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**The Dissertation Committee for Heather Scott Johnson Certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:**

**Her Own Works Praise Her:**

**Examining the Development of**

**Ambitious Feminist Teachers and their Resistance**

**Against Curricular and Pedagogical Control Mechanisms**

**Committee:**

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Cinthia Salinas, Supervisor

---

Anthony Brown

---

S.G. Grant

---

Katherina Payne

---

Melissa Wetzel

---

**Her Own Works Praise Her:  
Investigating the Development of  
Ambitious Feminist Teachers and their Resistance  
to Curricular and Pedagogical Control Mechanisms**

**by**

**Heather Scott Johnson, B.A., M.A.**

**Dissertation**

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## Dedication

The work is dedicated to all of the amazing women teachers in my family,

Jane Johnson, Minnie Lacy, Irene Lacy Johnson,

Rachel Wernsman Karg, Maurine McManamy, Marijane Wernsman,

Kate Wernsman Yoho, Beth Wernsman-Holland, Tracy Wernsman

and also to the five amazing feminist teachers

whose thoughts, word and deeds

are literally what this work is all about.

### *Proverbs Chapter 31 Verses 25-31*

Strength and honour *are* her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.

She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue *is* the law of kindness.

She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband *also*, and he praiseth her.

Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.

Favour *is* deceitful, and beauty *is* vain:

*but* a woman *that* feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.

Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

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This work is something I could not have ever accomplished on my own. If the title page were accurate, it would have dozens of names, which unfortunately the University of Texas will not accept. Instead I will try to let the reader know here at least some of the many hands and hearts that went into every page.

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**Her Own Works Praise Her:**  
**An Investigation into the Development of Ambitious Feminist Teachers**  
**and their Resistance to Neoliberal Mechanisms**  
**of Curricular and Pedagogical Control**

Heather Scott Johnson, PhD

The University of Texas at Austin, 2017

Supervisor: Cinthia Salinas

The purpose of qualitative case study was to examine the development of activist feminist teachers, their viewpoints and understandings of the current neo-liberal educational system and their methods of resistance to the curricular and pedagogical controls placed upon them. This research was built upon a three part conceptual framework. First of all, that feminist consciousness needs to be nurtured in teachers rather than assumed to be present. Second that the enactment of feminism can take on many forms and is affected by the contexts of era, region and class. Lastly, to recognize as legitimate and effective, feminized forms of resistance which frequently veer from traditional ones and as such tend to be dismissed and marginalized.

Using a feminist post-structural theoretical lens, I explored the multiple pathways by which teachers reach a point of feminist consciousness and what were the important factors, which led them to apply these understandings to their work in the classroom. The data analysis revealed the many roads to feminist consciousness and its

manifestations. Additionally it also uncovered common threads such as the importance of critical coursework in college, mentors and support networks. Teachers, using their feminist frameworks understood, responded to and resisted the mandated curriculum in a variety of ways. The first was through their content knowledge of both the dominant and counter-narrative. Secondly, they employed feminist pedagogies and fostered strong relationships with their students, which helped create space and acceptance for critical thought. Finally they used their understandings of the current values of the neo-liberal educational system to not only navigate but to leverage this fluency into change for themselves, their curriculum and their students. The goal was not to merely critique the system, but to illustrate real life examples of successful feminist teacher resistance that teachers and teacher-educators could recognize, understand and apply to their own work.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

In our society there are several “givens” about gender and teachers. First, it has been long observed that women teach and men administrate (Galman, 2012; Goldstein, 2014; LeLoudis, 1996; Stober & Tyack, 1980) and as such, teaching has been accepted as a feminine profession, a public expansion of the private spheres of mother and wife (J. Fraser, 2007; James, 2010). Second, men’s dominance is hegemonic, causing masculinity to become the norm against which all else is deficiently categorized as “the other” (de Beauvoir, 2010), a situation that is too rarely noticed or critiqued (Arnot, 1994; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Lightfoot, 1978; Ponterotto, 2016). As such, the discourse of teaching constructs and maintains then that it is only natural for a woman’s place in the world to be an extension of her place in the home (Weedon, 1987).

In this project, I argue that the standards and reform movement is a further manifestation of the continuing oppression of women. Religious and political conservatives have used education as a tool in their cause to reinforce or re-establish traditional societal roles (Hartman, 2013). As Kathy Miller of the Texas Freedom Network pointed out in *The Revisionaries*, the ingenuity of this strategy to avoid directly attacking “hot button issues, like you typically see, like abortion and gay and lesbian rights” (Thurman, 2012, p. scene 13). These topics might trigger a strong reaction from the left, as so conservatives use less obviously contentious avenues such as education to promote their social agenda. These conservative/far right groups have harnessed the hegemony of patriarchy to legitimize and disguise the accountability effort. The result

further normalizes policies and discourses that control teachers/women in the name of education reform and the status and security of the United States.

The patriarchal foundation of these efforts is revealed when the same political groups, in contrast, fight for less government involvement and regulation in the male dominated business sectors. For example, former Texas Governor Rick Perry denounced “government effort to micromanage the behavior of adults” (Wear, 2015) in reference to texting while driving, but simultaneously executed intrusive government control over women in their private lives (National Republican Party, 2013; Tea Party Patriots, 2014) and within the feminized profession of education (M. Smith, 2014). In response, the purpose of this study is to analyze the effect of these “givens” of patriarchal hegemony on the education system but most importantly to examine the development of feminist social studies teachers and their strategies of resistance.

