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**The Art of Manipulation: Gender Inequity and the Picture Study  
Movement**

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**The Art of Manipulation: Gender Inequity and the Picture Study  
Movement**

**by**

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## **Dedication**

To my family and friends, whose support and encouragement is invaluable.

## **Abstract**

# **The Art of Manipulation: Gender Inequity and the Picture Study Movement**

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This study locates and examines the relationship between societal gendered expectations in nineteenth century United States and the content of a picture study manual published at the turn of the century: Lucy Langdon Williams Wilson's *Picture Study in Elementary Schools: A Manual for Teachers* (1909). Critical analysis of the images, artists, and content of the picture study manual provides insight into the relationship between curricular materials and the social climate during which they were produced. Recognition of this connection will enable art educators and curriculum developers to produce materials and textbooks conscious of the potential bias and marginalization of students.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to Study

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, social and political reforms in the United States were abundant, with collective consciousness and activism providing frameworks upon which awareness could flourish. Marginalized populations banded together to enhance their voices and ignite change. These individuals, often relegated to the fringes of society due to gender, race, and class, began to congregate and stand with a united voice. As a result, the systematic origins of oppression (capitalism, patriarchy, imperialism, etc.) began to react to the new risks posed to the stability of the status quo, presenting itself as a concern for the intellectual and cultural well being of the masses, giving way to the implementation of public education. While educational equality and children's rights were becoming common areas of interest, a need for cultural and social assimilation also pushed this movement forward. The influx of immigrants created the necessity for open edification. Through carefully constructed curriculum, the States could provide life-skill training, core education, trade education, and encourage cultural engagement. The latter manifested in the form of school and school room decoration, a practice that would evolve into the picture study movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The purpose of this study was to locate and then examine the relationship between societal gendered expectations in nineteenth century United States and the content of a picture study manual published at the turn of the century. Analyzing Lucy Langdon Williams Wilson's *Picture Study in Elementary Schools: A Manual for Teachers* (1909) enabled me to isolate three foci within picture study manuals: artists, text, and images. During my first encounter with Wilson's (1909) text I recognized that the artists chosen to be represented, the language used in the text, and the content of the images reinforced a two-sex gender binary framework. Looking further into the content, I sought to

determine if matters of gender, present in the United States during the 19th century, were manifested in and promoted through these foci in Wilson's (1909) manual. If connections between the social shifts of the nineteenth century and this text did exist, what rhetorical and or propagandistic methods may be evidenced in the work of the author, and for what purpose?

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Addressed historically and from an observational perspective, information about the picture study movement in art education is limited to approximate dates, pertinent individuals, and a minimal framework outlining the origin of the movement. In my search for sources, I found only one researcher who had critically analyzed any element of the picture study movement. Peter Smith's (1986) analysis, while brief, included an insightful discussion of the "implication of a hierarchy of wisdom" (p. 52) within the picture study movement. While minimal, his discussion addresses the presence of "agenda" manifested through an implied hierarchy of knowledge within picture study. A group of elite individuals determining material to be ingested by the masses emphasizes an imbalance of power through a potentially oppressive action. Looking at the images, content, and language of the picture study movement, I have explored the possibility of this agenda relating directly to conceptions of gender, race, and class during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Analyzing curricular evidence of an agenda for picture study existing in 1909 has direct connection to contemporary art education. Ronald Jones (1974) asserts that the turn of the twentieth century "marked the beginning and growth of a form of picture study" that closely "parallels the thinking of art educators today" (p. 14). The manner in which Wilson's (1909) text is organized connects art education practices over the past one

hundred years. Contemporary textbooks continue to feature selected thematic images, artist biographies, and suggested curriculum based on the two aforementioned components: While the field of art education has proven malleable, bending and growing as researchers collect data and approach new theories, certain curricular tools have remained consistent. Given the similarities between past and current art history and aesthetic practices, analyzing the picture study phenomena at its point of origin has provided the opportunity to draw useful insight into the growth and change of art education curricular materials, as well as the evolution of art education as a whole.

#### **MOTIVATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND BENEFITS TO THE FIELD**

Historical interpretations and analyses are imperative for the growth of a field. Exploring sensitive, often overlooked, topics within art education has been an exciting and rewarding endeavor. Art education research often explores gender from a contemporary and practical standpoint: how it manifests itself in the classroom, how and why teachers must address it, what implications it has on education success and behavior management, and so on. Scrutinizing events in our history through the lens of gender is invaluable beyond a look at art education today. This exploration has revealed connections between past and current practices as well as igniting critical thinking and examination of an important facet of our history as a field. Examinations of the past have enabled us to synthesize woman's place as the Other. Both historically and currently, women are often perceived as keepers of culture as opposed to creators of it and the curriculum provided to children and adults reinforces this archaic presumption. Alternatively, men are underrepresented in gender studies, seen as oppressors and not victims of patriarchal circumstance. Men are taught to be tough and not to cry just as women are taught to be submissive damsels in distress—both are injustices, both are

relevant, and both are present in art education texts. Why should one aspect of gender representation be explored while the other ignored? The nineteenth century is filled with oppressive behavioral expectations from both the male and female perspective, which need to be explored and revealed. There are expectations that seem to be manifested to some degree in the picture study manuals utilized for public art education.

The benefits of this research to the field of art education are primarily historical. A rich understanding of a field hinges on recognition of its past. It is beneficial for the field to acknowledge and explain our origins and growth through investigation and interpretation. Currently, there are many underserved and underexplored regions of art education, one of those being the picture study movement. Gaining insight into its carnation and execution provides insight into the lasting educational practices continuing today. Analyzing this movement through the lens of gender provides new dimensions, as “gender perspectives cast old issues in a new light” and “by considering women and the issues of gender, historians could achieve a more complete picture of historical events” (Williams, 2003, p. 126). Interpreting the picture study movement and its educational materials through the lens of gender provides a new perspective on an antiquated topic, revealing new connections and interpretations that help to bring clarity to the past and possibility to the present. If we do not investigate the reinforcement of gender inequity presented and armored through picture study manuals, we will likely be unable to fully recognize the evolution and continuing discrimination present in art education texts today.

The responsibility of educators to develop unbiased curriculum is problematic. In order to create objective curriculum, an educator would have to be able to remove him or herself from the content. As individuals we are always operating within systems. For this reason, I would argue there are no unbiased pedagogies, curriculum, or text—everything

we do and create is informed by outside forces and interpreted through our own experience. On the most basic level, all individuals present themselves and their views with certain bias and in order to attempt to omit partiality and present objective ideals, educators need materials that support this objective. Unfortunately, art textbooks do little to challenge archaic societal shortcomings. Most textbooks reinforce divisions of sex, race, and class, by featuring primarily western, male, White artists. Children are continuously digesting the overt and subliminal messages of this subtext. Personally observed performative behaviors indicate that children are learning very early on who they are expected to be and how they should think and behave, based on gender, race, and class. Children need exposure to varied models and schemes that extend beyond societal expectations. I feel fortunate to have had an upbringing filled with assertive, independent, and intelligent women who helped me to see and engage the world in strong and thoughtful ways. These early interactions rendered me sensitive to gender inequity.

My mother, born and raised in rural Georgia, has spent the majority of her life doing “man’s work.” At sixteen she began working shifts in a textile mill, only changing professions at twenty-one to be on the line at Bandag tire factory. As a child and young adult, her environments were inhospitable and often defined by their patriarchal nature, an environment not welcomed in our house. When I was a child, from birth to around seven years of age, my mother did not work—my father would not *allow* it. When I was eight my mother had dealt with his tyrannical machismo for eleven years, her breaking point. She elected instead to pack up all her valuable assets and begin again. Starting over meant working three part-time jobs in order to make ends meet in lieu of subjecting herself to a life managed by her husband. At eight years old, I was taking notes. My mother had overcome adversity in her youth, being a single teenage mother in 1976, and was not going to allow herself to be silenced now. She continues to thrive, as she works

on her Bachelor's degree in English and maintains her role as an occupational trail blazer, being the only female water plant operator in McDonough, Georgia.

I have observed one obstacle after another being trampled by my mother's will power, and it is on her back that my motivation lies. Her experiences trickled down to me, fueling an understanding of circumstances beyond my years. It was clear from those early moments that there were certain expectations of young women and men, that there were boundaries outlining gender, and to go outside those lines was not recommended. Those boundaries both fascinate and inspire me to understand reality from fiction. Why do we behave and think like we do, where did these limitations originate? The unspoken expectations affixed to gender must be explored, and their place within art education must be extinguished.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

Art educator Manuel Barkan emphasized the importance of an historical point of view. He believed an awareness of the origin of established ideas heightens our understanding of modern practices. History, Barkan asserted, enables us to look at art education from a more removed vantage point, in order "to better distinguish some of the whole forest from the qualities of the many individual trees" (Henry, 2002, p. 7). In order to synthesize the content of a picture study manual, I had to place the movement within its proper context. I proceeded through an historical timeline with caution, always conscious of Mary Erikson's claim that art educators tend to arrange history in accordance to its level of pertinence within art education (1977). Seeking to be as unbiased as possible, I began gathering information hidden under many rocks and crevasses from the past two hundred years. Quickly realizing the frustrating, fanatical, and futile task at hand, I turned my focus to foci, or lenses, that would guide my research.

In this I reassured myself that the tools we select for our research are as imperative as the events and individuals we study (Williams, 2003).

Gender emerged as a lens of historical analysis in 1986, through the work of Joan Scott (Thurner, 1997). An invaluable tool for historical research, “gender perspectives cast old issues in a new light,” by providing a more complete version of the story (Williams, 2003, p. 126). Looking at *Picture Study in Elementary Schools: A Manual for Teachers*, by Lucy Langdon Williams Wilson (1909), critically and analytically through the lens of gender, provided the opportunity to explore a more inclusive account of the picture study movement. This approach furthered our understanding of art education’s place within the evolution of public education, specifically curriculum and curricular materials. Acting as an historian, I set out to present a full and rich story based on a range of evidence, focused on connecting the social climate of the time with curricular conditions present in this era. While I am consistently checking my bias, it proved to be the least intrusive problem during my historical investigation. More intrusive, presentism emerged time and again as I waded through historical accounts and current criticisms of gender inequity in the nineteenth century.

I acknowledge that I am writing during a time when the notion of binary gender opposition is archaic (Bryson, 2003; Nicholson, 1997; Tong, 2009). While I respect the complexity of “gender” and do not seek to simplify or reinforce these oppositions, I must insist that gender inequity during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries relied on prescribed oppositions. Therefore I approach the content of the manual with a late nineteenth century gender lens, and not utilizing a twenty-first century perspective. In this regard, race, class, and sexual identity are additional problematic areas of focus. Currently, in the field of Women’s and Gender Studies, it is widely accepted that early consideration of gender inequity lacked few examinations of race, class, or sexual

orientation (Tong, 2009). First wave feminism is a movement of White middle class women (Kesselman, McNair, & Schniedewind, 2008). I respect the position of contemporary scholars, however, while picture study manuals may have content spun from a backlash to the early women's movement (as I argue in later chapters), the implications of its content reach beyond the White middle class. For this reason, I elected to go beyond the traditional face of the first wave feminism in my consideration of the social climate of the time. Always conscious of presentism, I forge new connections from an evolved vantage point considering the following questions: Does the language used to describe the artists, artworks, and art histories reflect the gendered expectations of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? And how does the content of the images correspond to the growing gender divide at that time, specifically the reinforcement of the public and private spheres? The text written by Wilson (1909) is composed of themes, images, artist biographies, and curriculum suggestions. All components, when combined, provided a stable foundation for analysis. Published at the onset of the picture study movement, this text represents the ideals and practices of education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, evidenced through the language, images, and overall content of the book.

