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# MALE TEACHERS, MALE ROLES

## THE PROGRESSIVE ERA AND EDUCATION IN OKLAHOMA

COURTNEY ANN FARR AND JEFFREY A. LILES

In 1975 a total of sixty-seven Anglo men responded to a letter sent to all its members by the Oklahoma Retired Teachers Association (ORTA), asking them to record in autobiographical sketches their reasons for becoming teachers and the benefits that they had derived from that choice.<sup>1</sup> A collective portrait of these transitional professional men spans the Progressive Era, the 1920s, and the Great Depression and, in so doing, describes two sets of phenomena: first, the social context within which the men became teachers and administrators—communities' willingness to pay men more and to exclude women from so-called

“male” positions—and second, the various career patterns of male educators that evolved partially as a result of ever changing professional expectations. For the most part society expected the male teacher to provide boys with a physically active role model and to serve as a “father” not only to his students but to the community at large. At the same time, however, the schoolmen continued their own educations, pursuing degrees and exposing themselves to theories of professionalization that urged them to remain detached from their clients. As this study will show, the male teachers who answered the ORTA request attained a high degree of formal education but never abandoned their fatherly commitments to students and community.

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### MEN IN EDUCATION: THE NATIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL CONTEXT

Schoolmasters dominated education during America's first two centuries as colony and nation, but eventually teaching's lowered status and poor salaries and the lure of other jobs took many men out of classrooms. Descriptions of

TABLE 1.  
PERCENTAGE AND Z SCORE OF MALE TEACHERS TO TOTAL TEACHERS IN TEN STATES,  
1880-1920.

State	1880		1890		1900		1910		1920	
	%	z	%	z	%	z	%	z	%	z
AR	67.56	2.13	55.29	2.30	47.14	2.26	34.60	2.12	25.67	2.18
IN	46.03	.64	41.65	1.07	38.74	1.37	30.64	1.57	23.16	1.66
NM	57.79	1.45	38.19	.75	37.07	1.20	26.00	.91	20.41	1.09
OK/IT	NA	NA	38.07	.74	35.10	.99	28.08	1.21	20.15	1.03
UT	43.24	.45	38.92	.82	38.39	1.34	29.09	1.35	26.47	2.35
WV	56.14	1.34	50.65	1.88	47.64	2.31	40.42	2.94	28.72	2.82
IA	25.32	-.79	17.95	-1.07	15.63	-1.07	10.80	-1.22	9.30	-1.23
NE	29.45	-.51	23.15	-.60	19.41	-.67	13.03	-.91	9.67	-1.15
NV	24.78	-.83	19.82	-.90	15.82	-1.05	00.00	-2.74	00.00	-3.17
VT	7.89	-2.00	9.78	-1.81	10.51	-1.61	10.35	-1.29	8.85	-1.32

Source: U.S. Census 1880-1920, see note 2, below. Arkansas, Indiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma (Indian and Oklahoma Territories before 1907), Utah, and West Virginia, are the only states that produce z scores greater than 1.0 (i.e., these states are at least one standard deviation above the mean in a national distribution of percentages of male teachers to the total number of teachers in each of forty-eight states and the District of Columbia). Only four states, Vermont, Nevada, Nebraska, and Iowa, recorded percentages of male educators in 1920 with a z score of -1.0 (one standard deviation below the mean). These provide the national context for trends in Oklahoma.

some remaining nineteenth-century male teachers characterize them as laggards or drunks who often wandered into a town and convinced the local citizenry that they could instruct students. Women continued to enter teaching and drove the percentage of male teachers steadily downward—from 32.2 percent in 1880 to 15.5 percent in 1920, an all-time low. That year only six states had teaching forces that were more than 20 percent male, including Oklahoma, at 20.15 percent.<sup>2</sup> Although four of the six states were in the West, two other western states reported some of the lowest percentages of male educators, suggesting that individual state characteristics as well as regional and national trends were associated with turn-of-the-century men's decisions to teach.<sup>3</sup>

Most of the former Oklahoma teachers who responded to the ORTA request were reared during a time when the nation marked the passing of the American frontier and the opportunities it had afforded for boys to become men. For many, President Theodore Roosevelt was a modern male who nevertheless epitomized the nineteenth-century frontiersman, proving his manliness to the public and probably to himself by riding horses, shooting guns, fighting, and owning a ranch. In 1904 the Male Teachers Association of New York responded both to Roosevelt's image and to his assertions about the roles of women by calling upon schools to employ more males as teachers in order to mold boys into competitive young men and to enable women to return to their putative primary role



FIG. 1. A teacher with his class at "School on the Hill," Ramona, Indian Territory, 1905. Photograph courtesy of Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Library.

as homemakers. Men's obligation to teach, many educators and citizens held, had grown as the percentage of males in the teacher force had diminished.<sup>4</sup> In order to attract and keep male teachers, gender-specific salary differentials were common throughout the United States whether school districts employed many or few male educators. After 1920 the percentage of male teachers nationwide began to rise again, to 18.2 percent in 1930 and 26.1 percent in 1940.<sup>5</sup>