When I began teaching, I was the fourth generation of women in my family to make a career of education. In many ways my family history follows the changing and yet similar paths women have taken to join the profession. The feminization of teaching, the evolving reasons women choose to teach and the changing dynamics and requirements of profession are important factors in the resultant interwoven identity of female teachers. For me, unlike for the previous generations of women in my family, teaching was one of many avenues I could take as an educated and ambitious woman. My ability to *choose* teaching meant that the flexibility of the job and the opportunity to study history and serve my community is what drew me to the profession, rather than it being the best or only way to pay my bills. It was an excellent, challenging and

rewarding job to have while I was also raising my children. However, when they were old enough I decided to go back to school and study to be a teacher educator, as teaching on the college level had always been my eventual goal. For all of these women in my family, being a teacher is or was part of our understanding of ourselves. It also gave each of us economic, social and intellectual benefits in a way that was the least costly to the other aspects of our lives as women, wives and mothers.

The women who participated in this study also had very similar histories and reflected the experiences of many teachers, both past and present. They also all referred to themselves as feminists in their personal and professional lives. These common threads, and the increased threats to our shared professional identity (Alsup, 2006; Lasky, 2005), pulled me to examine further. I endeavored to understand as a fellow woman, teacher and feminist, their evolution from feminist women into feminist teachers. I wanted to study what factors led them to see themselves as feminists, why they became teachers and how those merged into activism in the classroom. To be able to better serve teachers, and education in general, it is important to investigate this feminized profession from a feminist perspective.

The geographical focus of this study was Texas. The state represented an exceptional tension in both the overt religious and political forces in play and the level of control they have asserted over education. As such, Texas was “most likely to exhibit a given outcome” (Gerring, 2007, p. 89). The 2011 Texas State Board of Education (TSBOE), dominated by a wave of religious and political conservatives, crafted the standards with an emphasis on conservative, nationalistic, and fundamentalist Christian

religious values (G. Collins, 2012). While a few members of the board and many representatives of the public and academia protested vigorously against the way the board was recasting history (Bimbaum, 2010), they were overruled and outvoted (Collier, 2016). As a mark of protest over what she saw as a whitewash of racial injustice, liberal board member and immigration attorney Mary Helen Berlanga hung segregationist artifacts all around her desk and said, “They can just pretend this is a white America and Hispanics don’t exist.” (McKinley Jr., 2010, p. para 8). Latinos account for 9.1 million residents of Texas and have the second longest history in the state after Native Americans, yet are represented in the standards only sporadically (Texas Educational Agency, 2011).

The state mandated historical narrative was also especially dismissive to the impact of women on history and society. Through the social studies curriculum standards, the TSBOE reinforced the “natural order” by limiting named women to those who follow traditional, if public, supportive roles (Texas Educational Agency, 2011). Heilig, Brown and Brown (2012) point out communities of color may appear to be represented in the TEKS but are actually marginalized in what they refer to as an “illusion of inclusion” (p. 410). Women also appeared to be represented in the Texas standards (Texas Educational Agency, 2011) but, as was occurring in other states’ curriculum (Schmeichel, 2015; Schmidt, 2012; Stephenson, 2001), they were frequently segregated into specific time periods and “women’s” issues. This diminished their role in the broader history and implied that events happened *to* women, rather than being enacted *by* women. In addition, the clumping of women, minorities, children and immigrants into

the same standards, segregated and “ghettoized” them into marginalized supporting roles (Cassese & Bos, 2013). Indeed, the standards addressed the concept of feminism by ignoring activists like Alice Paul, or powerful liberal women such as former Democratic Texas governor Ann Richardson, while highlighting anti-feminists like Phyllis Schlafly and conservatives such as former Republican Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (Texas Educational Agency, 2011).

The classification of people and events in curriculum standards is not neutral. Language is “a medium for action” (Hicks & Taylor, 2008, p. 53) and determines what is considered real history or social studies (Apple, 2000; Au, 2009; Chancey, 2014; Evans, 2015). While some studies (Apple, 1992; Cornbleth, 2002) argue that standards alone do not tend to motivate or instigate change in the classroom, others have found that the corresponding high stakes testing that enforces these standards does change teacher’s curriculum and pedagogical choices (Center on Education Policy, 2006; Hamilton, et al., 2007; Segall, 2003) frequently because it excludes them from the decision process (Salinas, Blevins, & Sullivan, 2012). Several other studies show how some resistant teachers minimize the controlling consequences of accountability policies (Gradwell, 2006; Salinas, 2006; VanSledright, 2011) and cast doubt upon those policies’ effective use as levers on teachers’ pedagogical practices (Grant, 2006; A. Smith, 2006; Tilotta, 2015).

