday rhetorics encourage the study of daily life – that which falls outside the typical province of academia and attends to bodily practices alongside discursive practices. Similarly, the participatory turn in rhetorical studies has led researchers to consider the body *in situ* in order to highlight “the significance of the embodied, emplaced, material, visual, affective, processual, and vernacular dimensions of rhetorical practice” (Middleton et al. xiii). For the purposes of this study, the consistent contemporary focus on everyday,

participatory embodied practices allowed me to extend beyond discussions of hegemony to consider how the Laboratory School students productively navigated power – and their own bodies’ power – in an educational setting.

Through the clubhouse project, students demonstrated contemporary, constructive definitions of embodied rhetoric. They used their bodies with agency to build a space that they could use for the (largely embodied) social activities they had chosen to pursue. Their extensive conversations and negotiations centered around how they should enact the embodied work of the project they had chosen to undertake. Throughout the process, students also relied on one another to gain, communicate, and employ all the information necessary to render their structure safe and usable. While the work was ostensibly manual, the clubhouse project as a whole also illustrates an active, social, sensory, and corporeal site for rhetorical education.

To better understand how the idea for the clubhouse came about and how young students gained such advanced technical proficiencies, this study will also consider how the clubhouse project was informed by the work students had previously done with the women educators at the Laboratory School. Reviewing some of the larger curricular arcs will help to illuminate the role that invitational rhetoric played in helping students channel their powers in the clubhouse project. The term invitational rhetoric was coined by communications scholars Sonja Foss and Cindy K. Griffin, feminist rhetorical historians who assert that rhetoric can be used to create and maintain equitable relationships by facilitating change not as a form of domination but rather “as a result of new understanding and insights gained in the exchange of ideas” (Foss & Griffin 6). In invitational rhetoric, Foss and Griffin envision a more inclusive,

open-minded rhetorical practice that both offers multiple perspectives and creates the conditions that encourage others to acknowledge, incorporate, and articulate a growing wealth of viewpoints.

The feminist underpinnings that inform invitational rhetoric – specifically the focus on collaboration rather than domination – both characterized the work of the Laboratory School educators through history teaching and aligned with the definitions of embodiment I have chosen to use for this project. Generally, teachers chose to introduce history “as an account of the forces and forms of social life” (*School* 155). Teachers used feminist rhetorical strategies to specifically invite students into the perspectives and experiences of various groups around the world and from ancient history up to the present. This strategy was intended to humanize different people around the world with whom students would otherwise be unfamiliar and would generally have no point of exposure. To practically deploy this invitational strategy, Laboratory School educators students in a process of living history that sought to introduce past events in a way created for students the embodied experience of “living men and women anxious to get on with their living” (Mayhew and Edwards 49). By inviting students into the perspectives of these men and women, educators could introduce genuine problems and purposes that aimed to widen students’ perspectives about different groups throughout history.

In this curricular scheme, students moved through the ancient past to more recent and local histories in Chicago to “follow the processes by which man recognized the needs of his situation, thought out the weapons and instruments that enable him to cope with them, and [learned] how these new resources opened new

horizons of growth and created new problems” (Dewey, *School* 157). In practice, educators generally introduced a particular group, the geographical and environmental conditions they lived in, the general resources at their disposal, and a particular problem that had arisen for those peoples. Instructors then *invited* students to imagine themselves in the position of those past people and to decide, given the situation and the available means, how they might proceed together. In response, students first discussed the possibilities for moving forward and then, with the historical moment approximated, physically worked out a series of embodied reenactments to test out (to the degree that was possible in the limited conditions) the success of their plan.

The historical educational framing – and the embodied work that propelled students through the curriculum – helped connect the past with the present and, according to the reports made by School’s teachers, allowed students to begin cultivating a variety of perspectives through their investigations. Additionally, because students encountered so many different kinds of historical undertakings, they began to add strategies and practices into their own repertoires that allowed them to respond to the complex social circumstances of their own times. Examples of these historically-based activities exhibit feminist values of “collaboration, inclusiveness, diversity, as well as a willingness to listen, develop empathy, receive feedback, change a course of action, interrogate one’s own motives, and engage with diverse communities” (Kirsch, “Creating” 26). As this study will show, students gradually began to apply the mindsets and habits they learned through history to their own lives at the Laboratory School, as evidenced through the clubhouse project.

Educators at the Laboratory School described “the building of the Club House” as the “peak point of development” in a portion of the history curriculum that they called the “shelter activity program.”⁵ As part of their invitational strategy, teachers had chosen to first introduce different groups throughout history and around the world through what they shared – namely, the ways in which they met their basic needs for food and shelter. Teachers used activities within the shelter program to invite students to explore an embodied presentation of history by actually recreating, sometimes in miniature but often in full scale, the dwellings that various communities, groups, and societies had inhabited. Students were introduced to the environmental conditions and available resources of a particular people and then invited to consider how these elements would have shaped the process of ensuring survival.

This prolonged engagement with the purposes that a physical structure could fulfill for a community both helped students begin to cultivate embodied rhetorical perspectives and ultimately served as the inspiration for the clubhouse, a project that consistently required students to consistently employ both agency and invention in order to see their project to completion. Equally importantly, students had cultivated a mentality of problem solving and a series of manual skills through the shelter activity program, so they possessed the abilities to make their idea a reality. Such widespread engagement with dwellings – both historical and present – offered enormous pedagogical gain for the Laboratory School in its day. As this dissertation suggests, the practices explored during this pedagogical experiment can continue to offer

⁵ Chapter IX Draft. Box 17, Folder 3, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

today's educators usable strategies for designing and implementing embodied rhetorical education. By recovering the work of the Laboratory School in general and students' and teachers' work on the clubhouse project in particular, this study hopes to cultivate alternative perspectives on rhetoric and encourage unique, investigational pedagogical applications.

To uncover workable methods and mentalities, this dissertation recovers educational practices and ideas from records documenting the first seven years of the Laboratory School, when Dewey headed the project. As a whole, the Laboratory School was and remains the clearest articulation of Dewey's pragmatic philosophy and theories on education as comprehensive, practicable pedagogy. For rhetoric and composition educators, the Laboratory School can offer a unique example of teaching that sought to cultivate a rhetorical habit of perspective-building and to create authentic access points to literacy. Admittedly, the School's focus on elementary-aged students marks a key difference from the postsecondary students on which rhetoric and compositions typically focus. Yet its practices were meant to apply to multiple age groups, and this study will make several suggestions for how the concepts put forward can potentially be applied in a higher education setting. Crucially, it can also demonstrate the risks and rewards of an experimentalist ethos in the classroom both on the part of the educator and the student.

To date, while researchers have mined Dewey's extensive works for insight into progressive, student-centered composition and rhetoric instruction, the field has largely neglected the Laboratory School, perhaps the only documented example of Deweyan pedagogy. By employing a qualitative interpretive method across three

archival collections documenting the work of the Laboratory School, this dissertation recovers educational practices that were not recognized as rhetorical during their use but which exemplify contemporary definitions of rhetorical practice. By recovering these practices, this dissertation would particularly seek to answer calls for pedagogy that incorporates embodiment (see, for example, Enoch, Hawhee, Shipka, Johnson et al.).

To further introduce how Dewey's pedagogical practices can inform contemporary thinking, the following sections will explore Dewey's extensive contributions to psychology and education as well as the historical, political, and social contexts that shaped his work. Examining Dewey's commitments to inquiry and to the process of learning by doing will reveal the motivations for the "occupation"-based curriculum that the Laboratory School employed. The benefits of that curriculum will be weighed alongside its weaknesses. Last, this introduction highlights the factors that propelled the current investigation and anticipates the value of such explorative work for today's rhetorical educators.

Dewey's Pragmatism and its Workings in Education

Dewey's ubiquity in 20th century American philosophy, psychology, and education followed from his work to establish pragmatism as a tenable philosophy that connected theory and practice. Dewey considered wholesale distinctions between thought and action to be misleading – and pernicious – and much of his writing sought to dispel what he perceived as an unproductive duality. In 1896, the same year that the Laboratory School opened, he published "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology," an

article that offered a novel conception of psychological theory and that also bore the mark of someone trying to reconcile what he saw as artificial distinctions. The publication challenged the then-dominant behavioral psychological framework of stimulus-response wherein the body passively receives a stimulus that the mind then translates into a reaction as well as some new piece of knowledge. Instead of this dualism, Dewey asserted, mind and body perpetually operated together, modifying one another in a continuous circuit of experience and reflection.

In “The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology,” Dewey described how the psychological model used to interpret an experience – say, a child’s interaction with a burning candle – dramatically shifts how a reflective observer interprets the experience. According to what Dewey terms the reflex-arc model, a child receives the visual stimulation of the candle and responds by reaching out to touch the flame, pulling her hand away when she is burned. However, for Dewey this explanation artificially fragmented an observer’s point of view on the acts, the responses, and the environment in which the experience took place. According to Dewey’s way of thinking, the child had already entered the room with some purpose or interest and was already engaged in multiple sensory and, critically, motor processes. For Dewey, movement was primary, and he lamented more than once that sensory experiences generally occupied a place of higher importance than movement in psychology (“Reflex Arc” 358-359; *School* 93). Instead, Dewey understood seeing and reaching as simultaneous acts that are inextricable in the larger context of the child’s experience. Further, the burn invoked by touching the flame does not represent the hard line of a new stimulus-response arc, but instead a “continual reconstitution” of experience that

can only lead to new knowledge when concurrently considered with all the other sensio-motor elements. For Dewey, all elements of a given situation – including and even especially the embodied – contributed to a recursive and reflective process of knowing.

In more contemporary terms, the thinking Dewey presented in “Reflex Arc” anticipated the larger theoretical project of “deconstruction” that took hold among intellectuals in the later 20th century (Menand 328). In 1896, Dewey’s child-candle example allowed him to propose a psychological motivation for reconceiving education around the idea of learning by doing. Had the child not seen the flame, she would have trouble identifying it again in the future without a similar pain consequence. For instance, if she had hypoesthesia, a condition that numbs most sensations, there would be no corresponding discomfort to dictate the consequences of touching the flame. Additionally, without the gross motor muscle memory of reaching out and pulling back, the child would have never found herself in the position of touching the flame in the first place, nor any sense of how to avoid a burn in the future. The isolation of any element creates the possibility that the new knowledge – the understanding that an open flame causes pain and injury when touched directly – would be missed. Only the recursive embodied experiences had enabled the child to reflect and learn a new and usable piece of information about the world in which she operated. This thinking helped Dewey to “deconstruct” the “Reflex Arc” concept, substituting for its dualistic terms a more cyclical, recursive conception of behavior and learning.

Out of his reflections on psychology and behavior, Dewey began to articulate his beliefs about pedagogy. In addition to serving as the foundation for what would become a lifelong engagement with pragmatism, Dewey's "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology" anticipated his extensive contributions to education. At its core, Dewey wanted to reorganize education into a process of learning by doing: "give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and [if] the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking, or the intentional noting of connections; learning naturally results" (*Democracy and Education* 359). In this interpretation, having some bodily process to enact provided the impetus for more organized pedagogical activity because knowledge was seen as a "statement of action" that facilitated "the successful ongoing of action" (EW5:20). Framing knowledge around the activities it facilitated would, to Dewey, help students cultivate the problem-solving skillsets and mentalities that would serve them more comprehensively than exposure to formalized subject matter.

Crucial to Dewey's pragmatic pedagogy was the practice of inquiry, which was defined as "the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole" (*Logic* 104-105). If the student was to learn by doing, then the impetus for what she did will likely emerge out of some curiosity or problem that she encountered in her daily life. Inquiry provided a means for that individual to uncertainties and determine, first, whether that situation presented a problem that disrupted a particular activity and, second, what potential avenues and available resources could be employed to solve the problem once identified. From that point, the individual would be able to engage in a recursive

process of action-reflection-inquiry until he or she reached both a workable solution for the present problem and a strategy that could, in some form, be applied to future situations. Inquiry required that “facts be taken as representative and not just presented” so that students see how the information they gather is the result of a body of experiences to which they can directly contribute rather than passively absorb (*Logic* 114). Through the habits and mentalities that inquiry facilitated, students could develop responsive and practical intellectual capacities that could be flexibly applied to a particular situation.

Particularly as his own children prepared to enter school, Dewey worried that the educational practices of the late nineteenth century were limiting students’ potentials.⁶ For instance, subject matter was almost always articulated in inflexible categories and isolated from the social conditions and experiences that would render that information operational. When rote facts and generalizations were presented without practical application at too early an age, the natural interest of the child was “crushed,” and, in Dewey’s epigram, “acquiring tends to replace inquiring.”⁷ Consequently, students who moved through this system developed a passive relationship with the bodies of knowledge they encountered and failed to cultivate the critical ability to analyze and observe the full spectrum of available intellectual and material resources in a given situation. Though written in 1894, Dewey’s articulation of the problems in education mirror the “banking education” that Paulo Freire described almost eighty years later (73). Both saw a growing problem of student

⁶ (1 November 1894 [00218]).

⁷ Chapter Outlines. Box 12, Folder 1, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

passivity, and both sought to empower students in their own learning and, more broadly, in their communities.

The nontraditional psychological framework Dewey articulated allowed him to offer a new perspective on the learning process – one that originated in embodiment and involved a continual reconstruction of experience. These beliefs led Dewey to consider how one might practically go about reforming education in a real and effective way. In November 1894, he wrote to his wife, Alice, and described his vision for “a school where some actual & literal constructive activity shall be the centre & source of the whole thing, & from which the work should be always growing out in two directions—one the social bearings of that constructive industry, the other the contact with nature which supplies it with its materials.”⁸ If a school could be designed to foster a productive and social community, in Dewey’s mind, it could offer usable strategies to begin remediating some of the deep-seated problems he observed in 19th century education.

In the context of the Progressive Era educational movement, the development of the school was a major milestone. Today, we can also appreciate the connection of Dewey’s innovation to more contemporary problems in the rhetorical tradition and, particularly, in rhetoric and embodiment. Examining examples like the clubhouse project and its larger curricular emphases on dwelling can help reveal usable strategies for teaching with embodied rhetoric. While recent scholarship has facilitated a productive increase in attention to embodiment, rhetoric and composition scholar Debra Hawhee contends that these findings do little in present contexts to “easily and

⁸ (1 November 1894 [00218]).

smoothly reveal new ways to run a classroom” (“Rhetorics” 156). Incorporating the body into the classroom presents no shortages of challenges, and Hawhee submits that the field desperately needs more studies that attend to pedagogical practice. The present study of the Laboratory School answers this call by recovering a portion of rhetorical history not previously included in the canon in order to highlight valuable techniques with present applicability. Out of the invitational strategies embedded into the curriculum, instructors enabled students to begin cultivating multiple perspectives and working together as a community to solve shared problems.

Studying the Laboratory School can also offer further insight into how the principles and practices of problem-based learning can be applied to embodied rhetoric and composition pedagogy. Already of recent interest to rhetoric and composition scholars, problem-based learning (PBL) aligns with the Laboratory School’s core educational philosophies; both center around praxis and operate specifically by “posing a complex, authentic problem, one which students might encounter in real life” (Erickson ix). Recuperating the work of the Laboratory School can demonstrate further the ways that PBL can lead to learning opportunities in rhetoric and composition classrooms. Specifically, educators operated on the understanding that the functions of “good writing” could be revealed through the problems that written communication helped resolve. Under this interpretation, writing instruction was to be inextricable from experiential learning. Viewing the Laboratory School curriculum as a problem-based heuristic in light of this recent scholarship particularly highlights how students accessed literacy through the occupational

curriculum and employed embodied rhetorics in ways that met Dewey's pragmatic vision then and can continue to inform contemporary pedagogies now.

To this point, we have seen a promising example of how the Laboratory School worked to create independent, creative, and problem-solving students who used sophisticated discursive and embodied practices to improve their experience at the School. We have also encountered how Dewey's nascent pragmatism and its progressive underpinnings led him to develop the idea for an experimental education project. The following sections will further detail the Laboratory School's context, development, and operations in order to draw connections between this Progressive Era experiment and contemporary concerns in rhetoric and composition.

Context and Development of the Laboratory School

As he envisioned the new school, Dewey considered how a curriculum could both put his pedagogical theories into practice and allow educators to efficiently modify those practices based on what they and students needed and learned in a particular situation (Tanner 19). Such a project, in Dewey's mind, required a fully immersive environment where students and teachers alike could explore variables in ideas and practices – a “laboratory” type setting that evoked the spirit of experiment. Teachers would build their curriculum around inquiry and lead by example, allowing students to have a hand in the direction of their learning and to try out different tactics when faced with a problem. In this system, failure would be possible, even probable, but this too would offer useful information and further questions that allowed a future activity to be redirected and made more efficacious. The resulting curriculum would

function with this aim: “to keep alive and direct the active inquiring attitude of the child, and to subordinate the amassing of facts and principles to the development of intellectual self-control and of power to conceive and solve problems.”⁹ If children could retain their natural tendencies toward investigation, Dewey believed, those impulses could gradually be trained into more precise methods of inquiry-based problem solving. Indeed, cultivating such methods became one of the overarching outcomes of Progressive education.

Dewey’s move to Chicago in 1894 situated him in a supremely *kairotic* environment for someone with his Progressive educational objectives. Soon after arriving, he began a friendship with Jane Addams, a pivotal figure and active reformist in Chicago. In addition to ongoing social activism for immigrants, women’s suffrage, and education, Addams had served as a key arbitrator in the negotiations of the 1894 Pullman Strike, which eventually expanded to include the entire railroad system west of Chicago and served as a turning point in a national labor movement. From Addams, Dewey learned views that differed from his own that he also deeply respected, and it was her work as a reformer that led him to declare that “Chicago is the greatest place in the world” (Westbrook 85). Addams was also responsible for opening the Hull House, a settlement house in Chicago that sought to foster diversity, equality, and safety in a neighborhood comprised mostly of immigrants (Seigfried, “Socializing” 212). The residents and supporters of Hull House advocated on behalf of children and women’s workers, called for improvements to public health, and put forward many programs with family and community in mind. Many of Hull House’s activities were

⁹ Chapter Outlines. Box 12, Folder 1, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

geared around children, and Addams organized many education and recreation-based activities for children to keep them off the streets and provide stimulation outside the factories.

Rhetorical scholarship has recently reclaimed Addams as thinker who has much to add to contemporary rhetorical traditions (Danisch, “Jane Addams” 37). From Addams, Dewey did learn lessons that can be called rhetorical, but for him, she more importantly shaped his vision for Progressive Era education. Seigfried contends that Addams’s work at Hull House satisfied specifically “Dewey’s pragmatic theory of knowledge as inquiry that resolves problematic situations” and that, more generally, the “traits of Dewey’s ideal democratic community … were actually instantiated at Hull House” (Seigfried, “Socializing” 213). Seeing the educational projects Addams enacted for local children helped to situate Dewey in the fundamental tenets of Progressive Era education and begin to see how his own pedagogical theories might be applied in his own school. Fundamentally, he saw how educational practices could orient students around the competencies they would need to contribute as active democratic citizens (Cremin, “John Dewey” 160). More specifically, he observed with veneration the ways in which Addams and Hull House tenants responded to the unique problems each day brought and the ways in which even young children contributed to each unfolding situation.

Progressivism in general and Chicago’s reform community in particular provided for Dewey’s educational thinking a favorable rhetorical environment in the sense that many of his contemporaries were talking and writing about issues that the School was designed to address. In particular, The University of Chicago’s President

William Rainey Harper approved of his young new hire's idea and provided bureaucratic and budgetary support to get the project off the ground. Likewise, educators from various backgrounds, including Dewey's own graduate students, assembled to serve as the enthusiastic staff, and with these elements in place Dewey began to solidify the Laboratory School's design. Finally, it was in this context relatively straightforward to find parents who could be convinced to transfer their children to a new and progressive school when it opened.

While it was Dewey who had secured the Laboratory School's opening, it was the group of women educators who designed and deployed the pedagogical practices that would be so influential on Dewey's thinking about education. In particular, the Laboratory School's new teachers helped Dewey to think concretely about how to bridge the growing gap between each child's actual experiences and the subjects that were typically presented in school (*The Child* 10). Reconnection, in Dewey's thinking, depended on the students' ability to see how studies like math, geography, language, botany, etc. embodied the "cumulative outcome of the efforts, the strivings, and the successes of the human race generation after generation" (11). In practice, the Laboratory School's teachers provided the pedagogical mechanisms to establish these connections. In helping Dewey to immerse students in richly social, sensory, and embodied learning processes, the teachers made this experiment a pedagogical success. In addition, they helped bring Dewey to a critically important insight into inquiry and embodiment that remains relevant to educators today.

In brief, Dewey's observations of the work in the Laboratory School helped him to understand the reciprocal relationship between learning and embodiment.

Using the example of a map, Dewey once described how users see “an arranged and orderly view of previous experiences,” which “serves as a guide to future experience; it gives direction; it facilitates control; it economizes effort” (*The Child* 20). However, while the map certainly makes travel easier, it exists exactly for that purpose: orientation and movement. For instance, the very first thing someone reading a map generally does is to position the map in relation to her own body. If the person holding the map is not or has never been physically in the space, the map generally grows harder to interpret, and the less she has explored different places overall, the less significance a map will hold. The function of the map depends on the holder’s embodied experiences, and she needs knowledge of her own body’s movement in a space just as surely as she needs the ability to interpret the symbols on the map. Essentially, for Dewey, this example illustrated the fundamental problem of traditional education. Students were given maps but never placed in the places those maps depicted. The disconnection of bodies of knowledge from actual bodies meant that students were left holding armfuls of map but no sense of where they stood.

Out of the problem of information that was disconnected from experience grew a second, equally troubling consequence: students who had only encountered the finished products of maps and never used them could not begin to grasp the effort it had taken to produce that record in the first place. Students saw only the discrete, organized information that arose out of an explorer’s much more complex experience: the terrain she traversed, the paths she took and deemed impassable, and the circumstances that created challenges and failures along the way. These conditions – the rocky paths, the wrong turns, the problems met – critically informed the map’s

creation, and the physical experiences of the map maker are an inextricable and critical factor in the final presentation of the landscape. Typically, in traditional education, students had not had the chance to travel uneven roads and find dead ends, and so they had no point of reference for the messy process of creating new knowledge. Metaphorically, they also lacked the means to begin charting their own course and exploring new landscapes. Put simply, Dewey saw an education system that rendered students not only incapable of using information, but also of producing it. This, for Dewey, problem underscored the fundamental connection of learning and embodiment.

Despite the depth of the problems he observed in education at large, Dewey firmly believed that the Laboratory School educators could demonstrate how reuniting bodies with learning processes could reveal to students the purposes of formalized subjects. For this reason, Deweyan historians have reflected that the Laboratory School “was based on the idea that knowledge is a by-product of activity: people do things in the world, and the doing results in learning something that, if deemed useful, gets carried along into the next activity” (Menand 322). To extend on Dewey’s metaphorical map example, if students could be reoriented first around the experience of travel to understand how and why maps had been created, they could begin to not only interpret maps more effectively in the future but also could begin to make maps of his own. As a result of his insight into learning, experience, and embodiment, Dewey counseled avoidance of formalized subjects until some authentic purpose for their study had arisen in the student’s life. Rather than using the “3 R’s” as a catch-all pedagogical foundation, the curriculum was based instead on the premise that:

Whenever a need, a motive, is felt for any special line of facts in any particular direction – as in number work, reading, writing, etc., – there is no hesitation in giving special work in that particular line. The necessity which the child feels, and the possibility of using what is gained to enrich and further some other subject, furnish all the threads of connection that are required.¹⁰

While Dewey and Laboratory School educators acknowledged the value of discrete areas of knowledge, in their minds the omnipresence of formal subjects had created the impression of education as little more than, as one teacher remarked, “a weight to be carried.”¹¹ Instead, educators believed that they could introduce subject matter in relation to the questions raised by individual students, and while students would engage with discrete subjects, they would do so through a reflective process of “judging, reasoning, [and] deliberation” which indicated “that the child has a question of his [sic] own, and is actively engaged in seeking, and selecting relevant material with which to answer it.”¹² By framing knowledge acquisition around inquiry, educators hoped, students would be able to see the purpose for more structured learning as solution-oriented, and thus engage in the process with more enthusiasm.

Despite its pedagogical interest, one of the complications with regard to the Laboratory School, and in particular historical framing used to enact Dewey’s thinking about pedagogy, was also the predominance of white superiority in and amidst which it was developed. Accordingly, there are multiple instances of ethnocentrism limiting

¹⁰ University Record, December 30, 1898. Box 1, Folder 1, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

¹¹ Laura Runyon graduate thesis, 96. Box 14, Folder 1, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

¹² Dewey in the Elementary School Record, May 1900. Box 22, Folder 8, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

the true potential of the Laboratory School’s pedagogy. Dewey’s plans for the Laboratory School were developed at a time when Darwin’s theory of evolution enjoyed a place of prominence in the scientific thinking. While the relationship between species and environment was based in scientific observation, the concept of natural selection also led to what Thomas Fallace calls a “linear historicist” model of thinking (*Dewey* 75). Under this model, it was believed that all human civilizations occupied a place on a single line of development with industrialized (Western) nations at the most advanced end of the spectrum. Such thinking meant that civilizations who did not follow Westernized ideals of “progress” were relegated to a lower position, not because they were viewed as inherently lesser but because it was believed they had yet to reach a certain point of development. While this was, at the time, considered a step forward with regard to how non-European cultures and peoples were viewed, it maintained the deeply flawed and fundamentally unproductive primacy of Eurocentric societies in a global context.

In the Laboratory School, linear historicism treatment manifested in a largely white and Eurocentric treatment of history, which frequently led students to the view that history had progressed in such a way to put them furthest along with regard to progress and technology. While instructors sought to introduce history specifically with universal commonalities in mind, elements of the historical curriculum – in particular the ways in which European and American conquest, colonization, and slavery practices were treated – reveal, undeniably, the influence of white superiority. Where these features are present in the curriculum, embodied connections to the culture and the students’ experience are almost universally lacking. Arguably, this

consequence only underscores the dramatic importance of embodiment in the process of cultivating open minded and inclusive perspectives. This study treats evidence of ethnocentric practices in the Laboratory School in order to highlight specifically what should not be recovered today and what in fact dictated the greatest failings of this experiment.

The “Occupation”-oriented Curriculum and the Problem of Language Education

Despite the limitations deriving from its frequently ethnocentric treatment of non-European societies, as a whole, the history emphasis manifested itself as a highly productive pedagogy. Yet also within this pedagogy, teaching literacy (and, implicitly, rhetoric) became a major problem for the School and its teachers. The Laboratory School teachers operated as what literacy scholar Deborah Brandt would call sponsors, or “agents... who enable, support, teach, or model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy and gain advantage by it in some way” (166). Throughout the experiment, teachers attempted to let student engagement with the occupational curriculum dictate the occasions for reading and writing. What Dewey called “occupations” served as the basis for students’ learning in every area. Particularly important in this scheme was students’ direct, embodied experience of problems as leading to the need for instruction. However, language education was not immediately or directly amenable to this treatment, and figuring out how to help students encounter literacy through natural appeal presented “the most conspicuous problem and the chief educational problem at the start.”¹³ While they had set out to

¹³ The University Elementary Record. Box 12, Folder 2, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

decentralize literacy from the position of primacy it held along with other formalized subjects, “the teaching of language was at all times a subject of discussion and concern for all teachers” (Mayhew & Edwards 338). Educators wanted to ensure that, despite the fact that their educational setting did not privilege literacy, students still came to recognize the need to read and write.

The teachers’ concerns about language education certainly made sense in light of the Laboratory School’s decision to delay literacy in favor of more embodied activities. Literacy was, and remains today, a primary metric of success. The decision to depart from literacy-based instruction was a risk, both to the credibility of the project and, more seriously, to the future of the students who enrolled in the experimental institution. Yet Dewey and Laboratory School educators firmly believed that if literacy was delayed until some natural impetus emerged in daily life and with physically-mediated activities, students would be more successful and more functionally literate when they had something tangible to connect and apply that body of knowledge to. For this reason, the Laboratory School advocated “a willingness on the part of both teachers and parents to watch and wait for the development in the child of a sense of need for any skill or technique to write, to construct, or to use, read, and other form of communication, in his daily activity.”¹⁴ Beyond the patience such work required, exercising continually inventive sponsorship to capitalize on a potentially teachable literacy moment presented a constant challenge.

Despite ongoing complications and obstacles, the Laboratory School educators fully immersed themselves in the experimentalist ethos. As the experiment went on, a

¹⁴ Chapter III drafts. Box 12, Folder 4, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

more specific concentration emerged; to situate students within a particular history and orient daily activities around “learning-by-doing,” Dewey and Laboratory School educators worked to create the occupational curriculum. Occupations were defined by Dewey as “a mode of activity on the part of the child which reproduces, or runs parallel to, some form of work carried on in social life” (MW1: 92). Such work served as more than just an avenue to a specific professional path; in the Laboratory School, occupations referred to specific groupings of “materials” and “mechanical principles” that humanity has accumulated to not only survive, but to protect and enrich the conditions of their own lives (*School* 18, 135).