As children or young adults, at least twenty of the Oklahoma respondents had migrated to the state during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. "In the spring of 1907 . . . my father left [Iowa] for Texas and Oklahoma in search of cheaper land," remembered Neal O'Brien. Such cheaper land did not, however, necessarily translate to a prosperous family farm. A. D. Hefly, who had been born in 1896 but

had not attended school until he was fourteen years old, explained that as a youngster, "I was tired of corn pone and blackstrap for breakfast and plowing all day in the blazing sun" and then giving one-half of the household earnings to a landlord. Hefly continued, "Maybe Mr. Banks [his teacher] was right. . . . I could go to school, learn to be a teacher and improve my way of living. . . . His words of encouragement had changed the entire course of my life. Never again would I be content to grub sassafras and plow all day." For both O'Brien and Hefly teaching was an economically rewarding alternative to endless days of tenant farming, which, rather than agrarian self-sufficiency, seemed to be offered by this latter-day frontier.<sup>6</sup>

Many Oklahomans were not as fortunate as O'Brien and Hefly. On a visit to the Oklahoma and Indian Territories just before statehood in

1907, socialist Oscar Ameringer was shocked by the "indescribable aggregation of moisture, steam, dirt, rags, unshaven men, slatternly women, and fretting children." From the remainder of the Progressive Era through the Great Depression, many rural Oklahomans were driven to political radicalism, embracing the tenets of socialism or the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the poverty and political extremism of so many residents, in 1907 hopeful political leaders from the Twin Territories created a new state and an educational system that reflected national progressive reforms. The state's white, male founding fathers wrote provisions regulating monopolies and insuring initiative and referendum rights for the electorate. They approved compulsory education, institutions for the handicapped, and book depositories to dispense free or inexpensive school books. They made segregation of the races a constitutionally approved reality and granted women the right to vote only in school elections, despite a significant campaign for full suffrage. And in 1911 the first state school board, comprised of seven male members, decreed that "No person was eligible to the office [of state superintendent] except a male person of more than 30 years of age."<sup>8</sup>

Officials such as State Superintendent E. D. Cameron firmly believed in separate male and female spheres and the same gender roles that Roosevelt favored. In 1907 Cameron admonished his listeners at a state teachers' convention:

The teaching of Domestic Science in all our schools will have a tendency to arrest the wild wave of restlessness that has come over the women of our country and will bring them back and fix them more firmly in the sphere where God intended for them to dwell. . . . It is not so much from the intellect of man as from the heart of woman that our people must be elevated.

Three years later, equating the school with the traditional family, Cameron decreed that "the

American school ma'am [was] doing the same job in the classroom that her female homemaker counterpart was accomplishing in the home, teaching traditional values to American children." The female teacher was particularly useful in acculturating immigrants, he continued, and he hoped that her work would continue with younger pupils. Yet eventually, perhaps in high school, Cameron wanted boys to be "brought face to face with a stalwart man of noble heart, high ideals, and strength of manhood."<sup>9</sup>

While some western states had empowered women in education, in Oklahoma patriarchal leaders like Cameron embraced the anti-feminist stands of national and state progressivism, enabling a cadre of male politicians and educators gradually to organize and gain control of the state's formal and informal educational hierarchy. Many of these powerful schoolmen hailed from mean circumstances, and they viewed the forty-sixth state as a last frontier but chose to build their success as educators rather than in farming or in other careers usually associated with the frontier. Former teacher and progressive Democrat Henry Bennett served as president of Oklahoma A & M College from 1919 to 1951, and from this base built a coalition intended to protect the state's citizens from the mercurial rule of left- and right-wing political extremists—but also to benefit himself and other educator-politicians.<sup>10</sup>

With role models like Bennett, men saw education, particularly educational administration, as an acceptable career. As a result, Oklahoma women were to some extent shut out of classrooms and especially out of administrative positions. Some, such as Althea Barr Taft, objected to this discrimination. At an Oklahoma Education Convention in 1914, she admonished her male colleagues, "I want to warn you men that women teachers will not participate in another convention without being active in it, and without learning for themselves what is going on." The state's male leaders were unthreatened by such words, however, for their predominance within the state's educational

system survived for decades, perhaps even to the present day.<sup>11</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that the Oklahoma men represented in this study were reared to observe traditional gender behavior, emphasizing first physical prowess and then father-like responsibility. Jeryl Watson recounted a typical schoolyard game he had played with the teachers' approval. As a test of "a boy's strength and courage," boys were encouraged to climb to the top of a flagpole "thirty feet high and made of three ten-foot joints of pipe, each smaller than the preceding one. At the top it swayed back and forth perilously. . . . Looking back now, I wonder why the teachers permitted us to do something this dangerous." James Moore observed, "Boys and girls both participated in . . . games[,] . . . girls only in the games which the schoolmaster considered suitable for them."<sup>12</sup>