Firsthand accounts and contemporary critical analyses of gender equity and inequity in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries form the framework and direct the lens through which I examine the work of Wilson (1909). As I encounter elements of the text that reinforce or disregard 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century gendered notions, I dissect the language, image, artist, and/or curriculum in question and then theorize the potential implications of this content, always supporting my assertions within an accepted historical framework.

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

- Content: Artist biographies and recommended curriculum featured in picture study manuals.
- Gender: In 1986 Joan Scott introduced gender as a category of historical analysis. Scott defined gender as “knowledge about sexual difference,” with knowledge being “defined not only as ideas and insights, but all the institutions, structures, daily practices, and rituals by which a society organizes and understands itself” (Turner, 1997, p. 127).
- Historical Research: “A process of discovery and construction” (Williams, 2003, p. 11), focused on the past but undertaken in a recognized present.
- Picture study movement: Curriculum movement developed in the late 1800s that “sought to develop appreciation of fine art among school children” (Stankiewicz, 1984, p. 86).

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Place and time are the primary factors that established the parameters which limited my study. Limiting my research to nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the United States enabled me to investigate issues of gender through a particular “first wave” lens. Outside the United States and outside this timeframe, arguments made through a first wave lens are antiquated and insufficient. The secondary parameter of my study is the use of one picture study manual. *Study in Elementary Schools: A Manual for Teachers* (1909) provided a useful framework for analysis because of the manner in which it is organized. Wilson (1909) arranged her text thematically, assigning a different idea for exploration monthly. Her text provided themes, content, and images for synthesis.

## **CONCLUSION**

My research has sought to explore possible connections present between gender inequity and art education curricular materials in the nineteenth century. After analyzing Wilson's (1909) text, I have formed an argument for the existence of these connections. This research addressed an historical issue that has been neglected in both art education and gender studies, helping us to understand better the time, place, and purpose of picture study, as well as perhaps ourselves.

## **Chapter 2: Review of Pertinent Literature**

Investigating the picture study movement through the lens of gender required the review of four distinct areas of interest: the picture study movement, public education, gender in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the analytical framework of public and private domain. This review of literature focuses on each topic individually for clarity and ease of reference during analysis. In later chapters, these four areas converge to provide a framework for the correlation between gendered expectations of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the content of picture study manuals.

This review is strategically sequenced in order to develop a narrative framework for discussion. The section begins with the founding and development of the picture study movement in order to root my discussion in the field of art education. To fully recognize the benefits and goals of the picture study movement, I next considered the evolution of public education during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A concise discussion of gender during the same period follows, presenting the social and political context upon which my arguments are built. The review of literature concludes with a critical look at this study's primary analytical framework: public and private domain. With this inclusion, I hope to illustrate the continuing complications of critical gender lenses.

### **THE PICTURE STUDY MOVEMENT**

The evolution of printing technology in the late nineteenth century gave rise to a visual transience (Stankiewicz, 1985). Chromolithography, a process in which photographs are mass produced and filled in with color, caused an exponential increase in the availability of art images between 1840 and 1900. Chromolithographers, such as Louis Prang, utilized this technology to democratize exposure to art traditions. Through mass produced reproductions of canonical works of art, Prang and others exposed the

masses to established culture (Stankiewicz, 1985). Prior to 1840, printed reproductions were not accepted as aesthetic objects or even considered an appropriate means for viewing art. Despite the potential for reproductions to bring art to the masses, chromolithographs were heavily scrutinized by art critics and advocates of traditional high culture. Stankiewicz (1985) notes that these advocates and critics “argued that chromos were anti-art: garish in color, too mechanical to be artistic, [and] symbolic of social decline” (p. 87). Where as a painting may be composed of rich layers and delicate rendering, chromo reproductions captured only the subject and a general idea of color and space. The hand of the artist was often lost, fueling arguments that reproductions alone were not capable of stimulating viewers no matter how untrained their eye may be (Stankiewicz, 1985). Ultimately, the increasing immigrant population required new, universally understood, approaches for cultural assimilation. Criticisms about the quality of reproduced images could not obstruct continuing mass media progressions during this influx of cultural and social change.

Augmented accessibility to images provided democratized cultural opportunities for aesthetic pleasure as well as enrichment (Schwarcz, 1982). The growing immigrant population and the accompanying demographic shift in the public school population presented potential cultural barriers between educators and pupils. The new opportunity to transfer universal ideas from one person to another without need of translation through images was invaluable. The advent of this new technology coupled with a desire to refine the masses, led to the development of *picture study*: a curriculum movement grounded in art appreciation (Stankiewicz, 1985), exercising the imagination, cultivating emotions, and developing aesthetic understanding (Jones, 1974). This curricular shift closely mimicked the church’s use of images in order to relay information to illiterate members of their congregations. The fact that students were being guided into certain frames of

thinking did not come into question and seems, in fact, to be an intended outcome of this educational endeavor. The populous focused instead on determining what age was most appropriate for art exposure through picture study. They remained divided, with some believing that art discussion with children is inappropriate, that “children are not mature enough to get anything from it” (Anderson, 1986, p. 5), while others insisted that art appreciation and structured art viewing be incorporated into the elementary school curriculum (Anderson, 1986). Ultimately, this shift in art education relied on the personal drive and motivation of individuals like Oscar Neale, who elevated and cemented the picture study movement into the public school curriculum.

Oscar Neale was not trained as an art educator nor was he a practicing artist. His connections with art and art history were born from drawing courses he participated in at Doane Academy (Smith, 1986). This exposure to art created a certain aesthetic expectation in Neale, a belief that manifested itself while he was serving as a school superintendent in Nebraska. After encountering a young educator who utilized cut pages from a dressmaker’s publication to adorn the walls of her classroom, Neale became acutely aware that “the arts were neglected in teachers’ education” as well as the education of students (Smith, 1986, p. 49). Soon after, Neale purchased reproductions on loan and took them on the road. He traveled around the country, speaking to students at various schools about the content of the images he purchased. Inspired by the engagement of children in art discussion, Neale would go on to publish a picture study manual titled *Picture Study in the Grades*. The preface of this text contains insight into the main foci of picture study curriculum: (a) “...to develop in children of our schools an appreciation of the great masterpieces of art so that they may know the joy that comes from such an appreciation,” and (b) “...so that their ideas may be influenced” (Smith, 1986, p. 50). It appears that art appreciation and ideological influence were the primary

driving forces behind the picture study movement. Neale's successes reinforced the certainty that picture study would serve as a curricular unifier. People of influence now looked toward technology to educate the masses.

Problematic in the democratic education of individuals is the often overlooked undercurrent of political power displayed by the writer of the text. Smith (1986) reminded us that presentations of *masterpieces* or *desired actions* are equipped with implied authority. Who are the individuals responsible for deciding what is imperative for the masses? How are we to accept their ideals and not seek out the hidden, or not so hidden, agendas? Fred J. Orr outlined two clear "values" in his address at the annual National Education Association meeting in 1900. The first was "a cultural value resulting in a 'training of the mind, morals and taste'" and the second "a technical value resulting in the students' better use "of one or another medium of pictorial expression" (Jones, 1974, p. 14). Even more revealing are Orr's closing remarks: "Picture study is, therefore, valuable in placing before young minds the teachings of great men who have been able to present their lessons in simple and attractive form, easily understood and gladly studied" (Jones, 1974, p. 14). Orr's words highlight the problem my thesis seeks to address. Who was being targeted and impacted by picture study manuals in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and to what end?

#### **GENDER IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES**

The late 18<sup>th</sup> century provided independence for the American Colonies and supplied a hopeful foundation for the women who inhabited this nation. Unparalleled opportunities were left in the wake of the American Revolution and the women of the newly formed states "had the greatest potential for political and economic equality" (Clinton, 1999, p. 3). The support women provided during the American Revolution

highlighted the talents and strengths they had to offer. However, this occurred while “economic necessity and political conflict created more flexible roles for women in the New World” (Clinton, 1999, p. 4). American women still faced varying levels of adversity in the fight for rights and equality. The Revolution had provided women a platform to gain “confidence and pride in their abilities both collectively and as individuals” (Clinton, 1999, p. 13), and though their participation was a necessity for independence, equality remained a potent threat. Fear surrounding the possibility of equal opportunity gave birth to the *cult of domesticity*.

The cult of domesticity is an ideal used to guide women’s societal contributions into *proper* channels, chaining their “public” involvement to the domestic sphere. After the Revolution, women’s power shifted from active participation in the development of a budding nation, to being tethered to biased perceptions about gender. How a woman was perceived by her husband, family, neighbors, and society at large were precedent to little else. These attributes combined to form “true womanhood.” Determining how women were perceived both within and outside the home, true womanhood consisted of four cardinal virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (Welter, 1966).

The strength of a woman in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was not seen in her physical presence, but evident in her pious presentation. First and foremost, women were seen as the vehicle through which religion was passed along to the family. Women were viewed as naturally religious, having a mind formed to be receptive to the Gospel. Most importantly, religion was a highly valued feminine attribute because it did not take women away from their “proper sphere,” which was the home (Welter, 1966). Unlike other potential endeavors, religion would not make a woman any less available to her husband and children, and any less submissive to them. Religion was utilized as a tool to transform women into subservient, home based, and uneducated individuals. To apply your time to literature or

thinking beyond the church was viewed as the ultimate disservice to your family. To turn away from religion was to mark yourself as a brute and to remove your status as a woman.

Purity was as essential as piety to a young woman. Its absence was viewed as unnatural and unfeminine; in fact, without purity a woman was no longer classified as “woman” (Welter, 1966, p. 154). Purity, like religion, was promoted as the manner in which a female was defined. Her purity belonged not to her but to her husband, and to give this most beautiful gift to anyone else was unforgiveable. Just as religion was bound to intellect, purity was tied to reformation: “In the nineteenth century any form of social change was tantamount to an attack on woman’s virtue” (Welter, 1966, p. 157). Continuing, Welter (1966) wrote,

The third virtue, submissiveness, was paramount. Societal expectations were spun consistently to encourage the submissiveness of *true women*. Submission was illustrated as an active choice that elevated a woman to a higher status, a virtue that separated women from men. Men were supposed to be religious, although they rarely had time for it, and supposed to be pure, although it came awfully hard to them, but men were the movers, the doers, the actors. Women were the passive, sub-missive responders. (p. 159)

A woman who understood and accepted her position was a good woman, those who attempted to step away from their prescribed roles, were viewed as volatile, disgraceful, and masculine.