This has not dissuaded authorities from trying. Indeed as education became increasingly critical to national advancement and efficiency (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) “the discursive construction of the new nation, state

intervention and regulation over education and teachers' work increased" (Blackmore, 1999, p. 28). The future of education was too important to leave to the judgment of teachers/women (Apple & Teitelbaum, 1986; Lowe, 2007). Biklen (1993) asserts, "Teachers were neither real workers nor real managers" (p. 47). Meir (2002) writes that teachers are undervalued and constrained because they are untrusted but that the imposed solution, testing and standardization of curriculum ironically, "fuel the very distrust they are aimed to cure" (p. 2). Instead, standardized test results are positioned as quantitative proof that teachers must be administrated to, rather than left to their own professional judgment (Kerr, Kerr, & Miller, 2014) for the good of future generations.

Scott (1990) points out that frequently oppressors claim that their power is for the benefit of those they are oppressing. Just as the claims concerning the protection of women's health or the dignity of human remains disguised the de-facto overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973) for geographically isolated and economically disadvantaged women (The Editorial Board, 2014), in education, conservatives claim their control is crucial to protecting children (McGreal, 2010). TSBOE member Cynthia Dunbar said, "Sending children to public school is like 'throwing them to the enemy's flames, even as the children of Israel threw their children to Moloch'" (G. Collins, 2012, p. 115) which highlights the perception of teachers as anti-Christian, and anti-patriarchy (Need to Know, 2010; Simpson & Makow, 2008) and thus in need of protection through control of teachers. The resulting mechanisms of standards and testing then engender a threat rigidity reaction (Olsen & Sexton, 2009) whereupon administration, progressively and increasingly male (NCES, 2013), reverts to the most conservative "teacher proof"

methods (Giroux, 1988) in an attempt to encourage conformity to the official curriculum (Apple, 2000).

## **OVERVIEW**

In this qualitative case study of practicing social studies teachers, I used a feminist post structural lens (Baxter, 2003; Gavey, 1989; Weedon, 1987) affirming that the positions of power and oppression slip and slide against each other. Barrett (2005) defends the inherent feminist character of post-structuralism because both frameworks challenge assumptions about a clean binary of oppressors and oppressed; asserting that these roles are not assigned entirely to one gender or the other. In line with this, Butler (1990) defines gender as a performance, an assumption of an identity that morphs and or dissolves. Sowell (2004) claims feminists should recognize this and utilize the broader spectrum of identity, gender and power. In doing so we can resist the hegemony of masculinism, what Brittan (1989) calls the societal structures and systems that naturalizes and justifies men's domination over women. Connell (1995) further explains that this system not only attempts to legitimize and authorize, but also to guarantee dominance, most specifically of White, heterosexual, adult men by affording implicit privileges and marginalizing and subordinating "the other". I intersected these understandings with the critical view that these dominant values are privileged within our educational system (Apple, 2004; Au, 2007; Gavey, 1989; Giroux, 1988; Salinas, 2006).

Furthermore, feminist post-structuralism recognizes the agency of oppressed peoples and as such, can identify overlooked modes of resistance. As Apple (2000) asserts, "Teachers have a long history of mediating and transforming text material" (p.

191). Drawing upon studies of resistance by Kelley (1993), King (2015), Scott (1990), Solorzano and Degado-Bernal (2001) and Yosso (2000), I was interested in examining, as a feminized defense of agency, teachers' resilient resistance. I wanted to describe the legitimate and effective methods by which these feminist teachers ostensibly follow the rules but actually subvert them (Allen, 2015; Bartolome, 2004; Irving, 1991; Ramsey, 2012) through their syntactical understanding (Schwab, 1978) of both the content and the educational system and also their pedagogical content knowledge, or PCK (Shulman, 1987). Resistance requires a fluency of the language of education as spoken within the standards and reform movement, knowledge of their students, their subject, and their society. Covert acts of teacher resistance are not only more realistic (Frazer, 2015), as most teachers perceive the need to demonstrate compliance (Segall, 2003) and are constrained by each unique setting and circumstances (Lasky, 2005), but this also may also be more effective (Gradwell, 2006; Mayo, 2013; A. Smith, 2006). Drawing on my own experience as a female teacher with more than twenty years in the classroom, I agreed with Giroux (1988) who stresses that criticizing without devising practical alternatives is exactly what has allowed conservatives to dominate the discourse.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

For this qualitative case study (Merriam, 2009) I examined a bounded system (Cresswell, 2007) of five purposefully selected Texas feminist social studies teachers as my focus group (Mertens, 2010). I endeavored to examine the following research questions:

1. What are the factors that motivate women to become feminist social studies teachers?
2. How do feminist social studies teachers view the mandated curriculum and accountability educational system and their position within it?
3. How and why do these teachers resist this system?

Through the use of multiple interviews, classroom observations and document analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) I triangulated and analyzed my findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1998) within its context and constructing environment (Merriam, 2009). To increase the validity and trustworthiness (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993) of my findings I used a cross-case analysis (Merriam, 2009).

Through pilot studies I had already gathered data on the public discourse surrounding teaching as represented in the media, focusing on 2010 and 2011 as the high point of the standards debate in Texas but continued to do so throughout the study. I also transcribed the movie *The Revisionaries*, (Thurman, 2012) which documented the religious right's control over the SBOE and the resulting curriculum. I used this discourse as a contextual element of this study.