Schoolmasters enjoyed a relatively high social status in early Oklahoma. In the absence of industrialists and big business men teachers joined other professional men in the various town patriarchies. They led troops of Boy Scouts and were elected and appointed to local Rotary Clubs, church boards of overseers, and governors' special committees and task forces.<sup>13</sup> Yet social power frequently had to be earned by a display of frontier-style physical strength and courage. For example, Byron Shepherd was hired to replace a teacher who reportedly had not been able to confront physically intimidating students. Shepherd remembered, "When I reported for work one of the school board members volunteered the information that 'they didn't hire me for what I KNOWED,' but because a former teacher in that school had [said] . . . she didn't think 'they could run me off.'" Shepherd had "felt that there surely must have been some advantage to being . . . a full-back in high school."<sup>14</sup>

In regard to one of his early teaching assignments, George Spraberry recalled that the eighth grade boys had harassed the former teacher, encouraging her to resign. "Flushed with their success," he wrote, "it was decreed . . . that I was to be the next to go." The boys put a sign on

the school door that read "closed out doctor." Spraberry believed that his "whole future as a teacher" was at stake, so he pretended to carry a gun as he opened the school, a move that greatly alarmed the boys and some of their parents. But ultimately Spraberry kept his job and commanded respect from all of his pupils.<sup>15</sup>

Oklahomans' enthusiasm for hiring and keeping male teachers is reflected in the average monthly salaries of white (usually Anglo) teachers. Although in 1880 male and female teachers alike earned \$50 per month (with the length of school terms varying depending on patrons) by 1900 male teachers' salaries had advanced to \$61.69 and female teachers' only to \$51.96. In 1910, men received \$68.73 and women \$55.56. Twenty-four years later the average yearly salaries of white male and female teachers were \$1055 and \$831. Other states with significantly large percentages of male teachers recorded similar differentials. (See Table 2.)

The role of the Oklahoma male teacher as father was emphasized by the division of labor in the Oklahoma educators' marriages, even when wives were gainfully employed. From 1937 to 1942, J. Myron Oates served as a superintendent while his wife, Veta Porter Oates, was a principal in a small school district. W. A. Franklin wrote that it was his spouse Nell (also a teacher) and not he who decided "that I could be a successful teacher if I could get an education." Together they attended and graduated from a two-year teacher-education program at a western Oklahoma college, yet, at Nell's insistence, he, not she, went on to obtain a bachelor's degree.<sup>16</sup>

At the time of their marriage Tom Watson and Bessie McBroom worked in a small, rural school. Tom's salary was \$60 per month for teaching the lower grades, and Bessie's was \$90 for instructing the older students. Tom soon became the principal, however, and eventually they moved into another school district where Tom became a teacher-superintendent and Bessie started as an elementary teacher and later became a teaching high school principal. In his narrative, Tom acknowledged the debt that he

TABLE 2.  
COMPARISON OF MONTHLY TEACHERS' SALARIES IN TEN STATES: 1880, 1910, AND 1913.

State	1880		1910		1913	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
AR	\$39.21	\$34.93	NA	NA	NA	NA
IN	38.40	33.20	\$72.40	\$62.20	\$75.46	\$69.45
NM	30.67	30.67	NA	NA	62.39	58.65
OK/IT	50.00	50.00	61.69	51.96	68.73	55.56
UT	35.00	22.00	94.49	71.95	92.06	75.08
WV	27.96	28.70	NA	NA	NA	NA
IA	32.56	27.25	79.23	48.14	83.22	49.91
NE	36.50	32.50	69.35	49.98	80.51	58.62
NV	99.50	74.76	122.02	77.00	125.92	81.91
VT	29.76	16.84	55.23	33.53	68.48	37.83

Source: *Executive Documents of the House of Representatives for the 3rd Session of the 46th Congress, 1880*; *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year 1881*; *Report of the Commission of Education for the Year Ended June 30, 1912*; *Report of the Commissioner of Education, 1915* (see note 5).

owed his wife for remaining the woman behind the man. "I want to give my wife full credit for the work she did during our teaching career. Besides her regular teaching load she sponsored the hot lunch programs at each place[,] . . . kept the school board clerk's record" for eight years, and sponsored numerous programs. And never was she given more than "one hour off [from] her regular teaching load."<sup>17</sup>

Although the Oklahoma men moved easily up the administrative ladder, many maintained a continuous personal involvement with students. Nine ORTA respondents remained exclusively in teaching, and approximately thirty taught for at least ten years before going into administration. Many administrators were still required to teach. Carl Paul noted that he was always a full- or part-time teacher. J. C. Fitzgerald added that along with "being principal, I was a full-time teacher of seven and eight grades, coached 4-H clubs, and coached boys'

and girls' basketball teams." Tom Watson wrote that even as a superintendent, "I had a full load teaching with one hour off each day to do my extra work as superintendent."<sup>18</sup>