The final virtue prescribed to the women of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was that of domesticity. Just as all things stem from religion, purity, and submission, all roads lead home. The facets of womanhood were wrapped up within the private sphere and all the events and individuals within it. Women were charged with educating their children and husbands in religion, both nurturing and educating the family on proper hygiene, cooking and maintaining a clean and productive household, and creating an environment that was

so pleasurable men would not leave the home to find a “good time.” Elsewhere women were educated about the roles they were meant to fill through the popular culture of the time, particularly women’s magazines, as well as through social interactions in town, at home, and in church. Home journals and cookbooks served as constant reminders of the expectations and demands of womanhood. However, with the introduction of social reforms in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a woman’s role as developer and protector of her limited sphere began to break down. Many women, some outraged by the existence and encouragement of the cult of domesticity, as well as some who felt incapable of fulfilling such definitions of “womanhood,” began to actively change that status quo.

While Welter (1966) paints an image of the 19<sup>th</sup> century woman by virtue of firsthand sources, diaries and publications, she is often criticized for the narrowness of her focus. Roberts (2002), Hewitt (2002), and Epstein (2002) challenge Welter for her lack of demographic diversity. In *The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860*, Welter (1966) chronicles the experience of White upper middle class women, omitting the trials and tribulations of minorities and the working class. Roberts (2002) acknowledges that Welter’s (1966) sarcastic tone and confrontation of first wave feminism shook things up, becoming regurgitated rhetoric for feminist scholars of multiple generations. However, Roberts (2002) is highly critical, citing Welter’s (1966) lack of an analytical framework as a great flaw of her argument, rendering it weak, one-sided, and superficial. Hewitt (2002) adds that *The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860* was Welter’s assessment of a historical circumstance that scholars must look at critically, as an alternative to quoting it endlessly. Epstein (2002) pushes further the issue of race, citing the inherent racism in first wave feminism.

Confronting the issues of race and social class is as imperative as addressing both the male and female experience of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. To look only at one portion

of the whole complex experience is a historical injustice, and would simply present an unfruitful interpretation of the past. However, this moment in time, in regards to gender, is defined by White middle class women's engagement in various forms of social revolution. In order to accurately assess the content of this period, which I view as backlash to the progression of gender equality, I must consider the movement within a narrow time frame. I fully acknowledge that in order to understand the relationship between gender and curricular content, one must consider race, class, and sexual preference. However, my analysis is made of a particular moment in time, a moment defined, in regards to gender, by the social actions of the White middle class. It is within these parameters that I recognize the narrowness of my analysis.

I argue in favor of this skewed perspective based on historical context. While ultimately I sought an understanding based on the experiences of an extended range of men and women in the United States, at this moment it is imperative to look at one specific manifestation of gender inequity. Welter's (1966) perception of the nineteenth century is rooted in firsthand accounts. In order to understand and utilize her perspective, I had to look at the time from which she is writing: during the second wave of feminism. In feminist studies, the second wave is synonymous with universalism and binary opposition, two characteristics heavily scrutinized as we currently reach across borders and boundaries of gender, race, and class.

#### **UNIVERSALISM: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DOMAIN**

The women's liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s influenced shifts within multiple fields of academia, including feminist studies. Unrelenting social discriminations required these newfound "scholar-activists" to ask questions that might assist in the formation of feminist centric lenses within research and the academy (Lewin,

2006). The language developed and implemented by feminist researchers has impacted the historical analysis of gender. Simultaneously focusing on the personal and cross-cultural subordination of women, these scholars situated women's oppression universally and often, if not only, discussed this oppression in dichotomous terms. The following paragraphs critically consider the origins, the benefits, and the detriments of using binary opposition as an analytical framework. Despite the validity of these detriments, I chose to utilize the framework of public versus private domain for my analysis of a picture study manual. In later chapters, I revisit the criticisms in this section and defend my utilization of this binary means of comparative analysis.

The universal nature of women's subordination is a cornerstone in the work of early feminist scholars and anthropologists. *Woman, Culture, and Society*, edited by Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (1974), focuses on the cross-cultural subordination of women and the universal asymmetry of the sexes. In her theoretical overview, Rosaldo accepts that there are a variety of unique sex roles within any given culture, but emphasizes the collective "tradition that treats women as essentially uninteresting and irrelevant" and the universal acceptance of the idea that "women are in some way subordinate to men" (Rosaldo, 1974, p.17). Due to the unique nature of gendered expectations from culture to culture, there are innumerable approaches one may take to evaluate the subordinate nature of women. Rosaldo streamlines her evaluation by proposing a structural framework that connects psychology, as well as cultural and social organization, to "an opposition between the domestic" or private "orientation of women and the extra domestic" or public "orientation of men" (Rosaldo, 1974, pp. 17-18).

The notion of private and public domains is pervasive throughout early feminist studies. Researchers utilize these domains to classify and investigate the "male and female in psychological, cultural, social, and economic aspects of human life" (Rosaldo,

1974, p. 23). The notion of private, as put forth by Rosaldo (1974), describes a sphere defined by its domestic nature, often the home or an equivalent. Alternatively, public refers to “institutions and forms of association that link, rank, organize, or subsume” private groups (Rosaldo, 1974, p. 23). This overarching framework provides a space for researchers to organize the activities ascribed to the sexes. Following this belief, the origin of private and public domains is rooted in biology, thus the unnecessary placement of men and women into limited categories originates from birth.

Child rearing provides a basis for a variety of binary oppositions, beginning with private and public domains. Regardless of the societal constructions of a particular culture, childbirth offers an innate distinction in the division of labor between men and women. As mothers, women are biologically assigned domestic duties and are therefore attached to the private sphere (Rosaldo, 1974). Further, a woman’s position in society hinges on her identity as a mother and her confinement to the home defines her socially. In contrast, “men have no single commitment as enduring, time consuming, and emotionally compelling” as the bond that exists between mother and child (Rosaldo, 1974, p. 24). Men lack an anchor attaching them to the home and are therefore free to form identities and broader connections within society. In opposition to women, men are defined by their associations outside the private sphere. This establishment of a *natural* male and female sphere division is propagated by the binary opposition of nature versus culture within feminist studies.

To understand the universal subordination of women, one must consider the universal qualities of existence. What are the constants experienced by all humans in all societies regardless of cultural practices and societal organization? Sherry Ortner (1974) believes that we must investigate these universal elements of the human condition in order to decipher what it is about our existence that leads to the subordination of women.

She poses the following question: “What could there be in the generalized structure and conditions of existence, common to every culture that would lead every culture to place a lower value upon women?” (p. 71). Within societies there are symbolic systems, as well as systems of value. Ortner (1974) proposes that women are being identified with, or are symbolic of, an idea or practice that is devalued within all cultures. The author argues that nature, in its most basic form, satisfies this ideal, that when compared to culture, it is a “lower order of existence” (Ortner, 1974, p. 72). In opposition to nature, “culture” actively seeks to generate symbolic “sustaining systems of meaningful forms” in order for humanity to transcend “the givens of natural existence” (Ortner, 1974, p. 72). Culture is an attempt to control nature. Ortner (1974) acknowledges that nature and culture are conceptual ideas that are not manifested in tangible forms, thus there is no clear delineation of where one ends and the other begins. Beyond that, she asserts that the conception of nature and culture may vary within societies—“that some cultures articulate a much stronger opposition between the two categories” and that certain primitive cultures “do not see or intuit any distinction between the human cultural state and the state of nature at all” (Ortner, 1974, p. 72). To counter potential variables that dismiss the universal notion of a nature and culture opposition, Ortner (1974) insists that any form of ritual reveals intent and requires the manipulation of nature. The universal second-class status of women is easily explained by hypothesizing that women are identified with nature and that men are identified with culture. Further, the obvious evolution of thought is that culture transcends nature therefore man rises above woman. But, how are women closer to nature? The answer to this question is the lifeline between the binary opposition of “nature and culture” to the prescription of private and public domains: procreation.

Ortner (1974) dissects the significance of procreation on the over-arching status of women on three levels: First, the functions of women's bodies is more involved *more* of the time with "species life" when compared to men (Ortner, 1974, p. 73). Second, women's ability to reproduce puts her in the position to occupy social roles that are less desirable than those of men within a society. Third, women's social roles give them "a different *psychic structure*," which is more closely related to nature. On the first level Ortner (1974), citing de Beauvoir, presents the argument that a woman's body does not serve a woman. (Instead, it functions primarily to ensure the comfort of the egg or fetus depending on the woman's current place in the life cycle.) Ortner (1974) summarizes:

It is simply a fact that proportionately more of the woman's body space, for a greater percentage of her lifetime, and at some—sometimes great—cost to her personal health, strength, and general stability, is taken up with the natural processes surrounding the reproduction of the species. (p. 75)

A woman is a vessel, a tool of natural creation. Alternatively, man is a craftsman who generates artificial and lasting objects and systems. On the second level of her argument Ortner (1974) illustrates that the nature of women's reproductive capabilities dictates the social context in which she exists. Women are permanently linked to domesticity or the private domain. Their "confinement to the domestic" sphere is argued by Ortner (1974) to be a result of lactation (p. 77). On the most basic level, women are universally relegated to the private domain because of their physiology. The final portion of her argument inspires the most controversy, the idea that women are not only physically and socially different but that they have a unique psychic structure. Ortner (1974) declares that the feminine psyche "tends to be involved with concrete feelings, things, and people, rather than with abstract entities (p. 81). Women are subjective because of the personal nature of the relationships within their domain, so again, even the abstract elements of women's existence are products of female reproductive physiology.

In considering Ortner's position, I question our ability to find and then analyze "universal qualities of existence." Are there constants experienced throughout *all* cultures? Arguing the association of women with nature, Ortner assumes that cultural definitions of nature are consistent enough to be comparable. The relationship that exists between a specific culture and the universal natural world, dictates that particular society's definition and understanding of nature. Because those relationships are unique and varied, it is impossible to assume that there are any constants for us to analyze, including those of a biological nature. Our understanding of the natural world impacts the manner in which we interact with it, and our bodies are no exception. Through scientific research and education, citizens of industrialized nations possess at least a rudimentary understanding of their physiology. Remote civilizations may not possess this objective understanding of biological functions. For example, menstruation may be viewed as damning, an event that necessitates seclusion. What is more appalling: the seclusion of menstruating women in a culture who fears this process due to ignorance or the ridicule of menstruating women in societies that are fully aware of this biological process? Are these two scenarios comparable? I would argue no. If you are going to cite the mistreatment of women within a society, then one must acknowledge the variables within that culture that have led to such discrimination. When we Whitewash over discrimination, placing varied experiences into a single category, we run the potential of putting more women at risk—generalizations will hinder progress. The generalizations found in the nature versus culture argument mimic the oversimplification that is universal asymmetry.

The arguments put forth by Rosaldo (1974) and Ortner (1974) are both profound and problematic. The proposal of universal asymmetry during the second wave of feminism heightened the awareness of and reinforced the need to address the pan-cultural

inequities faced by women. A vital component to any movement is the diffusion of awareness; using high stakes verbiage, like “universal,” captures the ears of the proponents, of the opposition, and of the indifferent, generating discussion, analysis, and synthesis. While I agree with the assertions of a universal inequity put forth by Rosaldo, there are factors left unaddressed that render the argument problematic.