By coding and chunking, using an iterative method (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009), I identified two broad themes (Mertens, 2010), the first was bringing feminism and teaching together. Within this first theme were three subthemes, becoming a feminist woman, becoming a teacher, and bringing it together as a feminist teacher. I used the words becoming rather than being because I wanted to clearly indicate that this was a process that is ongoing rather than a completed accomplishment.

The first subtheme documents the path the women took to becoming a feminist. For one participant this meant from an early age having models who overtly named a claimed of feminism. For most however they were surrounded by feminist actions, but neither they nor their models perceived these actions as feminist. For them the introduction of feminist theory and women's history in college or during their first years of teaching opened up a perspective that let them not only claim feminist for themselves but to recognize it in the actions of their models.

The second subtheme explored why the women went into teaching. For some teaching was familiar career path because their mothers were teachers. In these examples they saw teaching as an outlet for their need to serve their community. For others teaching allowed them to care for their families, or because teaching was seen as a secure job. However, for all of the women the overwhelming reason was a love of history.

These two subthemes come together in the third; becoming a feminist teacher. The impetus to act was based on a variety of factors: sexism in society and their profession or seeing their student's and their own identity being ignored by the standards. The events of the recent election only furthered their drive to do something. However they would not easily know what to do, how to transform feminist theory into actual curriculum changes and practical lessons in their social studies classrooms without help. This took the forms of mentorship and models either in their teacher education training and or their first years in education.

In the second theme, resistance and persistence, I explained how these teachers resisted the dominant patriarchal educational system. This begins with deciding that one

has the right and ability to change the given curriculum. In doing so, these teachers frequently faced pushback from students and co-workers but were able to overcome it. They did so through their content knowledge of both the dominant narrative as well as women's history. This fluency let them create spaces for women in their curriculum in a variety of different ways. In the final subtheme I explain how, these teachers used their syntactical understanding of the educational system and its focus on quantitative measures, to leverage change beyond their classrooms.

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

Teaching has been accepted, as well as defined, as women's work, and as an extension of motherhood and child-care (J. Fraser, 2007; James, 2010). The common discourse constructs and maintains that it is only natural for a woman's place in the world to be an extension of her place in the home (Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000; Fetterolf & Rudman, 2014; Triana, 2011; Weedon, 1987; Weiler, 2009). Yet teachers and women hold the final determination over their own choices and as such actively create their own identities within and outside of those imposed upon them.

### **THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF OURSELVES AS TEACHERS AND WOMEN**

A feminist post-structuralist view (Butler, 2011; Baxter, 2014; Tilley, 2015; Weedon, 1987) affirms that the positions of power and oppression slip and slide against each other. How we see others and ourselves is fluid rather than fixed, as is our relative positions within the power structure. The self is largely determined through the contact and interactions we have with each other and the language we use to position each other (Alsop, Fitzsimons, & Lennon, 2002). Foucault (1980) states that

power is exercised and employed through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are also the elements of its articulation (p. 98).

Thus, all of us construct ourselves and our perceptions of our own power through the threads woven for us by our society and our relationships with each other within that society. We are a patchwork sewn together from pieces of the fabric of our family experiences and relationships, cut into patterns and deeply embroidered by our sexual preferences, wealth or poverty, race, ability, talents and passions (Griffith, 2007). Thus the same thread can be simultaneously holding us up, holding us down and holding us in place. There is agency in our positions as well as oppression. We weave our own lives with these threads, creating new patterns and possibilities.

This idea supports the inherent feminist character of post-structuralism (Barrett, 2005) because both challenge assumptions about a clean binary of oppression and oppressed, powerful and powerless; asserting that these roles are not assigned to entirely to one gender or the other. Barrett writes, “by naming gender as a social construction and troubling normalized notions of gender, we can open ourselves up to new ways of being a man or a woman.” (p. 88). Similarly, Butler (2011) defines gender as a performance, an assumption of an identity that morphs and or dissolves. Accordingly Sowell (2004) claims feminists should recognize this fluidity and utilize this broader range of possible performances. as a source of power. In doing so we can resist the hegemony of masculinism, what Brittan (1989) calls the societal structures and systems that naturalizes and justifies men’s domination over women. Connell (1995) further explains that this system not only attempts to legitimize and authorize but also attempts to guarantee dominance, most specifically of White, heterosexual, adult men by affording implicit

privileges and marginalizing and subordinating “the other”. In this way, not only women, but homosexuals, boys and men of color become marginalized and diminished in society.