These teachers immersed themselves in the lives of their students at least in part because they used the role of the traditional father as the model for the educator. Robert Wood described the roles of himself and his wife, Ellen, at Jones Academy, a school for American Indian boys, in terms reminiscent of a nineteenth-century pater familias and his wife. During the 1930s, "we organized a Cub Scout Pack. I was Pack Master and Ellen had one of the dens as den mother." They also coached sports, organized a Sunday school, and showed movies on Saturday nights. "This was a full and rewarding work as we participated in the whole life of this community. It was more than just class work in a school room," he explained.<sup>19</sup>

Other men took the model of fatherhood



FIG. 2. Sod schoolhouse with students and teachers, western Oklahoma, c. 1890. Photograph courtesy of Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Library.

more personally. Clifford Strozier, who had taught for eleven years before becoming principal of a school that included all twelve grades, wrote that he learned "to love the pupils" and tried "to help in these one-teacher schools; the experiences gained have been 'treasured' [through] the years." Walter Ward stated, "I can sincerely say that, while now retired and looking back over these years, I can feel that the greatest reward and satisfaction has come from learning when and how to reach out and touch the hand and life of a young person." A. L. Ebersole, an industrial arts teacher, explained that during some Depression years he had not made as much money as the custodian, but he remained in teaching because his students needed him. The resulting "close association with the boys in my shop classes became extremely important to me. . . . Most of my early students called me 'Eb' (affectionately, I thought)." <sup>20</sup>

Many of the teachers saw themselves as central not just to their students but to the lives of other Oklahoma residents. Jeryl Watson,

whose grandfather and father had been rural teachers, adapted a patriotic ode to link the settlement of a new state to the importance of teaching. He chastised the early Boomers and Sooners who often wore out the land and sucked the "mineral wealth" out of the ground, leaving "their ugly scars behind." It had been the teachers' job, he claimed, to pick up the pieces, generating human wealth where the natural resources had been depleted.

Then came the teacher pioneers,  
Who saw the wealth of future years,  
Not in the oil or wheat so tall  
But in the minds of children small. . . .  
. . . Overworked and underpaid.  
They kept the vision and undismayed.  
. . . Inside the child they saw a mind.  
That could do service to mankind. <sup>21</sup>

A religious fervor that had motivated many nineteenth-century teachers was rekindled during the early twentieth century as part of the Social Gospel movement and also influenced

many of the patriarchs of Oklahoma education. Spraberry taught Sunday school for fifty-five years while Strozier instructed vacation Bible schools and was a superintendent of Sunday schools for his church. Roe Smith held a similar post and had earned a D. D. degree in Bible studies. J. P. Jenkins, who began his teaching career in 1907, spent a lifetime in teaching, much of it offering classes in reading and writing to young men incarcerated in a state reformatory. Jenkins explained that teachers shared "a great work, second only to that of preaching the Gospel of Christ. For we have helped to mold characters and shape destinies."<sup>22</sup>

#### CAREER PATTERNS AND RISING PROFESSIONAL EXPECTATIONS

Despite Jenkins's sense of calling, numerous men throughout the United States (including some of the ORTA respondents) initially entered teaching for very pragmatic reasons. Even historian Paul Mattingly, whose work emphasizes the moral commitment of some nineteenth-century male educators, notes that a good number of the era's schoolmen viewed teaching only as a temporary way to make a living while they prepared to do something more prestigious or lucrative. Whether they viewed the field as a temporary or permanent career, American men steadily became educators, particularly within regions where teaching remained an easy-entry job or a sure path to administration. The number of male teachers climbed from 73,335 in 1880 to 116,848 in 1920.<sup>23</sup> Data collected early in 1914 from Oklahoma indicate that fewer than 25 percent of the state's teachers, primarily in the southeastern part of the state, had completed a high-school education, demonstrating that teaching was an easy field to enter. That year 65 percent of all Oklahoma rural school teachers were reported to be inadequately prepared to do their jobs, and 38 percent of Oklahoma's rural teachers were male, indicating that these men were likely to take advantage of low entrance requirements. Other states, such as New Mexico and West Virginia, two of the six

reporting the largest nationwide percentages of male educators in 1920, recorded relatively high percentages of males to females in administration and low standards for licensure.<sup>24</sup> (See Tables 3 and 4.)

In Oklahoma certification standards for teachers were established quite slowly. Before statehood in 1907, prospective teachers had only to pass a test supervised and graded by county officials. After 1907 state representatives of the former Oklahoma Territorial Board of Education officially issued the certification exams, but they continued to be administered by county personnel until 1919. Although supervision and grading of tests were then officially in the hands of the State Department of Education, local school boards retained the right to hire and fire

TABLE 3.  
PERCENT (%) AND Z SCORE (Z) OF RURAL TEACHERS WITHOUT ADEQUATE TRAINING AND OF MALE RURAL TEACHERS IN TEN STATES, 1914.