Specifically, Dewey believed that occupations would help cultivate “agencies through which the child may be initiated into the typical problems which require human effort, into the laws of human production and achievement, and into the methods by which man gains control of nature, and makes good in life his ideals” (MW1: 235). As students encountered different kinds of work undertaken – gardening, carpentry, cooking, weaving, metalwork – they would do so with a reflective eye toward the problems these occupations had historically solved. This framing would provide students with genuine motive, firsthand experience, and contact with realities; more importantly, though, as the child engaged with various embodied tasks, she would gain knowledge that rhetorically transformed the act from a “pleasant occupation” to “a medium, an instrument, an organ of understanding” (*School* 20). The tasks of various occupations combined with attention to the different historical contexts would inform students both about humanity’s past and the ways they might contribute to its continual unfolding.

The hope was that occupations would also furnish organic connections between embodied and discursive activities. Occupations were immediately “active or motor” to stimulate the child’s interest, but they also involved the “continual observation of materials, and continual planning and reflection” to invent, plan, and produce the work of that occupation successfully (*School* 131-136). In all avenues, Dewey wanted to promote education that focused not only on what children would learn, but how they would be able to collaboratively enact what they learned in response to some felt problem. Critically, instructors would also focus on occupations that “demanded cooperation, division of work, and constant intellectual exchange by means of mutual communication and record” (Mayhew and Edwards 5). In this way, instructors could exploit any opportunity to introduce reading and writing into students’ activities in a way that would reveal literacy’s social, productive functions. In many cases, the use of records and storytelling was a primary access point to literacy. Students used the accounts they found in stories, history books, and manuals to gain the information they needed to proceed in a particular occupation.

Over time, the sustained practice of consulting text-based resources slowly awakened students to the value of creating their own records to share what they had done and learned so that others, in particular peers, could have a salient reference point should they undertake a similar activity. Crucially, each text-based activity had its inspiration in an embodied practice that the students had enacted and was generated to describe either the process or the material artifact that had been produced. As a result, instructors reported, students developed the habit of writing reports about their weekly activities, but also of using records functionally and creating transcripts of

dramatizations that had proven particularly evocative of some past moment and writing instructions for reproducing their various creations. Dewey observed that “the more direct modes of activity, constructive and occupation work, scientific observation, experimentation, etc., present plenty of opportunities and occasions for the necessary use of reading, writing (and spelling), and number work” and that as a result of introducing literacy organically in relation to occupations, “the final use of symbols, whether in reading, calculation, or composition, is more intelligent, less mechanical; more active, less passively receptive; more an increase of power, less a mere mode of enjoyment” (*School* 106-107). The problem that Laboratory School educators perpetually faced was how best to anticipate, recognize and take advantage of opportunities furnished by student engagement with occupations.

All told, the occupational curriculum provided significant problems for instructors trying to maintain students’ authentic connections with learning and propel them to more sophisticated language practices. While educators worked tirelessly to adapt curricula to suit students’ needs in any given moment, literacy education was a weak point in their scheme. However, it was also through this weakness that some of the greatest ingenuity emerged in the Laboratory School curriculum. The very constraint introduced by the “learning-by-doing” emphasis of the occupational curriculum led instructors to implement an imperfect but suggestive approach to literacy and rhetoric instruction. The significance of the occupational curriculum is particularly exemplified in the ongoing attention paid to dwelling.

Dwelling, Literacy, and Rhetoric in the Laboratory School’s Curriculum

The “dwelling” emphasis in the “shelter activity program” emerged in the experimental curriculum as a key site for what scholars today would call rhetorical education. Again, instructors had begun their historio-occupational lessons by introducing students to the basic conditions for human life: shelter, food, clothing and, increasingly, the practices and complications that arose out of meeting these needs. As students examined different historical periods, they considered the day-to-day lives of cultures ranging from early human societies to ancient Phoenicians to Inuit peoples to indigenous Native American tribes to American colonists. They observed how certain fundamental motivations overlapped across time, but also how the unique attributes of a given environment unavoidably shaped the particular practices and habits of a culture. Through the occupational aspect of the curriculum, students then had the chance to try the work that had built and maintained civilizations with their own hands.

The emphasis on dwellings, which spanned across multiple years and age groups, provided near-constant connections between different groups, occupations, and purposes. Dwellings were a universal feature of humanity, and while the physical structures themselves varied dramatically depending on environment and culture, they were ultimately omnipresent across space and time, and such place-based learning gave students the chance to begin exploring difference while also acknowledging inherent similarities. While these efforts did not fully counteract the ethnocentric underpinnings present at the Laboratory School, this study argues that the embodied practices supported by the curriculum helped students begin to cultivate more perspectives into their worldviews. In this way, Laboratory School educators

facilitated rhetorical education by inviting students to consider and navigate together the nuances of many different dwelling-based situations.

Dwellings also supplied a reliable connection between history and the embodied work of occupations. Across different years and age groups, students built both miniature and full-scale reproductions of dwellings such as Native American longhouses and wigwams. They also frequently worked to create the furnishings of the dwellings they studied, and built chairs, wove blankets, and created pottery and even knickknacks to round out the accuracy of their houses. Crucially, no one student could undertake construction, and each class worked together to build and furnish each structure they created. Dwellings were particularly immersive because they provided a more realistic-feeling space in which to dramatize the events of a people. As students grew, instructors recorded, they moved beyond the imaginative (and as this study argues, generative) learning of “playing house,” but they retained from that activity the ability to construct a physical structure, to see the value in collaboration, and to acknowledge how the two together had been necessary conditions to solve recurring human problems.

By presenting history through dwellings, teachers hoped to immerse students more fully into a past society’s conditions so they could better understand that group’s perspective: its problems, its environment, and the occupations enacted in response. This anthropological, invitational framing worked to create inclusivity and connection among various cultures by highlighting the common features that had propelled “the process of human invention and integration” across space and time (Mayhew and Edwards 6). Once students recognized how processes had unfolded variously

throughout history, they were better prepared to enact such work in their own life. Such habits of mind, this study will argue, opened the door to culminating projects like the clubhouse, which gave students an opportunity to move beyond the context of a past society and to consider the remediation of a present problem using the skills and mentalities they had cultivated.

The clubhouse in particular highlights how the occupational curriculum operated successfully to produce students who were capable of employing different discursive and embodied practices to respond to the needs they felt as a community. Mayhew and Edwards reported that during the year of the clubhouse's construction, "the aim was to inculcate an increasing respect for language symbols as a means of self-expression and for description of individual and joint undertakings" (234). Throughout this project, students employed reading and writing for several purposes. In addition to referencing relevant texts to visualize and plan their dwelling, students also wrote up regular reports after they had met with professors at the University of Chicago to discuss the principles of architecture and construction such as formation of soil, condition of drainage, climate, exposure to light or wind, and ventilation (229). With so many elements to consider, students divided up their efforts into small groups who then presented their findings to the rest of the larger clubhouse community. They were also responsible for maintaining and organizing the materials that they purchased for construction. Each task, undertaken individually or collaboratively, served to propel the work of the clubhouse. Together, these myriad activities, particularly when viewed in light of the Laboratory School curriculum as a whole, reveal nontraditional but operational rhetoric and composition teaching.

Today, the efforts of the Laboratory School can answer the call for more examples of embodied rhetorical practicum in the classroom and simultaneously demonstrate how invitational rhetoric can shape students' habits and mindsets as they encounter difference. Recuperative work around the School's activities can also extend knowledge surrounding triumphs and pitfalls of an experimentalist ethos and inform educators today who are preparing to try explorative pedagogies of their own.

In the following chapters, I will explore how the Laboratory School developed pedagogy that helped students to internalize the functions of literacy and rhetoric not just in reference to how they had been used by past societies, but also with regard to how they could wield such knowledge in their own lives. Using Gesa Kirsch and Jacqueline Jones Royster's principles of feminist historiography, I will explore how embodied rhetoric featured in daily lessons – especially those related to occupations and dwelling – and how this presence allowed students to begin interacting with different perspectives, finding uses for literacy, and eventually enacting solutions to the problems of their own lives. Through the building of the clubhouse in particular, students demonstrated that they had learned to navigate complex social situations, tap into appropriate bodies of knowledge, and collaborate productively in order to enact positive change in their immediate educational community. In addition to exemplifying the Laboratory School spirit as a whole, the clubhouse project and the curricula that made its undertaking possible hold great potential for rhetoric and composition educators today.

The Present Investigation

The purpose of this dissertation is to recuperate the work of the Laboratory School, the most direct example of John Dewey's teaching in practice, through archived records in order to better understand the ways that this group of women educators fostered embodied writing and rhetoric education through feminist, invitational strategies. Today, reviewing the work of the Laboratory School provides a rich site of investigation to consider how embodied rhetoric, as it was expressed then, may be applied to contemporary pedagogies. On a practical level, this study argues, the Laboratory School particularly underscores the rhetorical potentiality present in immersive, student-directed projects that emerge out of the needs that arise in students' own lives. In this spirit, then, it is also my hope that studying the Laboratory School can inform our future practices by helping us internalize the principles necessary to craft "new curricula, new syllabi, new research and mentoring projects, new readings, and new writings into our classrooms" (Glenn 299). Revisiting the Laboratory School can equip rhetoric and composition teachers to create spaces that emphasize problem solving, social engagement, and creative thinking through embodied and expressive activities.

Some Deweyan scholars have already acknowledged the profound influence that the Laboratory School had on Dewey's thinking, but have also noted how this effect has been largely "ignored by subsequent scholars in favor of a more traditional history of ideas approach" (Seigfried, "Socializing" 212). The reciprocal relationship between his observations and his writings indicate that, in addition to interpreting Dewey's collected works, scholars must also return to the experiment that so deeply inspired and influenced his thinking about education – and that best represented his

theories on embodied learning – to understand the true potentiality of pragmatic pedagogy. His ideas have already proven to have a lasting significance in education, and because the Laboratory School represents the most comprehensive and primary example of his thinking in practice, it makes sense to investigate this site for what might be applicable for today's teachers.

Of course, the Laboratory School also presents a variety of complications for scholars interested in returning to the experiment. Most immediately, the records of the School's activities are fragmented and incomplete. No one will ever fully reconstruct precisely what happened at the Laboratory School, and as such, any recuperation must be appropriately qualified to account for inherent uncertainties. The second obstacle has to do with what *is* clear in the records: the Laboratory School teachers rarely used the term rhetoric, and as previously stated, literacy education was not a primary goal of the school. Perhaps it is for this reason that the Laboratory School has never before been studied in terms of what it has to offer language pedagogy. That said, given the activities laid out in this introduction, there might be something worth recovering in this unique, messy, and fascinating experiment.

Given the considerations presented in this introduction and the obstacles set out immediately above, three questions guided this research:

1. To what extent can The Dewey Laboratory School's educational activities be characterized as rhetorical education?
2. How were literacies employed in this experiment, and what were students responding to when they decided to read, write, and communicate?

3. What strategies does the Laboratory School offer writing and rhetoric teachers about engaging in our own experimental pedagogy?

The next chapters will detail further the intellectual contexts and methods that were employed in this study before turning to more specific, archival evidence from the Laboratory School that illuminated potential answers to the queries outlined above. Chapter 2 attends further to the intersections of Deweyan pragmatism and rhetoric as well as the reasons and implications for tapping these connections for current pedagogical gain. It uses feminist interpretations of embodied rhetorics, which are defined by inclusivity and productivity rather than overt domination, to illuminate how both Dewey's philosophies and the Laboratory School's pedagogical practices can be interpreted as contemporary rhetorical education with the means to empower today's students.

Chapter 3 details the archival exigencies that governed this study's method and methodology. It attends to the philosophies and current issues in archival study, explains why such research would be instructive for the rhetoric and composition field today, and describes the narrative principles and practices used for undertaking archival work. With rationale established, the chapter then describes my time in the archives and the interpretive, qualitative methodologies undertaken to evaluate those records through a three step historiographical process.

Chapter 4 deliberates on how literacy practices unfolded in a nontraditional setting through embodied activities that arose out of historical, occupational curriculum as well as the mindsets and abilities that this treatment of history produced in students. It highlights the crucial role that record-keeping and dramatization played

creating access points for students to develop functional literacy out of problem-based motivations.

Chapter 5 builds on the place-based learning that students encountered through the Laboratory School curriculum and attends specifically the ways this spatial, historical pedagogy was expressed through sustained engagement with dwellings. This chapter traces the curricular emphasis on dwelling across multiple years and explores in more detail the ways that the focus helped students begin to cultivate perspectives and more open minded, inclusive mentalities. This chapter also suggests how the processes of the Laboratory School can bear upon contemporary rhetorical education.

Chapter 6 acknowledges further the ethnocentric complications of the Laboratory School, considering inherently troublesome elements of the curriculum and how those aspects impacted what students took and scholars continue to take away from the experiment. It examines specifically how pervasive Eurocentric thinking and an application of linear historicism stymied moments of great potential throughout the School.

Finally, this project concludes with some ideas on how instructors today can flexibly apply the most generative ideas and practices of the Laboratory School to their own courses.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Contemporary interpretations of rhetoric and composition offer a useful framework to consider how the Laboratory School, a hundred-year-old pedagogical experiment, might still have value for rhetoric and composition educators today who are interested in incorporating embodied learning into their curriculum. Studying the Laboratory School engages two main research literatures in rhetoric and composition. First, this study engages and expands upon the literature on Deweyan rhetorical education. Particularly as a direct example of Dewey's educational thinking in practice, the Laboratory School offers a unique view of the possibilities for a genuinely "Deweyan" rhetorical education. Second, as the introduction has suggested, study of the Laboratory School connects with the field's scholarly investments in embodied rhetorics. The active and hands-on nature of the occupational curriculum combined with the invitational framing of history learning create a comprehensive site of investigation for scholars to consider today as we incorporate embodiment into our writing classrooms. Consequently, this literature review will first consider the ways in which Dewey's ideas have been applied to rhetorical education, noting the need for further primary evidence. It will then trace the concept of embodiment in rhetoric with a particular focus on how feminist readings have shaped current understandings of the body's rhetorical power. Finally, this chapter will consider how these two bodies of literature comingle to inform the present study.

Recuperating the embodied work of the Laboratory School can also reveal connections between pragmatism and feminism and encourage further study of the two together. Like pragmatism, feminist historiography has been marked by pluralism – scholars today find themselves drawn to the term “feminisms” rather than “feminism” and also prefer “histories” over a singular “history” (Ede et al. 407; Glenn & Enoch, “Invigorating” 11). The acceptance of pluralistic perspectives has allowed for new alignments to be drawn between feminism in pragmatism, particularly as pluralism has also largely defined the concurrent 21st century resurgence of Deweyan pragmatism in rhetoric as well as the workings of the Laboratory School as a whole. The Deweyan mantra to “learn by doing” also connects at several points to feminist iterations of embodied rhetoric, particularly as educators acted as pragmatist feminists by refusing “in principle to subordinate flesh-and-blood human beings, in all their diversity, to the requirements of any theory, program, or institution” (Seigfried, *Pragmatism* 263). Under this interpretation, the Laboratory School can help to profitably align Deweyan pragmatism and feminism for contemporary scholars and educators.

Deweyan Pragmatism in Rhetoric

John Dewey’s influence in philosophy, politics, and education provide natural intersections with rhetoric, and humanities and education scholars have recently pursued an interdisciplinary resurgence of Deweyan pragmatism. Yet, even amidst the increasing recent scholarship in humanities and education, scant attention has been paid to Dewey’s actual pedagogy and its applications for today’s teaching. Simultaneously, little attention has been paid to incorporating into contemporary

pedagogy the distinctly embodied elements that Dewey found so important to his thinking and that the women educators at the Laboratory School worked so hard to activate. It is true that Dewey as a rhetor and educator in practice had distinctive flaws; however, the work done by Laboratory School educators represents an example of teaching that was directly designed by Dewey and hugely influenced by his thinking, but that did not suffer from his particularly circuitous manner of communicating.¹⁵ Further primary evidence would both enrich existing scholarship and propel future research. Ideally, it could also play a part in facilitating the development of innovative pedagogy around embodied and invitational strategies.

Many studies focus on the import of Dewey's thinking for studies in academic rhetoric. Danisch's 2007 *Pragmatism, Democracy, and the Necessity of Rhetoric* uses Dewey to illuminate classical Greek rhetorical traditions, and to advocate for this philosophy's use in creating productive intellectual conditions for contemporary rhetorical practices. Danisch contends that both philosophies were designed to extend beyond their own discrete boundaries and into other fields. Given this logic, he asserts that "pragmatism can be a useful resource for rethinking, reshaping, and extending rhetoric's role in human affairs" (2-3). Scholars have taken up Danisch's call by examining various points of Deweyan history for current application. Jeremiah Dyehouse uses archival evidence to explore Dewey and Fred Newton Scott's failed

¹⁵ In *The Transformation of the School*, Lawrence A. Cremin noted that Dewey's style was described by his contemporaries variously as 'lumbering and bumbling,' 'inarticulate,' and 'damnable; you might even say God-damnable' (Cremin 237). Elsewhere, education historians describe how Dewey's writing creates "prose of terrible vagueness and plasticity" that "cries out for an editor" (Hofstadter 361; Moran 75). Unfortunately, such density also extended to Dewey's teaching style, and "the majority of his students suggest they had too little help finding continuities between their own concerns and Dewey's to profitably interact with the philosophic subject matter on which he was focusing" (Fishman and McCarthy 23).

attempt at a publication called *Thought News*, and the impact of this project on Dewey's early theories about communication. Prior to the *Thought News* project, Dewey placed immense value on the productive power and social impact of writing. However, the project's ultimate failure led him to reflect and revise his thinking, and to consider writing as "one activity among many in which social groups can achieve more intelligence behavior" (Dyehouse 265). While the project itself failed spectacularly, Dewey gained substantial insight from the work that allowed him to build toward a more comprehensive educational philosophy that saw reading and writing as individual nodes in a larger network of embodied, lived experiences rather than as a centralized force of education. Such work illuminates how Dewey was thinking and re-thinking literacy in the years directly prior to the Laboratory School's opening and, perhaps just as importantly, demonstrates how he used failure productively to shape the pragmatic canon. Projects like *Thought News* seem to anticipate the habits of mind that would come to mark the Laboratory School as a whole, thus bolstering the school's status as a site for rhetorical education.

Other studies bring forward Dewey for thinking about the role of embodiment in literacy instruction. In particular, the ways Dewey's failure with *Thought News* shifted his thinking with regard to literacy help to trace the nascent philosophy of occupations that would come to define the Laboratory School and most clearly express contemporary definitions of embodied rhetoric. Anthony DeFalco affirms that "Dewey's epistemology includes not just the intellect but the body interacting with the environment" with equal emphasis on physical activity and sensation (DeFalco 85-93). Nathan Crick, observing a clash between expressivism and constructivism articulated

through the Elbow/Bartholomae debate, offers a Deweyan remediation: an amalgamation that moves away from a dualist assumption and embraces instead what Dewey terms the “body-mind,” or that which “simply designates what actually takes place when a living body is implicated in situations of discourse, communication, and participation” (*Experience* 285 qtd in Crick, “Composition” 270). In his extensive writings on education, Dewey details how bodily activities like “gardening, cooking, sewing and weaving, constructive work in paper, leather, wood, metal, care of animals, excursions, singing, story telling, dramatizations, drawing, painting, designing, sand molding, clay modeling, plays and games” have three key purposes: they “present important social processes... typify occupations that are indispensable to the continued existence of community life... [and] condition intelligent study of social products” (MW6: 395). Through repeating embodied acts that had been shared by generations of societies, Dewey saw the opportunity to awaken individuals to both greater appreciations for manual activity and ability as well as deeper intellectual capacity with regard to the work they undertook and its larger place in society.

Most commonly, rhetoric and literacy scholarship emphasizes Dewey’s thinking about society and politics. Particularly relevant in this regard is scholarship that highlights more Dewey’s focus on meaningful social cooperation than the “demand for difference and the exhilaration of change,” aligning Dewey’s pragmatic philosophy with the goals of invitational rhetoric (Stuhr 103). Karen LeFevre, Kenneth Bruffee, and others highlight connections between Deweyan and rhetorical scholarship when they offer descriptions of cooperative dialectic processes (Jackson & Wallin 379). Deweyan scholar Scott Stroud also underscores the inclusivity that Dewey’s

thinking supports. Stroud identifies what can be defined as an invitational mentality in lecture notes written by Dewey during the time he spent in China, and translations from Chinese interpretations of those same lectures. By comparing these notes, Stroud uncovers Dewey's acts as a rhetor trying to reach and persuade an audience with a vastly different background. Karen Shea builds upon this understanding of Dewey's time in Japan and China by highlighting a sustained practice of open-mindedness in both cultures and across sometimes great differences. Both John and Alice noted perpetually in their letters to each other how profoundly inviting people were in both Japan and China, and these years abroad help Dewey to dramatically revise his linear conception of history to one that included a pluralistic and inclusive understanding of human development (Shea 129).

With regard to informing contemporary rhetorical education, Deweyan pragmatism has been usefully employed by a few scholars, most notably in the collection *Trained Capacities*. The collection sets out, as editors Brian Jackson and Gregory Clark put it, to "establish Dewey as an essential source for . . . the project of teaching others how to compose timely, appropriate, useful, and eloquent responses" to democracy's "diverse and often contentious rhetorical situations" (4). This compendium of pragmatic rhetorical education details how scholars have explored Dewey's work as a resource for individuals participating in difficult and potentially confrontational political conversations. In combining scientific method with democratic deliberation, for example, William Keith and Robert Danisch argue that Deweyan pragmatism can provide a way to frame rhetorical action as "a systematic account of the theoretical and normative ways in which social structures, institutions,

and forms of individual agency are both guided by and constituted by communicative practices” (28). Through this method, rhetorical education provides an evaluative function that allows rhetors to position themselves more effectively in a communicative process.

Also in this collection, Crick uses Dewey to forward an argument about the value of the experimental classroom – the kind cultivated primarily by the women educators at the Laboratory School – in helping students “develop the ‘intelligent skepticism’ and ‘rhetorical consciousness’ Deweyan democracy requires of citizens” (“Rhetoric” 183). Once again, the focus is on inquiry rather than domination and focused on a widening of perspectives rather than a narrowing down to a single truth. Elsewhere, Crick’s 2010 *Democracy and Rhetoric: John Dewey on the Arts of Becoming* uses Deweyan pragmatism to further consider the role that creativity, ethics, and inquiry play in creating an active democratic citizen. He notes persuasive advocacy as a key part of an active democracy and a crucial connection between pragmatism and rhetoric. The methodology remains steeped in the open-mindedness that marks much of Deweyan rhetorical education.

With regard to distinctly embodied takes on Deweyan pragmatic education, there has been only one major contribution. Robert Hildreth frames democratic activism around public achievement, a civic education initiative developed by the University of Minnesota’s Center for Democracy and Citizenship. Under Hildreth’s interpretation, public work “embodies the idea that an important component of democracy is the ‘work of the people’ and an important component of citizenship is being a co-creator in our public world” (“Theorizing” 627). As a pedagogy, this

Deweyan belief took shape as students identified a public problem they thought deserved attention, found peers who shared that belief, and researched and developed the means to respond in a given time frame. Students were encouraged to follow their own passions to make a difference in the world and to see one another as inclusive, collaborative resources in the process. Examining acts of public achievement allows Hildreth to consider specifically how “Dewey’s situational understanding of experience directs us to the concrete conditions of everyday life as the necessary groundwork and starting point for civic engagement” (Hildreth, “John Dewey” 921). Hildreth’s work provides a worthwhile example of how Deweyan pragmatism may be applied to rhetorical education to help us “theorize the embodied and embedded *how* of learning” in participatory democracies, and its singular presence in the field only underscores the need for more examples (“John Dewey” 932). As Dewey pointed out, every felt problem reflects the particular individuals, situation and context of that moment. For this reason, further studies provide not a step by step manual but rather further exposure to examples that can help cultivate a set of guidelines, useful trends and habits for future pragmatic rhetorical educators.

The increasing recuperation of Dewey’s corpus has illustrated both its flexibility and applicability in contemporary contexts, but has also largely neglected Dewey’s commitment to embodied learning and to the Laboratory School as a primary site of rhetorical investigation. A few scholars have revisited the Laboratory School, and most have called for further exploration while marking continued potential in the work done by the School’s educators. While Dewey himself may no longer be available for consult, “the next best thing – or perhaps an even better thing – is to see

how the problems were dealt with in his school” (Tanner 11). Put another way, this study supports the idea that there is value in returning to work done by women educators at the Laboratory School, which had a critical role in shaping Dewey’s pedagogical thinking.

Specifically, one of the school’s most “remarkable contributions” to pedagogy was to its attention to embodiment – specifically, to “how children’s hands-on activity can expand their intellectual horizons” and develop constructive social power and insight (Tanner 156; DeFalco 85). Reviewing the types of occupational activities in which students participated can help educators today to see how the hands-on work of the occupational curriculum “facilitated the inquiry central to the philosophy of pragmatism and that clearly distinguished the school from others of its time” (Durst 74). Little has been written about Dewey’s theory of occupations in general, let alone in rhetoric and composition (DeFalco 84). Yet its purposes as Dewey saw them align with the goals of contemporary rhetorical education insofar as they consistently attended to the agency and invention in a social sphere, and Dewey’s commitment to incorporating motor functions into education align productively with current discussions about embodied rhetoric.

Not every scholar advocates for a recuperation of Laboratory School practices, however. Most notably, Thomas Fallace’s studies into the Laboratory School’s racial implications reveal how the curriculum’s content contains distinctly troublesome elements in the way it dealt with non-white cultures. Specifically, Fallace contends that Dewey’s understanding of history – and by extension the way he oriented the history curriculum as the Laboratory School – was a reaction to 19th-century historicist

theories of evolutionary anthropology and genetic psychology that ultimately led the philosopher to conclude, early in his career at least, that the stages of human development corresponded with that of Western civilization (Fallace, “Repeating” 381-382). During this phase of his life, Dewey operated under what Fallace terms a “pragmatic historicism... the idea that all cultures and races progressed naturally and organically through stages along a single, linear, hierarchical, evolutionary path toward a more socialized, integrated, and efficient future” (384). While this belief was never framed in “purely racial or nationalist terms,” it still carried “inherently...ethnocentric assumptions” because cultures who had not followed the Western trajectory inherently occupied a lower place in such a social order and were considered comparatively inferior if not inherently so (386, 399). Such a belief created embedded problems for the Laboratory School curriculum by presenting history not just as a process, but as a “process reenacted in a particular sequence” (398). Based on this thinking, ethnocentric undertones decidedly complicate any evaluation of the Laboratory School pedagogy.

With these complications in view, the work done by Laboratory School educators can still offer value to those interested in extending the scope of the rhetorical tradition. Despite the problems faced and perpetuated by the Laboratory School, the commitment to embodiment and open-minded experience remains usable and potentially productive today. As this section has detailed, Deweyan pragmatism has already been used in the rhetoric and composition theory to recover how Dewey’s experiences shaped extensive thinking on communication and literacy. Contemporary scholarship has begun to more specifically consider how Dewey’s thinking supports a

pedagogy that incorporates embodiment into literacy practices. It has also explored how pragmatism has been used to provide frameworks for sociopolitical dialogue and strategies for generating civic activism in students. Collectively, recent studies have demonstrated the resurgence of Deweyan pragmatism in rhetoric and composition and the need for evidence that helps today's scholars more fully understand Dewey's contributions to rhetorical education. The next section will outline the features of embodied rhetoric to underscore how Dewey's pragmatism aligns with contemporary, feminist conceptions of embodiment.

Feminist Embodiment in Rhetoric

As the introduction outlined, the physical body has been extensively treated throughout rhetoric's history, but only recently has that treatment extended beyond domination. Feminism has played a crucial role in expanding the uses for embodiment in rhetoric, and as this section will explore, such scholarship clearly notes the needs for further recuperative investigation because so many examples went unnoticed in their own day despite their diversity and applicability. As the field expands to account for new sites and strategies for rhetorical education, it has grown increasingly clear that we need not just one 'embodied rhetoric' pedagogy but instead a network of strategies to draw from in order to enact and engage students in the appropriate situation of the moment. The next section will detail how feminism has extended contemporary conceptions of embodiment to include inquiry, invitation, and inclusivity rather than an overarching focus on overt physical domination. Establishing these features as central to my definitions of embodied rhetoric helps to underscore

how recent thinking about embodiment has also shifted away from the emphasis on dominating the body and toward an attention to what bodies can accomplish and produce under their own power. By examining how recent scholarship has operated with these understandings of embodiment, this section will show the lengths that scholars have gone to establish inclusive rhetorical traditions and responsive contemporary pedagogy.