However, if the gender binary of power is exposed as inaccurate then the gender basis of that power can be revealed as illegitimate. In the meantime, this hierarchy is buttressed, in part, by giving to women the appearance of male authority and privilege, but not the substance. For example, in the classroom, behind closed doors, the teacher may feel that she is the arbitrator of what is valuable information. She may feel that she is the gatekeeper (Thornton, 1990) and caretaker of the official knowledge (Apple, 2000). Clifford (2014) quotes a social studies teacher, “I may not be able to change the school district or to change the way the school runs but I can change what goes on in my classroom... I have the power there to do that and have it work the way I want.” (p. 200). Yet, even this vestige of control over pedagogy is being threatened. Increasing incursions into the classroom through the standardized curriculum and testing are deskilling teaching (Au, 2007; McNeil, 2000; Nichols & Berliner, 2008) and eroding teacher’s identity as a professional (Dillabough, 1999; Weir, 1997). Teachers are instead being forced into a role closer to that of an aide, assisting students’ prescribed consumption of state mandated material in an orchestrated and pre-determined pedagogy, a best practices model. Britzman’s (2003) work reveals the illusory autonomy of teachers in contrast to the real capacity of administrators to control and regulate them in a paternalistic or chauvinistic manner. Attacks on educators are validated under the auspices of using the free market and business models, traditionally bastions of masculinity, to fix the failures of the education system and correct the inadequacies of

women/teachers and resulting mistakes have made. They advocate adopting a business model that treats all customers the same, creating a “McDonaldization” of teaching that ignores flavor, quality, creativity in favor of efficiency and quantity served.

Furthermore, as Ticknor (2010) points out “Teaching is a profession that everyone has access to on a regular basis without joining the profession” (p. 6). This contributes to outsiders believing that their opinions about education are as valid as ones held by those within the profession (Britzman, 2003). However this interference is also entangled with the hegemony of the patriarchy and masculinism, of men being in control over all “others” including women and children, for their own good. Scott (1990) points out that oppression is frequently framed as protection or aid. The implication that those being helped are perceived as less competent or capable and thus in need of administrative control is obvious.

Kerr, Kerr and Miller (2014) remind us that in examining control of teachers we must insistently question issues of gender equity. In scrutinizing the ways teachers are managed and administered, we must not lose sight of the parallels to the constraints on women in our broader society. Henry (2011) further insists that teacher education is blind to this wider question, and has only approached critical feminist methods as a soft and unimportant form of analysis rather than recognizing its power to explain and unlock the mechanisms controlling teachers. Apple (1988) concurs, asserting that these incursions into a feminized profession are not a coincidence but rather that this control is critical to the defense of a patriarchal hegemony.

Indeed the identities of teaching and gender have been woven together deliberately, and while teachers and women create their own identities, Dillabough (1999) reminds us that these are patterned on, and tangled in, historical and discursive

ones. To better understand the impacts of this on the teachers in my study I surveyed the historical context of teaching as a feminized profession. I recognized the multilayered and shifting nature of the self as being constantly constructed and remodeled by the influences of gender, talent, education, class, race, region and time (Griffith, 2007). Secondly, I examined how these women's understanding of themselves as feminists and teachers were formed through indexing – the property of speech through which identities are formed as well as categorized around social constructs, such as gender, and affirmed through stances and actions (Ochs, 1992). Green (1998) writes, “Put, simply, we learn to be women and men and in the process acquire gendered identities which shift over time in relation to changing historical and cultural contexts.” (p. 175). Teaching is directly indexed as feminine and when one thinks of teacher, most frequently the image conjured up is of a woman. As such these two roles, woman and teacher resist picking apart; as Ropers-Huilman (1997) observes, it is unclear where one's own identity and the larger social construct begin and end. So, if we are to understand how teachers construct and act upon their ideas of their own identity, it is imperative to first examine how the loom was strung, how the waft and weave of economics, patriarchy and feminism developed into a pattern that continues today.

### **FEMININE SPHERE**

Teaching, in the last century and a half has been almost completely conflated with the feminine. It is perceived as women's work and an extension of the traditional roles of mother (Bhana, 2016). Indeed Noddings (1984) has claimed that this maternal care be the basis of school reform. However, as Walkerdine (1986) challenges, if teaching requires care, love, hard work and faith it is not necessarily perceived as also needing skill, professionalism, talent, knowledge and reason. Several studies assert society's

expectation that women must care and sacrifice for others is a mechanism of self-exploitation (Clement, 1996; Diller, 1996; hooks, 2014; Tsouluhas, 2005). Care is considered part of the essential nature of women, and this burden fall disproportionately on women (Stepler, 2015). As Ochs (1992) points out, being a good teacher is understood as being good care-giver, in tune and responsive to a child's needs more than it is valued as the professional transmitter of knowledge. As such, while the lauding of supposedly feminine virtues was used to open up possibilities for women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the continual binary nature of these frameworks have limited them in the 21<sup>st</sup>.

In the Enlightenment, society framed women and their supposed innate characteristics as the antithesis of civilization and yet crucial to it. Dillabough (1999) writes that democratic ideals of rationality and objectivity were assigned as masculine; women could not possess these traits themselves but could only nurture them in others. Education for women was restricted in subject and its main purpose was to "improve" women for their role as wives and mothers. This linked and limited women contribution as only reproductive and physical while sidelining any intellectual, rational or civic participation (1999).

As such the rise in female literacy in colonial America education was not due to a more liberal view of gender but for service or purposes of others. The requirements of Puritan faith to know and read the Bible were essential to worshipping and serving God (Fischer, 1989). For some merchants a woman's ability to read and write was useful to help the family business (Solomon, 1985). For many elite families, female education was sheer luxury ostensibly with no economic purpose, "providing public proof that white female productive labor was not needed in their households," (Montgomery, 2006 p 24) thereby also advertising the status of any family who could afford to educate their female

children. Women were to be protected from the world, not engage it as thinking, analyzing or critiquing individuals.