	% Rural Teachers Without Adequate Training		% Male Rural Teachers	
		z		z
AR	71.0	2.16	58.0	1.98
IN	1.4	-1.60	21.7	-.21
NM	57.8	1.45	25.3	.01
OK	65.0	1.84	38.0	.78
UT	6.2	-1.34	28.1	.18
WV	62.5	1.70	70.4	2.73
IA	65.0	1.84	10.5	-.88
NE	4.7	-1.42	10.9	-.86
NV	10.0	-1.14	10.0	-.91
VT	35.7	.25	3.2	-1.32

Source: Harold W. Foght, *Efficiency and Preparation of Rural School Teachers* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1915), pp. 13-14.

TABLE 4.  
PERCENTAGE (%) AND Z SCORE (Z) OF MALE TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN CITIES 4000-8000 (SMALL CITIES) AND CITIES OVER 8000 (LARGE CITIES), 1907.

State	% Male Teachers in Small Cities	z	% Male Administrators in Small Cities	z
AR	15.00	.98	71.43	.36
IN	19.08	1.99	52.53	-.55
NM	13.51	.61	100.00	1.74
OK/IT	5.32	-1.42	69.23	.26
UT	20.93	2.45	57.14	-.33
WV	16.18	1.27	50.00	-.67
IA	6.24	-1.19	47.22	-.81
NE	6.42	-1.14	54.55	-.45
NV	9.52	-.38	33.33	-1.48
VT	6.11	-1.22	40.00	-1.16

  

State	% Male Teachers in Large Cities	z	% Male Administrators in Large Cities	z
AR	15.19	1.91	78.57	1.67
IN	11.59	.84	49.49	-.13
NM	11.11	.70	62.50	.67
OK/IT	20.47	3.47	57.14	.34
UT	10.38	.48	63.64	.74
WV	9.85	.33	56.41	.30
IA	6.29	-.73	39.41	-.76
NE	4.12	-1.37	28.21	-1.45
NV	NA	NA	NA	NA
VT	5.29	-1.02	25.00	-1.65

Source: *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year 1899-1900*; *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year Ended June 30, 1907* (see note 24).

Thus, early in the century, teaching in Oklahoma offered men a means of making a living without much preparation. Particularly in rural areas, many men easily met certification requirements and supplemented their farm income by teaching. Farming and working-class men taught high schools, while women of that socioeconomic class staffed rural and elementary schools. Jess Hudson recalled that a local

educators. Requirements for certification gradually became more stringent, as they did in other states. By 1936 the State Board of Education stipulated that certain elementary and secondary licenses must be obtained through college credit rather than through an examination. Although the Life Certificate was granted until 1950, by 1957 Oklahoma required a bachelor's degree for certification in any area.<sup>25</sup>

school superintendent visited his eighth-grade graduating class (probably during the 1910s) to tell the students "that we were qualified to teach school on a third class certificate" if we passed an examination. Jeryl Watson remembered that in 1919 "any person who had completed the eighth grade could take the county teachers examination and, if he scored high enough, could get a license to teach." And Byron Shepherd recalled that there were numerous men in search of teaching jobs during the early 1920s "because of a depression in rural areas and because of a lack of funds for further school attendance at the college level. This was certainly the case in my situation. I thought that I could teach [in] a one-teacher school for a year or two and then attend college for a year."<sup>26</sup>

Men who had attended college had considered employment in government, medicine, or the myriad of scientific careers created by the oil boom. In 1920 Oklahoma recorded sixteen professional categories of gainfully employed males, more categories than the national average. Many respondents did not become teachers until they had reached their late twenties or early thirties. Neal O'Brien recalled that, with the exception of two younger males, those with whom he took the county teachers' examination "were all mature men with grey hair showing at the temples, and as I now remember there were only two women."<sup>27</sup>

After making the commitment to education, the respondents' academic interests remained in those fields stereotypically dominated by men: industrial arts, sports, science, or mathematics. Moreover, most of the men soon climbed up the educational career ladder from nongraded to graded schools, to high-school teaching, and finally to administration.<sup>28</sup> Fifty-three of them eventually spent some of their work days as administrators, and thirty of those men took full- or part-time positions in higher education. Five men went directly from teaching into higher education. (See Table 5.)

Clearly the careers of these men were advanced simply because of the fact that they were male. Just before Jess Hudson graduated from a

small liberal arts college "a friend who was superintendent of schools at Headrick, Oklahoma wrote me offering me a job at ninety dollars per month." Hudson accepted the position, for which he may not have been qualified; as he stated, "I had no professional training . . . [but]

TABLE 5.  
EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE  
OF THE SIXTY-SEVEN OKLAHOMA MALE EDUCATORS.

Degree Attained	Number	Percentage
Total	67	
Unknown	3	4
No Degree	2	3
Bachelors	62	93
Masters	50	75
Doctorate	8	12
Professional Experience		
Career Teachers*	14	21
Administrators**		
(Full- or Part-Time)	53	79
Higher Education		
(Full- or Part-Time)	30	45
X Years as Teachers** +	10.5	NA
X Years as		
Administrators** +	31	NA

\* Five of these men went directly from public school teaching into higher education, and nine remained in public school teaching.