I believe that all women, in every culture, are *perceived* to be subordinate in some capacity to men. I have not encountered any arguments against this suggestion that would lead me to believe otherwise. Even within spaces that appear, on the surface, to be egalitarian, it becomes apparent that in some capacity men are elevated above women. However, universal subordination falls short in regards to the consideration of race and class. While acknowledgement of these divisions is superficially present in the framework of this philosophy, no analysis presented by Rosaldo or Ortner considers the impact of diversity on binary opposition. This lack of diverse understanding is particularly corrosive in regards to the public and private domains.

A multitude of second wave feminist writings, both inside and outside of anthropology, discuss the opposition of public and private domains. While arguments made about the domestic sphere were pertinent and continuously referenced in academia, the scope of their reach was misleading. As with universal asymmetry, the prearranged occupation of the private domain was presented as a collective oppression of all women. In reality, the clear distinction between public and domestic spheres is a Western convention. The industrialized nature of our culture gave birth to the separation of the public and private. Factory and business work continuously enhanced the distinction of these realms. While the reproductive physiological foundation of public and private domains is a universal fact of womanhood, the existence of this dichotomy hinges on our particular cultural relegation of gendered roles. An example of this fact can be seen

throughout American history, as war breeds opportunity and backlash for and against women.

If you look at conflicts, beginning with the American Revolution, a clear pattern emerges. Men are sent away to battle, leaving vacancies in the public sphere that must be filled; women step up to fill these positions, abandoning their private domain. When the war has ended, the men return and the women are expected to retreat to their *appropriate* sphere. This pattern repeated during the Civil War, then during World War I, and again during World War II. After each of these wars, there is a push to remind women of their appropriate place within American society. *American* is the key descriptor in the private and public analysis. Power, in the west, is distributed among White men. Any disruption to this power is unwelcomed, especially in the case of women occupying positions formerly taken by men. This over-arching power schema does not include the issue of race and class, which when considered, add additional layer upon layer of necessary considerations, further evidencing that it is impossible to simplify these issues.

The use of public and private domain as a framework for investigation is viable, but applicable only within very specific populations. All factors that impact a woman's existence must be considered: her race, class, sexual orientation, and any other unique variables that may dictate her experience. When these factors are considered, the notion of public and private domain are revealed to be a legitimate issue, primarily for White heterosexual women of varying socioeconomic statuses. If this framework is forced onto all women, then one risks complicating facets of their discrimination and overlooking others. The oppression of women is unique to the woman, we cannot paint with such broad strokes, we have to address and recognize individual needs. The nineteenth century, and the first wave of feminism, permits these parameters to be utilized. The first wave, in hindsight, is defined by its focus on White middle class women, therefore the

dichotomy of private and public spheres is an applicable and useful analytical framework for a picture study manual composed in 1909.

### **Chapter 3: *Picture Study in Elementary Schools: A Manual for Teachers***

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, multitudes of picture study books and manuals were published. Each of these volumes approached picture study in a unique way. Some authors organized their text around students in primary and secondary classrooms, while others spoke directly to educators and individuals outside of public schools, advising them on how to implement this curriculum with their respective populations. Lucy Wilson developed a teaching manual very reminiscent of contemporary “teacher’s editions” of textbooks, featuring images, historical, and curricular content. The following chapter provides a brief overview of the origins and content of *Picture Study in Elementary Schools: A Manual for Teachers* (1909).

#### **THE ORIGINS**

Lucy Langdon Williams Wilson was born on August 18, 1864 in St. Albans, Vermont (Vinal, 2006, p. 456). A lover of knowledge and knowledge acquisition, Wilson devoted her life to education and the writing of education texts. In 1899 she published *Picture Study in Elementary Schools*, a manual for primary grade teachers. This first publication, consisting only of primary grade instruction, laid the framework for the two following publications in 1900 and 1909. The 1909 text is formed of two volumes, both of which are organized by the traditional ten month public school calendar. Each month, in both volumes, is assigned a theme and five images that speak to this designated topic. Each volume of Wilson’s text spans approximately 250 pages. In order to make manageable the amount of content for this study, I chose to limit my investigation to one volume in the set. Part one of Wilson’s two-part 1909 publication serves as the object of my study.

## **A NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE VOLUME**

It is the turn of twentieth century, and your child's classroom consists of four barren walls painted institution-white adorned only with generic writing boards and dull looking maps. There is little color in the world of school children. This is no place for art, according to Lucy Wilson. The lack of imagination in schoolrooms, uninspired curriculum, and aesthetically stunted drawing lessons inspired Wilson to create an alternative: "Tinted walls adorned with reproductions of great pictures and casts of famous statuary, are the order of the day" (Wilson, 1909 p. ix). Wilson possessed and voiced sophisticated and visually appealing plans for primary and secondary classrooms. She encouraged educators to develop a space where authentic aesthetic learning could occur. Wilson believed that this "proper environment" combined with an informed interpreter would lead to a new "Palace Beautiful," where these manuals would serve as a "guide to its treasures" (Wilson, 1909, p. ix). Wilson strengthened her argument regarding classroom and curricular revolution by including a quote from James Frederick Hopkins, director of drawing in public schools. Hopkins revealed a collective interest in the movement, asserting that "picture study should be taken seriously. This effort is not for amusement, entertainment, or decoration alone." The purpose of picture study is much greater than all these elements (Wilson, 1909, p. x).

## **THE CONTENT**

The scope and purpose of Wilson's manual was guided by subjective goals. She described in detail at the beginning of her text the intent she has to inspire and to guide children's engagement with art objects, to impact their ideals, and to refine their morals. Wilson's aim was to impart "a true appreciation of, and love for, the paintings by the world's great masters" through exposure to "famous and beautiful paintings" (Wilson, 1909, p. vii). The paintings provided in the text are accompanied by artist biographies, a

suggested “method to be pursued by the teacher” and quotes that may be printed with each picture (Wilson, 1909, p. vii). Wilson organized the text by months of the school year, September through June, assigning each month a theme. The thematic months correspond to the transition from home to school, to the changing seasons, and to the current holidays. The level of artist information and suggested curriculum varies from month to month, but each section consisted of five images, a simple biography, and recommended curricular methods. In order to understand the overall content of the text, I have provided a brief description of each month and the images displayed therein.

The month of September was designated “Home and School.” Beginning the school year with this transactional theme was meant to assist young children in the shift from their individual homes and mothers to the collective learning environment. The images included in this month embody this intent. Of the five images presented for September, three are dedicated to the home, one highlights school life, and the last image represents the month from a seasonal perspective. The family-centric images include *Mother and Child* by Vigee-Le Brun, *Cat Family* by Adam, and *Girl with Cat* by Hoecker. These three images depict a mother and daughter embracing, a family of cats lying together on the floor, and a young girl adorned in clothing and ornaments passed down from generations before her. These images are meant to remind the students of the presumably safe and nurturing space from which they come. To shift from home to school the students discussed *Primary School in Brittany* by Geoffroy. This painting provided students with an idyllic image of school, an image that captured their current endeavors and connected the student to their immediate place of learning. The final image in the set, *September* by Zuber, is a serene landscape that embodies the change from summer to autumn. In addition to utilizing a seasonal image for educational means,

the choice to use a landscape as the final image helped to transport the students from home and school into nature.

“Nature” was a common theme explored during the month of October in primary, elementary, and secondary schools. Even today, students continue to focus on changing seasons through crafts and activities in their classrooms. For October, Wilson presents five images primarily centered on harvest. The first, *The Hay Harvest* by Bastien-Lepay, embodies the exhaustion felt after a long day in the field, as two laborers rest in the grass after eating a meal. Alternatively, *Harvest Time* by L’Hermitte and *The Balloon* by Dupre encouraged students to observe laborers actively gathering harvest, working in tandem to complete a tedious task. Alternatively, *Return to the Farm* by Troyon is a pastoral landscape with cattle as its central figures. The final, and transitional image, is *Shepherdess Knitting* by Millet. An image of a woman standing in the field amongst her herd, engrossed in her needle and yarn, Millet’s painting provided students with an understanding of the preparations necessary for winter as the calendar moved from October to November.

“Preparation for Winter and Thanksgiving” presented students with a narrative of winter preparation. From herds of sheep illustrated by Rosa Bonheur in *Brittany Sheep* and Lerolle in *The Shepherdess* to the spinning of wool in Maes’ *The Spinner*, students acquired an understanding of the process of transitioning into winter. Additionally, Wilson provided images of Thanksgiving through the work of Velasquez and Boughton, with *Aesop* and *Pilgrim Exiles* respectively. Concluding the month of November with an emphasis on holiday celebration, prepared the students for the holiday centric December line-up.

Wilson’s December calendar focused entirely on Christmas. As with contemporary elementary classrooms, holidays tend to dictate curriculum during their

respective months. Wilson provided five images directly connected to Christmas, featuring prominently the Madonna and child or the nativity. *Arrival of the Shepherds* by Lerolle, *Holy Night* by Correggio, *Madonna and Child* by Dagnan-Bouvret, *Madonna of the Louvre* by Botticelli, and *Holy Family* by Murillo provide a religious focus for primary students, while staying within their familial centric comfort zones. After focusing four months on images Wilson believed the students would relate to and respond significantly toward, she shifts into the works of the “masters.”

January and February are dedicated to the “Great Masters,” artists viewed as esteemed and timeless. Wilson transitioned from Christmas into master works by featuring Bellini’s *Angel*, Raphael’s *Madonna on the Chair*, and Andrea del Sarto’s *Madonna of the Sack*, easing the students into more broad subjects. Wilson presented ten images she attributed to the “Great Masters,” all canonical works, many of which would still be considered master works today. The author believed that sharing *universally* accepted images of beauty with students would be able to instill not only images “but realities, and bringing forth and nourishing true virtues” (Wilson, 1909, p. x). Wilson believed that these images combined with the appropriate content held the power to influence students’ ideals and behavior. In addition to the timeless masters, Wilson included a chapter touching on artists whom she believed to be “Modern Masters.”

March’s modern masters include Landseer, Richter, Bastien-Lepage, Bashkirtseff, and Israels. The content of these artists paintings continued to reflect Wilson’s focus on family, specifically the nurturing mother, as well as her focus on images of animals. Wilson believed that all children respond positively to images of animals, that this engagement forged a connection to the work of art and artist that served as a foundation for future growth. After exploring a variety of subjects through the works of “masters,” Wilson returned to seasonal themes to complete the school year.

The emergence of springtime resulted in April and May being dedicated to “Nature.” These two months featured images that displayed an array of subjects: Carot’s *Willows* and *Lake at Ville D’Avray* provided serene glimpses of nature, while Renouf’s *A Helping Hand* reminded the students once again about the importance of family togetherness. Within these two months, Wilson also provided several images of domestic life executed by Millet. These images illustrated a connection between humans and nature, making nature a relatable and digestible entity.