However, Kerber (1980) writes that, acceptance of these models became in of itself a form of agency for women; for how could women, left in their “natural” state, teach the republican values to their children? More recently, Eastman (2007) points to the influence of Mary Wollstonecraft’s arguments that the domestic sphere is not isolated, but rather is part of the public and that the education of women is an indicator of the progress of a civilization. Many historical studies (Clifford, 2014; Galman, 2012; Goldstein, *The teacher wars: A history of America's most embattled profession*, 2014; Kerber, 1980; Schwager, 1987; Solomon, 1985) note that the expansion of education for women was thus predicated on its employment for the good of others. In 1787 American revolutionary Dr. Benjamin Rush proclaimed that the country’s future depended on women.

They must be stewards and guardians of their husband’s property...The equal share that every citizen has in the liberty and the possible share he may have in the government of our country make it necessary that our ladies should be qualified to a certain degree, by a peculiar and suitable education, to concur in instructing our sons in the principles of liberty and government (Schloesser, 2002, p. 78).

It is obvious from his argument that he does not see the value in female education as a citizen herself but in her identity as wife and mother (Cambell, 2000). Hannah More, a evangelically religious author, was instrumental in idealizing educated women as defenders of the moral high-ground. Female academies were quick to reassure young

women's parents by repeating More's assertion that education would reinforce rather than challenge traditional roles and duties (Clifford, 2014; Solomon, 1985). However, no educational system could completely control what was learned or how that learning was applied and enacted. Just as the expansion of White man's suffrage spread past the elitist classical republican vision of many of the founding fathers, so too did the ideas about women's power and role extend past the servile vision of Rush and More. While true that even among highly educated women most followed the path of marriage (Clifford, 2014; Solomon, 1985), they also created their own trails, for their own purposes, and expanded rather than shattered their spheres of influence (Apple, 1988).

In doing so they helped usher in the Second Great Awakening, a period of social reform and change. These resiliently resistant women applied themselves to a variety of fields such as abolition, temperance, sufferance, and to expanding educational and employment opportunities for women. Angelica Grimke, for example used her position within Southern genteel society and later her authority as a wife of prominent abolitionist Theodore Weld as a platform for her work to end slavery (Lerner, 1998). Founder of the American women's suffrage movement Elizabeth Cady Stanton was very careful of, and made much use of, her image as a happy and contented mother and wife to pursue of her goals. By pushing from within the accepted feminine sphere she was able to maneuver around her critic's claims of the unnaturalness of her demands (Ginzberg, 2010; Ward, 1999). This example of women leveraging accepted societal rules or expectations to serve one's own purpose of resisting the status quo is in keeping with the ways the teachers in this study attempted to do the same.

## **TEACHING AS WOMEN'S UNDERPAID AND UNDERVALUED WORK**

Catherine Beecher opened up teaching for women by utilizing interest intersection and working within frameworks of feminine gender norms (Goldstein, *The teacher wars: A history of America's most embattled profession*, 2014) even while tacitly acknowledging that many used teaching to escape the prescribed and normed path of marriage and motherhood (Clifford, 2014). In fact Fraser (2007) writes that what had been a male profession had become by 1850 predominantly a female one. But that transition, that advancement for women was not without cost. Hoffman (2003) states that by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the profession of teaching had moved to a position that it would hold for the next century and beyond. It was less than equal in status to male professions but also a source of satisfaction and power for women. Teaching was to remain “shadowed but also special” (2003, pp. 43-44). In this way, teaching mimics motherhood, itself a source of joy, pride and power but still secondary to male administration in the traditional hierarchy of the patriarchy. Further, Schwager (1987) writes that while discounting the abilities and aptitude of male teachers, and lauding instinctive abilities of women, Beecher unapologetically marketed female teachers as the solution to cash-strapped school districts’ financial woes.

Some seventy years later, Texas politicians couched their support of “Normals” in populists’ terms: “That we give special attention to the training of female teachers for Primary Schools, rather than to the general culture of young men in colleges, who will likely teach in the higher schools for the benefit of the few.” (Eby, 1925, p. 184) With an eye to long-range budgets, these politicians were supporting the Normal school education of women who would be cheaper to employ.

Women were a bargain because, in keeping with perceptions of benevolent patriarchy, a woman only had to support herself (Goldstein, 2014). If she was married or

a parent, it was conveniently assumed that she had a husband who could and would support her (J. Fraser, 2007). However, national economic changes were recasting reality into something quite different from that the idealized and highly delineated roles. The emerging industrial economy had a dramatic impact on the produce of the domestic sphere. Factory made goods were less costly than those a women could make for her family. Specialization and economies of scale devalued women's labor and pushed women outside the home for cash paying work or relieved them of the necessity of staying at home (Rau & Wazienski, 2015; Solomon, 1985).

Especially in the post Civil War South, middle class women raised to remain in the domestic sphere, faced few "respectable choices" because of the reduced number of men (Faust, 1996). When women did marry in this time period, it was at increasingly older ages. While some did demand a wider role in the male dominated society, that society rejected their utility and worth, forcing their efforts into the narrowest acceptable margins (Janney, 2008). In doing so, White men prevented competition for their status but they also masochistically denied themselves the benefits of harnessing all of that talent.

