Chapter One

Introduction

"Harper Blasts School on Equal Rights" –Blacksburg Sun, front-page headline, April 13, 1980

"Tech Chided for its Attitude Toward Women" –Roanoke Times and World News, April 12,1980

Founder's Day is a day for self-congratulation on any campus. In 1980, Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI, now known as Virginia Tech) wanted to congratulate itself for its support of women. Dr. Laura Jane Harper, the university's highest-ranking woman, was invited to give the keynote address, detailing the accomplishments of women at the institution. However, Harper was not one to congratulate in public what she criticized in private, so she used this ceremonial occasion to force the university to review its discriminatory treatment of women throughout its history. Her speech (Harper, 1980) included these challenges:

> One of the odds against women gaining prominence at Virginia Tech was the length of time it took this institution to embrace coeducation in the first place…. Certainly the 49-year exclusion of women from the opportunities provided here both as students and academicians is not a part of the best land-grant philosophy or mission. (p.1)
>
> VPI, established in 1872, was one of the last 5 or 6 land-grant colleges in the U.S. to admit women as students. Why?… I wonder if they ever would have been

admitted if the Corps could have maintained enrollments without them?…(p.2-3)

Except for a remodeled faculty residence on campus (1925-26) to house a few women students, no dormitory facilities were provided for women until 1940…. I know also that when I came to Blacksburg, for the most part, women students were not accepted into the town of Blacksburg as desirable tenants…(p.6)

Harper's speech shocked the community. They discussed it at work and at church. Wherever her speech was mentioned, women asked, "Did she say anything that was not true?" (R. Purdy, personal communication, June 13, 1999).[1]

This is the remarkable story of Laura Jane Harper. She was Virginia Tech's first female academic dean, a champion for women and minorities, and a fighter to the end.

Currently, in the United States women represent a majority (51%) of undergraduate enrollment in colleges and universities (Chronicle of Higher Education, 1997). Forecasts predict that enrollment rates among women will continue to increase, even in academic subjects not currently dominated by women. Although the enrollment of women attending institutions of higher education has increased, women are disproportionately absent from academic leadership positions. For example only 27% of academic deans are women, and more than 77% of these are deans of nursing, family consumer sciences (formerly known as home economics) or education, which are often categorized as female-dominated fields (Touchton & Davis, 1991).

Scholars have studied the outcomes associated with this disproportionate number of female academic leaders compared to female students. Studies revealed that women

[1] Interestingly, then-VPI President William Lavery recalls that he himself was not surprised by her remarks. After all, "this was Laura Jane Harper" (W. Lavery, personal communication, June 15, 1999).

need role models or mentors to help them aspire to leadership positions (Neumark & Gardeck, 1998). Role models can include pioneering women in similar fields and those who have overcome obstacles and circumstances to achieve their leadership positions. Aisenberg and Harington (1988) described how female students observe role models to learn how to interact with colleagues. Through this observation, female students learn team-supported concepts and other techniques that strengthen their skills and abilities (Aisenberg & Harington, 1988; Harter, 1993). In addition, role models provide information to younger women about advancement and rules of the system (Epstein, 1970).

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) suggested that female faculty members are possibly more influential career role models and mentors for female students than male faculty are for women. Smith (1990), Astin and Kent (1983) and other scholars found that predominately-female colleges have a statistically significantly higher number of women attaining doctorates and high academic achievements than co-educational institutions. Female colleges provide more visible role models and mentors, thus enhancing female aspirations and ambitions (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Cantor and Bernary (1992) suggested that having many role models increases an individual's dreams, visions, and future possibilities.

In graduate schools too, mentoring and sponsorship are frequently cited as one of the top factors that influence young women to become faculty (Berg & Fever, 1983). The limited number of women in formal academic leadership positions today creates a shortage of role models for women who aspire to these positions (Alexander, 1990). This deficit

can be filled by studying the lives of women who pioneered in these positions. Histories and biographies of past female leaders can provide individuals, especially women, with inspiration, a better understanding of accomplishment, and examples of significant achievements. Reading about heroines or role models can help women strive for excellence and leadership positions.