\*\* In most rural schools males were hired to be teachers and administrators, simultaneously. The data collected do not accurately reflect how often this occurred within the respondents' careers.

+ Some respondents did not separate careers into two distinct categories of teachers and administrators.

was issued a temporary one-year certificate with the provision that the following summer I enroll in eight hours of education at the University of Oklahoma." Before he had finished his first year of teaching he was drafted into World War I, an interruption that enhanced rather than hurt his career. As he explained, "near the end of my service in the summer of 1919, . . . the [state] superintendent wrote to me saying that in view of my services to my country all certification requirements would be waived, [and] . . . I was offered the superintendency at Headrick."<sup>29</sup>

Lonnie Vanderveer described how he moved into administration by default: "Had I been in my major field, mathematics, and had the salary scale for a classroom teacher been a living wage, I could have been happy spending my whole life in [teaching]." Instead he made the decision he felt expected, even encouraged, to make and became an administrator, first "in a small school," then "in a larger school, and from the larger school to a college."<sup>30</sup>

As the years passed those men who chose to



FIG. 3. J. S. Westhofer, teacher, Tonkawa Public Schools, 1908. Photograph courtesy of Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Library.

stay in the field of education, even if they had entered the profession and advanced in it only because being a man was credential enough, usually chose to continue their own educations. William Mellor, who in 1922 had received his seal to teach for life, soon believed that he "must obtain a degree to remain in the profession."<sup>31</sup> Although three of the educators in the sample neglected to record their schooling and two men seem never to have earned degrees, the vast majority of them had engaged in continuous professional education. The fact that these men chose to record their reminiscences suggests that they may have been more conscientious than their colleagues, but the achievements of the men in the sample are impressive. Sixty-two of the male educators held bachelor's degrees; two had acquired two each. Fifty had obtained master's degrees, and eight had attained doctorates. (See Table 5.) Either through choice or obligation these career educators became part of state and national drives to increase teachers' and administrators' academic preparation.

Despite the men's academic degrees and their exposure to educational theory that touted the educator's need for autonomy from clients and communities and for dedication to current educational theory, the respondents' lives retained the mold of nineteenth-century rural ideals. These male educators continued throughout their careers to identify strongly with their communities and to praise the benefits of experience over academic theory. Claude Harris, who in 1923 began teaching in a one-room school, wrote that he soon learned from the pupils and the situation much more about teaching than he did from "[William] Bagley and other writers of Pedagogy." Neal O'Brien noted that his "theory" of education was to consider "suggestions from pupils [and] parents and [to] cooperate with both." Oklahoma towns and rural settlements offered these men a chance to pursue a professional career but also insulated them somewhat from the nationwide professionalization of school teaching and administration.<sup>32</sup>



FIG. 4. *Faculty of Tonkawa Public Schools, 1908.* Photograph courtesy of Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Library.

#### CONCLUSION

As did national leaders, early Oklahoma officials asked for “stalwart” men to help counteract the feminization of American education by teaching and socializing the children of a fledgling state. State and local authorities wanted male teachers who were firm and who provided boys with strong masculine role models. Largely from rural areas and small towns, the working-class male teachers represented by the ORTA respondents desperately wanted to improve their standard of living and believed that they were the men for the jobs. They coached, became Boy Scout masters, often ran the schools in which they taught, and gladly accepted the status and pay bestowed on them as men in a profession dominated by women. In return, they continued their own educations, acquiring ac-

ademic degrees considerably beyond those required for certification, but they remained loyal servants to the various communities they served, not seeking the kind or degree of autonomy prescribed for educators by the progressives who professionalized the field. Male teachers in Oklahoma found respectable careers but on the terms of their state and local employers. Thus while Oklahomans followed the nationwide trend toward rewarding men simply for being men and providing “manly” roles to boys as the great American adventure of the frontier came to a close, the schoolmen of Oklahoma, one of the last of the frontier states, typically provided their young charges with the virtues of the nineteenth-century rural patriarch rather than the glamour of the Rough Rider or the detachment of the new professional.

## NOTES

The authors would like to thank Brenda Hill for assistance in preparing this paper.

1. A total of 512 retired Oklahoma educators (6 African-American men and 439 women in addition to the 67 Anglo men) voluntarily responded to a request from the Oklahoma Retired Teachers Association to tell the story of their professional lives. We omitted the very small sample of African-American males from our study because the sample was so small, but even so, the sixty-seven Anglo men were not scientifically representative of any larger population of males in the state. Other Oklahoma teachers of both genders moved in and out of teaching while this sample constituted a select group of men who, for the reasons discussed in this paper, chose to make careers in education. Moreover, the retired male teachers' sample made up only 13.1 percent of the total number of respondents to the association's call. This percentage of males was lower than the percentage of male teachers to the total teaching force in Oklahoma during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and it constituted only 1.7 percent of the approximately 3993 retired male educators living in Oklahoma during the mid-1970s. We believe these accounts are valid "life reviews" of the sort described by psychologists. See Robert N. Butler, "The Life Review: An Interpretation of Reminiscence in the Aged," *Psychiatry: Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes* 26 (February 1963): 75.

2. Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Knopf, 1963), pp. 299-322; Willard S. Elsbree, *The American Teacher: Evolution of a Profession in a Democracy* (New York: American Book Co., 1939), pp. 18-31; Millard Fillmore Kennedy, *Schoolmaster of Yesterday: A Three Generation Story* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1940), p. 72; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistics of the Population, Tenth Census, 1880* (Washington, D.C.: 1883); *Census of the Population, Eleventh Census, 1890* (Washington, D.C.: 1893); *Statistics of the Population, Twelfth Census, 1900* (Washington, D.C.: 1904); *Statistics of the Population, Thirteenth Census, 1910* (Washington, D.C.: 1914); and *Statistics of the United States Population, Fourteenth Census, 1920* (Washington, D.C.: 1923).

3. Percentages of male educators are derived from the censuses of 1880-1920 (note 2 above).

4. Joe L. Dubbert, "Progressivism and the Masculinity Crisis," in Elizabeth H. Pleck and Joseph H. Pleck, eds., *The American Man* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1980), pp. 303-20; Thomas Woody, *A History of Women's Education in the United States*, vol. 1 (New York: Octagon Books, 1980), pp.

505-15. For a definition of stereotypical gender behavior see Peter Gabriel Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Sex Roles in Modern America* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p. 78.

5. *The Fifteenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Oklahoma City: State Department of Education, 1934), p. 20; U.S. House of Representatives, *Executive Documents of the House of Representatives for the 3rd Session of the 46th Congress*, vol. 2, no. 1 Part 5 (Washington, D.C.: 1880), pp. xv, xvi; U.S. Commissioner of Education, *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year 1881*, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: 1883): xlv-xlvi; U.S. Commissioner of Education *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year Ended June 30, 1912*, vol. 12 (Washington, D.C.: 1913): 13; U.S. Commissioner of Education, *Report of the Commissioner of Education*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: 1915): 16; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistics of the Population, Fifteenth Census, 1930* (Washington, D.C.: 1933); *Statistics of the Population, Sixteenth Census, 1940* (Washington, D.C.: 1943); *Census of the Population, Seventeenth Census, 1950* (Washington, D.C.: 1952); David B. Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1829-1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), pp. 180-200.

6. Neal E. O'Brien, "Reminiscence." Oklahoma Retired Teachers Association (ORTA) Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City; A. D. Hefley, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection. For some discussion of teaching and the new middle class see Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), pp. 117-20, 166, 180.

7. Ameringer quoted in H. Wayne Morgan and Anne Hodges Morgan, *Oklahoma: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), p. 96; *Ibid.*, pp. 93-117; James R. Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism: Radical Movements in the Southwest, 1895-1943* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), pp. 71-75; Arrell M. Gibson, *Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries* (Norman: Harlow Publishing, 1965), pp. 336, 347, 351, 355, 359, 360-71.

8. Danney Goble, *Progressive Oklahoma: The Making of a New Kind of State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), pp. 202-27; *Constitution of the State of Oklahoma*, Article IX, Sec. 38-48 and Article XIII; Louise Boyd James, "The Woman Suffrage Issue in the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 56 (Winter 1979): 379-92 and "Woman's Suffrage, Oklahoma Style, 1890-1918," in Melvena K. Thurman, ed., *Women in Oklahoma: A Century of Change* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1982), pp. 182-98; school board quoted in Guy H. Lambert and Guy M. Rankin, "Oklahoma," in Jim B. Pearson and

Edgar Fuller, eds., *Education in the States: Historical Development and Outlook* (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1969), p. 979.

9. E. D. Cameron quoted in Oscar William Davison, "History of Education in Oklahoma, 1907-1947," Ed.D. diss., University of Oklahoma, Norman, 1949, pp. 48-49; Cameron quoted in *State Superintendent's Report* (Oklahoma State Department of Education: Oklahoma City, 1910), pp. 62-63.

10. Courtney Ann Vaughn-Roberson, "The Politics of Education and Reform: Henry Garland Bennett in Oklahoma, 1907-1951," *History of Higher Education Annual* 5 (1985): 83-110.

11. Althea Barr Taft quoted in Joe Hubbell, "Women in Oklahoma Education," in Thurman, ed., *Women in Oklahoma* (note 8 above), p. 151. Vaughn-Roberson, "The Politics of Education and Reform" (note 10 above).

12. Jeryl A. Watson, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection; James B. Moore, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection.

13. For state examples see Henry C. Whitlow, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection; H. D. Ground, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection; Jeffrey P. Hanover, "The Boy Scouts and the Validation of Masculinity," in Pleck and Pleck, eds., *The American Man* (note 4 above), pp. 285-301.

14. Byron L. Shepherd, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection.

15. George E. Spraberry, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection.

16. J. Myron Oates, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection; W. A. Franklin, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection.