In their 1997 annotated bibliography, Randi Patterson and Gail Corning outline the postmodern, domination-based interpretations of bodies in rhetoric that were common in the late 20th century. The scholars recall that in classic rhetorical canon, from Gorgias to Plato to Belles Lettres to Kenneth Burke, body and mind have consistently created a network of overlapping practices that both shape and are shaped by the spaces they inhabit. While the relationship has long been an implicit one in rhetorical theory, it has also been a metaphorical one that often subsumes the physical body. Through their annotation of 40 sources, Patterson and Corning demonstrate how scholars have explored the intersections of rhetoric and philosophy, history, and sociology through sustained engagement with the physical body, but note that each text constructs its own masculine ontology despite claiming a feminist origin (7). Jack Selzer and Sharon Crowley's edited work *Rhetorical Bodies* maintains the idea that the body should be studied in terms of its connection to "the material conditions that sustain the production, circulation, and consumption of rhetorical power" (Selzer 9-10). However, rather than maintaining the hegemonic positions outlined in the Patterson and Corning's bibliography, the sixteen works in Selzer and Crowley's collection investigate new ways of thinking about literacy and rhetoric through the

lens of corporeal embodiment. Contributors to this collection explore examples ranging from dissection narratives to the featuring of a nude, pregnant actress on the cover of a magazine to better understand how the body's physical and rhetorical purposes overlap.

In more recent years, the field has paid increasing attention both to different kinds of bodies and how those bodies can function in ways that extend beyond controlling impulses. Works like those collected in Selzer and Crowley's collection marked a new wave of study for embodied rhetoric that was hugely influenced the findings of feminist historiography movement that began in the 1980's and has progressively built steam in the 21st century. Over the last two decades, scholars have expanded the terrain of rhetoric and composition into non-dominant realms. Traditional conceptions of rhetoric frequently aim to shift the audience in a direction that benefits the rhetor, and often with "ethical disregard for audiences who may not want to change and may, indeed, have different, valuable perspectives on an issue" (Ryan and Natale 70). However, scholars like Cheryl Glenn have noted a remapping of rhetoric and composition. Where scholars had once followed the clearly delineated path that led from Plato to Aristotle, then Cicero, Quintilian, and St. Augustine, and then into to Weaver, Richards, Perelman, and Burke, feminism provided increasing opportunities to examine the areas "where roads run off the edge of the paper and drop away at sharp angles" (Glenn 287). As a result of feminist historiographical scholarship, scholars saw new places and diverse agents contributing to the field.

With regard to embodiment, this remapping served to open up further possibilities for what kinds of activities and actions could be evaluated as rhetorical.

On the “rhetorical map,” new lines were continually added, and old lines increasingly needed to be redrawn to acknowledge contributors who had not been included in the original canon but whose practices characterize effective rhetorical principles and practices. Such efforts helped to develop definitions of rhetoric “that move it from an *exclusionary* to an *inclusionary* enterprise” (Glenn 288). Notably, the proliferation of feminist historiography has created an area of study that is at once expansive and inclusive. As a result, scholars have become increasingly emboldened to explore the far corners of the “map” to find new places that could leverage a better understanding of what might be usable as rhetorical practice. These inclusive properties led to a continual expansion of rhetoric’s province, and it is this expansion that made possible an attention the constructive rhetorical forces of the body.

Many feminist historiographers have contributed to an expanding conception of rhetorical practices that informs this study’s understanding of embodiment. Andrea Lunsford’s *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*, a collection of essays that further wrote the history of women rhetoricians, covers examples from the sophists through the 20th century, and demonstrates the social, political, and cultural reach of rhetoric through women’s efforts in various circumstances. Jacqueline Jones Royster traces streams on the expanding rhetorical map in order to illuminate how African American women navigated with flexibility rhetorical situations on which their lives depended and through which they were able to reveal valuable perspectives that deviated from the white male viewpoint. Her work illustrates how feminist rhetorics “reveal the inequitable distributions of power across groups,” and having done so, suggests methods or mentalities that might be applied to reposition the

problem into a place of visibility and egalitarianism rather than overt dominance (Johnson et al. 39).

In service of this expanding rhetorical space, scholars have increasingly considered not only metaphorical bodies and spaces, but physical bodies in physical spaces. The pervasive spatial metaphors involved with these feminist iterations of contemporary rhetoric – revised maps, traced streams, crossed borders, tectonic shifts, fresh terrains, changing landscapes – highlight the embodied ways in which we increasingly “*travel* through complex rhetorical information” in order to leverage insights about an expanding tradition (Kirsch and Royster, “Social” 174). As feminist historiography has grown, works have been consistently marked by the desire to “know more broadly and deeply the nature, scope, impacts, and consequences of rhetoric a multidimensional human enterprise” (Kirsch et al. 42). Through attention to the physical, people can better understand their bodies as sites of knowledge and invention (Ede et al. 413; Knoblauch 60). Again, under a feminist lens, each body is considered specifically with regard to its generative forces – what it creates and accomplishes rather than how it can be used exert power and achieve dominance. Such attention has allowed scholars to “recontextualize bodies and experience the physical body as an entity with its own rhetorical agency” in order to better understand how “all bodies do rhetoric through texture, shape, color, consistency, movement, and function” (Johnson et al. 39).

In this way, feminist historiographers have also performed an important service in re-establishing important connections between rhetoric and the body. Hawhee calls specifically for today’s rhetors to attend to the importance of the body in the field and

also demands that we consider what might have been left out of the rhetorical canon given this lapse in attention. While embodiment has maintained a continual presence in the field, less clear is how to “help elaborate rhetoric’s emergence in a network of educational and cultural practices articulated through and by the body” (Hawhee, *Bodily Arts* 6). Fortunately, recent feminist interpretations of embodiment are also clearly marked by accessibility. At its core, embodied rhetoric should attend to the “material, mobile activities of everyday lives,” and feminist rhetorical scholars have recently embraced the importance of these daily lived experiences (Hawhee, “Rhetorics” 163). Royster also affirms that producers of rhetorical knowledge rely on embodied action and material circumstances that are perpetually “vested with vision, values, and habits; with ways of being and ways of doing” (Royster 280). In their ongoing collaborations together, Gesa Kirsch and Royster have attended to “linkages between women’s social engagements and the strategies that they habitually use in their everyday work, not only to build community but also to enhance their competencies, sense of agency and authority, and consequence in the worlds in which they function” (“Social” 171). Noting the significance of day to day life represents a hallmark of feminist scholarship and has recently allowed for more expansive inquiry into the rhetorical functions of embodiment.

Attention to everyday rhetorics has validated many different avenues of exploration, and several studies have used a feminist lens to recuperate specific examples of the embodied, rhetorical work that women have done. Sarah Hallenbeck, for example, reveals how women bicyclists in the late nineteenth century advocated for women’s health by arguing in a series of articles published in magazines that

women were both capable of and enriched by this increasingly popular form of exercise. In particular, women argued that physical benefits of bicycle riding were “experiential and embodied, more knowable to the woman rider herself than to the doctor” (Hallenbeck 335). By countering dominant medical views of the day, which held that women were delicate and often infirm, women were able to exert rhetorical agency to shape medical practice in ways that promoted a woman’s right to engage in physical activity at her own will and to her own benefit (327). These examples exemplify how bodies have been considered and reconsidered as rhetorically functional and the diversity of the examples only calls for further exploration.

In another important study, Maureen Goggin’s exploration of sewing circles details the ways women used their embodied work together as a way to circulate knowledge about the craft, teach literacy as a means of recording important moments through stitchery, create places of mastery and authority for women, and express aesthetic inclinations of their own design (Kirsch & Royster, “Social Circulation” 172). In doing so, Goggin suggests “an alternative way of theorizing and historicizing rhetorical praxis by exploring creative activities that may not typically come into view under current scholarly lenses” (Goggin 332). Her work shows intersections between aesthetics and empowerment and suggests even further possibilities for recovery.

As knowledge producers like the ones described above employ embodiment, they do so necessarily in shared spaces, leading to an emphasis on cooperation and community in embodied rhetoric studies. In her analysis of embodied rhetoric as a pedagogical response to over-digitization in the writing and rhetoric classroom, Janet Emig highlights “the learning that can take place only through transactions with literal

others in authentic communities of inquiry” (273). Kirsch et al. confirm that embodied rhetoric is “grounded in the communities from which it emanates, and deeply rooted in the traditions we feel obligated to honor and carry forward (*Feminist* 169). Such definitions mark the inclusivity and collaborative mentality that embodied rhetoric supports through a feminist interpretation.

A few scholars have contributed admirably to scholarship that considers “what a bodily *kairos* might mean for teaching rhetorical situations, the importance of looking outside predictable intellectual sphere for models of thought” (Hawhee, “Rhetorics” 157). Jessica Enoch’s *Refiguring Rhetorical Education* provides an archival recovery of five women who used rhetorical education to empower their African-American, Native American, and Chicano/a students through uniquely situated practices of “civic engagement, language practice, rhetorical strategies, and social and bodily behavior” (Enoch 5). Through her study, Enoch implored the field to “recognize pedagogy as significant rhetoric and reconsider the gendered relationships in which theory is valued over pedagogy” (7-8). By identifying pedagogy itself as a mode of rhetoric, Enoch helped draw attention to how each teacher’s construction of a learning space contributed to the rhetorical canon.

Also in line with everyday rhetorics, Kristie Fleckenstein’s study of embodied literacies focuses on how visual imagery is always “tangled with sound, movement, taste, touch, and smell” to show how the body constructs ways of knowing whether or not we acknowledge those connections (3). In a longitudinal observation of her daughter’s ongoing fascination with Pokémon, Fleckenstein demonstrates how Lindsey been “systematically creating herself and her world by means of embodied

literacies” (77). During her peak interest, Lindsey carries Pokéémon backpacks, reads Pokéémon novels, keeps company with Pokéémon stuffed animals, and cultivates a collection of Pokéémon figurines. She records a series of Pokéémon poems, songs, and stories. In every way she can manage, Lindsey physically immerses herself within the Poké-world. Along the way, she builds literacy skills as she composes in various genres, learns how to negotiate differences when she and her friend disagree on how a particular scene should play out, and consistently relates what she sees and reads back to some physical experience (and all before the release of Pokéémon Go).

Fleckenstein’s text demonstrates with relatable examples how students can think and act imaginatively to achieve functional literacy and build rhetorical competencies.

Again, the increasing attention to embodiment is also marked by spatiality and how bodies navigate the physical spaces they inhabit as well as by everyday practices. Nedra Reynolds’ 2004 *Geographies of Writing* uses the “spatial practices of the everyday – walking, mapping, and dwelling” to frame writing as an embodied, material practice that establishes worldviews and identities (3). As her students walk through the city of Leeds, for example, and evaluate their interpretations of particular spaces, Reynolds helps them consider how their bodies both shape and are shaped by the geographical, social, and economic conditions of a space. At the University of Rhode Island, students wander through unfamiliar places on campus to note the purposes of various establishments and how they are evaluated based on their physicality in those spaces. In total, Reynolds’ practiced pedagogy demonstrates what it means to teach writing “as a set of spatial practices not unlike those we use in the real world” (3). Such teaching answers the call to examine the rhetorical functions of

day to day experiences and offers usable strategies for activating student awareness of their bodies and their surroundings.

An attention to organic instruction and interaction with the everyday also marks Stephen Schneider's exploration of rhetorical education at the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee. Schneider underscored how the program allowed students to take social action in labor and civil rights movements impacting their lives at the time. Students employed labor drama – plays that reenacted their work efforts – and music composition to first express and then transform their social conditions. The means enacted to respond to the issues of the moment demonstrate how teachers framed theater and music as cultural agencies that address problems directly. Similarly, Susan Kates traces the work of Hallie Quinn Brown, professor of elocution at Wilberforce University from 1893 to 1923. Brown employed an embodied rhetoric that was framed around the intersections of “linguistic culture, historical moment, and social responsibility” and generated for the particular situations facing an African-American community seeking identity in the post-Civil War era (59-61). Her pedagogy was defined by its attention to ethics and to the “embodied work of history and politics,” and Kates’ analysis demonstrates the ways in which Brown’s pedagogy can help students navigate difference in present cultural and political climates (70).

Such work aligns with more recent studies like Kim Hensley Owens’, who highlights how embodied cultural practices like the *In Lak’ech* chant and clap contributed both rhetorically and materially to classrooms in Arizona to invite students into cultural intersections and border crosses that extended and altered students’ engagement with difference. For the students who partook in Tucson’s Mexican

American Studies program before it was for a time prohibited, the embodied ritual of *In Lak'ech* chant and clap performed rhetorics that served as a form of unlocking: “One discourse (*In Lak'ech*) opens up access to another, more distant discourse (ancient Mayan precepts), which in turn affects the students’ understanding of and appreciation of …human interconnectedness across races and ethnicities” (Hensley Owens 264). These works together demonstrate how embodied action can contribute to understanding across difference, and given political contention surrounding Tucson’s Mexican American Studies program, it is clearer than ever that we need further evidence to prove how such embodied pedagogies provide students with access points to cultural difference and enfranchisement.

As a whole, the writing and rhetoric field needs multiple, diverse examples of practical strategies and flexible mentalities employed by educators to help frame and support students’ embodied rhetorical actions. We need to be able to offer today’s students a network of pedagogies that allows them to become active agents in their own learning, and that facilitates their ability to develop and enact responses to real problems in their daily lives. The scholarship discussed in this section has highlighted unique moments of embodied rhetorical pedagogies that are specific to the people, places, and moments of each undertaking. Together, these works have highlighted not only what embodied rhetoric has to add to the field, but also why so many more examples are necessary to characterize the habits and mentalities of such a complex process.

This review of embodiment in rhetoric, and specifically the trajectory of embodiment under feminist interpretations, has shown the ways that bodies operate

rhetorically in a variety of spaces and under a multitude of conditions. It has shown whose bodies have been historically left out and the recent efforts that have sought to recuperate the productive work of those bodies. Further, this review has suggested how feminist interpretations of embodiment include not just conversations about domination but also an increase in attention to the constructive properties that groups can undertake as free agents in and through their physical bodies. While today's educators remain uncertain of how this interpretation of embodiment can most effectively be applied to teaching rhetoric and composition, the work done to date has highlighted the potential for further studies into student-centered curriculum that focuses on and validates the experiences of the everyday.

Review and Connections

Again, studying the Laboratory School engages two main research literatures in rhetoric and composition. First, this work engages and expands upon the literature on Deweyan rhetorical education. Particularly as a direct example of Dewey's educational thinking in practice, the Laboratory School offers a unique view on the possibilities for a genuinely "Deweyan" rhetorical education. Second, this study contributes to the increasingly feminist and constructive conceptions of embodiment in rhetoric and composition. The works described have illustrated how feminist embodiment is marked by inclusivity and understanding and contributes to more responsive and complex pedagogies. The collective review of embodiment scholars prepares the reader to understand how this study builds on that growing tradition.

This literature review has also marked out a shared space for feminism and pragmatism in the field of rhetoric and composition. While the two do not enjoy a straightforward or implicit connection, examining these schools of thought together through the lens of embodiment has demonstrated shared values particularly with regard to recent scholarship. Reviewing feminism and pragmatism simultaneously underscores the embodied commitments that both share and may advantageously employ, particularly in the rhetoric and composition classroom. Embodied rhetorics enjoy a long and rich history in rhetoric and composition, but where their application was once viewed primarily in terms of domination, feminist scholarship has offered a more inclusive and flexible framework that sees the body as rhetorical in a variety of nontraditional sites. For its part, Deweyan philosophy has been applied to create active, open-minded citizens capable using what they learn from lived experiences to develop resources and strategies for creating real change in their communities. Given these motivations, the Laboratory School can provide an accessible, practical site of investigation and is arguably one of the best ways to show how both Deweyan pragmatism and contemporary feminism can be used to inform embodied rhetoric and composition education.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Overview of Methods and Rationale

To analyze the contents of the Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools Work Reports, and the John Dewey Correspondence, I employed the principles of a qualitative interpretive method to analyze primary, archival data. A qualitative method provided “a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Cresswell 4). Through qualitative interpretation, researchers analyze data inductively to build from particulars to general themes. Because the contents of all three collections comprised mainly qualitative documents including official reports, minutes, letters, personal statements and occasionally even student material, this method allowed me to identify patterns that acknowledged and incorporated multiple data sources and to make use of my “background, history, context, and prior understandings” in the selection, organization and interpretation of data (Cresswell 176).

A qualitative interpretive method aligns with the approaches marked out by revisionist historians in rhetoric and composition who have turned to archives to recuperate useful strategies and practices in nontraditional or under examined places. By reviewing content ranging from official collections in libraries to crumbling boxes unearthed in a relative’s attic, rhetoric and composition historians have broadened

conceptions of whose work is worth recovering and what artifacts can be used toward that recuperation. Archives have allowed researchers to recover the work of people including women and minorities whose contributions to the field – and often to society in general – went unnoticed in their own day but whose practices have great potential to inform current undertakings.

Employing a qualitative interpretive method also helped me to engage in a narrative strategy of inquiry, through which the lives of individuals are studied and the “information is then often retold or restoried by the researcher into a narrative chronology” (Cresswell 13). In rhetoric and composition, feminist and ethnographic studies have used archival research to revise a dominant historical narrative to include multiple perspectives, and they frequently acknowledge that a necessary complication of archival historiography is that the evidence is always incomplete. The purposes and perspectives of rhetoric and composition historians mean that the goal of archival research is not to unearth “buried treasure” in the form of absolute and undeniable proof, but rather to use the archives to provide “a vantage point from which she can bring to light new forms of knowledge that would otherwise have remained shrouded in obscurity” (Farge 54). As a result of the inherent limitations of archival scholarship, researchers continually reinforce that they are constructing a story both in the description of methods and presentation of findings that is, in the words of archival scholar Robert Connors, “always a construction, always tottering” (21). The increase in archival scholarship has underscored the inherent subjectivity in any historical presentation, and researchers have purposefully highlighted this subjectivity in order

to encourage deviation from the dominant narrative and establish a unique historiographical ethos.

The commitment to recuperation and prolonged engagement with inconclusive evidence means that archival scholarship consciously avoids presenting history as absolute fact as a rhetorical move to leave room for future recovery, evidence, or interpretation. As a result, today's rhetoric and composition historians have articulated a flexible set of narrative methods as well as descriptive, personalized styles to discuss the process of gathering and interpreting archival data. Because the recuperative purposes of archival researchers have led to such distinctive practices, in this chapter I will first contextualize my research rationale within those of archival historians and then describe my specific, concrete practices for both collecting and interpreting data. Offering this comparative scheme will help the project to achieve qualitative reliability by demonstrating research consistency across different people and projects (Cresswell 190). The descriptions together will position my work and research objectives as extending revisionist historiography in rhetoric and composition with the explicit agenda of recuperating useful strategies for current research interests including teaching with embodied rhetoric and cultivating access points to literacy.

Research Rationale: Expanding Conceptions for Archives and Archival Method in Rhetoric and Composition

Through archival historiography, rhetorical scholars have the opportunity to reconfigure their positions to their histories – and their futures – by thinking

methodically about the relationships between texts and contexts (Wells 58; Buehl et al. 279). Throughout this project, Glenn and Enoch's concept of a "usable past" reminded me to frame my findings around a key purpose for rhetoric and composition historians: finding strategies and habits of mind that might have present application. While highlighting the work of diligent and dedicated educators is important and often satisfying work, scholars who contribute to rhetoric and composition historiography "must not simply recover neglected writers, teachers, locations, and institutions, but must also demonstrate connections between these subjects and larger scholarly conversations" (Gold 17). As historians uncover more artifacts in need of interpretation and put forward increasingly complex histories, they not only face the question of how archives add new knowledge about the practices that constitute rhetorical education, but just as importantly, how these discoveries respond to and enrich the field's current undertakings. Addressing this question was a key motivator for this study.

In the last twenty years especially, the combination of archival research with historiographic method has led to what David Gold described as a dramatic transformation in the field in which "scholars have complicated and challenged the conclusions drawn by more general earlier histories by considering alternative rhetorical traditions and sites of instruction and production" (Gold 16). While such work often fragments the dominant historical narrative of the field, it has also allowed for more inclusive, layered and textured discussion (Mattingly 107). Critically, the most effective recovery efforts into the past have been performed with the future in mind – both with regard to what the uncovered research might have to offer future

practices as well as what the research methodologies might have to offer future scholars interested in returning to archives as well.

Archival work allows scholars to widen their gaze and to find new access points to inquiry-based research while also cultivating habits of inclusivity and open-mindedness with regards to what counts in the field. However, turning to these resources for evidence also presents a new set of problems for researchers. First, archives experience varying degrees of decay as an unavoidable byproduct of time, and even collections that have been formally preserved continue to decompose.

Archival collections are never exhaustive, and can never contain every “small spatiotemporal detail” of an event (Hill 59). Each collection invariably undergoes some process of erosion in which it is moved or damaged by the people who created or contributed to it, those who transferred it after the death of the original order, or those who have handled it since its submission as an archive (Hill 11). So while rhetoric and composition scholars have begun to explore pluralistic histories, it can be difficult to find supporting data.

As a result, scholars continue to discuss a more inclusive definition for what constitutes archival material. Glenn and Enoch purport that “not all archival research begins – or ends – on a university campus or at a great research library” (“Drama” 326). While Glenn did the bulk of her research for *Rhetoric Retold* in the Newberry Library, she explains that it was when she turned her attention to gynecological guides from second-century AD naturalist Galen of Pergamum that the dominant thinking she wanted to challenge became clear (Glenn and Enoch, “Reinvigorating” 15). Wendy Sharer found exigence as she cleaned out her grandmother’s attic and discovered

political materials, resulting in *Vote and Voice: Women's Organizations and Political Literacy, 1915-1930*. Along with Brent Henze and Jack Selzer, Sharer also interpreted archives as the loose documents in their colleagues' drawers and files in order to write *1977: A Cultural Moment in Composition*. Examples like these illustrate the ways that scholars have responded to the first problem of archival research by turning to unconventional but productive places.

The widening definition for archives creates a second problem for researchers: how to describe the process of navigating these more broadly conceived collections. Despite the new places that researchers had begun looking for data, at one time, the “doing” of rhetoric and composition history remained rarely more than a short description involving blind luck and happenstance (L'Eplattenier 67). There was little discussion around the principles and practices for identifying and working with the “actual student writings, teacher records, unprinted notes, and pedagogical materials, and ephemera” that were often deeply buried but that also had the potential to contribute to an unfolding history of rhetoric and composition studies (Connors 20). Inattentiveness to the pragmatics of archive-based research grew especially problematic as the scholarship proliferated (Mattingly 104; Buehl et al. 274). As more researchers turned to the archives, it grew clear that historians in rhetoric and composition needed to develop ways to provide detailed accounts of archival work’s daily realities.

Critically, researchers have realized the need to not just articulate but specifically narrate their work in the archives to keep the inherent subjectivity of recuperative historiography perpetually in view. Connors once famously referred to

archival work as an “August mushroom hunt” – a foraging process through dense matter that can be intensely fruitful but that also requires many hours of painstaking effort and a degree of kismet to unearth minuscule pieces of content (Connors 23). For this reason, researchers generally begin relaying the process of their particular “mushroom hunt” by describing the discovery of the collection, its location and material conditions including what has been lost or damaged, and the researcher’s physical trip to the archive. Researchers also include use of finding aids (descriptive tables of contents), the size of the collection, the time spent examining the materials, the provenance (origin) of the collection, and the help received by archivists and librarians (L'Eplattenier 71-72). In this way, scholars make transparent the particular pragmatic components involved in each viewing and analyzing each collection. By acknowledging the potential problems they encounter, researchers rhetorically undercut the authoritative presentation that readers of historical narrative often find desirable and instead present a more pluralistic interpretation.

Researchers also employ a narrative strategy of inquiry to situate readers within the personal nature of archival work. The rhetorical style that researchers use to present their specific historiographical methods demonstrates a commitment to individualized, inclusive scholarship. Arlette Farge’s *The Allure of the Archives*, for example, begins each chapter with an italicized present-tense moment in the archives to re-situate readers, as best as possible, into the physicality of the research. In Ramsey et al.’s *Working in the Archives*, personal elements consistently mark each researcher’s methodology descriptions. In their essay, “Invigorating Historiographical Practices in Rhetoric and Composition Studies,” feminist historiographers Cheryl Glenn and

Jessica Enoch refer to one another in first person familiar as they describe the research process (Glenn and Enoch 15). In a different methods explanation, Linda S. Bergmann states forthrightly the emotional responses that are usually left out of traditional methodology including thrills, despair, anger, scorn, and contempt (Bergmann 221). Liz Rohan’s “The Personal as Method and Place as Archives” explains how a trip to Detroit informed her research and helped her to do what she calls “the squinting thing” to imagine what life would have been like for her research subject (242). Throughout the anthology, frequent “inter-chapters” provide brief process narratives to describe a day in a particular historiographer’s life and include details about hunches, unexpected research paths, and serendipitous findings. These examples together, rich with dialogue, descriptions, frustrations, and ministrations, help to establish the often familiar and personal tone used to situate researchers and audiences within a particular archival context.

Once rhetoric and composition historians have conducted their research described that process, they then face a third problem: how to articulate findings in a way that provides context, creates understanding, and leaves room for further interpretation. While archives may not provide a clear and indisputable source of truth, they can provide “traces of thought, expression, and activity that has to be interpreted to serve specific interests and purposes” (Eastwood 18). Kenneth Lindblom elaborates on this description in an interview published in *Working in the Archives* by explaining: “‘Striking gold’ in an archive is not only a matter of luckily finding a previously unknown text that one simply discovers like a chunk of shiny metal. It is a matter of having creating the conditions in which one might find old straw out of which one

might spin historical gold” (“Interview” 251). Each piece of evidence depends on its interpretation in a larger scheme just as surely as its initial recovery.

In service of pluralistic, open-minded interpretation, archival historians generally also present their evidence through a rhetoric of storytelling. Connors states straightforwardly that “All [history] can do is tell us stories” (31). Multiple researchers reinforce this perspective by describing their historical analyses specifically as a “story” or “tale” (Villanueva 83; Powell 115; Flescher Moon 3; Farge 122; Gaillet 28; Donahue 226). Archival evidence is consciously presented in narrative form as a means of “repudiating historical hubris” and instead presenting “the (inevitable and constructed) fallibility and partiality of all historical accounts” (Salvatori xii). Using descriptive, personalized language to interpret findings in the archives helps to establish the view that history is a construction – one that can be rich and detailed, but one that is also perpetually unfolding and incredibly complex. Presenting findings in this way fosters integrity by keeping in view, both for the researcher and the audience, the human intricacies that shape both history and historical scholarship.

This rhetorical move invites further conversation surrounding a history and ultimately richer understanding as a result. The artifacts analyzed by one researcher “can be returned to by others and be expanded, enriched, modified, and interpreted to tell different, thicker, stories” (Salvatori xii). By engaging with the complexities and nuances of archival content, historians can use their “hard-won narratives” to “keep the voices going, keep talking to one another, keep telling the stories that finally are all that can ever body us forth to one another” (Connors 34). Elsewhere, archival scholars confirm that it is the “historian’s responsibility to teach us a variety of ways to read

the past, to engage in historical debate, to position narratives in relation to each other so as to gain critical perspectives” (Welsch 122). Each story offers a particular historical vantage, and archival historians have increasingly developed rhetorical strategies to allow different stories told through archival data to comingle and inform one another. Having contextualized the current state of archival research methods, purposes, and problems, I will now describe the processes that governed this particular project.

Description of the Archives

Archival research of any sort demands straightforward, practical steps by which to evaluate the contents of the archived collections. In my case, I needed systematic procedures for collecting and valuating the collections I selected as relevant to my research questions: The Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools Work Reports, and, to a lesser degree, the John Dewey Correspondence. These collections were selected based on their connections to the work of the Dewey Laboratory School. The Katherine Camp Mayhew papers are a collection of source materials for *The Dewey School*. This reflective manuscript was written by Katherine Camp Mayhew and Anna Camp Edwards, two highly active educators and administrators at the School. The collection is currently housed in Cornell University’s Rare and Manuscript Collection, and reviewing the finding aid online led me to believe that the collection contained useful descriptions of the school’s activities as well as primary data from teachers and students.

By researching the University of Chicago Laboratory School further, I came across the finding aid for the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools Work Reports. This collection contains monthly and quarterly reports about the Laboratory School, and I hoped it would help me build a more comprehensive picture of the daily workings of the experimental pedagogy. Finally, in conjunction with this project I collaborated with Karen Shea to write a chapter about Alice Dewey's work in a collection of unsung pragmatists. This project in recuperative feminist historiography led me to obtain a subscription to InteLex Past Masters, an online database that housed the entire John Dewey Correspondence, a collection of letters to, from, and about Dewey ranging from 1871-1952. As I undertook the research for the chapter, I began noting examples of correspondence regarding Dewey's emergent thinking about education and the workings of the School to return to and examine further for this project. All three collections remain open and have no restrictions, which made access a straightforward process.