Literature about women leaders in higher education is limited. Few documents record the achievements of women and provide examples of success stories or guidelines for accomplishing tasks. For example, in various histories of Virginia Tech, leadership of women and their accomplishments for the university are often excluded. Although Harper was the first female academic dean at Virginia Tech, she is seldom recognized or acknowledged, even in works like "The Women of VPI." A study of Harper's life and contributions may encourage others to record the accomplishments of women, while also adding to the body of historical biographies of women in higher education**.**

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the role Laura Jane Harper played as a scholar, administrator, and activist for women and minorities at Virginia Tech. Butchart (1986) said that history connects the past to the present and offers future possibilities to our culture. This study employed historical research techniques to study Harper's life and accomplishments, and to connect her accomplishments as a leader and a role model to opportunities for women today.

Research Questions

The present study was designed to examine the following research questions:

1. What were the significant factors that influenced Harper to pursue a career in higher education?
2. What were Harper's significant contributions as a scholar?
3. What were Harper's significant contributions as an administrator?
4. What were Harper's significant contributions to women and minorities?

Significance of the Study

This study presents historical information that fills a blank space in the history of pioneering women in higher education. The information supplied here will also contribute to the history of Virginia Tech, which has often overlooked women. This study will provide central pieces for the history of the College of Human Resources and Education (formerly the College of Home Economics) and the history of the American Family Consumer Sciences Association (formerly the American Home Economics Association). It is by understanding the experiences of pioneers in various disciplines that current female professionals in similar positions will be able to connect with, and perhaps gain insight into, current issues facing higher education.

Limitations

As with all research, the present study was not without limitations. One limitation was the lack of available data covering the early events in Harper's life. Thus the study focuses primarily on Harper's accomplishments, contributions, and historic role at Virginia Tech.

Another limitation related to the age of many of those who knew Harper. Harper worked at Virginia Tech from 1949 to 1980. Many of her colleagues, friends, and family members were age 70 or older at the time of the study. Their memories may be faded or exaggerated after so many years. Wherever possible the researcher used multiple witnesses and contemporary documents to corroborate interview data. Despite their age, they are eyewitnesses to an important historical passage at Virginia Tech. Their memories are a perishable resource and the researcher is grateful for their willingness to contribute to this project.

Organization

This study is organized around eight chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study, the research questions posed in the study, and the significance of the research. Chapter 2 reviews the historical context for the study. Chapter 3 describes the methodology employed in the study, including data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter 4 describes Harper's childhood, college years, and first jobs. Chapter 5 describes Harper's early career at VPI, her doctoral study, and her appointment as dean of home economics. Chapter 6 covers Harper's years as dean. The final chapter summarizes her accomplishments and offers suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two

Historical Context

> *Harper's secretaries worried every time she left the office that she would be run over. She was so focused on her mission of the moment that she literally did not see cars coming. (C. Smith, personal communication, February 18, 1998; E. Oliver, personal communication, February 18, 1998)*

To understand the contributions made by Laura Jane Harper, it is important to review the history of the organizations and institutions in which Harper was involved during her life. This chapter includes an overview of 4-H Clubs, in which Harper was active; a summary of the beginnings of home economics, the field in which Harper studied and became a pioneer; a brief review of the histories of the colleges where Harper studied and worked; and finally a summary of the role of women in higher education administration as Harper was beginning her career.

The Beginnings of 4-H

Harper was active in 4-H throughout her life, and it influenced her career choice. Four-H clubs developed from numerous local farm-based organizations around the United States. One of these organizations was the Corn Clubs of Mississippi. At the turn of the Twentieth Century, young people had more occupational and lifestyle options than their parents (Wessel & Wessel, 1982). As a result, many young adults migrated from their agricultural homes to large cities. Many farmers felt this migration would increase unless steps were taken to attract boys and girls to farming. As early as 1896, communities

throughout the nation began such programs (Reck, 1951; Wessel & Wessel, 1982). William H. “Corn Club” Smith, who later became president of Mississippi State College (now Mississippi State University), founded one program, the Corn Club, in 1907 (Bettersworth, 1980). This club held the first federally sponsored corn growing contest. The Corn Club contest educated and involved young boys in agriculture through collaborative efforts between Mississippi State College and the federal government (Reck, 1951; Wessel & Wessel, 1982). Three years later, in 1910, club workers petitioned for funds to establish girls’ clubs as well (Wessel & Wessel, 1982).