Wilson closed the school year with “Vacations in Other Lands,” a trip through five countries around the world: Algeria was recognized through *Arab at Prayer*, Africa seen in *A Kabyl*, Japan through *In the Uyeno Park*, Italy by way of *A Street Scene*, and Spain seen through *The Melon Eaters*. Wilson’s compilation of virtual foreign travels transported the students to unfamiliar places and engaged them in conversations about cultures unknown to them. Capitalizing on upcoming summer break, teachers had an opportunity for their students to connect to the idea of traveling to another place and experiencing things beyond their typical day-to-day life.

Displayed in this overview of the images included in *Picture Study in Elementary Schools* (1909), Wilson’s text approached a variety of subjects: home, school, nature, holidays, seasons, master artists, and travel. For this reason, one could undertake the analysis of this text through a variety of lenses. Approaching this task, in the following chapter I explore the images and content within this text that relate directly to gender and gendered expectations of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century (public versus private domain, nature versus culture) and discuss forms of gender inequity revealed through the content selected and produced by Wilson in this picture study manual.

## Chapter 4: Data and Analysis

My desire to look critically at *Picture Study in Elementary Schools: A Manual for Teachers* emerged from my initial encounter with the text. Upon first glance I recognized the presence of a subtext, some portions more subtle than others, which inspired me to look more precisely at Wilson's work as a whole. Closer investigation revealed multiple areas of concern. One could consider the content of this text through a variety of lenses: gender, classism, racism, heterosexism, and colonialism, to name several. These foci could be adequately explored individually or in tandem, as many of these marginalizations occur simultaneously for a range of individuals.

The data and analysis provided in this chapter serve as starting point for further investigation into the marginalization of women in historical and contemporary art education curricular materials. I have organized the following images and content based on the thematic divisions within Wilson's text. The following analysis is based on my understanding of the nineteenth and early twentieth century emphasis on a separation between the public and private domain (Ortner, 1974; Rosaldo, 1974; Welter, 1966). While this dichotomy has proven problematic from contemporary academic standards, the universal notion of women in the United States being solely responsible for domestic duties (regardless of their participation in the public sphere) is an applicable and accurate frame of analysis for this time period. While simultaneous oppression complicates an analysis of women as a group, I felt it was fair to focus solely on social implications based on gender for the purpose of this investigation.

## SEPTEMBER: HOME AND SCHOOL



Illustration 1: *Mother and Child*

The first piece featured for the month of September is *Mother and Child*, a painting by artist Marie Vigée-Le Brun. The image is composed of two figures, a mother and daughter, embracing. The content of this image corresponds directly with September's theme, reflecting a sense of home through the eyes of a young child. Wilson's choice to begin her text with this piece as well as her decision to utilize this image for the cover speaks to her concerns and emphasis for the primary grades. Reiterated in the textual content is, Wilson desired contentment for young pupils transitioning from the home to the school, and she believed that she could achieve this through the selection and inclusion of warm and nurturing images. However, considering the social climate of the early twentieth century (the continuing push for women to remain in the private sphere), Wilson's choice to illustrate motherhood combined with the language of her text speaks to the backlash of attempting to keep women in the private sphere.

Wilson introduces the painting with an excerpt from a critique written by Sir Charles Eastlake. Eastlake writes: “A simple and unaffected group, *charmingly* composed. The mother’s *features* are very refined and *pretty*, and the eyes sparkle with animation” (Wilson, 1909, p. 3). The combination of Eastlake’s choice of adjectives and the emphasis of his opening remarks are illustrative of the disparity between male and female artists often observed in art historical texts (Bolin, 1995/1996). Eastlake’s use of the term *charmingly* to describe the composition of Vigee-Lebrun’s piece is of consequence. Gendered terms in art criticism and descriptions often speak to the biological sex of the artist and have little to do with the content or execution of the artwork. If Vigee-Lebrun had been male, her composition would have more likely have been described as simple, straight forward, or (depending on her notoriety) masterful. Decorum expected to be maintained by women in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries guided Eastlake’s word choice. Along with gendered adjectives his introduction lays the framework for the emphasis on appearance that accompanies female subjects and objects in Wilson’s text.

Following the brief reflection of Sir Charles Eastlake, the reader is introduced to the artist, Vigee-Le Brun, who is described first as a daughter. The choice Wilson made to lead with this descriptor creates an intriguing power structure. Initially, the artist is defined foremost in relation to a man, her father. However, Wilson shifts the power dynamic by describing Vigee-Le Brun’s father as “a second-rate portrait painter” (Wilson, 1909, p. 3). This action places Vigee-Le Brun in a position of power over her father. This position is reinforced by the choice of language used to describe their relationship: Wilson narrates, her father “*left her* an orphan at twelve” (Wilson, 1909, pp. 3-4), but fortunately, Vigee-Le Brun was already a masterful portrait painter. Wilson places the man, in this case Vigee-Le Brun’s father, in an active negative role while

simultaneously highlighting how unnecessary he was to the artist's success. I find the inclusion of this moment in the artist's life, as well as the manner in which it is framed, fascinating. The excerpt is representative of the social struggles being felt during this period, a push and pull between a woman's power being recognized and a woman's power being dismissed. Wilson, intentionally or unintentionally, evidences this struggle throughout her text. After describing Vigee-Le Brun's success in spite of her father, Wilson highlights the artist's skill and accomplishment, specifically her becoming a member of the Royal Academy at the age of twenty-eight (Wilson, 1909). Despite the strong initial description of Vigee-Le Brun, Wilson shifts into the perpetuation of superficiality and the private domain.

Wilson describes Vigee-Le Brun as beautiful first and a "clever artist" second (Wilson, 1909, p. 4). The fact that her appearance is mentioned is unique to her sex. In no criticisms, biographies, or suggested curriculums by Wilson is the appearance of a male artist discussed or mentioned. From beauty Wilson shifts into the reinforcement of Vigee-Le Brun's domestic status, detailing the marriage and separation of the artist and M. Le Brun. Wilson highlights M. Le Brun's lack of moral character, describing his behavior as "dissolute," which "obliged" Vigee-Le Brun to leave him and take "her beautiful daughter" (Wilson, 1909, p. 4) with her. The need to justify the artist's unique domestic circumstance speaks to the marital expectations of women during the time of Wilson's writing. One must have justification to be living independent of a man. The use of the term "obliged" implies that in this circumstance separation is not only justified, but a positive action. This distinction is imperative since *Mother and Child's* intended connections are domestic.

*Mother and Child* served to "link the school and home" so that students would feel "contented" (Wilson, 1909, p. 5). The feminization of education, where students are

transferred from their biological mother to a school “mother,” is indicated by Wilson’s thematic choice. Additionally, she claims that the children will instantly connect to this piece, seeing themselves reflected in the loving mother and child dynamic, not taking into consideration the variations of home life and family dynamics that exist. Wilson consistently focuses on heteronormative traditional kinship systems, seemingly not allowing room for varied demographics. This limited scope of familial definitions undermines her desired goal of connection, promoting the longed for ideal rather than the reality. Students enter the classroom with an unlimited array of familial pairings, the author’s assumption and prescribed notion of family is limiting and exclusive. Wilson assumes the students will connect, then, by process of evolution, will long to know more about “the lovely lady” who this image represents (Wilson, 1909, p. 5).

Wilson believes that the motherhood and beauty of Vigee-Le Brun will serve as a gateway to art education. To insure and to reinforce the children’s interpretation of this work, Wilson suggests allowing them to “choose” a quotation to accompany the image. The quotations, however, will be selected from a predetermined lot provided by the teacher. By controlling both the verbal connections to the visual image the teacher forms and shapes the students’ ideas about the artwork and its supposed “content.” If a teacher controls the image as well as the students’ associations with it, I would argue that the students’ engagement has shifted from education to propaganda. Controlling interpretations through quotations that emphasize motherhood and the importance of being a mother is of particular consequence when combined with Wilson’s use of feminine pronouns.

Wilson suggests that educators should “allow” children “to choose, each for *herself*, which one *she* wishes to keep on *her* desk” (Wilson, 1909, pp. 6-7 Itallics added for emphasis). Is the author specifying who the image is intended for? Two out of one

hundred images in the text exhibit the use of feminine pronouns, both of these images are categorized in the template of home and school. The implications of this pronoun usage are radical. For me, they are indicative of an underlying view put forward by Lucy Wilson. To allow a student to hold onto the image and prescribed text at their personal desk enforces ownership of the image and ideas attached to that image. The ownership could be detrimental, especially when Wilson insists that children may not make the “right decision” about their image and quotation and that you must assist and re-direct until the students come to the *correct* conclusion (Wilson, 1909). The idea of one correct interpretation is problematic by itself, particularly within this analytical form of art education. As facilitators, educators should enable students to intake and synthesize images independently with minimal intrusion. Wilson’s recommendations here exhibited control over all aspects of student engagement: image choice, content choice, and interpretation. Additionally, Wilson reinforced the importance of not empowering students to recognize their own contributions to their thought processes and conclusion about the work and its contents, making sure that educators masked their contributions to the students’ engagement with the work.

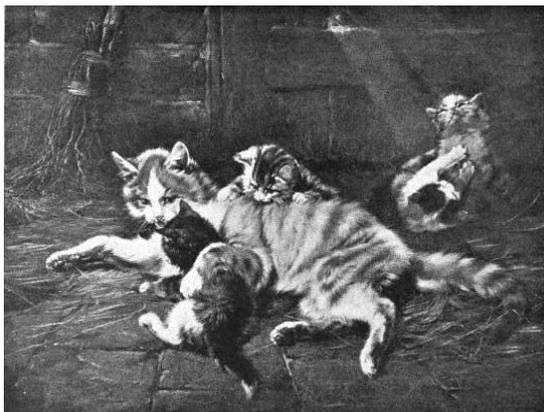


Illustration 2: *The Cat Family*

The second piece included in Wilson's text is *The Cat Family* by Adam. This image depicts an adult cat and four kittens lounging and playing on the stone floor of a barn. The moment captured feels candid and natural. The connections between this image and the notion of home are clear and direct. There are no components, based solely on the image, that speak to unequal gender dynamics and societal expectations. However, the content accompanying the image raises some issues for consideration.

Wilson provides a very brief discussion of the piece with no information about the artist, only referred to as Adam. The imperative elements of Wilson's prose are her suggestions of use of the image and, again, her use of feminine pronouns. The author asserts that even the "shyest child responds readily to the kittens, for they are so dear to *her*" (Wilson, 1909, p. 8 Itallics added for emphasis). The purpose of the artwork is to bring forward the notion of family, in a less direct and abrasive manner. The idea that the kittens would trigger these associations in young girls may be linked to their "innate" desire to become mothers. The idea that women, or in this case girls, lack control of their bodies and biological desires is problematic, and lies at the root of the private versus public domain argument. Women are directly linked to nature due to their ability to create and sustain life. Women's ability to reproduce proverbially married them to the socially constructed domestic sphere. The necessity of childcare combined with the physical stress of reproduction provided the necessary framework for the separation of the public and private, relocating women to the role of mother and caretaker. Of additional interest is the use of the pronoun "her" in reference to the teacher. This solidifies the notion of a transition from one mother (home) to another (school). Wilson

seems to be speaking directly to a female audience within the first section of her text, clarifying the relationship between the content and possible intent of the author.