Given that the scope of my project includes the first seven years of the laboratory school (i.e., the period of time in which Dewey operated the school), I chose to limit my review to materials that were collected during this time frame with the exception of correspondence in the years directly preceding the School's opening. While it would have been interesting to compare the Laboratory School's workings after it changed hands and continued to develop into a still-functioning school today, the time period during which Dewey had presided over the school, and the one that Katherine Camp Mayhew and Anna Edwards' had chosen to cover in *The Dewey School*, represented the most direct iteration of pragmatic pedagogy.

Because *The Dewey School* had served as the impetus for my study, I began by exploring the contents of the Katherine Camp Mayhew papers. These materials are housed in Cornell University’s Rare and Manuscript Collection, so I traveled to Ithaca to view this open collection in person. In total, these archives contains 5.7 cubic feet, or 16 boxes, of material that included syllabi, logbooks, minutes, weekly records, correspondence, photographs, newspaper clippings, rosters, and undated notes, as well as early and edited drafts of Mayhew and Edwards’ publication. A Master’s thesis written by Laura Runyon, graduate student and active educator at the school, makes an appearance because its text was used to develop the description of the history curriculum. Finally, the collection contains a fair amount of material marked “not used” or “cut from chapter.” These inclusions were useful because, as Mayhew and Edwards admit, they initially produced an enormous manuscript that had to be pared down before publication. They had amassed much more detail about the school than what made it to print, and their unpublished recollections proved as useful to this project as those that were ultimately included in the final manuscript.

To supplement my understanding of the day-to-day activities at the Laboratory School, and to fill in some of the gaps encountered in The Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, I next turned to the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools Work Reports, which span the years 1898-1934. This collection contains 38.5 linear feet (77 boxes) and is divided into three series. Only Series I dealt with the Laboratory School during the years of 1896-1904, so I reviewed 2 linear feet, or four boxes. This collection contained primarily Elementary School Reports for each group on a weekly or monthly basis organized by academic quarter. This series had been digitized, so to

access each document, I downloaded a .pdf attachment of typewritten documents. The organization was more linearly chronological and lacked the larger gaps that had occurred through erosion as with the Katherine Kamp Mayhew Papers.

Finally, in a supplementary capacity I used the John Dewey Correspondence, a digitized collection of letters to, from, and about John Dewey. I reviewed correspondence to and from John Dewey beginning in 1894 and spanning through Dewey's resignation from the University of Chicago to take a professorship at Columbia in 1904. This collection is organized by year and then by month but, now digitized, did not have any indication of size as each year appeared as a single Web page. Reading the letters in which Dewey wrote about his vision for the laboratory school, seeing how others described and reflected on the laboratory school's operations, and, not least, following seven years of budgetary, bureaucratic and administrative navigations helped me contextualize the tensions and problems that this school faced, and also the successes and potentialities that grew from the experiment. Reviewing the correspondence broadened my understanding of the conversations and contexts surrounding the school.

Three Stages of Archival Analysis

As previously stated, the methods I employed during this study grew out of the research considerations common to both rhetoric and composition and archival historiography. Rhetoric and composition historian Katherine E. Tirabassi provided more specific guidelines by which to engage this qualitative interpretive method within the archives, and through her principles of selectivity, cross-referencing, categorization, and closure I broke my own research down into three phases (171).

During the first phase of my research, I combed through each document in a given collection, engaging in a process of reading and rereading that has been aptly described as “trudging forward doggedly through this bog” (Farge 62). The “bog” in this case was represented by thousands upon thousands of pages in each collection of hand-written, typed, and carbon copied pages of text with an occasional image or photo. In this first phase, Tirabassi’s principles of selectivity and closure, which helps a researcher examine an archival record to understand what it does and does not contain as well as what stories it can and cannot tell, helped me remain attentive to the “silences,” “gaps” and organizational schemes present in each collection (Tirabassi 172). Employing these principles from the outset also helped me determine which artifacts to consider in my own research.

As I accumulated archival data, Tirabassi’s principle of categorization as well as Cresswell’s guidelines for qualitative interpretation helped me to code my findings by evidence that related to literacy instruction, lessons that had rhetorical resonance, and, as my research progressed, evidence of ethnocentric thinking in the curriculum. During the first stage, whenever I encountered potential evidence, I immediately photographed or made a PDF copy of the text and saved it to my personal files for future evaluation, noting the general code I thought it fulfilled. At the end of each day’s research, I uploaded all saved material to engage in the “slow and unrewarding artisanal task of recopying texts, section after section, without changing the format, the grammar, or even the punctuation” (Farge 17). Put simply, I typed and retyped passages from material I had selected. This accomplished several purposes. On a practical level, it combined my evidence into one document and created a more legible

copy for future review and interpretation. On a cognitive level, it allowed me to assimilate the data without the overt goal of interpretation. Following each round of transcriptions and at the end of my initial encounter with each collection, I took notes and wrote reflective journal entries about what I had found. Finally, I cross-referenced my selections with *The Dewey School* to understand what had been used and not used in the final manuscript before proceeding to the second stage of research.

In the second stage, I proceeded through a multifaceted organizational process. Historical researchers can organize data chronologically, thematically, or in some combination, so I chose to begin chronologically and by group, then perform an additional organization by theme (see Gall, Gall and Borg). The archives themselves were generally organized by a particular date and then by group, because each instructor provided a weekly report of each group's activities throughout the year. Through this scheme, it was generally possible to see what Groups I-X (ages 4-13) had done on, for example, April 4, 1898, but no straightforward guide to what Group V (age 8) had done over the course of an entire year. Thus, after the initial phase of selection, I went back through and organized the individual groups across years in order to see how an entire year was carried out, how the curriculum had changed over multiple years, and also how younger groups who had the chance to spend the most time in this school grew and developed. With this work done across the Katherine Camp Mayhew papers and the University of Chicago Laboratory School Work Reports, I was able to gain a better understanding of the day to day workings of each class at the School. This second stage helped me to understand how problems had been dealt with over time and also began to reveal specific curricular themes (i.e.

“recordkeeping,” “storytelling,” and “dwelling”) that I also began to code onto my data to evaluate more closely in the third phase of research.

In this third and final stage, I reviewed the newly organized contents of the collections and the themes I had established to draw out the most salient examples of practices that can be called rhetoric and writing education at The Laboratory School. Here, I engaged in “an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data” (Cresswell 183). By considering the examples I had highlighted in relation to each other, I began to determine how the curriculum had developed longitudinally and to evaluate the elements that appeared to contribute to an embodied rhetorical education or demonstrated the presence of invitational pedagogical strategies. I sought out connections between what students had done in a given year, and I followed the progress of individual students and groups from kindergarten through high school to better understand learning processes in action. Finally, as I uncovered particularly useful and emblematic examples and observed how that pedagogy had shaped students, I reflected on how what I had found could offer useful ways to frame the workings of the school in present contexts by thinking about how I might apply what I had observed to my own courses and assignments.

Throughout this stage of the research, I considered how my own interests, prejudices, subject matter selection, research questions, and biases would shape my interpretations as I engaged with the archives (Gallet 36). I had first encountered the work of The Laboratory School through Katherine Camp Mayhew and Anna Edwards’ 1936 reflective manuscript *The Dewey School: The Laboratory School of the University of Chicago 1896-1903*, and so my interpretations in the archives were

invariably shaped by that text. I walked into the archives feeling as though I had a map of sorts, and while I reviewed many artifacts across these three collections with a critical eye, I also frequently returned to Mayhew and Edwards' text to orient myself within the archives. Finally, I had to admit to myself that this project had personal importance, both because of my academic trajectory and because I truly wanted to find evidence that would validate my research and help me build responsive pedagogy of my own. Keeping these purposes in mind helped me to check my optimism and to avoid conflating the evidence I found by overdrawing connections. This attentiveness also made the eventual connections I did draw from archival data all the more rewarding.

Process in the Archives

I was fortunate to consider the archives from a privileged position given my previous experiences and education. The year before undertaking this study, I completed a graduate with Dr. Robert Schwegler, who both maintains and serves on the advisory committee of the National Archives of Composition and Rhetoric (NACR) in addition to teaching at the University of Rhode Island. In response to the call for more graduate education in archival practices, Dr. Schwegler designed an elective that focused equally on method and methodology (Buehl et al.). Through this course, I immersed myself in the best practices and current turns in archival studies to understand the state of research in the field.

As part of the class, I also helped preserve and catalog recent donations to the NACR. In this work, I interpreted and sometimes created organizational frameworks

for finding aids while taking care to leave each collection's provenance undisturbed. I logged careful descriptions of every artifact, and in doing so became literate in interpreting everything to scribbled notes on a coffee-stained napkin to notes made in pencil on carbon copy. When it came time to conduct my own research, I was well-versed in the principles and practices of archives and archival methodology and prepared to treat the physical archives I viewed with the appropriate care.

After receiving a grant for the enhancement of graduate research, I traveled to Ithaca, New York and spent 40 hours in Cornell's Rare and Manuscript Collections. With limited time in this physical collection, I arrived each day equipped with a DSLR camera and photographed every page that contained reference to literacy or rhetoric. The work was slow and involved many pauses. There was not always a recognizable organization scheme, and the finding aid descriptions did not necessarily always match the contents I found in each folder which presented further complications. Beyond the collection's sometimes unfathomable composition, the individual artifacts within each box were in varying stages of physical decay, and this required an additional level of care throughout my time in the archives.

Given the scope of the questions I had identified and the constantly changing nature of the Laboratory School's curriculum, I was generous with what I chose to record during this first stage since "studying a larger theme means extracting all kinds of documents that could potentially deal with the subject" (Farge 63). Photographing any potentially relevant documents also allowed me to take a high-resolution image without damaging the archives in any way, to review the contents at my leisure outside of the Cornell Library, and to zoom in on and enhance selections that were difficult to

read as they were worn with age. Photographing all selections that were potentially related to my study also allowed me to eliminate distractions around duplicates and triplicates, which were found frequently and across many boxes, so that I could focus specifically on relevant documents.

The process of copying and recopying combined with reflection and review of *The Dewey School* allowed me to begin to isolate pieces of the archives in order to begin drawing out themes and formulating interpretations. This process constituted the second stage of my analysis in this collection, where I began to identify specific activities and behaviors that helped me understand the workings of the Laboratory School as rhetorical education. During this stage, I organized the pieces I had selected group by group, and, when possible, in chronological order since these papers were not always arranged that way. I then re-coded my copies of the documents to include new categories based on themes of recordkeeping, storytelling, dwelling, and eventually, the clubhouse project.

Once I had organized the data thematically, I was able to begin the third stage of research, in which I employed interpretive qualitative textual research to assess what I had found in terms of relationships, patterns, trends, and possible contradictions. I interpreted documents in terms of what was similar as well as what was unique (Farge 65). For instance, as I uncovered more and more examples of dwelling pedagogy, I began to consider more closely its relation to the occupational curriculum and how teachers consistently demonstrated invitational rhetoric through their shelter and home-based history teaching. I also began to note how students used what they learned, both with regard to how they approached the technical elements of

clubhouse construction and how they managed the collaborative and communicative elements of that project using the invitational rhetoric their teachers had modeled.

Along the way, I observed how the ethnocentric thinking present in the curriculum challenged its most promising attributes and developed the means to discuss the impact of these opinions on the Laboratory School as a whole.

While I left Cornell with 150+ photos taken and many pages of notes, I found that I lacked the framework to place some of my evidence into a larger context. In conversation with the Cornell archivists, I also learned that in a transfer from Columbia University, Boxes 6-10 had been lost. The erosion constituted an additional unknown in my research. For this reason, I turned next to the University of Chicago Laboratory School Work Reports, which broadened my understanding of the school workings in general, clarified many assignments and curricular arcs, and in doing so enriched my understanding of the Katherine Camp Mayhew papers. These reports contained little reflection by the teachers and no student material; they were instead straightforward statements about a particular group's activities. This collection did not provide as much information as The Katherine Camp Mayhew papers had about the ways in which students and teachers navigated the occupational curriculum. However, as a regular activities report that had not encountered much erosion, it was invaluable in helping me to trace the day-to-day activities of each group and how these activities shifted from semester to semester and over multiple years.

In much the same way I had engaged the Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, I spent approximately 40 hours reading through each page of each digitized report, and retyped pieces that described assignments and activities that aligned with my

principles of categorization. Again, I employed the literacy, rhetoric, and ethnocentrism codes, but having already identified particular assignments of interest in the first collection, I also noted storytelling, recordkeeping, and dwelling during my first phase of research into the work reports. After I had completed the first cycle of reading, I went back through the 100+ pages of re-typed quotes and rearranged them so that I could first see each group's activities throughout an academic year (i.e. Group I from Fall 1898-Spring 1899), and then again by groups longitudinally so I could see how the curriculum changed over time (i.e. Group I 1898, Group I 1899, Group I 1900). The Chicago Lab Reports undoubtedly supplemented my engagement with the Katherine Camp Mayhew papers by providing a sense of logic that was not always apparent to an outsider looking in on the Laboratory School project.

Between these two collections, I noted that as the years progressed and the school fell into a slightly more established routine, the descriptions in the reports often became more straightforward as Dewey had outlined for teachers in his guidelines for the reports that similar activities did not need to be described multiple times.¹⁶ Thus, as the years went on, only the methods that differed from what had already been done were covered in greater detail. This decision was understandable from the perspective of busy teachers, but disappointing from the perspective of a researcher seeking longitudinal evidence. Another frustration was the lack of direct student material; while there are many descriptions of what students did from teachers, there are not as many primary examples of student work as I had hoped going into the project, which meant that I consistently had to read each document as composed by a teacher with a

¹⁶ Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 2], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

specific intent. Finally, I had grossly under anticipated the degree of ethnocentric thinking that would be present in the curriculum and the impact its presence would have on my specific claims about the Laboratory School. This realization was dismaying, and I felt I had to make it a critical element of how I interpreted my data. By analyzing the ethnocentric content, I had the opportunity to reflect on how and whether I could extricate useful pedagogy from useless ideology and to develop ways that I could acknowledge tension while providing possibilities for current application.

Despite these ongoing problems that manifested through archival work, looking at these collections allowed me to recover the pedagogical efforts of a group, largely made up of women, who made substantial contributions to pragmatic education and to analyze the data I found for what it might offer contemporary rhetorical education. I chose to measure the value of the Laboratory School program by what it adds to contemporary conversations about both invitational and embodied rhetorics. In general, I explored how the Laboratory School's curriculum facilitated students' participation in the world around them and how they did so in ways that were communicative and inclusive, but also grounded in real and measurable action. More specifically, I hoped to uncover strategies for teaching rhetoric in ways that attended to body, space and text simultaneously and that promoted empathy and activism in that process. I was also seeking evidence for the level of literacy that students obtained in a nontraditional program and the uses to which that literacy was put – that is, the purposes that students eventually saw for learning to read and write, and their abilities to do so once realizing that need. Finally, I was deeply curious about how teachers and students alike had navigated the untried and ever-changing

curriculum. I wanted to verify for myself that such work had merit beyond its inherent risk and frustration.

Throughout this project, employing the qualitative interpretive research methods of a rhetoric and composition historian helped me to uncover evidence of how teachers had carefully crafted daily learning experiences in ways that maintained and in fact invited each student's participation. These methods aided my understanding of how the occupational-historical curriculum had promoted literacy practices through consistent use of record at the Laboratory School. They also helped me use a narrative strategy of inquiry to trace the impact of housing and shelter on learning across different ages and time periods, and to assess how this emphasis had promoted various manifestations of embodied and invitational rhetorics throughout the school. Finally, proceeding through the archival research as a rhetoric and composition historiographer allowed me to fully acknowledge and articulate the complications of the historical curriculum and to demonstrate how such obstacles can shape current potentialities. In these ways, I was able to tell the story of the Laboratory School and to provide some sense for how the lessons offered then might be usable today.

CHAPTER 4

ACCESS POINTS TO LITERACY: INVESTIGATING THE HISTORICALLY-SITUATED WRITING AND RHETORIC PRACTICES OF THE OCCUPATIONAL CURRICULUM

Connections to Contemporary Concerns

Despite the fact that the Laboratory School as envisioned by John Dewey concluded its work over 100 years ago, the workings of its experimental curriculum bear relevance to current trends toward emphasizing embodiment in writing and rhetoric education. As a whole, this study was motivated by the desire to recuperate the Laboratory School as a usable past that can extend and inform some of the field's goals for contemporary pedagogies. This first results chapter will present findings about the Laboratory School that illuminate its nontraditional literacy practices, the inescapable problems the system presented, and the embodied access points to literacy that educators ultimately forged with their students. Through the ongoing activities associated with the occupational curriculum and the invitational presentation of certain histories, instructors enacted unique – and by contemporary terms, distinctly feminist – pedagogical solutions to the ongoing problem of language education.

Throughout my archival investigation, recent work by rhetoric and composition scholars informed the way that I read the work of Laboratory School educators. This chapter in particular owes much to Deborah Brandt's concept of literacy sponsorship. Brandt's definition for literacy sponsors helped me identify the

workings of these agents at the Laboratory School to create “dynamic sources for literacy learning” by finding “the means to teach using local conditions and embodied moments of literacy learning that occupy so many of us on a daily basis” (Brandt 165-166). Brandt’s conception of literacy sponsors, excepting the ubiquitous economic motivations she underlines in most acts of sponsorship, echoes the motivations of Dewey and Laboratory School educators. While they purposefully displaced literacy from what they saw as a position of unnecessary pedagogical primacy, teachers still continually sought ways to help students grow invested in literacy practices as part of their daily lived experiences. They relied heavily on local conditions and embodied elements of the occupational curriculum in connection with historical exploration to furnish the conditions under which literacy became usable and productive.

In addition to the concept of sponsorship, Brandt’s rhetorical framing of each history she told factored into how I interpreted my findings of the Laboratory School. By acknowledging unique and layered conditions that had propelled previous language education, the descriptions of sponsorship helped me to see how the presentation of a history could reveal the purposes for literacy. In her own work, Brandt employs the narrative scheme of a rhetoric and composition historian to present the stories of three individuals whose efforts demonstrated how the work of sponsoring literacy had been undertaken in response to the unique conditions and problems of the moment. In each story, Brandt highlights how “accumulated layers of sponsoring influences – in families, workplaces, schools, memory – carry forms of literacy that have been shaped out of ideological and economic struggles of the past” (178). The rhetorical framing that Brandt employed to tell stories about literacy

sponsorship was also observable in the way Laboratory School educators conveyed history to students, and as this chapter will demonstrate, such framing also holds pedagogical value for those seeking to sponsor literacy today by highlighting the unique access points to literacy that Laboratory School educators refined.

The work I did to articulate my own archival methodology also played a role in helping me interpret the School's literacy-based activities through a contemporary rhetorical lens. In recent years, feminist researchers have performed archival analyses under the understanding that "history isn't a dead or remembered object; it is alive and it speaks to us" (Powell 121). By emphasizing research as a lived process, feminist historiographers echo the same sentiment presented to Laboratory School students: that history was "never dead and gone" (Mayhew and Edwards 49). While students at the Laboratory School did not visibly work to recover the work of women throughout history, the principles employed by the largely female teaching population bear striking resemblance to current definitions of recuperative historiography. Employing Kirsch and Royster's feminist historiographical concepts of critical imagination, strategic contemplation, and social circulation in my interpretations of the Laboratory School helped me to see how students had used feminist rhetorical inquiry tools to conduct "textured examinations of social spaces" that helped to uncover important access points to literacy throughout history ("Feminist" 666).

The pragmatics surrounding the creation and maintenance of these access points and the value of such work to today's rhetoric and composition teachers can be further illuminated by keeping problem-based learning heuristics in view. In a PBL environment, educators present "complex, real-world problems... to motivate students

to identify and research the concepts and principles they need to know to work through those problems” (Duch et al. 6). Functionally, students face an ill-structured problem – that is, one without clearly delineated steps for resolution but with a certain degree of inherent complexity (Marra et al. 223; Rosinski and Peeples 10). In response to the challenge set before them, students enact an inquiry-based method to determine what they know, what they need to know, and how they will go about learning it (Pennell and Miles 377). Such work includes “comparing/contrasting, summarizing, nonlinguistic representations, cooperative learning, generating and testing hypotheses, and questioning” to provide learners the chance to evaluate a situation from multiple perspectives (Barell 4-5). Teachers regularly recalibrate their roles in the process to provide flexible mentorship that maintains student autonomy (Marra et al. 222). In this way, a PBL classroom necessarily adapts to account for each group and each problem.

The multiple uses that instructors have identified for writing in the PBL classroom suggest a “contextualized praxis” can be “effectively adapted to implement the student learning outcomes of any writing class” (Rosinski and Peeples 9; Kumar and Refaei 73). Across multiple courses and projects, PBL has helped instructors to sponsor authentic rhetorical situations that have both “motivated the students to greater sophistication” in their writing and provided the opportunity to produce purposeful compositions in many different genres (Pennell and Miles 383). Researchers have also observed that the PBL framework aids students by providing them with a real audience to inform and persuade rather than only an instructor and some abstract or hypothetical audience (Miles and Amador 38; Smart and Melton 73).

Its adaptability and applicability together create a useful heuristic for today's writing and rhetoric classroom.

With regard to the Laboratory School, PBL offers many pedagogical and practical alignments. For PBL to unfold organically, instructors must design an "invitational environment" marked by trust and communication that ensures students feel comfortable as they take risks (Barell 11). From a curricular standpoint, the Laboratory School oriented its treatment of history specifically around the problems that civilizations had faced over time and encouraged students to engage in self-directed and self-reflective learning to solve those problems. Within its unique PBL heuristic, teachers consistently employed invitational rhetoric as they offered perspectives on various peoples throughout history to highlight shared, universal conditions of humanity. As this chapter details further, students responded to these conditions through ongoing discussion and dramatic reenactment to better understand their workings of past peoples. In this system, reading and writing were introduced in response to some element of a given problem, and students sought to gain literacy primarily based on what it would enable in a particular situation. Reviewing the specifics of these strategies in light of more recent scholarship can show how educators worked to infuse literacy practices into the Laboratory School by sponsoring organic access points to literacy through historical problem-based heuristics.

In service of creating access points to literacy, this chapter will also respond to a specific, critical problem laid out by contemporary rhetoric and composition scholars. In addition to extending the scholarship and pedagogy surrounding literacy sponsorship and problem-based learning, reviewing the work of the Laboratory School

can answer Hawhee's pressing question about embodied rhetorical education: "Can we teach the non-rational, bodily, nonverbal features of rhetoric to our students? And to what end?" ("Rhetorics" 160). While the scholarship surrounding embodied rhetoric has increased, especially through feminist treatment, its presence has presented a problem of how to purposefully apply these expansive concepts to rhetorical education. In response, this study of the Laboratory School offers insight into how "nonrational, messy, affective, bodily aspects" of rhetorics can operate in the classroom and beyond (Hawhee, "Rhetorics" 158). Hawhee acknowledges that there are many inherent challenges in "knowing where to look and how to listen for these sorts of already-built-in lessons" (163). The Laboratory School provides a unique and generative site to explore the mentalities and practices that instructors used to meet the challenges of embodied learning on a daily basis. These factors were effective in responding to the problems of the Laboratory School in its day and can inform the ways we teach writing and rhetoric in ours by promoting unique, flexible, and student-centered pedagogies.

Dilemmas, Delays, and Defenses: Explanation of Nontraditional Literacy Practices

As they drew together materials for *The Dewey School*, Mayhew, Edwards, and Dewey reached out to former students and parents to gain their reflections on the experience thirty years after the experiment had concluded. Paul McClintock, a student who attended the laboratory school from kindergarten through high school, provided a strongly worded reply about the way that literacy in particular was handled

as he had not learned to read until he was fourteen. He said of the Laboratory School curriculum:

There would have come a time when I would have wanted to write up what I had found out and what I was doing in the shop. Then I would have learned to spell. But the school as an experiment stopped just before we non-book people came to the point where we wanted to write or read. This was bad for the experiment and was very bad for us... (Mayhew & Edwards 404)

As a self-professed hesitant reader, McClintock admitted that there would have been eventual merit to the program, but that the curriculum failed to provide access points to those who were not naturally drawn to reading and writing. His rebuke of the program seems to demonstrate the very pitfalls that laboratory school critics identified during the school's seven-year tenure. Yet while McClintock remembered the delay in a negative light and felt that the experiment had stopped just short of helping him – and those like him – develop an interest and proficiency in writing, his educational journey had been well documented. Mayhew and Edwards recalled that McClintock had been the “despair of his literary parents because he never voluntarily turned to turned to books for recreation.”¹⁷ They acknowledged that his ability to read freely was “delayed until his fourteenth year when an interest in Geology developed, and, of his own initiative, he began to read widely on this subject.”¹⁸ In Mayhew and Edwards’ telling, once some natural interest had developed, McClintock took to literacy without hesitation, and after graduating from high school, McClintock went on

¹⁷ Chapter XIX, teachers’ notes on students, correspondence. Box 17, Folder 11, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

¹⁸ Chapter XIX. Box 17, Folder 11, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

to study geology at the University of Chicago where, at the time of Mayhew and Edwards' writing, he was still employed as a professor.¹⁹

While McClintock identified a lack in the Laboratory School methods, his career trajectory and his expressive abilities in writing suggest that his literacy and intellect were eventually established despite the unconventional instruction methods. The professional success McClintock enjoyed in a career that seemed to grow out of genuine interests also led Mayhew and Edwards to speculate whether "the superior literary quality of his later writing as a geologist might not be due, in some measure at least, to his freedom from coercion in those early years, when pleasure in the use and form of language had not yet dawned on him."²⁰ His experiences may have been frustrating in the moment, but for Mayhew and Edwards, the Laboratory School methods were supported rather than undermined by the fact that McClintock went on to cultivate sustained reading practices and a career that genuinely reflected his interests.

In general, while there were educators, administrators, and parents throughout the seven-year course who thought these methods were cause for concern, Mayhew and Edwards report that eventually, "to a confused amazement, the supposed madcaps entered colleges and universities and acquitted themselves creditably with conventionally prepared students" (347). Students went to colleges including Yale and Harvard Law.²¹ To the authors of the book and the supporters of the Laboratory

¹⁹ Chapter XIX, notes and drafts. Box 18, Folder 3, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

²⁰ Footnote in draft of Chapter XIX. Box 17, Folder 11, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

²¹ Correspondence with parents. Box 17, Folder 11, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

School, the success enjoyed by alumni like McClintock clearly validated the unconventional methods. While this may be true, the larger context surrounding the drastic shift in McClintock's literacy requires further consideration in order to elucidate how instructors and students incorporated literacy into their daily practices. Additionally, McClintock's sustained diffidence toward reading and writing should not be taken lightly. Even thirty years later, he reflected adversely on the experience. His literacy practices as a child by no means matched up with what was and still is considered the educational norm, and the prolonged anxiety this delay caused him and his parents highlighted the most pressing problems with this pedagogical venture: in some cases, it provoked unease rather than curiosity. Yet Mayhew and Edwards' speculation also deserves further analysis: did the Laboratory School curriculum actually support literacy? If so, how did the historical, occupational curriculum create access points for literacy instruction? Answering these questions can help to illuminate the degree to which the success of students like McClintock can be traced to the Laboratory School.

In a privately printed brochure titled "Plan and Organization of the University Primary School," John Dewey summarized his educational vision with regard to literacy practices:

The primary skills, in reading, writing, and numbers, were to grow out of the needs and the results of activities. Moreover, since basic occupations involve relations to the materials and forces of nature, just as the processes of living together involve social invention, organization, and establishment of human bonds, making the development of individuals secure and progressive,

knowledge was to grow out of the active contact with things and energies inherent in consecutive activities. (Mayhew & Edwards 24)

In this statement, Dewey marks once again the two foci of the occupational curriculum – material environments and social conditions. Literacy, under this interpretation, was to grow out of the situational factors that rendered the acts of reading and writing with some tangible purpose. The problem he saw, and the one that laboratory school instructors sought to avoid, was introducing literacy in the typical way – one that “built up a super structure of knowledge without any foundation of relation in the child-mind.”²² By introducing structure before purpose, students had little to connect with the written word, which made reading and writing inherently unattractive because these acts required much repetition and practice yet had neither appeal nor application to younger students. As Dewey and Laboratory School educators saw it, traditional literacy instruction meant traveling “the wearisome road of the alphabet” (Mayhew and Edwards 379), which was as a path “beaten by the travel of many tired feet.”²³

Beyond the immediate onus traditional instruction created for literacy, quotidian literacy education indoctrinated students with the idea that the book was the primary, if not only way to get information which created a “passive and absorbing” learning mentality.²⁴ In response to the issues they observed, the Laboratory School took what was considered a drastic measure and delayed the introduction of literacy, in some cases for several years. In order to introduce students with the means to

²² Chapter I drafts and notes, January 1897. Box 12, Folder 2, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

²³ Chapter III draft. Box 12, Folder 12, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

²⁴ University Record, May 21 1897, p72. Box 12, Folder 4, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

interact with their social environment, the Laboratory School operated under the working theory that it was premature to force the student into work where there was a separation between means and ends, that is, “steps and acts from the idea for which they exist” (Mayhew and Edwards 141). Mayhew and Edwards explain that this “theory accounts for the relatively slight and incidental attention given to reading, writing, and numbers in the sixth and seventh year” (141-142). Despite the risks of this method, educators argued: “If it takes a longer period of time to learn the three R’s by the more concrete method the delay is justified because the result is richer, beside the technique of the symbols is in either case mastered by the time a child is old enough to need them.”²⁵ Particularly in light of the passive and uninspired thinkers they saw emerging from traditional schools at the time, Laboratory School educators underscored their willingness to embrace some short term complications in exchange for a long term payoff that saw students enjoying their learning and usefully employing their literacy.