Teaching was one of these limited channels that afforded these women a respectable profession and did not prevent the possibility of future marriage. In addition, Reynolds and Schramm (2002) point out, the field of education was an acceptable outlet for overlapping themes of progressive political and social work. Society accepted women as natural educators. "Woman is the only creature who is sympathetic enough to be a model teacher. The teacher must have the essence of tenderness developed in the highest degree and no man has this." (North Carolina Teacher, 1891, p. 1) A Tennessee newspaper concurred saying, "We want more lady teachers in the county...Past experience proves very conclusively that they are quite or more successful than the

gentlemen.” (E.L. Ayers, 1995, p. 33). Women turned this hegemonic understanding of the “natural” aptitudes as a way to remove these gentlemen from the classroom. Memphis teachers, for example, protesting the difference in wages and representation stated, “...when men assume themselves the whole management of school rooms and school children, they are plainly usurping the natural place of women and are pushing themselves into our peculiar sphere.” (Berkely, 1984, p. 52) LeLoudis (1996) writes that it became considered a double victory because not only would there be “better” teachers in the classroom, even more importantly, by hiring women, there would be *more* teachers for the same budget because one could pay them less. In this sense it was finances more than any other attribute that led to a restructuring of the acceptability, and eventually the preference for, women teachers. By 1850 teaching positions were mostly held by women and as the century continued that gap increased, especially in the cities where women teachers outnumbered men 9 to 1 (J. Fraser, 2007).

The establishment of the discourse of the woman, working for the greater good and not for her own profit or ambition, Apple (1988) argues, becomes a mechanism of exploitation that continues to this day and thus is critical to the context of this study. For the “good of the kids”, teachers are expected to give up their lunch time, stay hours after school, host “study parties” on the weekends, buy classroom materials all without financial compensation. This extends even to the university level as several studies (Acker & Feuerverger, 1997; Brooks, 1997; Dillabough, 1999; Probert, 2005) have found that female professors are overloaded with administrative duties, especially in dealing with the needs of students, which limit their ability to research and publish and thus advance themselves within their fields. Fraser (2007) describes how the missionary model impels us to put the responsibility on ourselves to ‘save’ every child. We have accepted teachers as society’s scapegoat, by internalizing the discourse that students fail

not because of structural inequities and barriers (Goldstein, *The teacher wars: A history of America's most embattled profession*, 2014) but only when the teacher is not caring enough (Noddings, 1984) and dedicated enough (Cammack & Phillips, 2002) to *give* enough of herself. This positions the work as volunteerism rather than a high status profession that deserves to be compensated for the value it provides.

Goldstein (2014), argues that teaching's lack of status is tied to its feminized identity. She describes how in 1853, Susan B. Anthony, after having to fight for two days for her voice to be heard at the New York State Teachers Association convention, dominated by men despite their being the minority in attendance, said that until women are recognized as capable of entering all professions, those they do hold will be seen as intellectually and socially inferior. Grumet (1988) further postulates that women teachers accepted the lower status and increased supervision because they were not as well educated as men and in doing so established a precedent that continues to this day. That the patriarchal controls, rather than their own intelligence or aptitude prevented them from earning these credentials and skills was not examined. Establishing educational requirements to achieve status, while controlling who has access to these attainments is one way in which a system of control justifies and perpetuates itself (Foucault, 1980; Giroux, 2013).

There are still are social constructs and discourse around “women’s work”, and so these self fulfilling prophecies still enact themselves today. Women’s work is normalized in our society as less valuable, less esteemed and underpaid for the very reason that it *is* women’s work and vice versa (Arestis, Charles, & Fontana, 2014; Levanon, England, & Paul, 2009). Flanders (2015) points out that activities done previously by both genders became devalued in the Industrial Era as men began to work for cash outside the home. In another example, when the printing press lowered the

value, and thus status of scribes, it became acceptable for women to be able to write (Clifford, 2014). Oldenziel (1999) notes that the reverse happened to computer programming in the modern age. When the field became masculinized there was subsequent rise in pay and prestige. There is a similarity in the continuously maintained construct of male superiority that seems to share characteristics with Gordon's (1999) bad faith framework surrounding race. Just as Whiteness depends on "othering" constructs of Blackness, masculinity depends on maintaining the inferiority of feminine and its dominance over it. As Hughes (2000) explains, "Masculinity is not equal and opposite to femininity; it attracts a higher status" (p. 435). For example, the desire to underscore the dominant position of men led the all White, all male Memphis school board to engage in bizarrely overt inequities and dis-economies. Berkely (1984) recounts that in the 1870-1871 school year the board cut their White female teacher salaries by an average of 15%, stopped the construction of two new schools, and slashed the number of black teachers in half, all to give their White male teachers *a raise*.

Feminized professions like teaching are still quantitatively devalued by being paid less than masculinized careers requiring similar qualification (Black, Haviland, Sanders, & Taylor, 2008; National Education Association, 2015). As a result, according to Butler (1990; 2011), men in feminized professions underscore their masculinity, moreover McDowell (2015) notes that they devalue supposedly female characteristics through performativity designed to diminish the appearance of nurturing or caring. An example of this can be seen in the predominance of men in disciplinary roles in schools rather than counseling. They can express care and concern within the masculinized spaces of sports more than in the classroom. The prevalence of men in administration also reveals the impetus to rise to a higher station within the feminized profession (Galman, 2012).