Illustration 3: *Girl with Cat*

The third installment in home and school in Wilson's text is the Dutch painting *Girl with Cat* by Hoecker. The image consists of a young girl in traditional Dutch clothing, holding a large black cat in her arms. This piece brings forth the idea of tradition and, when combined with the accompanying text, multigenerational motherhood. Discussing the girl's attire, Wilson references her mother and grandmother having come before her and shared her experience and her adornments. Calling attention to the girl's mother and grandmother brings out an implication of production and familial responsibility. The individual pictured here is regarded as being a part of a family line and is expected to create a family of her own in order to continue the legacy.

Additionally, Wilson discusses the domestic rituals involved in caring for the unique attire worn by the “charming” girl (Wilson, 1909, p. 10), connecting girls with domestic chores and painting those chores with a large and positive brush.



Illustration 4: *Primary School in Brittany*

A shift from home to school occurs at this point in the text, through *Primary School in Brittany* by Jean Geoffroy. Wilson provides more detail about the artist than she does the painting. Beginning with a quotation from Guillemot, Wilson emphasizes the skill of Geoffroy, describing his work as “epic” instead of “charming,” as with Vigee-Le Brun (Wilson, 1909, p. 12). Geoffroy’s biography does not reference his role as son; it does not mention his parents or family at all. Instead, he is defined by his wealth and abilities as an artist. Comparing the works by Vigee-Le Brun and Geoffroy, it appears that gender differences are very apparent. While Vigee-Le Brun was described primarily based on her appearance and relationships with others, Geoffroy is signified independent of anyone else and solely for skill as an artist. The discrepancy illustrated here is

prevalent throughout Wilson’s text, with men being consistently referenced for their artistic ability, as in the case of Geoffroy and Millet, and women being regularly noted for their appearance, as seen in the discussions of LeBrun and the central female figures in pieces featured later in my analysis.

#### **OCTOBER: NATURE**



Illustration 5: *Hay Harvest*

Lepage’s *Hay Harvest* depicts two central figures, a man in a reclining pose and a woman sitting upright, stationary in a field. The combination of the image and title creates a timeline of events for the viewer to process. The workers, both appearing exhausted, are at rest in an empty hay field, having just harvested their quota for the day. As a viewer, I find it difficult to digest the inclusion of this image in Wilson’s text, and I find it hard to determine the intended focus. “Nature” speaks to the use of landscapes, but here is a portrait. The focal point of this piece is the woman who occupies the foreground. My eye is drawn immediately to her contemplative face then moves around her posture before widening my gaze to the middle and background on which she sits. I would argue

that this image is a presentation of this woman first, and a dialogue about nature second. The combination of portrait and landscape as well as narrative developed by the artist, speaks to woman's involvement with and control of nature. The relationship between woman and nature forges feminist theoretical connections with this work.

Inextricably linked to private and public binary framework are nature and culture. At various points in feminist theoretical history, women have been both rightly and wrongly attached to the concept of "nature." Women's bodies and reproductive functions continuously connect them to natural world; however, these connections have been exploited throughout time, used to suggest that women are limited by their bodies' reproductive functions. Built upon this notion of limitation, a power structure was formed. Private and public domain centers around the ideology that women are controlled by nature while men overpower, contain, and utilize nature for production (nature versus culture). Placing men in an active role and women in a passive role is damaging, but when that passivity is viewed as non-negotiable, the lasting effects on the manner in which women are perceived is beyond detrimental. This active and passive dichotomy is the framework on which all male and female oppositions are built. This image, *Hay Harvest*, counters those perceptions.

Depicting a man and a woman who have been, presumably, engaged in similar strenuous physical labor shatters the notion of separation and predetermined abilities that accompany nature versus culture and private versus public. Additionally, the female figure is depicted upright and contemplative, which could be viewed as a connection to the "double day" expectations of women. Double day, or second shift, is a term used in reference to the expectations placed on women who work outside the home (Hochschild, 1989). Unlike a majority of their male counterparts, women who work in the public sphere are expected to maintain their roles in the private sphere as well. A woman who

works all day in a field must come back home and work all evening and night within the house, as well. The painting evokes this idea in particular because of the socioeconomic status of the main figure. Working class women and women in poverty have little to no alternative to the double day. They are the providers for their families on all levels; they do not know any other alternative to doubling their work load. Wilson's text confirms the economic status of the central figure, solidifying the likelihood of a double workload. The interplay between strength and weakness, reality and stereotype is interesting, as Wilson's written content connects and limits the central figure to and with nature.

Wilson introduces this piece through an excerpt from Richard Muther. Muther describes this painting as a "work of truth and poetry," enforcing the validity of this image and its contents upon the reader (Wilson, 1909, p. 19). Muther continues, describing the scene as two day laborers sitting down to have a meal, taking a break from their toils. He acknowledges that the man has elected to sleep in the hay while the woman sits, daydreaming and exhausted. Muther continues, his focus now shifted completely to the dazed woman, "she does not know the drift of her thought; nature is working upon her, and she has feelings which she scarcely understands herself" (Wilson, 1909, p. 19). Wilson's choice of this excerpt both highlights and reinforces the notion that women lack a full sense of control, particularly in relation to nature. Additionally, Wilson's curricular suggestions emphasize the focus on the woman. Her suggested questions of inquiry for the students lead with the following: "Who is the woman? What is she doing? What was she doing? How do you know who was helping her? Why?" (Wilson, 1909, p. 20). Our focus being consistently placed onto the central female figure enhances the potential for students to walk away with inaccurate perceptions of female roles in society, not to mention an emphasis of humans' control over nature through the process of planting and

harvesting depicted here and in other images of “nature” utilized by Wilson in this volume.



Illustration 6: *Harvest Time*

*Harvest Time* by Leon Augustine L'Hermitte connects directly to the theme of nature, and bears similarities to *Hay Harvest*. While both pieces feature laborers in fields, *Harvest Time* depicts workers in the act of cutting and collecting hay. There are an equal number of men and women working in the field, and their work roles appear clearly defined, as the moment captured in this image illustrates men cutting hay and women collecting it. Wilson capitalizes on this presentation of gender roles and guides teachers to inquire of their students why men and women are engaged in different activities in this piece. Her frame of inquiry, as well as the inclusion of this piece in her text, reinforces gendered expectations and stereotypes. Wilson's guided exercises press students to recognize that there are defined behavioral expectations of men and women. The exhibition of designated roles based on gender reoccurs here as it did in *Mother and Child* with the added detriment of juxtaposition. While *Mother and Child* prescribes duties to women directly, the tasks of men are drawn out through deduction. *Harvest*

*Time*, however, places the roles of men and women in the foreground in direct comparison to one another. Close inspection of the nature of the figures reveals men acting (cutting and laboring) and women reacting (gathering the remains of the men's toils). While these actions can be observed simply as a necessary "team effort," it is important to recognize that the ability of women to act relies on the action of the men, placing the men in a power position over the women. If *Harvest Time* were to be situated on the wall of a classroom without the guidance of the teacher, young students may fail to recognize the actions of the men and women as "different." However, Wilson's urging to dissect the disparity in action reinforces the connections between the chosen content and the social expectations of men and women. While this piece could provide constructive discourse regarding the roles of men and women, transforming an in class conversation into a teachable moment or a growth opportunity, it fails to fulfill that potential as Wilson elects instead to reinforce gender bias with her curriculum.



Illustration 7: *The Balloon*

The content of Dupre's work, *The Balloon*, is similar to the harvest images that came before it in Wilson's manual. My interest in this piece comes from the content provided by the author. The biographical information she presents reinforces the focus on male artist's skill level versus their appearance even if, in the case of Dupre, their skill level leaves much to be desired. This is of course in stark contrast to the discussion of female artists included in the text, who are noted for their physical appearance and not their artistic skills. Additionally, the questions presented by Wilson to be used by elementary teachers are noteworthy.

The method presented by Wilson for *The Balloon* is essentially the Feldman method of critique, a progressive shift from the narrow instructor prescribed questions paired with images presented prior to this one (Feldman, 1994). The students are being asked to describe, analyze, interpret, and then evaluate this piece through a series of pointed questions provided by Wilson. This student-led evaluation of the work is a stark contrast to leading questions Wilson poses in other sections of her book. As with Feldman's strategy for visual analysis, Wilson asks the students to objectively describe the work, to list what they see and what they are experiencing without any coercive suggestions from her. Other works featured leading questions: what are the differences of the roles of men and women (*Harvest Time*)? Asking the students to determine what connections exist in the work of art, and thus enabling them to bring their own experience and their own ideas to the conversation is monumental. This student-centered approach places responsibility and power with the student instead of the educator. Upon first encountering this shift, I hypothesized that it was intended to correlate with the development of students' cognitive skills, and that for the rest of the text critiques would be primarily student guided. This shift was indicative that students, at this point in the school year, are expected to have a level of comfort that would afford the freedom to

develop and synthesize their own ideas and responses to works of art. However, the next piece, and almost all that follow, returns to Wilson's subjective questioning techniques.



Illustration 8: *Shepherdess Knitting*

*Shepherdess Knitting* by Millet is the first of several shepherdesses to appear in Wilson's text. The female figure is presented in the foreground surrounded by her sheep in the mid and background. The shepherdess stands, with her back to the flock, knitting. The image presents two conflicting ideas of feminine roles through the lens of the early 1900s. A woman having symbolic charge over nature as she guards the sheep creates an illusion that this woman possesses power and authority, however, the inclusion of knitting alters the viewers' connections between the sheep and shepherdess (or nature and woman). Knitting is a vital element of the piece for a variety of reasons, as illustrated by its inclusion in the title. Knitting is a domestic task, performed almost exclusively by women in early 19<sup>th</sup> century United States society. Knitting is closely associated with the idea of children, child rearing, and family care and development. Knitting transfers the connection between sheep and shepherdess from one of power to one of necessity, as the

knitting is only made possible through the wool of the sheep. This shift in power dynamic removes the potential for the actions of the shepherdess to upset the status quo. To reinforce the idea of knitting belonging in the domestic sphere and the potential conflict of the female figure knitting outside, Wilson provides the following questions for students: “What is the shepherdess doing? Why? Why does she not stay at home to knit? Who is helping tend the sheep?” (Wilson, 1909, p. 36). Wilson further removes any potential for gender norms being agitated by implying that this woman is not tending the sheep alone but is “helping,” and is therefore not in charge of nature.