Though Mayhew and Edwards also acknowledged that in their society, “the child who cannot read by seven or eight is considered retarded,” they also maintained that there is “undue premium is put upon the ability to learn to read and write at a certain chronological age” (142). There were certainly other valid indicators of intelligence, and Laboratory School educators were ready to defend and explore methods that would bring these intellectual elements to the forefront alongside literacy. Mayhew and Edwards also qualified their methods by explaining the working

²⁵ Chapter I draft. Box 12, Folder 1, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

theory of the lab school by no means actively kept students from reading and writing, but rather waited to introduce literacy until a time when “such efforts by the child do not divert his energies from the more fundamental activities” (142). By allowing students to explore the kinesthetic aspects of learning, to move around and occupy various spaces, before introducing the more symbolic branches of learning, instructors hoped to let each student encounter literacy at his or her own pace. This meant that students would develop proficiencies at different rates based on their interests and their encounters with those around them.

For this reason, Alice Dewey, educator and eventually principal of the Laboratory School, explained early on: “Parents who are anxious to have their children learn reading and writing before the years mentioned are not urged to place their children in the school unless they are willing to wait for the later results to justify the methods used.”²⁶ By explaining their practices straightforwardly, educators hoped that they would draw in parents who also believed in their pedagogy and who would allow their children to renegotiate the means by which they acquired literacy. Thus, Dewey and educators hoped that children and parents alike would be open-minded to the non-traditional practices at the Laboratory School.

Even with their continual defense of the curriculum, educators within the Laboratory School sometimes struggled with the very core of the experiment, wondering: “Was it right to try a ‘newfangled’ method when it had always been done the other way? Was it right to refrain from making a child learn to read and to wait

²⁶ Alice Dewey, University Elementary Record, Spring 1900, p7. Box 12, Folder 2, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

until he was really ready to do so?”²⁷ Each teacher had to confront these tensions each day, and had to “watch herself to see at what moment she could discard her surest props of method and take to wings that might melt in the sun.”²⁸ In the midst of trying out a pedagogy with unconfirmed merit, teachers noted that: “All she did, all the children did, was subject to the continual questioning of her supervisors, of remote and suspicious trustees, of parents, and of that eager public of crowding visitors who wanted to know or wanted to laugh.”²⁹ To outsiders who did not understand the theory and purpose of the school, instructors and administrators imagined that the daily curriculum must have seemed like a “grand jubilee,” where children played through some classes and cooked through others, and where surely none the essentials, like reading and writing, were learned (Mayhew & Edwards 347). What is clear from Laboratory School records is that language education provided constant complications for instructors, and they had to be diligent and creative in their responses. Educators navigated a pedagogical paradox: how could they introduce the functions of literacy when they had consciously displaced reading and writing from their curriculum?

There was no easy answer to this question and no single, all encompassing solution. While teachers had intellectual freedom to develop and revise pedagogies as they saw fit, they still struggled with the immense complexity of the task.

Yet despite and arguably even due to the ongoing struggles associated with language education, instructors manipulated the occupational curriculum to develop

²⁷ Chapter III draft. Box 12, Folder 12, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

²⁸ The University Elementary School, 1897. Box 12, Folder 2, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

access points to literacy. As this chapter reveals, teachers used different points throughout history to introduce problem-based situations that would help students uncover the purposes for reading and writing. In a system that had generally decentralized literacy, these situations had to be particularly invitation-oriented and compelling to fully engage students. Again, history was presented to students as “a study of society in the process of becoming.”³⁰ This framing was meant to help students, in the case of literacy, see how various peoples throughout (a still living and active) history had used reading and writing to solve some problem their society faced. In turn, it was hoped that students would gradually realize the problems that literacy could help solve in their own lives.

Returning to the records of the experiment helps to illuminate how educators navigated the Laboratory School curriculum to generate different strategies that engaged students in genuine, functional literacy practices. This chapter next explores three access points to literacy that the curriculum created through recordkeeping, storytelling, and in connection with ongoing occupational activities including cooking and gardening. These examples demonstrate how the problem-based learning that students encountered in the history teaching helped instructors to sponsor literacy through invitational rhetoric. Simultaneously, each example underscores how students necessarily enacted embodied responses to these problems to reach a point where literacy had a direct and observable purpose.

³⁰ Miss Bacon in Elementary School Record No. 8. Box 21, Folder 3, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

Access Point #1: Record

Again, despite displacing literacy from a place of pedagogical centrality, one chief inquiry among instructors remained how to invite students to experiences in which the “formal, symbolic branches of learning – the mastering of the ability to read, write, and use figures – [could] intelligently be gained out of other studies and occupations as their background” (Mayhew & Edwards 25). Through the lens of the historical-occupational curriculum, instructors identified literacy primarily as a tool for record keeping, and would eventually identify two main purposes for introducing literacy at the Laboratory School: “as a means of discovering something otherwise of unknown and of sharing with others what he himself has found out” (26). By presenting literacy primarily as an instrument that could be used to get and give information about daily undertakings both past and present, instructors were able to present language-as-record as a means of connecting with others to communicate thought and better understand how something had been accomplished, as well as to make a case for how literacy acquisition was part of a “repeating a process which it has taken the human race ages to learn.”³¹ After all, the texts students used at the Laboratory School combined with frequent visits to the local Walker Museum (a geology museum on the University of Chicago campus) provided their most direct access points to each culture and civilization. Thus, books were seen primarily as a

³¹ Chapter I Draft. Box 12, Folder 1, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

storehouse of information by which to learn the results of someone else's experiences.³²

Under this interpretation, students could be invited to encounter reference or history texts along with literature and stories to better understand the time frame they were covering and how occupations would have unfolded in a particular geographic and sociological context. In a 1903 article in the Elementary School teacher, Laura Runyon explains the conscious and invitational mindset by which students were introduced to history in relation to their own experiences:

The child has clothing, and has seen the animal or the plant from which it came; but how did the complex structure come to be, and what did people do before they found out how to make clothing? There are certain plants and certain animals which the child knows are good for food, and others which he has been told are not. How was the difference discovered, and how the processes which making food-getting so simple in his family? The child is surrounded with tools and various devices for the convenience of life; but what of the man who had none of these with which to assist his empty hands?³³

As children considered their own lives, instructors invited them to imagine how previous generations had responded to the problems of survival in ways that had gradually developed into more advanced and organized practices. This envisioning process worked to put into practice the role that Dewey saw for imagination in

³² University Record, May 21, 1897, p72. Box 12, Folder 4, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

³³ Laura Runyon, The Elementary School Teacher, vol. 3, no. 10, 1903, p96. Box 19. Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

education. In general, Dewey saw imagination as “common to us all as a vehicle of learning” and believed a fundamental goal of education should be to “find ways of enlarging the scope in which our imagination plays and works and to make more substantial the actualities that our imagination makes possible” (Chambliss 43). Imagination also had a function, and Dewey saw that as a means of forging new understanding about a situation in which the individual otherwise lacks a direct point of reference. Specifically, he posited, imagination had the majority of its power not in creating that which was unreal, but instead helping someone to envision that which is not present (LW 17:242).

By contemporary feminist standards, students at the Laboratory School began to engage their “critical imagination” by asking questions of history such as: “How do we transport ourselves back to the time and context in which they lived, knowing full well that it is not possible to see things from their vantage point? How did they frame... the questions by which they navigated their own lives?” (Kirsch and Royster, *Feminist* 20). By considering history through critical imagination, students were able to trace, for example, how people discovered certain food sources, how they developed agrarian methods to ensure a relatively consistent supply, and how they had built tools to expedite the cultivation process.

Texts first became useful at the Laboratory School by providing descriptions that enabled students to envision what life had looked like in a specific moment for a particular group of people, and how the geographic, environmental, and social conditions would have inspired certain methods over others. To provide such resources for students, instructors regularly set aside periods in half hour increments to

work with children on reading that took its cue from history discussions.³⁴ Instructors had already identified two general methods that were used for introducing to students to historical material: “of presenting to their imagination through word, pictures and photographs the life of the people and the problems they had to solve...[and] by materials and the constructing of devices which might be thought of” in response to these problems.³⁵ Reading lessons were based on the former and tended to focus on what information students needed on a particular people, on directly stated student desire to read about a particular subject, and on the instructor’s evaluation of present literacy habits. Given these shifting exigencies, reading instruction varied from one period to four per week and instructors were careful to note the reasons for changes as well as the variances in student ability. During reading lessons, instructors would use a text to describe a particular historical event and then students would re-tell the event back to the teacher as she wrote their words on the board. With their own words before them, students would then set to transcribing their ideas in writing.³⁶

As students learned information that would aid their current undertakings, they garnered new vocabulary and continued to gain what instructors referred to as “tools” in their expanding storehouse of knowledge. Children in Group IV (age 7) even referred to learning new words as “putting tools in their shop,” with one boy so enamored of the metaphor that he “insisted upon buying each tool from the teacher before he wrote its name -- gravely proffering imaginary money and insisting that the

³⁴ Autumn 1899 and Winter 1900. University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folders 15 & 26], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

³⁵ Group Reports. Box 3, Folder 1, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

³⁶ Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 12], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

tool be wrapped up in paper and duly delivered.”³⁷ By introducing a physical element to the words students learned, instructors found they could more reliably forge a connection in each child’s mind. For younger students especially, the embodied conceit of tool-getting illustrated how language was presented as another mode of doing, and how words were seen as implements with specific functions that corresponded directly to the activity. Much like they could see how a hammer had been constructed to drive nails into wood, younger students began to see the purposes to which words could be put, especially as it helped them communicate what they were doing or what they had learned.

It is also worth noting that students encountered this method of literacy teaching far earlier than Laboratory School educators had anticipated at the experiment’s outset. Despite Alice Dewey’s statement that literacy would be held off until the age of ten, the access points created by the historical-occupational curriculum ensured that even very young students wanted to gain some exposure to text.³⁸ When kindergarten-aged children in Group I, for example, learned about the history of Japan, their instructor reported:

“Last week they showed for the first time an interest in words. They asked to have ‘rice’ and ‘Japan’ written on the board, and were able to recognize them the next day. Then sentences containing those words were written and the

³⁷ Winter 1900, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 26], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

³⁸ Alice Dewey, University Elementary Record, Spring 1900, p7. Box 12, Folder 2, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

children picked out the words they knew. Later they asked to have ‘coats’ written and ‘Japanese’, and were able to recognize them in sentences.³⁹

While instructors did not actively incorporate literacy into the curriculum for younger children, this evidence indicates that they did willingly indulge these students when they wanted to learn the words they encountered as part of their history lessons. For this reason, Groups I and II (ages 4 and 5) had occasional exposure to literacy when new and interesting words presented themselves, and by the time students had progressed to Group III (age 6), transcription of historical material was a twice-weekly undertaking.⁴⁰

While such transcription was a valuable tool in helping students come to appreciate the value of literacy in sharing their activities, that act alone was not enough to firmly secure literacy as a tool the students could themselves use. In 1900, Miss Hoblitt, a teacher who had been hired specifically for reading and writing instruction reported of Group IV (age 7):

I found that when the children wrote their own reading lessons, when it came to read it was purely memory work, so for the last two or three times I have composed the sentences myself, taking separate words from the sentences and building on them, such as at, bat, cat, fat, etc. I do this in order to give them a little time to forget what they have written. Then I will take up the work as before.⁴¹

³⁹ Winter 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 15], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁴⁰ Scheme for reports and Autumn quarter, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 2 & 8], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁴¹ Winter 1900, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 20], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Her account indicates that while students were certainly learning words, they did not always commit the corresponding written symbol to memory in a way that allowed for later use. Enough repetition led to memorization rather than functional literacy, and the reading instructor recognized that students needed a slow but steady scaffolding of novel words to truly reinforce a burgeoning literacy. Eventually, she tried a different tactic and allowed the students to choose their own topics in a writing assignment. She reported that “the papers were much better than those that they have composed as a group by dictating to the teacher and then copying from the blackboard” and that “the children worked much more industriously, tired of their work less quickly, and showed greater freedom of expression.”⁴² At the students’ request, they continued into a second period of writing one day, and another period was spent listing words they expected to need in their compositions. This example demonstrated to instructors a key factor of literacy acquisition at the Laboratory School, and one that ultimately reinforced their philosophies: the utility of repetition was necessary, but students also needed to cultivate their own reasons for needing literacy in order to successfully produce text.

The realization that text could be used to inform activity guided the ongoing practice of recordkeeping at the Laboratory School. Students consistently referenced text-based records to construct an understanding of the past, so it was likely not difficult to introduce the usefulness of creating their own records to share with the rest of the school what each group had done each week. Further, the instructors’ weekly

⁴² April 5, 1901, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 3], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

reports served as a cornerstone of the Laboratory School's pedagogical processes, and while there is no record of teachers discussing their practices with the students or consciously drawing a connection between the activities, perhaps their own ongoing process of record-keeping helped instructors to frame the value of such an endeavor for students. Regardless, as the novelty of sharing information through record began to dawn on the students, instructors noted an increasing interest in transcribing stories they had heard or generated, describing concepts they had encountered, and explaining processes they had enacted. In May 1897, the University Record reported that the making of records was a necessary part of the classroom process, but were not "held up" to make a child interested in learning to write. Instead the goal was to help with the mechanics of a record so that the student's interest in would be held. The report notes:

With regard to this point, it was a good practice in this school, particularly with the younger children, in the council meeting at either the beginning or the end of the period for the teacher to write a dictation the children's spoken story of the work of the hour. This story was arranged, and used the next period as a reading lesson for the purpose of review. The children seeing their own experience made lasting and useful to them and others, by the written form of language, gradually awoke to an appreciation of its use.⁴³

While transcription of history alone had exposed students to written language, their own literacy remained functionally incomplete. However, instructors observed that when students had their own activities as subject matter, they exhibited increased

⁴³ University Record, May 1897. Box 17, Folder 4, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

willingness to engage with the text that would allow them to document and revisit what they had done. Through the weekly council meetings, instructors saw students begin to generate the content of the text they interacted with to establish a greater connection with what they were doing, by extension, with the text that expressed their activities.

Given the instructors' observations and the students' continued interest, the process of generating weekly reports began to take on a more official capacity throughout the school. By 1899 the University Record relayed that the weekly reports had taken the form of a newsletter: "Once a week they dictate a report of the work of the group in all departments for the school paper. This report is printed by some older members of the school on the printing press, and read on Tuesdays by a member of the group."⁴⁴ What had begun as a habit among individual groups had expanded out into a more organized practice that allowed students across age groups to work together so that they could produce a collective record of their work. Younger children created the content of weekly reports while older children mastered the embodied process of the printing press. With the text of their own activities before them to use as reading lessons, the younger children decided to make book covers to keep their text intact and so they could have a complete record of their full year's work at the end.⁴⁵ The diligence with which students created, curated, and preserved the written records of their activities demonstrates a consistent, school wide expression of literacy practices

⁴⁴ University Record, March 24, 1899. Box 1, Folder 1, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

⁴⁵ June 7, 1901, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 3], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

that had emerged out of invitational strategies teachers used within their history teaching.

Access Point #2: Storytelling and Drama

While record keeping laid the foundation for literacy throughout the school, this access point introduced only one purpose for literacy. Students had learned how to write with the purpose of relaying information straightforwardly, but had little practice with other literary or rhetorical devices. Exposure to storytelling provided a way for students to see how the critical imagination they had been cultivating could be shared through the expressive qualities of literacy. Instructors banked on children's common love of stories, and frequently connected the history with literature to provide another access point to spoken and written language. Stories, poems, and fables either from or about a particular time provided a useful and enjoyable presentation of different histories, and the literature that instructors selected spanned across many subjects and time periods.

As students learned about early human history, younger children read the *Story of Ab*, a children's book that depicted the lives of cave people. Students also read a variety of fables and stories from "Heart of Oak," a common reader in the late nineteenth century. Through this text, Runyon reported that she "was pleased to find that the children could read the stories I gave them, quite easily, and enjoyed using the books."⁴⁶ Students of Group V also read Hans Christian Andersen's Snow Queen, passages from the "Ancient Mariner", Howard Pyles' "The Many Adventures of

⁴⁶ Autumn 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 15 & 18], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Robin Hood,” and *Robinson Crusoe*.⁴⁷ *Crusoe* in particular held the children of Group V’s interest, and Miss Runyon relates:

They begged after the first page or two to take it home. I suggested that they leave the book until they were ready to go at noon, but they assured me that it would be much better if they placed it in their blouses. So each child went off with a book in his bosom. I saw them later in the morning surreptitiously reading in the other classes, reading as they stood in the hall waiting for the bell and reading as they walked through the hall.⁴⁸

This endearing anecdote underscores the passion students could express about literature when a particular text caught their interest. It also reflects the students’ ongoing fascination with travel and exploration of new lands, which permeated many of the history lessons (i.e. Columbus, Crusoe, de Soto, American colonies, ancient Mediterranean) and could be reliably counted on to sustain a group’s interest over time.

The children’s interest in travel to and adventure in new places combined with a growing interest in storytelling led to a phase of literacy acquisition defined by dramatization. Here, students applied what we can now recognize as a second feminist inquiry tool to their study of history: strategic contemplation. While strategic contemplation utilizes the immersive thinking of critical imagination, it also “makes room for the researcher to acknowledge his or her embodied experiences while

⁴⁷ 1900-1901, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 3], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁴⁸ Winter 1900, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 21], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

engaging in inquiries that permit the researcher to gain perspective from both close and distant views of a particular rhetorical situation or event” (Kirsch and Royster, “Feminist” 659). Strategic contemplation can help students to see rhetoric as a “full-body experience” and functioned at the Laboratory School to help students more fully immerse themselves in a particular history (Kirsch et al., *Feminist* 95).

Based on their engagement with history, it did not appear to be difficult to draw students into the process of embodied strategic contemplation. Because of Dewey’s beliefs regarding the continued expression of imagination (see *Art as Experience* and *Experience and Nature*), students engaged in embodied play-acting more frequently and for a longer period of time than in typical schools to furnish a potential access point to literacy through storytelling. What would generally fall into the province of recess activity children did constantly in class to reinforce their understanding of a historical period. In order to confirm what they had learned and familiarize themselves with the situations that early civilizations had faced, students often bodily reenacted the events they were told about through spoken and written stories and plays “in order to portray the meaning of living”⁴⁹ and to “enlarge the concepts which the children get from the subject matter.”⁵⁰ These retellings were sometimes one-off re-enactments at the end of the lesson, but more often they held the children’s interest for a longer period of time and became increasingly complex and embodied productions (see Figure 2.) During some play sessions, children assigned each other various occupations and went through the motions of a working society,

⁴⁹ Chapter outlines. Box 12, Folder 1, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

⁵⁰ Group Reports. Box 3, Folder 1, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

“each one doing his part.”⁵¹ Over time, students grew increasingly anxious “to work on something of their own and see whether they can put it into their own expression.”⁵² In history periods, instructors also noted periods of an hour and a half where children were “fully engaged in telling the story of the people they are now playing, which is to be printed and is to form a part of a book which they are to illustrate with Miss Cushman.”⁵³

⁵¹ Winter 1900, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 24], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁵² Winter 1900, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 19], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁵³ Winter 1900, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 24], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

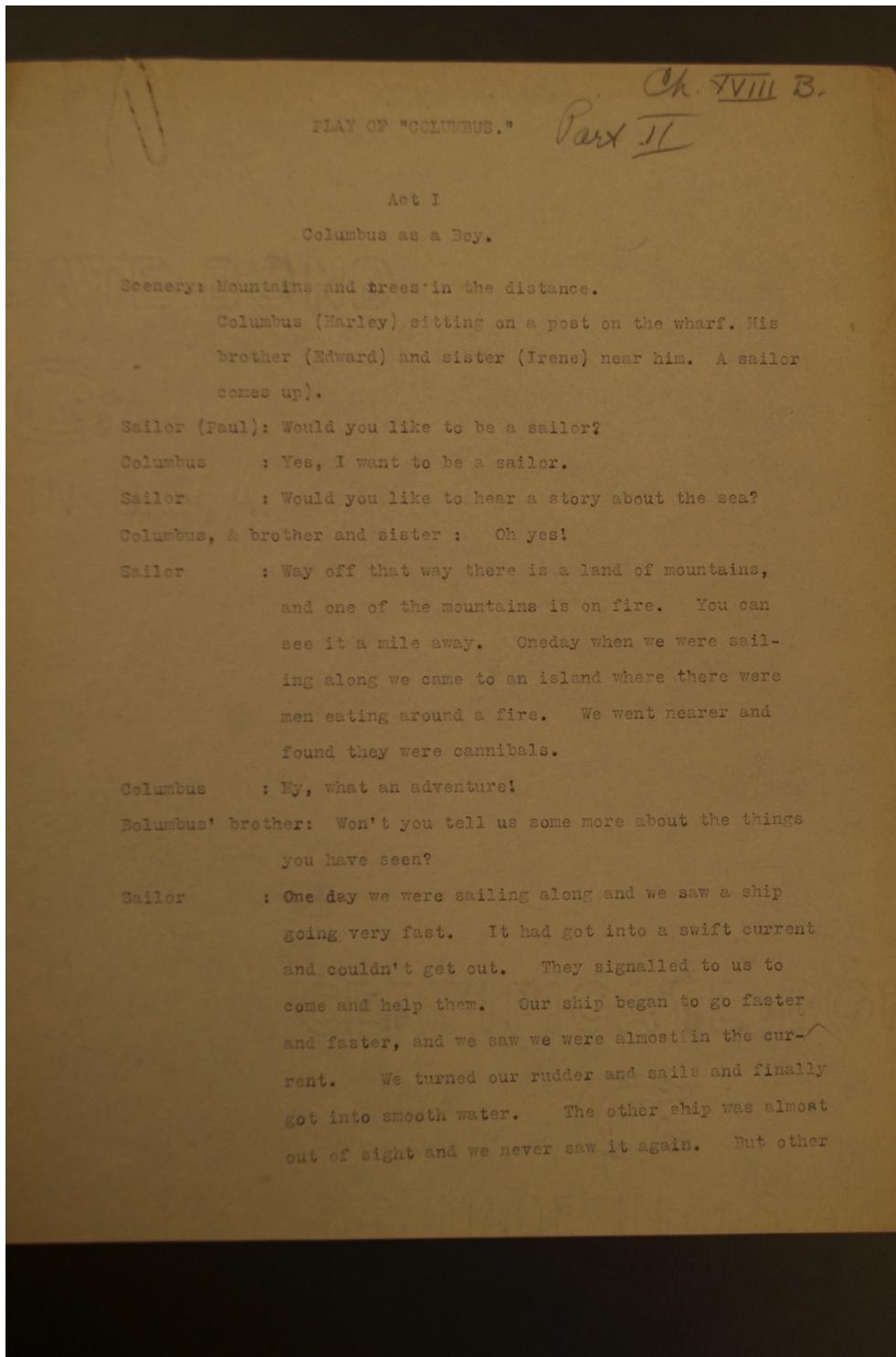


Figure 2. Play composed by students. Box 17, Folder 5, Katherine Camp Mayhew Papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

This increasing and sustained interest likely had something to do with the attention they paid to their reenactments, which caused some of the play-acting to

evolve into larger-scale theatrical plays. After reading stories about King Arthur, for example, Miss Bacon described that students discussed together what parts of the story could be best adapted into a play of their own design, paying particular attention to how the text could be altered into a script. From here, children suggested the dialogue for each scene, which was then discussed and agreed upon or changed until everyone was satisfied with the product. They dictated what they wanted to say to their teacher, who then took the opportunity to give them a spelling lesson on the words they knew verbally but had not yet encountered in text.⁵⁴ The final script was written on the board for students to copy down into their own notebooks, and then acted out during class and, eventually, transformed into at a production complete with costumes and set design that other groups would come to view.⁵⁵

In an equally generative example, students who visited the Walker Museum and observed animals during the last Ice Age undertook the process of writing a sequel to *The Story of Ab* based on what they learned. Their instructor reported: “The class was divided into groups and given the points to be made next, viz. that Ab must move from the fire country. They were to find out why and to arrange the directions and details of the change.”⁵⁶ Following what she knew about ancient history, the instructor set before the children a problem that would have caused early humans to migrate. By framing those migratory patterns as a sequel to the literature they had already encountered, instructors presented students with the opportunity to sharpen their

⁵⁴ Spring 1900, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 33], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁵⁵ Group Reports. Box 2, Folder 6, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

⁵⁶ Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 5], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

abilities as writers while building a more comprehensive understanding of how ancient history had unfolded. In response to the assignment, groups discussed the details they had already learned, worked together to create a plot, and then spent their study hour composing the first pages of the sequel. By the end of the week, the instructor reported, the story was acted out.⁵⁷ These two lessons and their resulting texts highlight how history and literature intersected to provide students with access points to literacy that helped them see its dramatic, expressive purposes.

The Phoenicians: An Evocative Example of Embodied Access Points to Literacy

An exemplar of how storytelling practices furnished access points to literacy emerged through the students' engagement with the ancient Phoenician people. Through this curricular arc, students created an immersive and embodied reproduction that helped to reveal more complex elements of literacy's "deeply textured history" (Brandt 178). As a result of the stories they told about (and as) Phoenicians, students came to better understand how literacy could enable exchange between and facilitate growth among different cultures. The practical problems that literacy helped solve for the Phoenician people underscored its purposes for students and propelled them toward literacy practices of their own.

In this unit, as with others, instructors began with invitational practices. They described the physical realities that the Phoenicians faced, discussing the effects of climate on agriculture and the proximity of the ocean.⁵⁸ They created a relief map with

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Winter 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 21], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

putty and stones to better understand the physiographic conditions of the particular place Phoenicians had inhabited and why this land was less abundant than other places in the Mediterranean.⁵⁹ Students in Groups II-IV learned about the founding of Sidon, the first Phoenician town, and discussed the occupations of a place where fish were the primary commodity and were handled in different ways, including catching, drying, smoking, packing and, most importantly, trading.⁶⁰ As children learned about the agricultural and food-related challenges this culture faced, they realized that trade with nearby lands was likely the easiest and most expedient way to sustain the Phoenician culture, particularly given what they had previously learned about trade winds.⁶¹ This realization sparked the next phase of student engagement with Phoenician history.

While having to shift from an agrarian lifestyle presented a huge problem, the prospect of travel apparently excited the children, and teachers capitalized on this excitement in several ways. At the unit's outset, each child was given a topic related to Phoenician life to present to the class and books from which to draw material. The teacher reported that students "showed a great deal of interest in doing this work," a statement which seems plausible given the immanent and imaginative exploration that the unit presented.⁶² The research they undertook helped students better understand the

⁵⁹ Autumn 1898 & Spring 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 14 & 26], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁶⁰ Winter 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 15], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁶¹ Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 14], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁶² Winter 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 22], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

central points for trade, the ways that the trade winds shaped the Phoenician's journeys, and the ways Phoenicians built boats to undertake such a mission.⁶³

Once they had gathered such knowledge, they envisioned themselves as traders and considered how they might travel to and set up a trade situation.⁶⁴ In this learning process, embodied dramatization played a critical role. Instructors reported that, having the general lay of the Mediterranean and having produced several maps to understand their relative positioning to other ancient civilizations, students insisted on physically sailing themselves around to arrive at different ports. Teachers steered into this imaginative scheme, often reporting that they had given children ample time to sail from place to place that day.⁶⁵ Allowing the students to linger in the travel-based realities of the Phoenician's maritime culture deepened their commitment to the people they studied and provided a realistic setup when they finally began to trade in earnest. From the time they had spent sailing around their imagined Mediterranean, students came to better understand what was available at each port, how to maximize their journey to reach as many ports as possible, and how their trading should unfold over time and in different, complex situations.

Once they decided to land, students split off into groups to take on the roles of both traveling and city merchants. The problems of trading manifested almost immediately when students docked at the first port. One student reported:

⁶³ Winter 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 15 & 21], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Winter 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 22 & 23], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

We had a hard time deciding how many fish the wheat was worth. First we thought we would do it by weight. A pound of fish for a pound of wheat. But then they said we could get fish without any trouble, and it took months to raise wheat. Then we told them we could not fish much in the winter because of the storms on the sea. But they wanted the fish, so we soon made a bargain, and they are to take some every month.⁶⁶

As students set about the actual practice of trading imagined wheat and fish, they realized that there was no easy method in their barter system to determine worth of different items in relation to one another. They had to weigh their items not only by their physical mass, but also in terms of relative availability and difficulty of procurement. To do so required each group to engage in both sophisticated rhetorical tasks and ongoing recordkeeping that would help them explain in various situations why, for example, certain commodities would be more scarce or difficult to come by depending on the time of year. The process of record keeping allowed students-as-traders to mark the value of their own goods while maintaining good relationships with each other to ensure the trade was made diplomatically and necessary materials secured. On a functional level, records helped students to keep track of the varying properties of various trades – to know what they could trade for what, at what times, and with whom.