Programs for girls expanded when the Smith-Lever Act in 1914 helped to establish a unified system for 4-H programs. Among other things, this Act provided that demonstration workers could work with children in corn clubs or tomato clubs. In Mississippi, the Smith-Lever Act improved the opportunities for young girls and women, because the Act increased the number of home demonstration agents available as resources. Prior to the Act, only one agent was available for the entire state of Mississippi (Slay, 1928). The Act made it possible to hire four district agents and six specialists (Slay, 1928).

The increased number of agents and specialists in Mississippi also expanded the number of clubs available to girls. The girls’ clubs were sometimes called tomato clubs. Despite this title young women where taught how to cook, clean, sew, can, garden, raise poultry, and enhance self-confidence through the guidance of their home demonstration worker or leader. By 1924, when young Laura Jane Harper was a member, Rankin County’s club for girls was known as the Home Economics Club. In this period, the club served girls aged 10 to 21 (Slay, 1928; Wessel & Wessel, 1982).

Origins of Home Economics

When Harper chose the field of home economics, she entered one of the few careers that offered women broad opportunities for professional advancement. This discipline was founded by Ellen Swallow Richards, a Vasser graduate and the first female graduate student in chemistry at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Richards "contributed to the scientific work of nutrition and developed the field of household sanitation" (Solomon, 1985, p. 85). Richards also started annual home economics conferences at Lake Placid after her public discussion on education reform in 1898. Out of these meetings developed the American Home Economics Association (AHEA, now American Family Consumer Sciences Association) which became a driving force behind the home economics discipline (Craig, 1945; Solomon, 1985).

Starting in 1903, other pioneers such as Marion Talbot, Isabel Bevier, Abby Marlatt, and Agnes Fay Morgan established home economics as an academic discipline at various institutions. Institutions with well-established programs in home economics early in this century included the University of Illinois, University of Wisconsin, University of California, Teachers College in Columbia, and Cornell. Home economics was an academic discipline that created opportunities for women to obtain more education, conduct research, become full professors, and enter administrative posts in higher education (Heinemann, 1996; Solomon, 1985).

The federal government viewed this discipline as essential because many of the skills home economists taught could be used to increase the nation's food supply during the World War I. The Smith-Lever Act strengthened the home economics discipline. The Act funded land-grant colleges to include demonstration methods with their research and

publications. Home economics teachers and demonstration workers traveled with farmer demonstration workers to give lessons on the preservation of fruits and vegetables and the conservation of wheat and sugar. The teachings of the home demonstration worker and the farm demonstration worker proved to be essential to the Allied forces during World War I (Wallenstein, 1997).

Home economics became a popular degree option at many colleges around the country. Both public and private schools offered the degree option, but ironically Mississippi's land-grant institution for White students, Mississippi State College, did not offer a major in home economics in the 1930s, even though women were admitted as students in this period (Goree, 1993). Private Belhaven College, in Jackson, Mississippi did offer a home economics degree.

Belhaven College

Harper earned her bachelor's degree in home economics at Belhaven College. During the 1930s, Belhaven College was a private all-female institution operated by the Presbyterian Church. The college emphasized service, with the motto "to serve, not to be served" (Belhaven College, 1999). The student body was small, under 400 women (M. Hall, personal communication, May 25, 1999). Belhaven boasted a 4-H club and a home economics club, which provided young women with social activities and professional development experiences. Other student activities included the Young Women's Christian Association which became very large on campus and was renamed the Belhaven Christian Association in 1933; several academic clubs; and national honorary fraternities. Frances Preston Mills, an academic dean and faculty advisor for the Town Girls Club, provided

encouragement, support, motivation, and discipline for many of the students in the 1930s (Gordon, 1982).