17. Tom Watson, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection.

18. Carl E. Paul, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection; J. C. Fitzgerald, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection; Tom Watson (note 17 above).

19. Robert H. Wood, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection.

20. Clifford Andrew Strozier, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection; Walter Glen Ward, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection; A. L. Ebersole, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection.

21. Jeryl Watson, "Reminiscence" (note 12 above).

22. For references to nineteenth-century teachers' social and religious commitments see William A. Alcott, *Confessions of a Schoolmaster* (Reading, Pennsylvania: H. A. Lantz, 1856), p. 282; Polly Welts Kaufman, *Women Teachers on the Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 6. See also Willard Waller, *The Sociology of Teaching* (1932; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1961), pp. 422-23. For a reference to the social gospel see Wiebe, *The Search for Order* (note 6 above), pp. 207-8. Spraberry, "Reminiscence" (note 15 above); Strozier, "Reminiscence" (note 20 above); Roe L. Smith, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection; James P. Jenkins, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection.

23. Paul H. Mattingly, *The Classless Profession: American Schoolmen in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), p. 22; David B. Tyack and Myra H. Strober, "Jobs and Gender: A History of the Structuring of Educational Employment By Sex," in P. A. Schmuck, W. W. Charters, Jr., and R. O. Carlson, eds., *Educational Policy and Management: Sex Differentials* (New York: Academic Press, 1981), pp. 140-41, relate low salary differentials and poor standards in various regions to high numbers of male teachers. Thomas Morain, "The Departure of Males from the Teaching Profession in Nineteenth-Century Iowa," *Civil War History* 26 (1980): 161-70, stresses that men may have remained in teaching in order to become administrators. John G. Richardson and Brenda Wooden Hatcher, "The Feminization of Public School Teaching, 1870-1920," *Work and Occupations* 10 (1983): 81-99, note that the passing of a state's compulsory school law was a crucial impetus for feminization. John L. Rury, "Gender, Salaries, and Career: American Teachers, 1900-1910," *Issues in Education* 4 (1986): 215-35, analyzes the Lotus Coffman study, *The Social Composition of the Teaching Population* (New York: Teachers' College Press, 1911) and finds that the relative number of male household heads was positively related to the numbers of male teachers. *Statistics of the United States Population, Tenth Census, 1880* (note 3 above); *Census of the United States Population, Occupations, 1920* (note 3 above).

24. Joe Hubbell, "A History of the Oklahoma Education Association, 1945-1965," Ph.D. diss., Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, 1970, pp. 5-10; U.S. Commissioner of Education, *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year 1899-1900*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: 1901): 1810-21; U.S. Commissioner of Education, *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year Ended June 30, 1907*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: 1908): 605-25, 677-97.

25. John M. Folks, "An Analysis of Opinions of House Bill 1706 as Perceived by Certain Selected School-Related Groups," Ed.D. diss., University of Oklahoma, Norman, 1982, pp. 42-44; Tyack and Strober, "Jobs and Gender" (note 23 above), p. 140; Richardson and Hatcher, "Feminization of Public School Teaching" (note 23 above), pp. 81-99; T. M. Stinnett, "Teacher Education, Certification, and Accreditation," in Fuller and Pearson, eds., *Education in the States: Nationwide Development Since 1900* (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1969), p. 394.

26. See Mattingly, *The Classless Profession* (note 23 above), p. 22; Ronald Butchart, "The Frontier

Teacher: Arizona, 1875-1925," *Journal of the West* 16 (1977): 54-66; Tyack and Strober, "Jobs and Gender (note 23 above), p. 137; Ernest E. Brown, *The Selection and Education of Oklahoma High School Teachers* (Oklahoma City: Harlow Publishing, 1938), pp. 26-34; Jess S. Hudson, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection; Watson, "Reminiscence" (note 12 above); Shepherd, "Reminiscence" (note 14 above).

27. Courtney Ann and Glen Vaughn-Roberson, *City in the Osage Hills: Tulsa, Oklahoma* (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing, 1983), pp. 51-66; In 1920 17.37 percent of the professional men in Oklahoma were educators, a figure that produced a z score of 1.16 when compared to the same percentages in forty-eight states or territories and the District of Columbia (computed from *Statistics of the Population, Fourteenth Census, 1920* [note 2 above]); O'Brien, "Reminiscence" (note 6 above).

28. Morain, "Departure of Males" (note 23 above), pp. 161-70.

29. Hudson, "Reminiscence" (note 26 above).

30. Lonnie T. Vanderveer, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection.

31. William J. Mellor, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection. For changing certification requirements see note 25.

32. For discussions of the relationship between the small communities and education see David B. Tyack, "The Tribe and the Common School: Community Control in Rural Education," *American Quarterly* 24 (March 1972): 3-19, and Carl F. Kaestle and Maris A. Vinovskis, *Education and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Claude C. Harris, "Reminiscence," ORTA Collection; O'Brien, "Reminiscence" (note 6 above).