The trade process had presented several issues even at the first port, but students were eager to continue their explorations and so set off for other important commodities including wood, wool, and metals. After another period painting a map

⁶⁶ Paul Hunter, student, Winter 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 15], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

and making pyramids in clay to extend their map, the children divided again into Phoenician sailors and Cyprus natives and considered a new problem: how to let someone who did not share their language know that they wanted to trade fish for copper. Several solutions were brought to the group's consideration: "One child proposed that they talk French to them; another that they spell out words on their fingers. But when their methods were shown to be absurd by other members of the class, they worked out a very good pantomime, using a piece of copper ore to indicate their desires."⁶⁷ The embodied act of communicating through pantomime served them in the short term, and laid the foundation for children to consider the larger problems that were emerging in their increasingly complex trade system. Children had now begun to trade at points throughout the Mediterranean, and the list of commodities and variety of cultures with which they interacted meant they had new problems of communication to manage. While pantomime was effective in the short term, students began to feel the need for more efficient methods.

At this point, instructors engaged in a little imaginative and invitational dramatization of their own to forge a direct access point to literacy. They told the students a story about a boy whose father was a trader and "who had been with his father on trips and saw the difficulty and ambiguity that arose from using the cumbersome writing and resolved to find an easier way."⁶⁸ The boy, wishing to help his father, invented the use of single letters to represent sounds and discovered the means of combining them to write ideas more expediently than was possible through

⁶⁷ Winter 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 22], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁶⁸ Winter 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 16], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

ideographic writing. After describing this story, the instructor relayed: “That the Phoenicians would be likely to find this method was brought out from the necessity of the case... They were the one people who need them most to keep accounts and records of trading business.”⁶⁹ At this point, the students had experienced through their embodied reenactments a need which had driven the establishment of a uniform script in ancient times. They had now traded enough items with different people to need tools for remembering how much fish they traded for wheat or wool, at what points during the year, and with whom. While these students were already engaged in the process of weekly record keeping through the newsletter, this felt need – paradoxically historical and present all at once – helped them to realize new purposes for record and literacy. The records themselves had an inherent value, and students had already shown through their engagement with the past that they understood human history was worth putting forth effort to remember. In their play-acting, in addition, they realized that records had a daily functional capacity. Phoenicians did not simply record what they did to have a story about their trading adventures for future generations; they wanted to be able to refer back to what they had already done and to usefully employ records to make a complicated process more manageable and prosperous (See Figure 3.)

⁶⁹ Ibid.

An Account of Merle's Trip.

Gladys: Merle got home last night just before dark. Let us go and ask him about his trip.

Grace: Oh yes, let us go. We did not know he was back.

Cecil: We are glad to see you Merle, come and tell us about your trip.

Merle: I will be glad to do so if you will wait a minute until Jessie comes. She said she would meet me here and she wants to hear about it, too.

Mary: Where is she, I will go and hurry her up.

Evelyn: Is not that she way over by that cedar tree?

Margaret: It looks like her, yes, I am sure it is.

Katharyn: What a long time it is since you went away, Merle.

Luther: Well here is Jessie at last. We are waiting for you, Jessie.

Jessie: I am sorry I kept you waiting.

Merle: Well, I don't know where to begin. I have had the finest time! we went along the coast until we came to Beyruth,- a

queer little town about twenty miles from here, where some other traders met us and went along, because father said it is not safe for a few traders to go alone. All the traders had donkeys loaded with the things they wanted to sell, just as we had. We had to cross two mountains. We camped for the night in the valley and father told me about the stars, and how he could tell where he was by watching them. From the top of the second mountain we could see Damascus. We reached the city just before sunset and went to an inn. Everything was so new to me that I could hardly sleep. The next morning we went to market. Here the people bring the things they want to trade. It takes a long time to find a man who wants to trade what he has for what you want to sell. Then I watched father making bargains with the people for what he should bring next time. He had to make pictures of the things and marks to remind him what he was to bring. It seems to me there must

be some easier way of writing, and I mean to try to find out how it can be done.

Jessie: I have thought of that too, Merle. I have watched my fathee making up his accounts, and sometimes he forgets what some of the marks he made were for, and things get all mixed up. Suppose we try to find a new way together?

Merle: All right, for I mean to be a trader, and I want to be the very best trader in the country.

Hilda: Then I should think you would have to find a way to measure things. I think that is as important as a way of writing.

Figure 3. Account of Merle's Trip, student play. Box 12 Folder 7, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

Students had spent a long time in play, traversing the ancient waters of the Mediterranean, but they came away greatly enriched. Runyon relayed her goals at the end of the unit:

The ideas which have been kept before the children continually, in the study of the Phoenicians, has been the gradual adaptation of knowledge of other peoples, increasing their own civilization; the fact that an environment apparently unsuited for life, may force a people to discover new ways of providing the necessities of life, and bring about a greater development by the action and reaction of a new stimulus ...lastly to get the geography of the Mediterranean sea with a general notion of the continents of which the bordering lands are a part.⁷⁰

Through their time sailing around in their created maps as Phoenicians, students had constantly been made to consider how to adapt what they knew to different people and situations in ways that not only made possible their own culture's survival but also its success. They had seen how the problems of a culture could manifest solutions that would extend into engagement with multiple other cultures, and that would ultimately produce a new technology that advanced human history. They had learned how Phoenicians had functioned as "distributors of civilization"⁷¹ through extensive maritime travel and how they had gone about the extensive trade that facilitated this distribution.⁷² Their embodied explorations of the ancient Mediterranean – recreated as it was with putty, stones, paint, and imagination – helped them to see how the occupation of merchant and trader would have unfolded and the way that symbiotic relationships could be established among different cultures to ensure a steady trade of

⁷⁰ Spring 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 26], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁷¹ In context, this term likely referred to the physical distribution of various goods; in terms of cultural awareness, however, the phrase warrants further unpacking.

⁷² Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 14], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

goods and ideas. Through their activities, students had been habitually steered toward the necessity of communication in and between societies to ensure collective success.

Throughout their engagement with the Phoenicians, students had participated in immersive and embodied storytelling practices that had engaged their interest on a number of levels. The increasingly complex trade practices students encountered through their reenactments helped them to understand how records operated in different contexts to make certain occupations easier and more successful and, ultimately, how they could be used to improve the overall productiveness of one's community. Students' sustained commitment to recreating the history of ancient Mediterranean had furnished access points that revealed practical, functional purposes for literacy in the occupations of the Phoenician people. Beyond its power to gain and hold students' attention, instructors decided to return to the Phoenician arc on a yearly basis because, as the next section will illustrate, framing literacy around occupational functionality helped students begin cultivating their own uses for literacy in their present, daily circumstances at the Laboratory School.

Access Point #3: Occupational Literacy in Daily Activities

As the previous sections have demonstrated, the Laboratory School curriculum provided useful access points to literacy that helped students understand the different circumstances that propelled reading and writing throughout history. The invitational rhetoric teachers consistently employed allowed them to "examine and teach specific local cases in which people can engage their surrounding communities to move toward a future" (Kirsch, "Creating" 26). For the students, living as Phoenicians had

especially helped frame literacy around what they could do with it, and this realization led to a new stage of functional literacy that can be observed elsewhere in the occupational curriculum. Beyond the roles they encountered through imaginative play, students took on the real, embodied work of occupations that were common to the agrarian lifestyle that had marked civilizations for thousands of years and that could be easily supplied by the Laboratory School's limited budget. This meant planting and tending to a garden, building tools that would make farming easier, and eventually learning how to prepare what had been grown for consumption. As this section will detail, the historical invitational access points created by women educators also helped students uncover more functional and embodied purposes for literacy. In turn, these purposes could be extended into their own lives and applied to occupational activities they most often participated in, such as gardening and cooking.

Again, despite the fact that Laboratory School educators had anticipated delaying literacy until at least the age of ten, the daily work students did frequently dictated needs for reading and writing before then. The school garden that children tended, for example, provided a straightforward need for recordkeeping practices even in the youngest students. Groups II and III made labels for the seeds and bulbs they grew in their garden so it would be easier to remember what they had planted and where.⁷³ Similarly, Group IV made a list of bulbs that could be planted in October and described the scenes as the wheat ripened and was harvested so they would know

⁷³ Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 2], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

when it was ready in future years.⁷⁴⁷⁵ After completing their first draft of these descriptions, Group IV read Hesiod's "Works and Days" to better understand how to determine when to plant certain crops. Their instructor reported that the style of this story caused them to return with "increased interest" to their descriptions of wheat's ripening and harvest and to revise with style in mind.⁷⁶ Using these and other self-generated descriptions of their gardens, Group IV frequently assembled individual sentences they had written into collaborative compositions that represented their collective efforts. According to the instructor's recollections, the children showed "a great deal of pleasure in taking home their typewritten lessons to read" and felt "very encouraged when they can read a sentence through without help."⁷⁷ In these ways, the youngest students at the school employed literacy to record their efforts and results in farming and gardening occupations.

Botany in connection with occupational farming also gave students the opportunity to practice literacy with regard to recording their scientific method. Group IV wrote a record of the experiment they had begun with germinating peas in an airtight vessel.⁷⁸ Group VI also generated reports about their observations regarding tree blossoms and pollination as well as their experiment to find out what gas came off of plants when they were in direct sunlight.⁷⁹ Group V made thermometers so that they

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Group IV Report. Box 3, Folder 7, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Group IV reading report, April 1900. Box 1, Folder 6, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

⁷⁸ Spring 1900. University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 31], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

would be able to monitor planting conditions and then wrote a record of the process. Following the successful completion of the tool, they proceeded to take reports of the weather by recording the temperature and atmospheric pressure, direction of the wind, and amount of clouds.⁸⁰ This experiment meant that students built a sophisticated recording device to that could be used in combination with other data to generate new, useful, and complex information about the environment of their growing crops.

Together, the reports and tools that resulted from farming practices helped students at the Laboratory School to develop a more functional relationship with literacy.

At the end of a successful planting season, children enjoyed the process of harvesting their carefully grown gardens, which gave instructors the opportunity to introduce another occupation: cooking. With different crops ready each week, it was only natural to allow students to experiment with what they had harvested to make food, and instructors hoped that the results of these experiments would provide students with another occasion to put their literacy to use. In older groups, cooking had naturally provided multiple points to written language. One instructor reported that an hour was spent in writing about the work done with yeast, and noted that “the majority of the papers were well written and showed a fair understanding of the subject.”⁸¹ Students spent a second hour that week on the “practical work” of making rolls. With their baked goods deemed a success, students went on to spent one additional period writing recipes in notebooks and recording the directions of the work

⁸⁰ Winter 1899. University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 18], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁸¹ Cooking Reports. Box 4, Folder 10, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

they had done the previous week.⁸² Based on this success, a 1901 report advocated for more extensive treatment of cooking, which could easily be incorporated throughout the curriculum since it both connected to the every student's experience and with the occupational studies in farm life that students navigated. For younger students, the value of cooking was that the activity tapped into "the spontaneous interest" and direct attitude of the child. Cooking provided a concrete motive for younger children who were disinclined to pursue an activity without immediate value – a "particular thing produces a particular result" – which in this case was the lunch that was served to the group that day.⁸³

While cooking had already been a regular part of the curriculum for older students, this philosophical reframing provided a new level of consideration. Following the decision to pursue cooking more directly, Group III decided to cook flaked corn and rice for lunch. Once the cooking was done, the children wrote down their recipes, and those who could not write yet dictated the recipe to the teacher and then read it back off the board. By the end of the 1901 school year there were enough recipes to go into a cookbook, so students spent time in sewing class crafting cookbook covers. Miss Lachmund notes that the children "took great pride and delight in the making and tried to do as accurate and neat work as possible."⁸⁴ When the recipes were ready to go into their cookbooks, the students were so excited to see their projects completed that they ran out of time to make lunch, and had to have the

⁸² May 31, 1901, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 3], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁸³ May 17, 1901. University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 3], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁸⁴ June 7, 1901, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 3], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

instructors step in to help. This distractibility allowed Lachmund to note an interesting trend:

A number of those, however, who had made covers, had been unable to read and write the recipes, so that when the covers were finished, they had no recipe to put them in them. This made them most eager to write, at least for awhile before school closed, and they begged to have them written out so that they could copy them. One little boy who had left in a hurry on the closing day of school, returned the following morning and asked for all the recipes which he had wished to write in his book.⁸⁵

As students encountered the feelings of satisfaction their peers felt upon completing the recipe books, they too felt inspired to create their own, and in doing so to gain the necessary skills to put that recipe book to use. By connecting the act of cooking with the activities of the group and the universal need for sustenance, the instructors found that, on multiple levels, the culinary explorations facilitated the expression of the “social and cooperative spirit of the child.”⁸⁶ In this way, students demonstrated the social spirit on which the laboratory school was built. Such work also revealed the social motivations for literacy to the children, encouraging those who had been previously hesitant to learn how to read.

Finally, throughout their exploration of an agrarian lifestyle, students also explored the tools that had been created to make the physical work easier. Students in Groups II to IV especially were attracted to the concept of metalwork and smelting,

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ May 17, 1901. University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 3], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

and instructors recounted that “their interest in smelting places and actual work almost swallows up their interest in any story, however dramatic.”⁸⁷ With regard to metalwork, students could not be distracted by stories and wanted to learn only the practical: the location of various ores, the relationship between fire and air, the different amount of heat needed to render different metals malleable, the molds used to create certain shapes, the uses to which those metals had been put.⁸⁸ With great enthusiasm, students conducted experiments in order to examine firsthand the properties of iron, copper, tin, lead, and zinc.⁸⁹ They re-enacted life as a village of metalworkers.⁹⁰ While they did not have access to a large smelting pit, they did craft miniature kilns and molds out of clay and stone so that they could conduct metalwork of their own (Mayhew and Edwards 46, 110). On this topic, students also read widely and vociferously. In connection with their metalwork, for example, Group III completed weekly reading lessons about ore and smelting.⁹¹ In reading a story called “The Stone, Bronze, and Iron Ages,” which featured pictures of bronze daggers with complicated designs, Miss Camp relates that: “After looking at this book two of the children said spontaneously: ‘I wish I could have that book.’ They had seen the same book in the fall with a good deal of indifference, and now requested that it be left on

⁸⁷ Winter 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 16], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 14], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁹⁰ Winter 1900, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 24], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁹¹ Winter 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 15 & 16], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

the table for them to look at.”⁹² In this particular example, Camp highlights a critical difference: before having a point of reference for why and how tools would be created, students had little interest in a text which, for all intents and purposes, might well have interested them (given the rich illustrations). Yet when it was introduced in relevance to their present occupational activities, the book became a much-coveted reference because it revealed a level of detail and artistry that could accompany a task that the students already enjoyed.

The experiences students gained through the occupational curriculum included activities related to farming, smelting, cooking, and trading. The functional literacy they enacted in response to or conjunction with these activities demonstrates how the history curriculum at the Laboratory School served as the framework in which instructors monitored and responded to students’ shifting literacy needs with embodied heuristics. These occupational access points to literacy, combined with recordkeeping and storytelling, helped to frame reading and writing as resources that would enable students to solve some problem they had encountered. By extension, students began to see how literacy could increase their expertise in a particular activity. The cultivation of these access points responded to the fundamental problem of literacy that the Laboratory School curriculum as a whole presented.

The activities described in this chapter have laid the foundation for how language education unfolded at the Laboratory School. The three access points to literacy demonstrate specifically the role of embodiment in promoting genuine commitments to literacy and active student engagement in language learning. The

⁹² Winter 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 22], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

ways that teachers deployed what was, by today's standards, a feminist invitational framework of different histories can begin to confirm that the Laboratory School model is “a usable pedagogical approach as we seek to train students as writers, speakers, researchers, and scholars” (Kirsch and Royster, “Feminist” 649). Through their engagement with history, students had learned to listen both to teachers and each other as they worked out a solution to a historical problem. They had encountered feedback that had changed their course of action and engaged in reflection on what worked and what didn’t throughout the process. In tandem with these collaborative, cognitive acts, the specific workings of recordkeeping, storytelling, and occupation responded to the challenge set forth by Kirsch and Royster in developing dialogic, dialectical, and operational strategies for today’s writers (“Feminist” 649). As the next chapter will further detail, students came to demonstrate complex and sophisticated skills as communicators and community members that can be traced to the rhetorical education facilitated by the historical, occupational curriculum. Their specific pedagogies, while not directly repeatable today, still contain both informative and inspirational capacities for today’s rhetoric and composition educators.

CHAPTER 5

DWELLING IN DWELLING: THE CLUBHOUSE PROJECT

Overview and Return to Contemporary Concerns

Through their invitational presentation of history, instructors had helped students begin to explore – through imaginative play and reenactment as well as manual work in occupations – how various peoples had responded to their particular environments and situations. In addition to the language skills gained during this process, as students navigated the imagined conditions of each previous people, students began to forge connections between the past, present, and future to consider how “mediated legacies of thought and action” might apply to their own unfolding circumstances (“Feminist” 660). In their reflections on the Laboratory School, Mayhew and Edwards confirmed an action-based and expressive mentality in students, writing: “Out of the increasing ability to observe, to analyze, and to select that which might be adapted to use, emerged a growing sense of power in self-expression, of ability to link observed facts in new combinations or to fashion raw materials into the more finished product” (223). The invitational strategies employed by teachers began to create conditions that allowed students to first begin to understand other perspectives and then to represent their own. As a result of this growing power of self expression, Mayhew and Edwards noted another critical shift:

The heretofore intensely satisfying story of what man [sic] had done paled before the exciting and fascinating thing that each boy or girl felt he might do.

For each the present, his own experiments, his work in shop or studio, his own social position in his class, his club, his school, his family, became of paramount importance. *The study of history became far less important than the making of his own history.* (Mayhew and Edwards 223; emphasis added.)

As students moved through the occupational curriculum, they had come to see history as a living process, and increasingly, they saw that process as one they wanted to have a role in shaping. As a result, students began to look for present connections in their own lives and to find activities that were inspired by what they had learned through history.

Nowhere was the connection between past and present clearer than through students' engagement with dwellings. Shelter was a basic necessity for human survival, and instructors knew there would be no shortage of opportunities to introduce different structures that had been built across time and around the world. Because of its ubiquity, dwellings (as extensions of shelters) crucially furnished students with the ability to approach diverse cultures with a more open-minded approach. In her spatial study of geographic rhetorics, Nedra Reynolds asserts that: "While race, class, and gender have long been viewed as the most significant markers of identity, geographic identity is often ignored or taken for granted" (11). By organizing their explorations of different cultures around the unique physical geography each group inhabited, students considered diversity primarily through an environmental lens rather than through more traditional (and more loaded) perspectives.

As a result of its geographical emphasis, the focus on dwellings sharpened students' ability to begin cultivating multiple perspectives by imagining themselves in

specific environments and responding to the problems that would arise in those places through embodied activities. In practice, after inviting students to the specific conditions a particular people had faced, instructors then encouraged students to physically reproduce historical dwellings ranging from miniature replicas to full-scale structures. In this process, students gradually recognized in each culture, including their own, basic similarities – the desire for safety and comfort – in the context of many different environments. This recognition of similarity allowed them to feel a certain degree of kinship with every civilization they studied – after all, everyone wants a home – and to begin immersing themselves in the lives of those people. Through their longitudinal observations of different cultures, they started to critically understand how and why each civilization had responded in a particular way, as for example what materials would have been available and what elements would have dictated the construction of a particular home. This framing helped students to begin seeing difference “as an asset, not a liability” (Bizzell 165). Differences did not emerge due to superiority or inferiority, but rather out of specific situations and the unique responses that had been enacted based on the available means. While instructors did not frame this work as a rhetorical endeavor, the attention paid to dwellings and their connection to people’s habits and interactions provide a distinctly pragmatic rhetorical pedagogy, and one that would eventually and critically aid students in solving their own problems within the Laboratory School.

Specifically, as students encountered peoples throughout history, they came to understand how “dwelling is a set of practices as well as a sense of place” (Reynolds 140). While dwellings were physical spaces, they had been built through embodied

activities and students consistently took on these practices as part of the occupational curriculum. Once each structure was finished, students recognized through their continual dramatizations that what happened inside a dwelling was just as complicated as its construction process. As students continued their historical reenactments in an immersive setting, they realized the complex role that dwellings had in building a community. Examples like the Haudenosaunee longhouses helped students to see how dwellings served as a place where people could come together, discuss the workings of their group, and cooperate to strengthen the group and its workings as a whole. These realizations regarding social circulation propel students to take on the clubhouse project – a large scale endeavor that employed many of the manual skills gained through occupational curriculum, helped students coalesce what they had learned about various histories to solve a problem in their present, and strengthened the workings of their community in the process.

The work students did through their encounters with dwelling presents a unique opportunity to consider how contemporary rhetoric and composition teachers might employ embodied rhetoric to help students encounter difference and engage in problem solving. At the conclusion of her study of how Dewey's time in Asia shaped his open-mindedness, Shea advocates for more examples that detail "which kinds of assignments best assist students in attaining openness" (Shea 131). Given the multi-continental nature of her own study, Shea admits: "Although studying abroad is arguably the most effective way to experience communicating across difference, I am recommending an assignment that would allow students to experience multicultural approaches to writing without actually going to another country" (Shea 109). While

travel abroad may not be possible in the scope of a single semester class, the Laboratory School curriculum can suggest alternate ways to immerse students in multiple perspectives more locally. Specifically, attention to dwelling can offer ways to promote an open inquiry into the living practices of various peoples and to infuse this inquiry with a sense of empathy and understanding. Reynolds argues that “learning to dwell, even when those places are imaginary like texts, might encourage a willingness to encounter difference” (Reynolds 140). This study finds that the imaginary places that students dwelt in helped them to cultivate perspectives. It also helped them to build up discursive and embodied problem-solving strategies that would eventually be applied directly in their own community at the Laboratory School through the building of a clubhouse.

In their presentation of dwellings, instructors again placed the problems of each civilization before the students and allowed them to creatively envision themselves in that scenario. Their purposes – to invite students into the perspectives of multiple generations and cultures so as to better understand the present – were laudable and their means were often relatively successful. However, despite the open mindedness that educators felt they employed, it must be noted that the terminology and overgeneralization used to describe indigenous tribes underscores the persistent ignorance of American society in general at the end of the 19th century. This chapter will acknowledge ethnocentric failings as part of the necessary discussion that must occur alongside any recuperative historiography of the Laboratory School. Throughout the chapter, I will point out moments that educators used terminology that obfuscated a particular group’s identity and, wherever possible, use the preferred names instead.

The next chapter will treat some of the most egregious examples of white supremacy in more detail to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the Laboratory School's social positioning sometimes undermined its greatest pedagogical potential.

While the Laboratory School suffered from profound flaws because of ethnocentric thinking, it also showed great potential that could be realized again as long as today's standards are kept in view. Even though some of the information presented was inherently wrong, as students imaginatively rebuilt the conditions of the past and reenacted the diverse ways that groups had responded to universal human needs in particular environment and circumstances, they began to foster increasingly open-minded, pluralistic, and pragmatic perspectives about the way that the past had unfolded. Examining the prolonged treatment of dwellings alongside the students' pivotal clubhouse project reveals precisely how students applied the lessons of the historical-occupational curriculum to the problems they felt in their lives at the Laboratory School. This examination, in turn, can help us to envision how embodied rhetorics can be employed in today's classrooms.

Dwelling in the Occupational Curriculum

The emphasis on dwelling was universal across the school, and students from 4-14 could be found discussing and creating dwellings that had been constructed across various times and people.⁹³ The impact of this emphasis can perhaps best be described by a little boy who came to school one day and described to his teacher how he gone in a dream "from his own home to other homes and noticed the difference;

⁹³ Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 6], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

and how each difference met the needs of the particular country.”⁹⁴ With his imaginative tendencies made rhetorically operative in a historical context, this Laboratory School student had declared himself ready to explore and interact with different cultures and people around the world. This boy’s description of his unconscious travels to homes around the world evokes the immersive spirit that teachers used to present dwellings to students.

As students had explored the lives of various past generations, they considered all the problems and solutions that the need for dwellings had introduced. To begin, even reliving the process of deciding *where* to establish the more permanent dwellings of a civilization gave the children many complications to consider and many opportunities to bodily enact the migratory patterns of early humanity to better understand how and why people had come to settle certain places. Reading *Story of Ab* had provided a useful foundation for students to imagine the conditions of some of the earliest examples of human life and respond to the problems of finding a tenable environment for the long term that would suit the growing population that accompanied a thriving civilization. Given what they knew, students first constructed huts after discussing what basic materials would be available and used without access to many tools.⁹⁵ With their early dwellings constructed, this group extended their play acting and created a tribe that they attempted to maintain and grow over “generations.” As they imagined how the numbers in their tribe would increase by each generation and considered the changing climate of the location they had chosen for their original

⁹⁴ Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 3], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁹⁵ Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 8], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

huts, students eventually voted to travel South and seek an environment that was more hospitable and that would support the growth of the tribe.⁹⁶ They could not physically move the huts they had already built or create enough to constitute a full community, so they instead modeled their villages in miniature so that they would be able to reimagine the spaces they, as imagined members of an earlier civilization, might occupy.⁹⁷

Having begun to explore and understand the different perspectives of earlier civilizations, students expanded their inquiry to consider how people around the world had built and inhabited various dwellings that responded to their own geographic conditions. Group I (age 4), for example, spent one fall focusing on the Inuit people (who educators referred to as “Eskimos”). These peoples were chosen for different climate they inhabited, highlighting the ways that educators attempted to invite students to encounter difference with an open mind.⁹⁸ Studying the populations of North America and Europe had provided some variety, but educators wanted to introduce vastly different environments that people had inhabited as well as the unique problems that emerged in each place to help students more reliably encounter historical human diversity.

By reading the story “Children of the Cold,” students learned that the Inuit peoples had procured wood from whale fishermen in exchange for skins, or else had

⁹⁶ Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 11], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁹⁷ Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 13], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

⁹⁸ Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 8], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

collected what had washed up on the shores of Greenland.⁹⁹ With this information, students then went on to learn about the different kinds of houses that the Inuit built, including skin tents, snow houses, and houses that were made of a combination of stones and skins.¹⁰⁰ Through visits to Chicago's Field Museum (one of the largest natural history museums in the world), they learned about and performed the common activities that would have taken place in the skin tents including making clothes and preparing for hunting trips as well as the games and life of children in the time period.¹⁰¹ Through these activities, very young children had the opportunity to explore a culture vastly different from their own from the perspective of the homes that the people of this culture built and inhabited.

From their focus on Inuit peoples, Group I moved directly to focus on Japan, comparing and contrasting two cultures they had not previously encountered.¹⁰² They considered the mountainous geography of Japan and the impact of volcanos on agriculture to learn where civilizations were most likely to be established and how this differed from the frozen terrain the Inuit people had faced.¹⁰³ With their hypothetical locations established, Group I learned about bamboo, which was strong enough to support a building and readily available throughout Japan, before constructing a house

⁹⁹ Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 10], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

¹⁰⁰ Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 9], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

¹⁰¹ Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 11 & 13], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

¹⁰² Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 14], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

¹⁰³ Winter 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 15], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

with bamboo sticks for the framework.¹⁰⁴ These students also learned how to plant and cultivate rice as part of their agrarian occupations and to better understand the activities that would have occupied the people within the dwellings they had created.

More locally, exploring the customs and dwellings of different Native American tribes provided students with several evocative considerations of dwellings. In their study of North American indigenous populations, which in some cases spanned the course of an entire year, students readily immersed themselves in the history and geography of many Native American people. Students began by learning about the environmental conditions and making the typical wigwams of Algonquin Native Americans.¹⁰⁵ Beyond their wigwams, students also undertook construction of the long house of the “Iroquois” (today referred to by their own name, Haudenosaunee) which provided a distinction as it was both a place of individual and community dwelling. Once they had an understanding of how buildings would be made, students planned a model of a generically identified “Indian village” – regrettably lacking in any distinction of tribe – so they would be able to better imagine the physical space their dwellings would have occupied.¹⁰⁶ By winter, students had progressed to a comparison between the dwellings of the “Iroquois” (again, Haudenosaunee) and the “Sioux” (a gross overgeneralization for a huge conglomeration of tribes including the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota) and consulted maps and historical texts together to understand why the Haudenosaunee might build

¹⁰⁴ Winter 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 16], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

¹⁰⁵ Autumn 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 2], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

¹⁰⁶ Autumn 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 3], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

wooden houses instead of wigwams.¹⁰⁷ In the end, construction of the closer-to-scale long houses and wigwams carried students through spring and into the end of the school year, demonstrating the sustained interest that students showed for a range of Native American cultures in spite of the pervasive ignorance with which these peoples were often presented.