University of Tennessee

Harper's master's degree was from the University of Tennessee (UT), a land-grant institution located in Knoxville. In 1948, UT placed first in the South, in the number of master of Science degrees awarded. UT had over 5,730 students working toward a master degree (DeJonge, 1997).

UT formally admitted women as early as 1795 when the institution was called Blount College. In 1806 both its name and its policy on coeducation changed. Coeducation resumed when the daughters of an education professor enrolled in education courses in 1891, along with the young men of the school. Two years later, in 1893, the trustees and the faculty officially voted to open UT to women. That first year about 50 women enrolled. Admission for women was restricted again, this time by the Tennessee legislature in 1895. By the 1940s when Harper studied there, the student body consisted of mostly women because World War II had drained so many men from the student body (DeJonge, 1994; Montgomery, Folmsbee, & Green, 1984).

Home Economics was established as a department at UT in 1926, housed in the Agriculture College. The department grew out of cooking classes offered by Minnie A. Stonner, who was Director of the Cooking Club in 1896 (DeJonge, 1994). In 1903, Anna M. Gilchrist was the first full-time domestic science faculty member hired (DeJonge, 1994; Montgomery, Folmsbee, & Green, 1984). At the time that Harper studied there, UT was first in the south in the number of masters degrees awarded in home economics (DeJonge, 1994). In 1957, home economics became a separate college, and Jessie W. Harris, once an

undergraduate at UT, became dean. Harris, Harper's most enduring mentor, was vice-dean at the time Harper attended UT for graduate school.

Michigan State University

Harper earned her doctorate at Michigan State College (now Michigan State University), the first agricultural institution in the nation. It was founded five years before the Morrill Land-Grant Act and it served as a model for many states (Kuhn, 1955).

Coeducation began at Michigan State in 1870 when 10 women enrolled. "By the spring of 1945, women outnumbered men three to one" (Kuhn, 1955, p.412). In the 1950s, the university had over 13,370 students enrolled in East Lansing, Michigan (Kuhn, 1955).

The home economics program at Michigan State brought increases in the number of women faculty. In 1901, the School of Home Economics was established (Kuhn, 1955). The increased female faculty served two roles: they were both teachers and "dorm mothers" for the coeds. By 1921, Michigan State had attracted several female professionals in the field of home economics, including Dean Mary R. Sweeny; and professors Irma Gross, Jean Krueger, A. J. Clark, and others who would have a large impact on the discipline of home economics when Harper arrived (Kuhn, 1955).

Virginia Polytechnic Institute

Harper's professional career was spent at Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI, now Virginia Tech). As the Twentieth Century unfolded, women were recognized more on the campus of VPI than in the past. In 1914, Ella Graham Agnew was hired as a home demonstration agent there (Cox, 1996; Kinnear, 1972; Wallenstein, 1997). Agnew brought notoriety to VPI because she was the first woman to serve as a field worker and

home demonstration agent for the United States Department of Agriculture. She developed a handbook for extension workers and formed organizations for girls in rural America (Cox, 1996). By 1920, VPI employed seven women home demonstration agents and three home economics specialists (Harper & Howery, 1985; College of fields, 1987).

VPI allowed White women to enroll as undergraduates in the fall of 1921. President Julian Burruss appealed to the board of visitors to enroll women (Wallenstein, 1997). To convince the board, Burruss described the achievements of women during the World War I; the successful enrolling of women at the College of William and Mary, the Medical College of Virginia, and at University of Richmond; the economic benefits of coeducation; and legal ramifications of not extending admission to women (Cox, 1996; Harper & Howery, 1985; Wallenstein, 1997). Burruss's argument achieved its goal, and women were admitted. Mary Brumfield, Ruth Louise Terrett, Lucy Lee Lancaster, Billie Kent Kabrich, and Carrie T. Sibold enrolled as the first female full-time students. Another seven attended part-time. The majors of the part-time and full-time coeds ranged from civil engineering to applied biology (Wallenstein, 1997). In 1923, Mary Brumfield received the first VPI degree awarded to a woman.