**NOVEMBER: PREPARATION FOR WINTER AND THANKSGIVING**

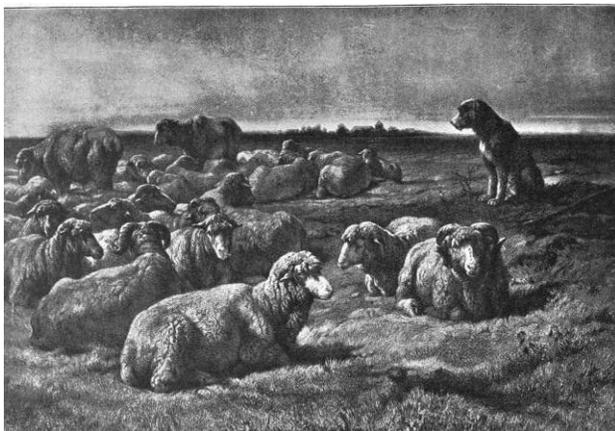


Illustration 9: *Brittany Sheep*

Rosa Bonheur is the second female artist to be included in Wilson’s text. This image depicts sheep being guarded by a watchful canine. The content of this image is relevant to the argument of gender bias, specifically in the field of art. Bonheur was extremely skilled at painting animals. Her development of this skill was due to her being

prohibited from studying the human form because of her gender. Wilson touches on this element of exclusion indirectly within the content of her text. She first acknowledges Bonheur as an “honored master” (Wilson, 1909, p. 39), then continues on to say that Bonheur loved animals and spent hours watching them in the fields. Wilson fails to address the necessity of female artists to depict objects from life that were available for study. Her omission of context could be viewed in a variety of ways. Most interesting would be the manner in which this image was presented in the classroom. What additional frameworks would be applied to this image by the educator? There are ample directions that could be traversed from Wilson’s guidance, but like in most teaching, we do not know the degree to which this path was taken by the teacher who used this book and images.



Illustration 10: *The Spinner*

Nikolas Maes' *The Spinner* depicts a woman sitting, hunched in a corner, concentrating on spinning thread. The female figure appears to be sitting in a spotlight, creating a halo effect around her body and head. The image is articulated through quotes by Timothy Cole, who describes the spinner as an "experienced housewife" and "a robust and beautiful old woman" (Wilson, 1909, p. 46). This mature housewife is preparing her family for winter by spinning yarn in order to make sweaters. The inclusion of a woman preparing yarn to create sweaters in the month of November could be viewed several ways. One might argue that the inclusion of yarn spinning is logical, and illustrates how our clothing is made on the most basic level—an example of a preparation for winter. Alternatively, the inclusion of this image may be considered as an additional reinforcement of the domestic sphere and the expectations of women in the nineteenth century. Domestic images, prominently featuring central female figures, occur commonly in Wilson's text. The frequency with which these images appear combined with their sometimes odd placement within specific themes necessitates critical consideration. The reinforcement of domestic actions being "natural" is of definite interest. Wilson foregoes the more obvious route of fortifying the students' understanding of the importance of food production, clothing production, animal husbandry, etc. and instead reinforces the role of women; focusing particular attention on the appearance and demeanor of the central figures. While the image of *The Spinner* is appropriate for November's theme, the content provided by Wilson shifted the focus from the action of the woman (and the necessity of warm clothing) to the domestic role she performs.

#### **DECEMBER: CHRISTMAS**

The focus through the month of December is Christmas. Wilson presents educators with traditional images of Christ and the Madonna and content that honors the

frequently regarded aspects of Christmas. However, Wilson also continues to reinforce a superficial focus on the physical appearance of female figures. Despite the religious focus, the author pays particular attention to the beauty of the female figures. All five images during this month prominently feature the Madonna and child independently or as part of the nativity. *Arrival of the Shepherds* by Lerolle, *Holy Night* by Correggio, *Madonna and Child* by Dagnan-Bouvret, *Madonna of the Louvre* by Botticelli, and *Holy Family* by Murillo provide a religious focus for primary students, while staying within their familial centric spheres of comfort. Wilson consistently redirects educators and students to the appearance of the Virgin, that “marvel of beauty” (Wilson, 1909, p. 60). A focus on the discrepancies of language when discussing artists and the content of artworks is fruitful with this section. What do the student’s gain from discussing the beauty of the Virgin in such superficial form? What power does Wilson’s choice of language and emphasis have over the pupils being exposed to her text and curriculum? Her redirection to the appearance of Mary links several ideas together: power and beauty, purity and beauty, purity and woman, and woman and beauty. This use of language and associations forges connections in students’ minds. While I have touched briefly on the author’s use of language, the specificity of this study does not allow full exploration of the impact that these analogies may have on pupils. Further review and critique of both picture study manuals and contemporary art texts would benefit our knowledge of subversive content within art education, and the impact it has on students in regards to body image, normative beauty ideals, and superficial expectations placed on women.

#### **JANUARY/FEBRUARY/MARCH: THE GREAT AND MODERN MASTERS**

The images and artists included in these three months provide an appropriate jumping off point for discussions about art historical canons. Inclusion in or omission

from the “master” catalogue, when viewed through the lens of gender, provides productive insight into past and current bias within the visual arts. The lack of women in “fine art” continues to be a point of contention within and outside the field. This complex and important issue would require independent study beyond the scope of this thesis. However, a brief look at the artists chosen by Wilson speaks to the male dominated canon portrayed in this work and within the world of fine art.

January and February are dedicated to the “Great Masters,” artists viewed as esteemed and timeless. Wilson features Bellini’s *Angel*, Raphael’s *Madonna on the Chair*, Andrea del Sarto’s *Madonna of the Sack*, Salvator Rosa’s *Diogenes in Search of an Honest Man*, and Velasquez’s *Prince Balthasar* in the month of January, giving a breadth of styles and subject matter. In February, Wilson continues, featuring the work of Rembrandt, Rubens, Van Dyck, Reynolds, and Millet. Wilson presented ten images she believed to be created by timeless master artists. The author assumed that sharing *universally* accepted images of beauty with students, she would be able to instill virtues and reinforce students’ perceptions of time and space. Wilson believed that these images, combined with the presentation of appropriate content, held the power to influence students’ ideals and behavior. In addition to the timeless masters, Wilson included a chapter dedicated to skillful modern artists.

March’s modern masters include Landseer, Richter, Bastien-Lepage, Bashkirtseff, and Israels. The content of these artists’ paintings continued to reflect Wilson’s focus on family, specifically the nurturing mother, as well as her attention placed on images of animals. While looking critically at what is present in this text is beneficial to our field, considering what is *not* in the text is equally valid and arguably imperative for art education. What has Wilson failed to describe? Who has been omitted from this text? These questions bring to the surface the subjectivity that is so present in historical and

contemporary art textbooks. The “Great Masters” are nearly always White men. These master works are indicative of the art historical trend to focus on Caucasian male works, while anyone outside of that classification falls into the margins. If we recognize and analyze these non-objective reference texts, we will be able to determine the potential negative as well as positive implications of teaching from them. Does an art education text featuring primarily dead White men reflect your student population? What message about success does it send to your pupils when every page they encounter is steeped in White male privilege? These considerations could ultimately guide the production of textbooks or cause them to be omitted from standard public use altogether.

#### **APRIL: NATURE**

The first several images included in the month of April embody a classical notion of nature. All three images are landscapes, which illustrate a variety of locations. These depictions are the types of paintings I expected to encounter in the months of October, April, and May, however, the number of landscapes included in the focus of nature are limited, especially in comparison to the number of images that feature figures prominently.



Illustration 11: *Feeding the Hens*

Of the images that feature human subjects in the month of April, *Feeding the Hens* by Millet is the most striking example of the clear reinforcement of gendered expectations. The painting features a woman standing on the stairs of a building, feeding a group of hens who have gathered in the alleyway as a child looks on from the doorway. While the image does include natural elements, the focal point is the central female figure and her action, which cannot be separated from her apparent gender. Wilson reinforces this domestic focus when she speaks about Millet, saying his “own domestic life enabled him to paint with so much grace and feeling” (Wilson, 1909, p. 188). Domesticity was a subject frequently explored by Millet, his works are featured prominently in this manual. The artist’s depiction of the private sphere reinforces the expectations of what it means to be a woman in the nineteenth and twentieth century, and when paired with the theme of “nature” these domestic engagements are viewed as “natural.”

## MAY: NATURE



Illustration 12: *Woman Churning*

Another of Millet's domestic portraits, *Woman Churning*, consists of a central female figure standing in the middle of a room, churning butter as a cat rubs against her leg. As viewers, are we meant to understand that women doing domestic work is "natural"? Why would this piece be included in the section about "nature" instead of one that focused on "home and school?" While the process of creating butter is natural and the animals depicted in the painting do connect to the idea of nature, the emphasis of the image and the focus of Wilson's suggested inquiry that revolves around the woman. The methodological approach that Wilson encourages is to pose questions to the students that develop the children's understanding of the woman's socioeconomic status and demeanor. The author encourages educators to use "questions to develop the fact that the woman is a peasant, hard-working, and gentle (look at the cat), making butter in a very primitive churn" and to "notice the poverty of the room, the hen in the doorway, and the

wooden shoes of the peasant” (Wilson, 1909, p. 200). The emphasis on the qualities of the central figure focuses the students’ attention on the woman and her actions. Continued questions and conversations emphasizing those domestic subjects reinforce expected gender roles and, in the case of this image, bring attention to the socioeconomic status of the figure. Wilson encourages, “with questions, develop the fact that the woman is a peasant, hard-working, and gentle” (Wilson, 1909, p. 200).



Illustration 13: *Song of the Lark*

Breton’s *Song of the Lark*, depicts a female laborer in the fields working and gazing up to the sky, another portrait of a woman with an emphasis on her actions, her condition, and her appearance. Breton’s piece depicts a female who Millet describes as too beautiful to remain in this condition (Wilson, 1909). Wilson’s inclusion of Millet’s comments reinforce classism and the notion that some women are better than others, that there are different roles prescribed to different women according to the socioeconomic

status as well as their appearance. The implication that beauty is an anomaly in the working class is striking regardless of the potential audience. Whether this text is utilized in upper middle class primary schools or in public schools with growing immigrant population, the reinforcement of acceptable and unacceptable spaces for “beauty” is detrimental to the audience. The emphasis on appearance in this work detracts from the real issue of poverty, plight, classism, racism, and sexism demonstrated in the painting.

#### **JUNE: VACATIONS IN OTHER LANDS**

The race and class implications of vacations in other lands, featured in Wilson’s text, present a privileged and narrow view. This portion of the manual necessitates focused exploration of the author’s intent, presentation, and ultimate reinforcement of racism and classism. Wilson closed the school year with “Vacations in Other Lands,” a trip through five countries around the world: Algeria through *Arab at Prayer*, Africa through *A Kabyl*, Japan through *In the Uyeno Park*, Italy through *A Street Scene*, and Spain through *The Melon Eaters*. Wilson’s compilation of virtual foreign travels presented European artists’ interpretations of foreign lands as fact. While some of the images and content respect the culture and provide insight into non-western art, others mask reality. The relevance of this chapter is enhanced, as art education currently seeks to provide authentic and diverse learning experiences in lieu of “multicultural” education.

While the content of this chapter is useful to explore with regard to its presentation of race and class issues, the images and text content are not pertinent to an analysis of gender. For this reason, there is no extended discussion of this chapter included.

## CONCLUSION

Hopeful and unified, the late 18<sup>th</sup> century held promise for the rights privileges of women. A commitment to the birth of a nation distracted from the inequity previously faced by women in the United States as they stood alongside men to ensure the success of a new country, a new ideal. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a separation returned and one of many gender binaries emerged: public and private domain. While this dichotomous thinking is considered archaic, and is representative of the polar nature of patriarchy, its use as a framework provided worthwhile insight into the content of *Picture Study in Elementary Schools* (1909).