In addition to individual structures, students considered how changing Northern American geography and climate shaped the way that larger Native American villages developed over time. As shifting environmental conditions were revealed to them, students realized that they would not be able to support the population they had amassed on the initial land they had settled. This led to a prolonged period of dramatic discussion in which students weighed the pros and cons of moving to various places and then decided how they would enact the migration. In this exercise, students “organized a party, naming the things that they would take with them, and the way in which each thing would have to be carried.”¹⁰⁸ The students made their move, and eventually decided to settle a new village on an island near a river. The advantages of having a village in this location were: “the protection afforded by the river, island meant it was not settled so there would still be game.”¹⁰⁹ Such efforts demonstrate how the acts of creating and moving dwellings allowed students to enact embodied rhetoric in order to solve problems and better understand the motivations of a previous people.

¹⁰⁷ Autumn 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 14], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

¹⁰⁸ Autumn 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 9], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

¹⁰⁹ Winter 1900, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 19], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

One example from the students' engagement with Native Americans stands out as particularly compelling. Students were fascinated with the cultural tradition of Native Americans putting "pictures on their robes and wigwams of whatever they wanted the tribe to remember."¹¹⁰ This unique system of recordkeeping likely held the students' interest for a few reasons: first, it was a novel form of documentation that built on the work students were already doing while also inviting them to consider how they could share messages with what they wore on their body and how they constructed their homes. Second, such information revealed that a dwelling did not have to be simply a matter of survival now, but also a means by which to express oneself to others in the community. Finally, students had encountered aesthetic design and household decoration in their study of Greek, Roman and Phoenician people, but this appears to be the first time they considered what message their homes could send to those around them.¹¹¹

As students looked at and reproduced the various dwellings that different people had built (and the resources that had been available to carry out the task), they began to practice more consistently open-minded, pluralistic, and pragmatic thinking. In considering the log cabins of historical Chicago and the rebuilding of a local fort in 1816, students used Mara Pratt's "Stories of Illinois" to take an "imaginary visit to Rush Street bridge" to find the exact location of the fort they had studied. It was reported that students "enjoyed closing their eyes and imagining how Chicago looked

¹¹⁰ Autumn 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 11], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

¹¹¹ Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 12], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

before there was any Chicago here.”¹¹² This critically imaginative assignment demonstrated an important transition for students; not only were they able to envision places they had never seen or been, but now they were increasingly able to consider multiple periods of history that had unfolded in their own location. Each of the examples that students encountered – Inuit skin tents, Japanese bamboo houses, Haudenosaunee longhouses, Algonquin wigwams, and Chicago log cabins – corroborates Reynolds’ observation that “geographical locations influence our habits, speech patterns, style, and values” (Reynolds 11). Students saw how their landscape had supported different civilizations over time, how each civilization had responded to the particular challenges of Chicago’s terrain, and how the dwellings of each people represented their larger social and cultural traditions.

As the Laboratory School students moved increasingly closer to recent and local history, they apparently began to notice more complex connections between cultures. By considering the inherent similarities and differences between each culture they studied, students could observe and experience the shared desire to build a home. They could also increasingly appreciate why those homes often looked so different from each other. Through their embodied reenactments and construction of dwellings, they felt to some degree the problems that previous cultures had faced with regard to terrain, resources, and climate, and could thus better understand how differences had emerged. Simultaneously, they could also use dwellings to appreciate the commonalities that drew each culture together and the ways that home life unfolded in

¹¹² October 26, 1900, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 3], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

each, allowing students to feel a sort of immersive connection with each civilization they studied.

From Reenacting the Past to Enacting the Present: Developing the Idea for the Clubhouse

As they participated in the activities and inhabited the perspectives of other people who had made dwellings in response to familiar needs in different environments, students gradually grew more cognizant not only of their own needs and problems, but how they might respond to them in real time and in the geographical locations they inhabited. This mentality was particularly prevalent in Groups IX, X, and XI (ages 12-14), who had generally been at the school the longest, and who had “followed through with the occupational sequences of cooking, textiles, and printing together with training in shop work” (Mayhew and Edwards 249). The oldest groups had been long immersed in the Laboratory School practices: they had undertaken a multitude of occupations, spent years “traveling” to encounter various civilizations, and dwelled in dwellings.

Mayhew and Edwards report that these students were also particularly active in forming clubs, noting that “because of the character of the school, the distinctive capacity of each child found an outlet in his preferred activity [sic]” and that “in response to these many developing angles of interest a number of social organizations had sprung up” (224-228). Among these groups, the most active was called “The Educational Club.” The constitution of the club allowed anyone in the school to become a member once voted on by existing members, there was a committee for

finances, a few president, secretary, and treasurer (244). The organization of this initial club helped children enter into a larger period of club forming in which the Educational Club branched out to accommodate students' growing interest in a variety of subjects.

Two club subsets were particularly active throughout the school: the debate club, which had drawn older students who had an interest in speech and argument, and the photography club, which arose out of a photography class that had introduced students to the mechanisms of different kinds of cameras. The aspirations of these clubs were ambitious, but their resources were incomplete. The Laboratory School provided many things to its students: a curriculum that was responsive to their inquiries; an active and immersive view of history; and teachers who were willing to let students explore, struggle, create, fail, and succeed in equal turns. However, due to lack of funding and a growing shortage of teachers and space, educators and students alike constantly grappled with inadequate facilities (Mayhew and Edwards 249). On a daily basis, students crowded into noisy classrooms. While they had a courtyard for nice days, they lacked any kind of space to use for their own interests and devices. The school had already relocated multiple times due to increasing needs for space, but the problem remained.

For the Laboratory School's most active student groups, the problem of space manifested in different forms. For the Educational Club, members felt that they needed an official space, like the Haudenosaunee longhouses, to conduct the business of their community. An official meeting space would establish authority and make the administrative duties of the members easier to carry out. Debate club members felt

that they lacked a space to carry on the sophisticated and sometimes sensitive nature of their discussions, and they too wanted a space where they could all meet together. The photography club had a different but equally compelling problem: they had nowhere to engage in the practical work of photography. While they had successfully built their own cameras from scratch, they had no access to a darkroom and therefore could not develop for themselves any of the photographs they took. This problem was noted multiple times by the photography instructor, and Mayhew and Edwards also remarked that the call for a dark room had grown “loud and insistent” (Mayhew and Edwards 228). Given the hands-on nature of the Laboratory School, it is not difficult to imagine the frustration such an obstruction presented.

However, students had spent their time continually responding to the envisioned problems of different historical peoples. Through their ongoing emphasis on dwellings, students had especially learned to recognize the purposes for shelters and homes. As their own problems grew more pressing, students eventually articulated a solution to their shared problem: a clubhouse. Mayhew and Edwards write: “Out of the actual, pressing, and felt need of the children the idea of the club-house was born, an actual house planned, built, and furnished by themselves. The two clubs joined forces, discussed the idea, consulted with the adults, and decided that the erection of a club-house was a feasible plan” (229). This idea was recognized as the culmination of the house building activities among the older students, and while the idea began within The Educational Club, the plans for building, decorating, and furnishing gradually spread through the whole school.¹¹³

¹¹³ Chapter IX draft. Box 17, Folder 3, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

Clubhouse Construction: A Community Effort

According to the school's quarterly reports, students officially took up the general planning of a house on the week of January 19, 1900.¹¹⁴ The students considered virtually every aspect of what it would take to build a sound structure in their location, and Mayhew and Edwards reported that "With unusual skill the teacher in discussing this problem led [the students] to see the importance to city building, of knowledge of certain geologic facts concerning earth formation underlying its situation."¹¹⁵ The discussion of natural geographic conditions took students the better part of the month during which they discussed, studied, and wrote reports that covered the "situation of the country house, the formation of soil, maps showing outlet of Lake Chicago and Lake Michigan (present drainage) and character of bed rock and soil of city of Chicago."¹¹⁶ Students reviewed what they had learned about geography previously and how various people had responded to the particular geographic conditions they now faced. As part of their study, they went on field trips to review the physiography of the city's setting so that they could truly understand the landscape on which they built.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Quarterly report, January 19, 1900. Box 3, Folder 3, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

¹¹⁵ Chapter XVII draft. Box 17, Folder 3, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

¹¹⁶ Quarterly Report, February 16, 1900. Box 3, Folder 3, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

¹¹⁷ Chapter IX draft. Box 17, Folder 3, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

With a location chosen, students began to consider the house's actual construction. Mr. Frank Ball, head of the Manual Training Department at the University of Chicago, helped children round out the carpentry and construction skills they would need to bring their vision into reality. Students also frequently met with Professor Salisbury at the University of Chicago, who was an immense resource of knowledge as students learned more conditions for construction in Chicago. Additionally, instructors at the Laboratory School also designed, in very short course, a "sanitation" class that would introduce students to construction guidelines and details they would need to consider with regard to the house's foundation, size, ventilation, size and proportion of the windows as well as fireplace, and exposure to light.¹¹⁸

Next, students focused on the architectural side of the clubhouse, and Miss Cushman used the opportunity to return to history to consider some of the general principles of design. She noted that children returned to the ancient Mediterranean and to locations around Europe before finally settling on their design, and Mayhew and Edwards explain: "Among other things the children found that Greece and Egypt were the homes of the lintel, Rome the round arch, and Europe of the pointed arch of Gothic and Saracen architecture" (230). As students considered the various options available for their own building, they took to the art studio to sketch out proposed design, and eventually settled on the style of "just as colonial as we can make it" (230). Here, students used what they had learned about dwellings around the world to inform their sketches and conversations about their own building plans. Older groups had spent a

¹¹⁸ Chapter XII draft and notes. Box 15, Folder 13, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

fair amount of time studying the people of colonial America, and the style of houses most closely reflected the children's current homes. While the exact content of their design conversations was not preserved, based on the end result, students would have had to communicate effectively with one another using both visual sketches and verbal explanations to relay why a particular design was the best suited for their clubhouse.

With the physical structure of their house established, students moved to design the interior. Here, the particular needs of each group arose more acutely – while they all wanted a shared space, the photography club in particular required a set of stairs so that they could venture into the attic of the clubhouse where their dark room would be placed (Mayhew and Edwards 231). This element caused a particular amount of frustration for students as the placement of the staircase meant that they had to revise some of their initial interior design. After finally deciding on a general placement that would be structurally sound and not totally inconvenient, students moved on to design the individual elements of the house including the stairway, doors, and windows. From the ground plan they had created, students also drew a perspective view of the house they were about to build that included the details on which they had now decided.¹¹⁹ By the end of March 1900, students had begun working in small groups to plan out the house in more detail, prepare designs for furniture, and give presentations on subjects such as ventilation so the whole class could be more prepared to take on the eventual construction.¹²⁰ Through these presentations, students not only laid out a list of tasks for students to take on as they proceeded with

¹¹⁹ Winter 1900, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 26], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

¹²⁰ Spring 1900, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 27], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

construction, but consciously communicated to peers why particular steps had to be taken to ensure the security of the building.

Throughout their planning, students consistently engaged in rhetorical practices as they relayed to each other why certain design plans were more realistic or useful than others. They informed one another on what it would take to build a structure that was safe, that adhered to the guidelines set by Chicago at the time, and that met the needs that had inspired the work in the first place. After months of planning with no teacher notation of waning interest, students were finally ready to begin building. Physically, their efforts began by “digging a hole” that would serve as the foundation of the structure.¹²¹ As efforts proceeded, the instructor reported that most if not all of the time in sanitation and shop class was spent on clubhouse construction, and when children did have to work indoors due to weather, they designed and produced what was to go into the house.¹²² Such sustained effort demonstrates how a project that responded directly to students’ problems at the Laboratory School both held their interest over time and inspired them to seek out new knowledge from multiple resources that would help them undertake the complex task at hand.

Critically, the more the project moved along, the more the students embraced an inclusive approach to participation in the building process. In the beginning, Mayhew and Edwards recall that work proceeded slowly. Group X only contained twelve members that year, and those students “jealously guarded the privilege of

¹²¹ Miss Harmer, weekly report for sanitation class. Box 3, Folder 9, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

¹²² Miss Harmer, May 4 report of Group X. Box 3, Folder 3, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

work” on their project, and were generally cliquish in spirit (231). Yet the realities of limited time drove older students to renegotiate the proprietary lens by which they viewed their project, and they slowly started to extend invitations to students throughout the school. Mr. Ball reported that children in Group IX were anxious to do something to contribute to the clubhouse, so they contributed to furniture construction.¹²³ Specifically, the girls assumed responsibility for building the stairs while the boys took on the project of the front door (Mayhew and Edwards 231). Here, it is important to note that the inclusivity of this project extended to gender as well – while students had separated themselves by gender to complete particular projects, the girls had not been solely relegated to the traditionally feminine tasks of sewing and decorating. Instead, they were just as active in clubhouse construction as the boys, and their gender earned no remark save to say that they were “treated alike” (Mayhew and Edwards 29). As pictures from the archives show, boys and girls could be seen

¹²³ Spring 1900, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 27], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

working side by side on the clubhouse (See Figure 4).



Figure 4. Clubhouse Under Construction. Box 17, Folder 9, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

Once the original group of students saw how much more quickly their work progressed with the help of their peers, the clubhouse project became a school-wide affair. Margaret Bell, a Laboratory School student at the time (who went on to become an M.D., a Professor of Education, and the Director of Physical Education for Women at the University of Michigan) wrote that the lower classes were invited to assist in the roofing as well as other construction tasks:

I think Phoebe's Group VIII did the "fanciest" work on the club house. We were allowed to do all the meanest jobs – and pound a nail here and there. We

shingled a good deal – when it came time to using the creosote stain we were unanimously elected...”¹²⁴

While younger students sometimes had the less glamorous tasks delegated to them, it also meant that they had a share in the project, and the eventual inclusion of all the students at the laboratory school in the clubhouse efforts exemplified the inclusive problem-solving spirit that the school sought to cultivate. In March 1901, the members of The Dewey Club held a meeting to discuss and adopt a measure “whereby certain people outside the club, who had worked very hard on the club house, could become members of the club, without dues or initiation fees.”¹²⁵ Philosophically, students investigated parliamentary law so that they could learn how to conduct a meeting of their club on house membership, which would be a continued topic of discussion throughout construction.¹²⁶ Practically, the club formed a committee to decide who would be allowed into the club based on these credentials, and it accepted new members on a rolling basis based on physical contributions to the project. As the clubhouse community continued to grow, students consistently evaluated the work their peers had done so they could extend an invitation to those who had collaborated

¹²⁴ Correspondence from Margaret Bell, M.D., Professor of Physical Education, Physician to the Health Service, Director of Physical Education for Women at the University of Michigan. Footnote in Chapter IX draft. Box 17, Folder 3, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

¹²⁵ Miss Bacon, quarterly report, March 31, 1901. Box 2, Folder 3, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

¹²⁶ Spring 1900, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 29], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

(See Figure 5).



Figure 5. Students working in Laboratory School Shop. Box 17, Folder 5, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

Work on the clubhouse extended from the end of one school year to the beginning of the next, and by the beginning of 1901 the doors, windows, and interior finish had been completely designed, and the girls of Group X were finalizing the stairs.¹²⁷ With the basic structure in place, students had also moved on to the ceilings,

¹²⁷ Report on clubhouse progress, January 25, 1901. Box 2, Folder 6, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

walls, and flooring, a mantel and screen for the fireplace, shelving, and furniture.¹²⁸ At this point, the project was recognizable not only as a structure, but a house, and one instructor reported that the children showed renewed enthusiasm as they began to see the vision of the completed building come together and realized what it would mean for their clubs.¹²⁹ With finishing touches like benches, cushions, and various knickknacks to decorate the hearth, students first walked through the threshold of their newly completed clubhouse in Spring 1901.

At this point, the original Dewey Club solidified its departmental character to accommodate the various interests that newer club members had identified when they joined including botany, science, debate, and photography (Mayhew and Edwards 233). In addition to the interests that had drawn each group together in the first place, each club also held a certain number of responsibilities for the club's maintenance so that all members would have a role in ensuring the overall success of the clubhouse space. In addition to positions already established such as treasurer and secretary, students also developed maintenance plans to allow for clubhouse upkeep and often arranged for speakers from the university on topics that interested the club as a whole. From guest lecturers to weekly meetings, new members to a set roster of duties, instructors reported that the clubhouse took on a sophisticated and lively social capacity (233).

¹²⁸ January 25, 1901, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 3], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

Reflecting on the Value of the Clubhouse

The clubhouse project became the culmination of the shelter activity program. Moreover, embodied rhetoric had consistently defined students' engagement with dwelling and carried a profound impact on the way that students encountered past civilizations. As a result of their multiple year engagement with and reenactment of dwellings and cultures around the world, students were well primed to recognize their own need for space when it arose. They were prepared to research and undertake the physical tasks of building a clubhouse because they had continuously navigated historical record and bodily practices through the occupational curriculum. Finally, having studied the workings of peoples in so many different kinds of dwellings – and how those people responded to new languages, material items, and ideas – they knew how much they would have to communicate and collaborate to succeed. Students had seen the various uses to which these buildings could be put, so they were well positioned to operate their clubhouse when they finally finished it and to understand how their embodied practices had contributed to rhetorical meaning making. Students had spent more than a year consistently engaged in the tasks associated with the clubhouse, from learning about Chicago's geography to the necessary conditions for safety in a building at the time. They had designed every aspect of their building from the ground up, deciding together on elements as large as the overall architecture to as small as the colors of the cushions on the couch. When it came time to build, they had procured the supplies and calloused their own fingers on the shovels to dig the foundation. They erected the framework and shingled the roof, and spent their days in the shop constructing furniture and décor for the interior. When it was finally

completed, there was no element of the building, inside or out, that was not completely student-made.

Through the clubhouse, students had solved a problem of space that they all felt collectively but that had manifested individually for the various clubs forming at the Laboratory School. Each group had identified why they needed a dedicated space and worked together in increasingly inclusive capacities to ensure they could meet their mutually felt needs. Considering the complexity and scale of the undertaking, the fact that the clubhouse was built by children ranging from ages 8-14 is rather remarkable. Mayhew and Edwards write that “this enterprise was the most thoroughly considered one ever undertaken in the school, and its purpose to provide a home for their own clubs and interests drew together many groups and ages and performed a distinctly ethical and social service” (232). Not only did students learn high level occupational skills during clubhouse construction, but the social situations they had to navigate both during construction and during the clubhouse’s eventual use confirmed that students had taken from their studies of other cultures the knowledge that groups needed to work together to grow and thrive. The clubhouse project had demonstrated that teachers had successfully introduced history with invitational rhetoric in ways that ensured students could understand with empathy various perspectives and that would also allow them to relate directly those situations to problems in their own lives. The occupational curriculum and the emphasis on dwellings – on homes – ensured that students maintained an embodied connection to any topic they considered or endeavor they undertook. Together, these elements of the Laboratory School led to the

discovery of a pedagogy that was at once pragmatic and also, we would now say, deeply rhetorical.

There was a downside to the clubhouse: by the end of the next year, the Laboratory School would combine with another university primary school shortly before John Dewey's departure from the University of Chicago to Columbia University. This shift triggered, among other things, another change in location, and the clubhouse had to remain behind. Directly following the shift, the Parents' Association recommended that clubs including debate, literature, music, and art be re-established and that a new clubhouse be constructed again to support genuine club life. It would be six more years before a report was issued stating that clubs had been successfully established, and the clubhouse was not rebuilt.¹³⁰ Yet the clubhouse project survived in the lasting imprint it made on the memories of those who had participated in its construction.

In fact, some of the most evocative imagery of the Laboratory School and clubhouse's impact upon children was composed by Brent Dow Allinson, a student who had gone on to become a journalist. He described himself as an adult "standing on one of the terraced heights of the ancient city of Genoa... gazing out upon the wrinkled water of the crescent bay crowded with merchant-ships of many nations," and explains that his purpose in Italy was to visit and attempt to "expound a complex process of high international politics then under way in the old Italian sea-port."¹³¹ As

¹³⁰ Charles F. Harding, The School Review, Volume XVIII, March 1910. Box 18, Folder 4, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

¹³¹ Essay by Brent Dow Allinson, former Laboratory School student, August 1930. Box 18, Folder 2, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

he looked out over the water that day, Allinson describes how he “became aware of a vague feeling of ‘sympathy’ for the place, a dim impression that he must have experienced the scene before, that it was not wholly alien to him. But how, or when? ... Had he been in Italy and breathed its glamour ... in some previous incarnation?”

Allinson then portrayed the following scene:

Twenty-five years before, in the attic of a rambling, shingled dwelling-house on an indifferent, flat avenue ... a brown-eyed child of six or seven years sat cross-legged on the floor confronting a vast expanse of taut canvas smelling of oil-paint and the excitement of turpentine. ... Lost in those painted ships upon a painted ocean, the lad was entirely happy... he was “learning by doing,” as the phrase went, and perhaps still goes, pedagogically speaking.¹³²

In consideration of what exactly it was he learned by doing, Allinson elaborated that he learned not only the feel of the artist’s canvas, but also “the feel of history.” As he entered into adulthood and continued his explorations around the world, Allinson found that his time in the dwelling-house of the laboratory school had allowed him to engage in the embodied, artistic tasks that imbued the ability to imagine a place before he physically visited and to feel a connection to a location that for all intents and purposes should be foreign. He had also cultivated an open mindedness to different perspectives and cultures as well as an understanding of pluralistic history. His purpose in Italy at the time of the article’s writing had been to observe and report in the political happenings of Italy with journalistic integrity and neutrality. Such work

¹³² Ibid.

that this particular Laboratory School student developed effective means by which to communicate about the happenings of a society.

Possibilities for Today

Throughout their time at the Laboratory School, students encountered an unavoidable paradox of humanity: humans all carried certain similarities, but beyond these elements, they were often completely different. What was more, each different iteration had value, and one was not necessarily better than the other but rather the most responsive to a particular situation. Learning about what had been done in the past helped students begin to recognize the problems that humanity had collectively faced and the unique responses each group of people had enacted. As students scaffolded this information, they were increasingly able to identify their own circumstances and how the problems they saw repeated throughout history had now manifested in their own lives.

Today, analyzing the work at the Laboratory School can offer strategies for making embodied rhetoric operative both as a tool for cultivating perspectives and solving problems. The School provides a large scale, multiple year educational venture that consistently operated using what we can reasonably describe as feminist invitational rhetorics to help students begin cultivating openness through their embodied representations of different peoples. While not considered a form of rhetorical education in its day, viewing the clubhouse project through the lens of embodiment reveals how students internalized and applied the multiple perspectives and practices they encountered through the occupational curriculum to solve shared

problems in their school community. Recuperating the work of Laboratory School invites today's educators to consider the kinds of 'clubhouses' their students might want to build and how what kinds of discursive activities they will need to enact in the process. The qualities of those who worked at the Laboratory School – including a commitment to letting formal subjects grow out of lived experience; and a willingness to fail and repeatedly revise a teaching plan – can also serve to encourage today's educators as we develop our own experimental pedagogies.

CHAPTER 6

ETHNOCENTRIC IMPLICATIONS AND PRACTICES AT THE LABORATORY SCHOOL

The previous chapters have demonstrated how the historical, occupational curriculum at the Laboratory School served to introduce students to multiple cultures, civilizations, places, and time periods. When students encountered the problems of previous generations, such as the need to build secure homes, teachers encouraged them to seek out and physically reenact solutions – to carry out the construction process for themselves. Through these efforts, students saw how each particular group had addressed their needs through a unique manipulation of materials and in response to the particular conditions of an environment. They also began to recognize themselves as a community driven by similar universal needs, which propelled some of the most independent and interesting work of the Laboratory School through the clubhouse project. As a whole, such embodied activities helped them to identify commonalities among groups while also acknowledging with an open mind the degrees of difference they encountered. In the case of the dwelling units, students took to building the houses of each society with equal interest, and each new home provided exposure to another historical context. Rather than deciding which structure was superior to the other, students instead reveled in the opportunity to build yet another house – to meet a new society – they had not encountered before.

Despite its consideration of cultures around the world, what is also undeniable is the white superior mentality by which non-European entities were often considered within this curriculum, which is a necessary consideration for anyone seeking to recuperate the Laboratory School pedagogy for today. White superiority within various presentations of global histories frequently interfered with effective perspective-building and also directly blocked access points to language learning that might otherwise have opened up. In this way, as this chapter will explore, the School's racism inhibited the most promising elements of the Laboratory School curriculum. To not include an analysis of the ethnocentric implications would be to both perpetuate the ignorant thinking present at the Laboratory School and to undermine its greatest potential the current and future potential for revisiting this pedagogical endeavor. Instead, any study of the Laboratory School must consider the complications as they apply to contemporary thinking. Reexamining the ethnocentric failings of the Laboratory School can show where the thinking created specific blockages to education and undermined the school's core potential – and, in fact, the core spirit with which it was intended.

By engaging in a larger conversation about the school's ethnocentric pedagogy, we can accomplish three things: first, we can identify moments of ethnocentrism that would be unacceptable in contemporary classrooms. Revisiting the school's practices can especially help to "problematize oppressive structures and processes that create and sustain social inequities" (Jensen 89). As this chapter will demonstrate, the Laboratory School provided no shortage of examples for "what not to do" with regard to pedagogy, and the presence of these examples offers a relatively

straightforward place to begin what is generally a difficult conversation. In this way, the Laboratory School gives us a place to start by showing us what we will wish to do otherwise.

Second, by returning to the Laboratory School's failings, we can begin to acknowledge how it is possible to contribute to an ethnocentric tradition despite best intentions. Specifically, the Laboratory School can demonstrate how historical narratives – even the ones still perpetuated today – can function in ways that relegate certain civilizations to positions beneath others. Today's educators generally do not incorporate white supremacy, superiority, or nationalism as openly as these historical actors, but we also do not necessarily always contest such ideologies. The classroom remains a space marked by the ongoing battle about “whose histories, literatures, and identities matter enough to be taught” (Hensley Owens 247). While ethnic studies programs like Tucson's Mexican American Studies program (MAS) offered rich rhetorical pedagogical opportunities to explore different perspectives and to enfranchise minorities in the classroom, it presented such a point of political contention that it was for a time banned. In her study of this unfolding pedagogical problem, Hensley Owens' research revealed that the MAS program in Tucson dramatically improved graduation rates, especially among Latin(x) students, and allowed teachers to forge curricula that both met standards and connected with life outside school (250-251). The consequences of removing curricula like the MAS program, Hensley Owens argues, continue to reverberate throughout the education system, particularly with regard to freshly disenfranchised students who no longer see themselves in the history they are taught. This example highlights why we need to

continue grappling with ethnic studies programs of all different kinds to extend a conversation that includes students from all backgrounds.

Finally, with contemporary issues in mind, the Laboratory School can help today's educators re-evaluate some of the problems we face to forge more inclusive, pluralistic pedagogy. Such pedagogy should have the capacity to appropriately and respectfully engage the diversity present in today's classrooms. Specifically, we can use reflection on the Laboratory School to consider how, when embodied elements are lacking from introductions to different cultures, students fail to register the same open-minded mentalities they cultivate when they do place themselves in the perspectives and positions of each unique group. By examining the Laboratory School's failures alongside its successes, contemporary educators can better understand the nuances of racial exchange, how embodied rhetoric can be used to introduce difference equitably, and how to facilitate productive and open-minded dialogue and activity that empowers students from various backgrounds.

As intellectual historians such as Fallace have demonstrated, Dewey himself demonstrated increasingly open-minded thinking in the early 20th century.¹³³ Nevertheless, his eventual increases in open-mindedness do not change his earlier pedagogical ventures. During the laboratory school's early years, Dewey had yet to realize the more pluralistic elements of his pragmatism, and so the linear history philosophy was still demonstrably a factor in shaping the Laboratory School

¹³³ Dewey biographers have highlighted his support for civil rights, and as a founding member of the NAACP, he actively contributed to equality movements that would shape the course of American history (Martin 248). Dewey's years in China and Japan would also especially help to widen his perspective on the multiple (and non-Western) paths that civilizations could take (see Shea dissertation).

curriculum. Ironically, the treatment of early humanity and civilizations was intended to connect rather than abstract different groups from one another by portraying shared conditions for human life. Instructors often began history with ancient civilizations to find a practical application point to Dewey's philosophy that children and early humanity had a certain "intellectual nearness" with regard to a centralized interest in the fundamental necessities of life and an appreciation for activities in which the significance is directly observable.¹³⁴ These psychological similarities were not a feature of any particular child or any particular race but rather considered a universal trait that connected young minds with early recorded human life. While Dewey's vocabulary for primitive life remains unusable by today's standards and his linear understanding history deeply flawed, his definition for this early stage of development applies to children in a more general sense. For Dewey, all children went through a stage of growth where they appreciated experiences that had directly observable results and that satisfied their basic human needs. Further, Dewey's thinking about language and the laboratory school was primarily centered on the beliefs he held about children – including his own – rather than any overt statement of race (Dyehouse and Manke 5).