As was commonly seen in other formerly male institutions, VPI allowed the women to study but did not integrate them into the university's activities (Goree, 1983). The military, student organizations, and the yearbook were all off limits to the women of VPI (Wallenstein, 1997). However, these women created their own clubs and sports, and even later produced their own yearbook, carving out their own part of the VPI community. Also, during that time, VPI hired two female faculty members. Anna Montgomery Campbell was an instructor in education (Cox, 1996); Mary Moore Davis

was a state home demonstration agent who served part-time to teach home economics to the women (Harper & Howery, 1985).

In the late 1920s, Martha D. Dinwiddie, Mary McGowan, Margaret Minnis, and Emma Weld, were hired as fulltime teachers of home economics (Harper & Howery, 1985). Martha Dinwiddie later headed the home economics department that not only awarded baccalaureate degrees in 1929, but also enrolled graduate students (Harper & Howery, 1985; Wallenstein, 1997). Additional women were hired, but budget reductions occurred in 1933 and the program was suspended, although extension and research work continued (Wallenstein, 1997). By 1926 there were enough professional women on the VPI campus to justify the establishment of a chapter of American Association of University Women (AAUW), which served as a support group for them. The group had 25 members, including professors, extension agents, and staff members (History of the Blacksburg Branch of AAUW, 1976).

Female faculty members were employed in other disciplines as well. Ella Russell became a faculty member in the chemistry department in 1928. In 1935, Alice M. Pletta, was employed as assistant professor of mathematics.

After the depression, women at VPI gained more opportunities, but slowly. For example, in 1939, the civilian "male" student union decided to combine forces with the women's student union to make a stronger club. The agriculture club began to admit home economics majors. The university reopened the home economics program in 1937 (Wallenstein, 1997).

The VPI-Radford Marriage

When Harper came to VPI, it was operating under a legislatively mandated merger with nearby Radford College. During this merger, Harper had responsibilities on both campuses.

During World War II, the Virginia General Assembly forced the consolidation of predominately male and predominately female neighboring institutions. The University of Virginia merged with Mary Washington College, and VPI merged with Radford College. Both mergers took place in 1944 (Cox, 1996; Kinnear, 1972; Lewis-Smith, 1971; Wallenstein, 1997). Similar mergers and affiliations occurred around the country as formerly male institutions began to admit growing numbers of women. These mergers established the predominately female institution as a satellite campus of the predominately male institution. They had the effect of reversing or forestalling the progress of coeducation on the formerly male campuses (Goree, 1993; Kinnear, 1972; Wallenstein, 1997). The Radford-VPI merger bill provided that all women undergraduates under the age of twenty-one would live on Radford's campus no matter which institution they registered. Women pursuing graduate work could then live on VPI's campus. Women needing exceptions required the approval of the board of visitors. Reviews and adjustments were to be made throughout the 1944-48 period by the board of visitors. The administrators on both campuses created a bus system to transport the women from one campuses to the other, based on the class schedule of students.

Women in Higher Education Administration

The history of women's access to higher education as students parallels the role of women employed in higher education (Ihle, 1991). As more women enrolled in colleges,

others were hired as professors and as deans of women, the first senior woman administrator on most coeducational college campuses (Encyclopedia of Women's Education, 1998). Although institutions for women sometimes had a female president, men often managed these institutions. An example is Wellesley College, where Jane Howard was president but Henry Durant, the school's benefactor, "really ran the school" (Solomon, 1985, p. 48).

As coeducation slowly increased at various institutions around the United States, many institutions felt women needed female disciplinarians (Brooks, 1988). Therefore deans of women were hired to serve in a dual role: to be faculty members, and also to assist with the counseling, discipline, and daily welfare of the female students (Schwartz, 1997). Even though this was an opportunity for advancement for women, they were discouraged from aspiring to even higher positions. Administrators at the University of Michigan, for example, informed their dean of women that "chances of advancement … were slim" (Ihle, 1991, p. 6). Later, many institutions combined the dean of men and dean of women positions into the new position "dean of students." Typically this position was awarded to the dean of men. Deans of women typically were fired, retired or demoted. Since these women served dual roles, many became department heads, deans, academic administrators, and vice-presidents in female single-sex institutions or in female dominated majors (Schwartz, 1997).