The use of public and private domain as a framework for investigation is viable, but applicable within this very specific population. While all factors that impact a woman's existence must be considered (race, class, sexual orientation, and any other unique variables that may dictate her experience), the notion of public and private domain is revealed to be a legitimate issue, specifically for White heterosexual women of varying socioeconomic statuses. The nineteenth century, and the first wave of feminism, permits these parameters to be utilized for analyzing Wilson's text.

Of the one hundred images included in this text, thirteen of them explicitly speak to gender inequity, specifically toward the public and private domain. Analyzing these images through the framework of domesticity revealed subtle and overt similarities between the content of the text and the construction of gender in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The reinforcement of the domestic "nature" of women was a pervasive problem during this period (Welter, 1964). Wilson's text continues this fortification of proper roles and identities through the use of images of women engaged in domestic duties, referring to those actions as "natural," and presenting guided questions that highlight discrepancies between the roles of men and women in work and society. This notion of gender (male

and female, man and woman, and boy and girl) is socially constructed and actively promoted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and Wilson's text aligns with this ideal. Exploration of *Picture Study in Elementary Schools* (1909) through a lens of feminist theory, anthropology, and language analyses reveal the patriarchal underpinnings and false "gender" performance in Wilson's text.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions**

Are matters of gender, present in the United States during the 19th century, manifested in and promoted through the images, content, and language of *Picture Study in Elementary Schools*? If connections between the social shifts of the nineteenth century and this text did in fact exist, what linguistic and or propagandistic methods maybe evidenced in the work of the author, and for what purpose? Utilizing historical and gender lenses I sought to determine what connections if any existed between the social climate of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and the content of Lucy Wilson's 1909 picture study manual. The presence of gendered expectations in this particular pedagogical tool may indicate a larger and more extensive problem in the field of art education that would need to be explored through future studies.

### **METHODOLOGY AND COMPLICATIONS OF GENDER STUDY**

Art educators' awareness of the origins of established ideas in the field of art education heightens their understanding of the benefits and shortcomings of contemporary practices. Reflecting on past practices provides significant insight into the stability and effectiveness of methods used today. Synthesizing the content of a picture study manual within its historical context with the benefit of retrospection enabled me to chart the potential impact specific practices and content may have had on students at that time. Utilizing the lens of gender within the firm roots of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, I dissected Wilson's *Picture Study in Elementary Schools* (1909). With a marriage of historical and gender lenses I hoped to cast new light on the power of curricular content (specifically through the medium of textbooks and teacher guides). Through this pair of analytical lenses, I explored the social components of the picture

study movement within the parameters of gender to gauge the impact of public art education on the masses and their possible responses to social change and social pressures. My consciousness of the complications of gender research and writing birthed consistent revision and more questions than answers.

Throughout the course of this study, I have struggled to determine a clear, comprehensive, accurate, and relevant explanation of gender and gender inequity. In an effort to construct well-rounded arguments, I delved into feminist theory through anthropology and rhetoric. The evolution of my thesis hinged on these areas of academia. Together these feminist fields have affirmed, confused, complicated, and changed who I am and what this study could be. What began as a walk through history transformed into a march for protest.

My first consideration of how to approach discussing “gender” resembled a rudimentary introduction to a women and gender studies course. Through a minimal but all-inclusive timeline of feminism, I was to begin with the first wave and end with the current postmodern confusion and revolutionary rebirth. Focusing on pertinent figures of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, I constructed an argument based on the documented lives of women during this time, focusing primarily on the shifting social climate and backlash. I did not realize the fault in this framework until I began to submerge myself into feminist theory. My first exposure to critical feminist theory came through anthropology and archaeology: examination of the politics and social structures that define and inhibit women, discourse on the origins and applications of oppression, and the continuing need to change the patriarchal framework of research and inquiry. Through anthropology, I discovered that rehashing introductory ideas in women and gender studies was not beneficial to this study. Instead, I needed an applicable frame of analysis for White American women in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Anthropology enabled me to think critically about my reflexivity and the positionality of potential pupils exposed to Lucy Wilson's text. Recognition of the situated nature of knowledge quelled mounting pressures to speak on all facets of gender and gender inequity. Anthropology granted me specificity, enabling me to focus on one time, one place, and one "woman." Through the lens of public versus private domain, the subversive nature of *Picture Study in Elementary Schools: A Manual for Teachers* (1909) became more transparent and digestible. Limiting the framework of this study to one dichotomous paradigm that is applicable to the specified demographic, centered and simplified the analysis and discussion of the picture study manual. However, this simplification comes with a great risk of further marginalization.

Feminist rhetoric shook my personal and professional foundations. Rhetorical scholars provide critical analysis on the construction and success of gendered systems. The continuing marginalization of women served as a stark reminder to me of the limitations of this study. The interpretation of an archive is a delicate process. Investigating and attempting to translate *Picture Study in Elementary Schools: A Manual for Teachers* (1909) with a focus on gender inequity and performativity is fraught with a variety of complications. The possibility of misreading the archive was a constant fear. My knowledge of the text and its application is almost exclusively bound within its pages. Limited availability of information about the picture study movement combined with almost no information about the author resulted in an uncomfortable reliance on the archive itself. The potential for false projections onto the text was high. I found refuge in the constant reminder of the patriarchal system in which we are educated. Dichotomous organization (placing thought and action into a series of binaries both specific and broad i.e., good/evil, male/female, culture/nature) guides the way we think, critique, and synthesize; this is a result of patriarchy (Tong, 2009). Utilizing a binary as a framework

provided an opportunity to analyze a system of thought (private versus public domain) and a product of that system (the content of Lucy Wilson's manual) simultaneously. What began as a critique of the text became a critique of the schema that produced it.

Though complex and ever shifting, the lens of gender is invaluable, providing the opportunity to complicate history, to problematize accepted ideals, and to enact change. All fields benefit from evolution and growth, when academia becomes static it is useful to no one. Gender provided and will continue to afford researchers in the field of art education the chance to agitate archaic thought and practice. Looking critically at the past, present, and future, art scholars will continue to complicate education normativity.

#### **GENDERED EXPECTATIONS IN CURRICULAR MATERIALS**

Sensitive, often overlooked, topics within art education provide excellent insight into potential growth opportunities within the field. Art education research traditionally explores gender from a contemporary and practical standpoint: how it is present in the classroom, what impact that has on students, how and why teachers must address it, what the implications are in regards to success and behavior management, etc. Examining the picture study movement through the lens of gender has revealed important connections between the content of art textbooks and cultural practices and societal expectations. An inspection of a picture study manual revealed interplay between social and political agendas and curricular content.

The presentation of women, both as producers of artwork and objects within works of art closely corresponds to the growing insistence during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that women should occupy domestic spheres and domestic work; that women are closely tied to and controlled by nature. Wilson's (1909) presentation of the theme "nature" attempts to define these prescribed, domestic, actions of women as "natural."

Her statement is powerful, strong, and in my opinion quite unambiguous. The correlation between Wilson's (1909) presentation of natural and society's pressure for women to remain out of the public sphere illustrates a clear connection between the content of curricular materials and current affairs. Just as historical texts, depending on their place of origin, present varied accounts of the same moment or event, these variances are illustrative of individual perspectives and collective bias and agenda. History, regardless of the focus, is born from partiality. Prejudice in text comes in many forms: political correctness, idolatry, racism, classism, sexism, etc. To expect that Wilson's (1909) text would be free from such preconceived notions is unrealistic. Partiality is a part of written and verbal communications. Individuals who engage the content of these communications must question, inquire, and challenge when necessary. The need to challenge prejudice in curriculum is historic and contemporary. Woman's place as Other in art and art education manifests itself in Wilson's text, but is also a marginalization that is mirrored by contemporary art education text books.

The third edition of *The Visual Experience* (2005), a secondary art education textbook published by Davis, bears striking similarities to *Picture Study in Elementary Schools: A Manual for Teachers* (1909). Both texts feature images, artist biographies, and suggested curriculum (specifically questions to pose to students about the featured artwork). However, the evolution of the field is manifested on the pages of *The Visual Experience*. The text is brimming with reproductions and exhibits a discipline based approach with equal attention paid to art history, production, aesthetics, and art criticism. Additionally the amount of female artists and the non-gendered discussion of their lives and work is a promising change. However, critical discourse about the lack of equality and the tumultuous relationship between art and gender is nowhere to be found. Acknowledgement of inequity and discussion of larger issues writ large, both within and

outside of the field, are imperative. If we fail to address issues of equity, we produce nothing but more inequity. Understanding the origins and evolution of biased textbooks will help enable our field to begin to break free from the disciplining of gender through written media (Sloop, 2004).

In his text, *Disciplining Gender: Rhetoric of Sex Identity in Contemporary U.S. Culture*, John Sloop (2004) presents case studies that reveal the power media outlets (print, video, and audio) exert in both the reinforcement and agitation of social norms. His work emphasizes the danger of the consistent digestion and reiteration of social norms, norms that guide American's understanding of race, class, sex, gender, sexual identity, and sexual orientation. Acknowledgement of these reinforcements ignites potential for change and confrontation of these ideals. Continued exploration of the content of art education textbooks, curriculum, and research through various social lenses will lay the foundation for lasting and powerful change in the field of art education.

#### **FUTURE STUDIES IN ART EDUCATION**

Further study of art education textbooks and curriculum may forge deeper and more valuable connections between art education and the lives of students. Recognizing the impact that the content of our courses has on our pupils is tremendously valuable. In order to recognize and adequately assess the reach of art education, scholars must look critically at old textbooks, current curricular materials, and teacher practices. Continuing studies should extend beyond text and curriculum analysis and investigate the immediate and lasting impact of educational practices on students. Looking at programs of study and being able to document the social impact the style of instruction and content have on students would be profound on several levels. This information could open pathways to the creation of texts and materials that are accurate, display minimal bias, and provide

space for authentic engagement for students. Prospective studies about the social impact of art education curriculum should seek to measure the impact of pedagogy on students' ideals and actions.

Humanization is an inescapable concern (Freire, 1970). The dehumanization of marginalized populations is manifested consistently in curriculum and curricular materials. This manifestation occurs because oppressors, or people operating from a space of privilege, develop materials utilized by educators. This intentional or unintentional "distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human" prevents further marginalization of the sensitive populations that fill our learning spaces (Freire, 1970, p. 44). How can we shift our curriculum from being oppressive to becoming more liberating? Oppressors cannot implement pedagogical practices that liberate marginalized individuals. Such action must come from within; it has to be student-centered and teacher facilitated. Enabling students' to have ownership of their education could generate meaningful and lasting engagement. Varieties of student-centered practices have presented positive results (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2002; Grant & Sleeter, 2007).

## CONCLUSION

A desire for social justice, a need to be a part of the revolution, a yearning to be a vessel for truth and a fortress for growth: this study has ignited and fanned my desire to strive for equity and to facilitate a shift from false to critical consciousness. Whether I return to the classroom as an educator or as a student, a fire within now burns hotter than before. *The Art of Manipulation: Gender Inequity and the Picture Study Movement* refined my sensitivity to the needs of others and tuned my awareness to the need for change and authentic engagement in public education. I hope that continuing studies of textbooks and curriculum will form valuable connections between art education and the

lives of students and continue to facilitate a gradual shift toward student centered education.

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