The acknowledgment that Dewey's pedagogy was, to a degree, based on observations of his own children helps to establish a somewhat reasonable context for the way he approached history. Because Dewey aligned these observations with the commonalities he thought all children shared during early stages of development, it is at least somewhat understandable why educators sought to create a setting of the

¹³⁴ Statement by John Dewey, 1899. Box 3, Folder 9, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

“simplest social conditions” in order to “bring out the great advance consequent upon each succeeding device for bettering man’s condition.”¹³⁵ On the one hand, this framework allowed students to see how humanity had stacked skills and collaborated over time to create systems that solved more than just the basic problem of survival. These presentations, while somewhat simplified, were also historically accurate within the limitations of the knowledge of the educators presenting the material. On the other hand, however, while the occupational treatment of history aligned the motivations of humans regardless of race or ethnicity, it also embedded much of the history curriculum with the idea that all society sprang from the same attitudes and thus progressed similarly along a set developmental timeline. Further, given the ways in which African peoples in particular were presented to the children, it is clear that significant overt prejudice leaked into the presentation of history. As this chapter will explore, the linear understanding of history paired with the inherent white superiority embedded in contemporary American culture sometimes created curricula for which no recuperation is possible. In contrast with the clubhouse project, which represented some of the greatest potential in the Laboratory School with regard to cultivating perspectives, the evidence presented here represents some of the School’s most obvious failings.

Specific Examples of Ethnocentric Practices

¹³⁵ Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 2], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Throughout their encounters with histories around the world, instructors sustained ignorance in children about the problems associated with European conquest and conquer. Over the course of their time at the Laboratory School, students studied the paths of domination forged by Columbus, Polo, Ponce de Leon, American colonists and more. Such conquests had been preceded by fascinating travels around the world, and students often focused on the adventurous aspects of, for example, sailing from Spain to the New World. But as educators maintained their willingness to focus on material that interested students the most, they failed to address the more problematic and destructive elements of those “adventures” – namely, that they had led to generations-long mistreatment, subjugation, and in some cases extermination of indigenous peoples.¹³⁶

Some of the most profoundly ethnocentric thinking emerged from engagement with Africa. Students began study of this continent primarily to discover the reasons for colonization (namely to acquire gold or land and to spread Christianity) and with no consideration of how colonization would affect an indigenous population.¹³⁷ They discussed the customs of trading and rules of conduct regarding ivory, but not the ethics of those engagements with regard to the people and animals who were at the center of that trade.¹³⁸ Not once did records indicate that students considered, or that teachers asked them to consider, the perspective of the tribes and cultures who already inhabited the land before European settlers arrived. Likewise, archives provide no

¹³⁶ Spring 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 27], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

¹³⁷ Winter 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 17], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

¹³⁸ Winter 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 18], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

indication that teachers introduced students to the thousands of unique ethnicities residing in Africa, instead choosing to lump a continent's worth of anthropological and biological diversity under one racial category.

In their discussion of the character of “African language,” for instance, children decided that there “were a great many things and actions for which the native Negro [sic] would need no word, and they concluded that their habits being simple, their language would not be hard to learn.”¹³⁹ This interpretation demonstrates that teachers and therefore students remained completely ignorant to the nearly 2000 languages spoken by people living in Africa (“Introduction to African Languages”). They failed to acknowledge the different intersections of language across the vast continent and demonstrated no awareness for unique dialects such as Zezuzu or Khoisan, which incorporated different sound schemes including click consonants or whistles as part of their language structure so that particular messages could be delivered across longer distances. Both the uniqueness of this method and the purposes for its cultivation could have piqued the interest of students who had grown increasingly attentive to functions and techniques of communication. Instead, teachers and students perceived African societies as less advanced than their own. In turn, they assumed that Africans’ language needs would also be more elementary. Particularly given how central language and communication had been to most cultures studied at the Laboratory School, this overt simplification of an incredibly complex network of languages marks a particularly troublesome mentality.

¹³⁹ Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 4], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Omitting these critical language factors meant that students were woefully unprepared to consider their own country's complicated past, and some of the most troubling examples of white supremacy at the Laboratory School emerged out of American treatment of Africa's indigenous cultures. Primarily, the ways in which American practices of slavery were presented to children deviates all but completely from the problem-based framework that had elsewhere defined their engagement with history elsewhere. In some lessons, students had the chance to consider multiple elements of the various people they had studied – the environmental conditions they would have faced, the ways in which they would have responded, and the elements of society that would be shaped by these unfolding situations – by habitually immersing themselves in the practices of these different cultures. However, with regard to what we now recognize as the more shameful parts of American history, educators presented a falsely philanthropic version of events. Children in Group V were told that:

At first the black people who were taken to Portugal were very kindly treated and the people tried to make them Christians and some people adopted and brought up the children with their own; then gradually how they came to be useful as servants and how the idea of capturing and selling them originated. The children expressed without any affection their sympathy with the negroes and yet seemed to feel that the black people were not very different from monkeys and other animals of the country [sic].¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Winter 1900, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 21], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

The thinking here is unsettling; first, not only does it recast forced emigration and the beginnings of centuries-long enslavement by saying that people were at first treated with kindness. Second, the forcing of a particular (primarily Western) religion is also lumped in as part of that kindness. The “idea” of capturing and selling people sounded like an organic, even logical, progression of events, at least in Runyon’s presentation of the discussion. Most troublingly, students seemed to identify the African people as animal rather than human, and while they still demonstrate a certain ‘sympathy’ for those who had been enslaved, that response seems largely without compassion and reveals a profoundly ethnocentric mentality.

As they studied colonial America and the growth of plantations in Virginia, students also learned how plantation life led into slavery, since “the planters, being gentlemen, would not be accustomed to work, and would have to have a great many laborers on their plantations.”¹⁴¹ Here, what is presented as historical fact remains loaded with white supremacist narrative – instructors do not hesitate to assert a sense of logic around keeping “gentlemen” from doing hard labor by having other, under these parameters less “gentlemanly,” individuals perform the most arduous tasks. Not only did such rhetoric demonstrate the linear historicist model by placing white men firmly in the position of social superiority, but it also normalized the practice of forcing a group of humans into lifelong servitude in the name of allowing another (presumably more advanced) group to thrive without the burden of physical labor. Racist ideas were reinforced when students learned about the process of giving measurements as a means of telling race, employing the now-obsolete practice of

¹⁴¹ Autumn 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 3], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

phrenology to demonstrate how certain aspects of genetic physiology had an impact in an individual's core intellect.¹⁴²

Some may be tempted to argue that uncovering the more shameful aspects of human history – and especially American history – would have presented too violent and difficult a telling for younger children to absorb. However, educators at the Laboratory School made no efforts to correct or expand their treatment of history as students grew. They also failed to apply the same pluralistic and problem-based mentality that had largely defined their treatment of other cultures around the world. The ways in which slave trade introduced to students, and particularly the specious benevolence instructors imputed to early slave transporters, owners, and colonizers, leaves no doubt of a Eurocentric hierarchy. While embodied acts had elsewhere invited students to consider a civilization's experiences from their own perspective, with regard to the indigenous populations of Africa they did not engage in such immersive acts. In what were otherwise active and imaginative encounters with history, it stands out as particularly conspicuous that students did not ever encounter the “occupations” of slave or slave master. While teachers living in a post-Reconstruction Era would have been justifiably unwilling to allow their students to take on the role of slave owners, there would have been immense instructive value in encouraging students to embody the perspective of individuals who had been forced into labor. For instance, students might have been able to confront the horrors of slavery in a relatively low-risk setting and could have potentially built toward a more sophisticated understanding of race relations in their country. In doing so, they would

¹⁴² Winter 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 18], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

have been more well-positioned to advocate for the issues of civil rights and equality that would mark their early adulthood and early 20th century America.

Unfortunately, Laboratory School teachers lacked the means to take advantage of this rich learning opportunity. Students were never invited to these perspectives or occupations and instead passively absorbed the narratives presented to them. There is no reference anywhere in the archives or in Mayhew and Edwards' text to suggest that students ever considered what history was like from an African perspective. Students did not wonder what it would have been like to be forcibly removed from one's country and permanently separated from everyone and everything that had defined home. They did not consider what it would then have been like to be forced into lifelong work that stripped away the fundamentals of not only one generation's humanity, but also wrongfully validated systematic and brutal oppression for generations up to their (and our) present. At no point did anyone at the Laboratory School raise the idea that families, lives, and futures had been destroyed by American slavery practices. For its treatment of African people, both indigenous populations and those transported to America during slave trade, the thinking introduced at the Laboratory School has no merit or application to present day pedagogy. It subordinates one race over another in a clear articulation of racist practices at the Laboratory School.

Misrepresentation of indigenous cultures occurred elsewhere at the Laboratory School as well. Despite their prolonged exploration and interest in Native American cultures, Laboratory School teachers did not challenge students' systemic ignorance toward this indigenous population. While students in this case did spend a great deal of time immersed in traditions and cultures, the relative ignorance of their teachers

meant that students failed to grasp the more complicated historical and anthropological contexts. Troubling examples, such as discussing “in what respects the Peruvians were more civilized than the North American Indians and why we considered them semi-civilized,” indicate that students engaged with unproductive comparisons that sprang out of a linear historicist curriculum.¹⁴³

Again, like their interactions with the indigenous populations of Africa, students and teachers suffered for the lack of information they had about non-Western cultures. On the most basic level, instructors regularly used the term “Indian” or “American Indian” to universally describe any indigenous community that had inhabited what was now American soil. As previous chapters have discussed, there was rarely any distinction between tribes, and when records did indicate a specific group, the names were still inaccurate to that tribe’s chosen name and frequently lumped together many distinct populations under one heading. This pervasive overgeneralization failed to introduce students to many distinctive cultural expressions, and as a result, even what they did encounter was often incomplete. For example, while students did encounter cultural artifacts including a head dress, wampum belt of peace, and pipe, they were told simply that these items had belonged to an “Indian Chief.”¹⁴⁴ The wampum peace belts, which had traditionally functioned as messages of diplomacy and were used both between different indigenous tribes and between tribes and European settlers, varied in design based on its particular meaning and recipient. Given the embodied activities that had propelled students elsewhere in

¹⁴³ Autumn 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 10], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

¹⁴⁴ Winter 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 16], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

the Laboratory School, it stands to reason that they could have been drawn into the task of creating their own belts. It might also have been socially generative to allow them to reenact the process of establishing peace. However, this particularly fascinating tradition received only cursory attention before students moved on.

With regard to American history, students continued to receive a particularly ethnocentric retelling of interracial relations and colonization. Instructors described “friendly relations with Indians” during the first winter at Plymouth, perpetuating a misinformed view of the encounter while failing to acknowledge any early tensions between cultures.¹⁴⁵ When they did address conflicts, it was mainly to consider what colonies did “in terms of protection against Indians.”¹⁴⁶ Once again, educators focused mainly on how white European/nascent American colonists could ensure their safety in space they increasingly considered their own. They failed to consider that Native Americans might have also considered themselves to be protecting their home and families, or to ask whether colonists had any real right to claim ownership of the land in any capacity. Students also possessed no frame of reference for the disease, displacement, and death that so frequently accompanied the settlement of Europeans in North America. While such a framing of colonization deviates from the proud tradition with which American history is generally still taught, it particularly stands out that students spent so much time immersed in the dwellings and occupations of Native Americans and yet remained so flippant with regard to these populations’ steady obfuscation and mistreatment.

¹⁴⁵ Winter 1900, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 2, Folder 23], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

¹⁴⁶ Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 4], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Likewise, the treatment of indigenous populations (both those originating in Africa and North America) gave children no cause to consider how it might have felt to have a religion, custom, and lifestyle forced upon them that was different from what they had believed their whole life, and to have their physical safety depend on aligning with those doctrines. The tone of adventure present in many narratives of conquest, conquer, and colonization led students to view these activities only with excitement and admiration rather than with any sort of unease. In their mind, it was only natural, and even preferable, that the white, Western European standards for living be applied universally because to do so would elevate any culture to a more “advanced” position.

White superior thinking is also clearly present in moments like the children’s study of Borneo; here, Runyon remarked that “children expressed a good deal of surprise that people in such a state of civilization could exist to-day,” and wondered why other countries did not join together to teach this particular group a “better” way of life.¹⁴⁷ No attempt was made to explain how the motivations and activities of another culture might differ from what the children had come to know from their Western exposure, nor the validity of that difference. Unlike their engagement with other cultures around the world, students and teachers did not consider how the geography or the deep and ancient rainforest might have shaped Bornean civilizations, and they did not consider how their cultural or religious beliefs might have caused them to proceed differently through their own social circumstances. Further, the articulated wish that someone would just come “to teach and civilize them” indicates that students had fundamentally failed to grasp the consequences of colonization on

¹⁴⁷ Winter 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 16], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

any scale.¹⁴⁸ Instead, all they observed was a culture that deviated from what they had marked as evolved and advanced, and they wondered why their Westernized and industrialized operations had not simply been transplanted to Bornean culture for the good of all.

Reviewing the treatment of certain races and ethnicities at the Laboratory School confirms that educators presented students with a predominantly Eurocentric understanding of human history. Even though they had set out to create a curriculum that embraced multiple cultures, teachers presented a primarily Eurocentric narrative of history because that was the only one available to them at the time. As a result, students encountered certain cultures with an open mind, but they spent remarkably little time considering the perspectives of groups that had traditionally been subjugated by Europeans. With regard to these groups, students failed to encounter the problem-solving heuristic that had defined their engagement with history elsewhere, and so they missed some of the most important issues that minorities had faced. There was only one brief mention of a problem-based heuristic in which students incorporated geography and climate into their understanding about life in Africa. During one class, students discussed why Africa had been the last place to be explored by Europeans even though it was sailed around soon after America was discovered.¹⁴⁹ Students compared the two continents, and decided that America had the more hospitable climate, easier means of access, and the promise of a way to India. Africa, in comparison, was often comprised of “marshy areas that gave rise to diseases, [and]

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Winter 1899, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 17], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

deserts that prohibited further civilizations.”¹⁵⁰ Here, students should have begun to understand that the immensely diverse and often difficult conditions present throughout Africa presented different challenges than the ones they had previously studied, and this encounter with embodied historical realities should have invited students to articulate a more open-minded perspective.

However, by the following week’s dictation, students had already moved on to a conversation about disposition and legend of the people of Africa, again notably lacking in distinction of tribes and particular customs but distinctively judgmental in what educators presented largely as superstitious belief.¹⁵¹ One instructor noted that “some of the boys wished they were Africans, which led to a lively discussion of the relative advantages and disadvantages of our live and the native Negro’s [sic].”¹⁵² While the boy’s interest in and subsequent comparison of cultures hints at the potential for pluralistic thinking, the language used to describe African people, the oversimplification of the movement of African people to America, and the overall simplicity of a vast network of tribal cultures worked to create a demonstrably ethnocentric lens that ultimately limited the full potential of the Laboratory School curriculum.

Looking at these examples, it is clear that the ways in which teachers presented Non-Western cultures, particularly those with whom Europeans and Americans had a fundamentally problematic history of subjugation, had an unsettling impact on the way

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 5], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

¹⁵² Autumn 1898, University of Chicago. Laboratory Schools. Work Reports, [Box 1, Folder 4], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

that students evaluated those groups. It is not difficult to see how the presentation of historical material aligned with the dominant narratives of the time, though it is disappointing. What is additionally unsatisfactory is the potential that the Laboratory School had to incorporate non-dominant histories and narratives into their collective understanding. As other chapters have demonstrated, students spent a great deal of time writing and considering the composition of histories. But they did not consider who had written the histories they encountered or how, instead taking the stories they heard at face value. They did not question whether a story of adventure and exploration could also be a story of disenfranchisement and tragedy. While this passive absorption was not the fault of the students, it does reflect the perpetuation of ignorance toward indigenous populations around the world in a system that was meant to instill a sense of open-mindedness and inclusivity.

As this chapter has demonstrated, inviting children into the open-minded mentality of the Laboratory School while simultaneously introducing such fundamentally flawed thinking created detrimental effects for children's thinking. As a result of their limited, disembodied engagement with certain communities through the linear historicist model, students sometimes came to believe that some cultures were less civilized and, in some cases, even less human than the Westernized cultures with which they were more familiar. While educators had by no means set out to produce ignorant or ethnocentric students, the presentation of history combined with educators' own prejudices meant that students sometimes developed inequitable assumptions. Put simply, the Laboratory School's curriculum had sometimes been generated from ignorance, and so it also perpetuated a degree of that unawareness. Given the

examples outlined in this chapter, it seems impossible to imagine that students saw themselves anywhere other than at the most advanced point of the historical line. The judgment they passed on indigenous societies, particularly those who had been previously mistreated by Western groups, was and remains completely irredeemable.

Today, teachers might use these particular elements of the Laboratory School curriculum to identify how ethnocentric thinking can emerge even out of the best intentions and how ignorance can be propagated even through attempts at open-mindedness. It suggests the degree to which an educator can be blind to her own knowledge gaps and reminds her to continually check her presentation of material against other equally valid sources and perspectives. It also reminds her that, no matter what, the history she teaches may be incomplete. In this light, the practices of the Laboratory School can help today's educators keep in view the importance of facilitating the difficult, uncomfortable, generative conversations that build more nuanced understanding of human histories and cultures.

Noting the Laboratory School's ethnocentric failings provides a unique set of problems for those interested in the Laboratory School, but also a set of generative possibilities. While its ethnocentric ideologies undermined the full expression of the Laboratory School curriculum in its own day, analyzing the successes and failures alongside each other can help educators see today where the Laboratory School fell short and where we, by comparison, may spring forward. Today, we can activate the open-minded and embodied aspects of the school while checking ourselves against its more ethnocentric impulses to design and implement our own pedagogies. In addition to its sometimes problematic ideological underpinnings, the occupational curriculum

frequently did also work to instill in students a sense of open-mindedness that modified students' thinking about various people, cultures, and histories as well as reshaped their engagement with their education. The handling of history in the Laboratory School has importance for how we teach today by revealing the damaging effects of Eurocentric treatments of history while also presenting, in that same curriculum, opportunities to see the value in extending beyond that dominant narrative and engaging with more complicated iterations of the past. All told, the Laboratory School offers a site of investigation that helps to illuminate for current educators what we should not do, what we still do, and what we could do better.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

All together, this study adds to the body of Deweyan pragmatic rhetorical theory as well as to the philosophy and teaching tradition of embodied rhetorics. In doing so, it has worked to uncover a usable past in the invitational rhetoric cultivated by educators throughout first seven years at the Laboratory School. Scholars have already usefully employed Dewey's pragmatic theories to attend to the concerns of the rhetoric and composition classroom. In particular, educators have focused on the ways in which his practice of reflection and open-minded discussion can help students develop the means to contribute as citizens. The present analysis of the Laboratory School extends the reach of Deweyan pragmatism by recovering a key embodied element of Dewey's pragmatic educational theories that has been hitherto unexplored. By analyzing the archived records of the Laboratory School through a feminist lens, this study marks out the uncharted alignments between feminism and pragmatism to show how teachers employed contemporary definitions of invitational rhetoric alongside a pedagogical take recuperative historiography. Ultimately, what we would recognize today as contemporary feminist thinking seems to have helped Laboratory School educators build a curriculum in which embodiment played a critical role.

Prior study into embodied rhetoric has revealed distinct pedagogies that grew from similar scholarly interests but evolved in completely different ways depending on the people, places and situations involved. Works like Fleckenstein's, Hensley

Owens', Goggin's, Reynolds', and Enoch's underscore the complexities surrounding the task of translating embodied rhetoric into practicable pedagogy. These works also highlight why the need is so acute to uncover further examples that might be recuperated to amass a larger repository of pedagogical strategies. The Laboratory School answers this call by providing a distinctive site steeped in attention to embodied action and organically-situated teaching. This educational experiment notably attended to practices of the everyday with its occupational curriculum, and the ways in which students navigated human history and responded to their own problems in the moment demonstrated ongoing rhetorical education.

The Laboratory School's practices led to a unique and compelling set of access points to literacy for students. As students explored different histories as still unfolding events carried about by living people, recordkeeping provided them with useful information that helped them better envision the past. Simultaneously, written stories held their interest because they enriched these historical interpretations through their descriptive and expressive capacities. Together, records and stories consistently helped students as they carried out their own embodied reproductions of history. The daily work of the occupational curriculum aided in a better understanding of how people had responded to the specific problems that had unfolded in the places and times they had inhabited. As students encountered these uses, they slowly began to uncover access points for literacy within their daily lives at the Laboratory School. Through their gardening and cooking work especially, students found ample opportunities to learn more sophisticated language practices.

The Laboratory School curriculum also supported a school-wide practice of cultivating perspectives. Through the invitational rhetoric teachers employed, students could begin to envision the lives of the people who had come before them. In response, they set out to reproduce the conditions of different groups as physically and faithfully as possible, often through reproducing the houses and homes in which a particular group had lived. These encounters with dwelling helped students to see history as a continual process that they too could shape if they worked together and employed a productive combination of information and skillsets. The ongoing emphasis on dwelling especially shaped the way that students saw people around the world and the attention they paid to the specifics of a given situation. As a result, when students did come up against a problem in their own lives, as evidenced in the clubhouse project, they possessed both the problem-solving mentalities and practical skillsets to respond effectively and collaboratively. Of course, as this study has also confirmed, the Laboratory School often operated with an entrenched ethnocentrism that impaired the school's greatest opportunities at multiple points. While no one should repeat the Laboratory School experiment be repeated exactly, this study has uncovered elements of a “usable past” for contemporary writing and rhetoric specialists. Specifically, it has uncovered practices that can reveal to today’s educators some heuristics, habits, and mentalities that help students respond to their particular embodied circumstances.

Finally, in this spirit, this study has worked to inform and extend our understanding of the risks and rewards inherent to experimental education and, in doing so, suggests to today’s educators an open-minded mindset that is accepting of

failure and willing to revise even core ideologies in the face of new information. In its first seven years of operation, the Laboratory School remained not only a work in progress, but it was also one that embraced its provisional status. As the Laboratory School teachers and students freely admitted, the workings of the school were frustrating, disorganized, chaotic, inspirational, enriching, and exciting – and often these things in combination. Aptly expressed one teacher,

There was confusion within the school and without, and to this day I never look upon a quiet and isolated experiment without a feeling of envy. But through it all, and from it all there somehow evolved a small, traceable line of accomplishment, drawn in faint but lovely colors, such as the imagination of the free child alone, can make visible to the darkened and despairing adult mind. To trace this wavering thread, to criticize it as a path leading to a promised land, is not possible in a single lifetime. But we may watch rather for its color shining out here and there on a dusty and changing road which little feet must learn to walk.¹⁵³

These words, among the many others preserved over the years about the Laboratory School, indicate that instructors knew well that their experiment was imperfect and unfinished. They also realized that the implications and potential value of their work would not be fully understood in their lifetime. Their purpose, rather, was to begin building momentum for a pedagogy they believed would better serve students, and which they believed would result in individuals who could positively influence their

¹⁵³ The University Elementary School, undated. Box 12, Folder 2, Katherine Camp Mayhew papers, #6561. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

society. Throughout the experiment, and despite a series of obstacles, teachers and students both caught glimpses of potential and saw a burgeoning environment that was capable of inspiring students to respond to individual and shared needs effectively.

Thinking Ahead

Reflecting on the work of the Laboratory School suggests possibilities for experimental, embodied pedagogies while providing realistic examples of risks and rewards inherent to such a curriculum. It reminds us that there are no easy answers or absolute guarantees for truly effective pedagogy, but that inherent challenges, risk of failure, and anxiety around unfolding practices are generally assured. That said, this pedagogical experiment also reminds us that there is instructive value in seeking out more examples and approaches that respond to the particulars of each situation, and that also provide more information about how to navigate such changeable and unpredictable pedagogies. While the Laboratory School experiment first unfolded more than 100 years ago, the diligence and open-mindedness of its teachers can enrich today's endeavors in experimental composition pedagogy.

My particular reading of this experiment marks out the space created by its educators on the rhetorical map – land with rocky, difficult, but ultimately lush terrain that is worth exploring. Future scholars may return to this landscape to further explore how they might incorporate the embodied rhetorical practices of the Laboratory School into their own curriculum. Even though the Laboratory School taught students in elementary through high school, its practices can be carried over into college composition courses. While the specifics of each course's design will depend upon the

people who make up the class, the places they dwell, the problems they articulate, the particular instructor's goals, and the available means for response, the Laboratory School can offer a place to start. Extensive records of the School's pedagogy can continue to provide a general framework from which to build out more personalized lesson plans that introduce, highlight, and, when necessary, manufacture situations that illuminate for students multiple, sophisticated purposes for writing and rhetoric. Educators may also turn to the work of Laboratory School educators to develop strategies for how one might practice the flexible but supportive mentorship necessary to render students fully operational in their own contexts. Finally, the Laboratory School can offer a valuable site for today's educators to extract useful principles as they prepare to design new pedagogies.

Looking forward, it is my hope that this work can inform and intersect with future projects pertaining to subjects including but not limited to global rhetorics, ecorhetorics, maternal rhetorics, material rhetorics and public achievement. On the side of pedagogy, I hope that this work can also productively align with recent educational interest in maker spaces. While the pedagogies I am suggesting we build out of continued engagement with the Laboratory School must be necessarily specialized for each classroom and responsive to the needs and problems of each student, for those interested in trying out this experimental, embodied work, what follows are some suggestions to get started based on where students dwell during their time as undergraduates. Following each suggestion are some preliminary possibilities for how writing and rhetoric can be introduced as part of the activity.

As this work will necessarily rise out of the real problems of students' lives, it is also necessary to acknowledge the real complications and limitations of each project students might choose to undertake. Many will arise in the process, but some can be anticipated. In a college classroom, there is a time constraint (generally a semester) and a budget constraint (generally none) to start. Like the women of the Laboratory School, educators may also face questions from outside observers about whether the method has sufficient merit, particularly for a writing and rhetoric class that seeks to "decentralize" writing and rhetoric. Departmental metrics for success must be met at many institutions. These challenges, paired with the unique obstacles that will arise in any particular project, can appear daunting.

In response to these challenges, I encourage prospective experimental writing and rhetoric educators to look at the work of the women educators at the Laboratory School: educators who operated under constant scrutiny, who began their teaching in an attic and had to budget every seed packet, who failed and revised in a day's work and encouraged their students to do the same. The work done by these women invites us today to tap into the instructive value of difficulties, problems and frequent failure. Even if our students don't meet their full goals by the end of the semester, record their process over time, reflect on what worked and what didn't, and articulate a next potential course of future action. Additionally, the Laboratory School teachers can help today's educators to see how opportunities for writing and rhetoric instruction may be forged creatively out of student experience, and how small-scale projects can blossom into long term undertakings with sustained student interest. Not every project

will turn into a multi-year, school-wide undertaking, but as the Laboratory School demonstrated, there can be great value in preparing for that possibility.

With these factors in mind, here are some ideas to get started:

Building off of the Laboratory School's activities, students could work together to establish a community garden on or around campus. Living on campus and fulfilling the academic expectations of higher education can often separate students with the physical, outdoor activities. Building and maintaining a garden would both allow students an opportunity to immerse themselves in nature and to offer personal satisfaction and fulfillment in the process.

Additionally, students could also work together to offer cooking classes that provide options for certain dietary restrictions or provide an opportunity to explore cuisine from different cultures. Finding workable dining options on campus for someone with, for example, Celiac disease, is no small challenge, and students could work together to help their peers learn how to cook nutritious meals that meet specific dietary needs. At the same time, since food provides such an instinctive connection to home and culture, students including but not limited to international and ESL students could share the recipes for meals that connect them with home, family, and heritage.

Extending off these examples, students could consider the larger spaces they dwell in to enact conservation efforts at local parks and beaches. Such work would not only reconnect college students with their environment but would also remediate local environmental problems. Students who feel that animals and pets play an important part in the places they dwell could volunteer their efforts with local shelters or get involved with Trap-Neuter-Release programs.

With regard to civic activism, young citizens can feel uncertain of how to get involved with local or national affairs, and embodied rhetoric can provide a useful place to start. Consider, for example, Will Haskell: a 22-year-old in Westport, Connecticut who recently won a bid for a State Senate seat and unseated an incumbent who had been in office almost for most of Haskell's life. Haskell secured his win through relentless campaigning and "by relying on an army of teen- and college-aged volunteers to knock on doors, hand out fliers and call potential supporters" (Li). The embodied, discursive, and collaborative work that helped carry Haskell to victory suggest great possibility; after all, there is nothing prohibiting a student from starting their own campaign in a writing classroom.

Even though the options listed above are in connection with embodied activities, there are numerous discursive practices that can be navigated in each process. Depending on the project, students may need to write proposals and plans to get their project off the ground; they may need to generate promotional material across multiple platforms to garner interest and support; they may need to write emails or lead meetings or compose scripts to share information and propel further action. As projects grow more complex, students may need to learn how to reach out for funding and apply for grants to give their work further reach or an ability to conduct research. Throughout the process, students can be composing reflective documents and discussing their anticipated next steps. The possibilities are numerous and, as the Laboratory School demonstrated, can be best illustrated when applied to specific courses and individuals. With this in mind, educators today can build out effective

embodied pedagogies of their own by beginning with the question: What kind of clubhouse do you want your students to build?

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