When Harper arrived at VPI, women administrators were located only in the department of home economics and in the home economics section of extension (Kinnear, 1972; Cox, 1996; Wallenstein, 1997). The head of the home economics department was expected to serve simultaneously as the dean of women, with the counseling and

mentoring responsibilities described above and also with administrative responsibility for the operation of the only women's dormitory, Hillcrest Hall.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Harper always ate fast. By the time her dinner companions had opened their sodas, her dinner would be gone. (A. Frame, personal communication, May 25, 1999)

In this chapter, the methods and procedures used to complete this study are discussed. The study was designed to examine the following research questions:

1. What were the significant factors that influenced Harper to pursue a career in higher education?
2. What were Harper's significant contributions as a scholar?
3. What were Harper's significant contributions as an administrator?
4. What were Harper's significant contributions to women and minorities?

This study employed educational biographical methods to examine, analyze, and report on the contributions, accomplishments, meaning of education, and the significance of Harper's tenure at Virginia Tech (Cantor & Schneider, 1967). Educational biographies have utilized different techniques to reveal the subject's development, growth, and life-long learning experiences through a long series of events to produce a smooth narrative about the strengths, weaknesses, accomplishments, sacrifices, and personal philosophy while producing a role model for the reader (Hyde, 1945). Educational biographies also allow the researcher to recreate the life and thoughts of the subject to help produce an account of the past and a measuring stick to judge his or her accomplishments which is very similar to historical biographies (Cantor & Schneider, 1967). Using an educational

biographical approach provides the reader with an appropriate understanding of the era in which the subject lived, insight as to how she used her resources and knowledge to contribute to the family consumer science discipline, the university, women, and minorities. The current study was designed using an educational biographic method to analyze Harper's service and contribution to Virginia Tech.

This chapter describes the method employed in the study. First, source selection is described. Then the data collection designed for the study is discussed. Finally, the procedures used to analyze the data are provided.

Source Selection

Like most historical research projects, the sources for this study consisted of primary and secondary resources. Stage (1992) defines primary sources as documents or other accounts of an event or person that are told in written form or oral format by someone who witnessed the event or knew the subject. Secondary sources are presentations or interpretations of the primary account of the events (Stage 1992). Primary sources provide data on the chronological events, accomplishments, and the subject's perspective of his or her life. Secondary sources depict the environment, events, and provide context for interpreting the events that occurred during the time the subject lived (Brickman, 1982). Using the definitions previously described, primary and secondary sources were used to classify the two types of data employed in this study: documents and interviews.

The primary data source used in this study was historical documents. These historical documents were collected from archives in different locations. Newspaper articles, yearbooks, catalogues, presidential reports, research reports on various

experiments written by or co-authored with Harper; and program, workshop, and conference descriptions on presentations made by Harper were collected from the Newman Library at Virginia Tech. Additional sources such as published textbooks and study-guides written by Harper; membership receipts; and copies of speeches delivered by Harper were also gathered from the Newman Library. The College of Human Resources and Education also houses primary sources related to the study such as an unpublished history of the college co-authored by Harper, Harper's curriculum vita, a personal accomplishment sheet, biographical information written by Harper, and other material such as a painting of Harper. Harper's dissertation was borrowed from Michigan State University.

Primary data sources were also collected at the Library of Virginia (the official state library of Virginia). In the Library of Virginia and the Newman Library, the researcher also reviewed Radford self-study reports between the years of 1960 and 1965, which are important in analyzing Harper's administrative role as dean at both Virginia Tech and Radford University. Data on Harper's research in nutrition and on the vocational goals of children in Virginia were also discovered in the Library of Virginia. The McConnell library at Radford University provided copies of the Radford newspaper, yearbooks, and catalogues from the years Harper was jointly dean at Radford University and Virginia Tech.

Additional primary sources included interviews. Snowball sampling was used to identify appropriate interview subjects (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 234). These sources are first-hand accounts of events or activities about Harper from people who can be categorized by their relationship to Harper. Respondents were individuals who were

placed in one or more of the following categories: family, students, colleagues, employees, or friends. Initial respondents were selected because of a relationship to Harper described in primary document sources.

Secondary sources consisted of two types: documents and interviews. These sources served as the foundation and structure to build a contextual framework to examine Harper's life, scholarship, and other achievements.

Several documents were used as secondary sources to provide the researcher with a framework to examine Harper's life. Documents included books on the history of Virginia Tech, such as The First 100 Years (Kinnear, 1972) and Virginia Tech, Land Grant University, 1872 - 1997: History of a School, a State, a Nation (Wallenstein, 1997). History books on Radford University including A Sentimential Chronicle through Its First Half-Century (Lewis-Smith, 1971), and A History of the State Teachers College at Radford, Virginia (Moffett, 1933), provided a context for the study. Secondary sources also included books and other articles on the experiences of women in higher education. Additional sources included books concerning the field of home economics and occupational trends dating from the 1930s to the 1950s. Other books, newspaper articles, and pamphlets helped to explain the collegiate lives of women in Virginia, political policies in Virginia on education and research, the history of Home Economics in Virginia, and other similar issues.

Interviews were another secondary source used to build a framework for this research project. Interviews were conducted with historians or scholars who were involved in 4-H Programs, the department of Family and Consumer Science (FCS, formerly known as Home Economics), and women in higher education. Many of the

respondents helped the researcher to examine the life or accomplishments of Harper. These respondents provided their knowledge and scholarly expertise in subjects such as 4-H programs, family and consumer sciences, women in higher education, and Virginia Tech policies and politics. These interviews helped the researcher understand, grasp, and build a contextual framework to analyze the primary sources and design research questions for the interview protocol to produce relevant data.

Interview Protocol

A semi-structured interview protocol was developed and used to guide each participant's initial discussion of Harper. A sample of the protocol is located in Appendix A. The actual interview protocol consisted of three parts: an introduction, formal questions, and follow-up questions.

Section One is the introduction component of the interview protocol. This section typically lasted 10 minutes and was comprised of an outline of the interview, directions for completing the consent form and permission to record the interview using a tape recorder, and to use the recording in future research on Harper. The consent form created to get permission from the respondents is located in Appendix B. After the respondent granted permission, the researcher proceeded with the second section, the formal questioning.

Section Two of the interview protocol is the formal questioning of the respondents. The researcher asked five broad questions that elicited data from the respondents to answer the questions posed in this study. The following questions were posed to each respondent:

1. Please state in what capacity you knew Dr. Laura Jane Harper?
2. Describe Harper, as you knew her as an educator.
3. Tell me about Harper's contributions as a scholar, mentor, and administrator at Tech and Radford.
4. Tell me vignettes about her.

The questions were designed to guide the respondents to define their relationship with Harper and to provide pertinent information.

The final section of the interview protocol consisted of the follow-up. During the follow-up, the interviewer asked additional questions until the participants offered no new information or clarification. The researcher or respondent was given the opportunity to write down names of other persons that could be interviewed (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). This referral allowed the interviewer to elicit more data for the study. The referrals also assisted the interviewer in locating others who were not initially contacted.

The interview protocol provided a natural flow of information into three phases during approximately one hour. Interviews were audio recorded and hand written notes were also taken. For several key participants additional interviews were used. These subsequent interviews were unstructured.

Data Collection Procedures

Several techniques were used for data collection including archival collection at each institution where Harper worked as dean and formal interviews with colleagues, relatives, friends, employees, and protégés. During the spring of 1998, archival data collection was conducted through visits to various sites where Harper resided or worked.

Prior to the visits, the researcher created a data collection plan detailing some of the resources needed for this study and the sites needed to obtain the resources. The data collection plan included a tentative bibliography, a list of possible unpublished primary sources, printed items that should be reviewed, and suggestion items provided by the Virginia Tech archivist/special collection specialist. The data collected by the researcher included catalogues, speeches, correspondence, newspaper articles, reports, yearbooks, personal effects, and other documents that provided insight into the life, scholarship, tenure, or legacy of Harper.

Visits were made to various locations included Virginia Tech's Newman Library, Radford University's McConnell Library, and Virginia's State library. These visits provided the researcher with primary and secondary source documents. Photocopies of each document were made if appropriate. Local religious and social organizations provided copies of flyers, correspondence, newsletters, and other items that provided biographical information about Harper.

Formal interviews were scheduled with administrators, colleagues, employers, students, and others who knew Harper. Interviews began in February of 1998 and continued into June 1999. Each respondent was contacted via phone, e-mail, or letter at least one day prior to the actual interview to explain the purpose of the study, and the importance of the interviewee's participation, and to schedule the interview (Appendix A). Both phone, face-to-face, and e-mail interviews were scheduled on a day and at a time most convenient for each participant. Face-to-face interview locations varied from participants' homes to a conference room on the Virginia Tech campus, whichever was most convenient for the participant. Phone interviews were conducted from the

researcher's home. An e-mail interview was conducted over an entire week using the researcher's and the participant's computers. Several respondents were contacted again to bring clarity to statements made or to answer follow-up questions.

Document searches and interviews were conducted until the point of data saturation was reached. Repetition of information signals data saturation and tells the researcher that the data collection technique can be discontinued (Schwartz, 1992). Document search thoroughly reviewed archival holdings and conducted interviews as complementary data to the documents until all sources were assumed exhausted.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data collection and data analysis were a continuous process. Data collection began in the spring 1998 with archival research and the process continued as analysis of the data determined other areas to further investigate. It was through the process of examining one small component of the data that other components were discovered and more evidence about the total subject being studied was unearthed (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996).

To perform a thorough investigation and uncover the answers to the research questions, a continual collection process was comprised of three steps. The first step was to construct a time line of Harper's life. The time line used several sources such as newspapers, and Harper's vita and accomplishment sheets, to discover and confirm relevant events, such as birth date, graduation, and dates of employment. The time line was also used as a guide to search for additional data. Then important national, regional, and local events were recorded on the time line to capture the complete historic picture during Harper's life. The History of Home Economics at VPI (Harper & Howery,1981), co-authored by Harper, and several secondary sources were also essential. Capturing an

individual's life requires using sources from the individual's perspective, points of view from the individual's colleagues, and events from the period in which the individual lived (Rickman, 1979).

After development of the time line, the data were assigned using a four step process to make categories, which included pre-professional years, graduate school, educational and scholarly achievements, and others. Each category was created based on relevance to the research questions. Each document was obtained through the inter-library loan policy and/or photocopied, except for the painting of Harper owned by the College of Human Resources and Education. Each interview conducted was taped and then transcribed. After being transcribed, the researcher analyzed each piece of data using a historical biographical approach consisting of four steps. The four steps were:

1. Form a hypothesis about Harper's life.
2. Read each individual document or transcript carefully for patterns or significant information.
3. Compare any patterns to the hypothesis, contextual framework, and other secondary sources. Assign all comparisons to a category and compile ideas on the findings. If there were no comparisons, reexamine the hypothesis and secondary sources and evaluate what the source signifies as evidence for the history of the event or pattern. Then make a judgement based on the source and the secondary sources as to whether the significance or pattern belongs to a new category; should it be saved for future investigation; or discredited the hypothesis; or should it be placed in a non-related category in the research pile.

4. Repeat step 2; however, use the newly acquired information to assist in critically analyzing the data. Continue until all data have been analyzed (Cantor & Schneider, 1967).

This is a continuous collection analysis process where all proposed research items, categories, hypothesis are examined and reexamined.

Collecting data through the use of the archival research and scheduled interviews provided information that answered the research questions. The researcher used the findings to form a response to the research questions and tell the story about Harper and her legacy.