## **IN NEED OF CONTROL**

The multilayered system of administration and control over teachers by reformer outsiders is another manifestation of the lack of faith men have in the women who teach. Apple (1988) writes

...as jobs- either autonomous or not –are filled by women, there are greater attempts to control both the content of the job and how it is done from the outside. Thus the separation of conception from execution and what has been called the deskilling and depowering of jobs has been a particularly powerful set of forces on women’s labor. (pp. 56-57).

In other words, Apple contends that it is because a job is feminized it must be controlled in order to socially maintain or reproduce current hierarchies of power. The concurrent de-professionalization of teachers, whether one thinks this is maintenance or change in status (Drudy, 2008; Johnson, 1972), is critical to maintaining the hegemony of outsider masculine control. Dillabough (1999) uses a feminist perspective to investigate the gendered discourse surrounding teacher identity and claims that harnessing the normed hierarchies of women and men enables government to privilege its goals over that of the educators and students. Combine this with the imposition of free market models with masculinized goals that stress observable, and thus controllable quantified criteria (Mahony, Hextall, & Menter, 2004), and hierarchies become established as “performativity takes precedence over substance” (Blackmore, 1999, p. 37), with the higher strata populated by men. Galman (2012) points out that the feminization of the profession was matched with masculinism of administration, which framed, as only natural, that female teachers would need male supervision, observation, and evaluation. The administration of schools perpetuated the wider society’s hierarchal relationship through the separation of men into administrative duties and women in the classroom.

The class teacher has lost sovereignty and has become private in the great army ruled by 'educators'. We witness a multiplication of positions filled by men who direct and supervise the work of teachers, but who do no teaching themselves... The class teacher is given a course of study docked on all sides, with methods of teaching every subject, and a boss educator is on hand at intervals to see that all... class teachers keep in line. (LeLoudis, 1996, p. 77)

The imbalance of men as administrators and women as teachers has resulted in an imposition of their will on teacher's decisions and claims to expertise and competence. With fewer years experience in the classroom than many of the women they are observing (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007-2008), these men still feel authorized to determine how and what she does.

Even into the twenty first century, the percentage of women in leadership positions shrinks dramatically the higher in education one goes. While the majority of elementary school principals are women, by middle school that percentage has dropped to 42% for high schools it slips further to 32% and only 14% of colleges and universities have women as their presidents (NCES, 2013). Kerr, Kerr and Miller (2014) point out that not only do that vast majority of school districts reflect this imbalance, but that when one digs into the data, the gender based differences become even starker. They argue that the position most imbalanced in terms of gender parity, assistant principal is also that which is most aligned with the male associated role of discipline. Further, they found that schools under the greatest pressure to improve scores are most likely to be entrusted to male administration to meet those goals.

Like today, public education was touted as a reflection of American egalitarianism even while obvious inequality and privilege proved otherwise. As education became a tool for the Americanization and industrial training of millions of

immigrants, it became increasingly and aggressively micro-managed by native-born Anglo-Saxon men determined to maintain their positions of power in society (Lynd & Lynd, 1929; J. Nolan, 2004; Tyack, 1974). In the late 1870's the Atlanta Superintendent Bernard Mallon said, "I keep my teachers in a state of subjection and fear" (Roberts, 1965). The 1888 annual report of the San Francisco Superintendent decreed that the deputy superintendent "must observe carefully the methods of teaching and discipline pursued by teachers...teachers are made for the schools and not the schools for the teachers" (J. Nolan, 2004, pp. 77-78). Goldstein (2014) writes that the founder of Teachers College, Nicholas Murray Butler, argued successfully that curriculum decisions could not be left to the teachers but instead come from experts who would institute a top down management of the schools. According to Crocco, (1999) the pattern of formulization followed wherever women were the majority of teachers. Over time the failings in the public education system were laid at these teachers' feet even while they were stripped of control of trying to fix them. That many women left the profession after a few years was likewise not blamed on poor pay, lack of supplies and overwork brought on by tightfisted state budgets, but converted bizarrely into the cause of these very problems (J. Nolan, 2004).

Indeed in the Chicago Public Schools at the turn of the twentieth century, according to Linn (1935), the prevailing attitude was to achieve strict economy through strict administration. The teachers were employees with no more control over their curriculum than a factory worker would have over the assembly line. Jane Addams protested that this the control over teachers was so complete 'that they have no space in which to move about freely and the more adventurous of them fairly panted for light and air.' (Linn, p. 230). This centralization of the curriculum and control was lead by William Rainey Harper, the president of the University of Chicago. He proposed in the

Harper Bill, that sweeping powers be given to the school superintendent who would receive a salary twenty times higher than the female teachers (Boyer, 2015). He prioritized the hiring of male teachers both overtly and by trying to raise the education requirement for teaching to a college degree, which was out of the reach of many women (Munro, 1995) which was especially true of the second- generation immigrant women who were using teaching as a social mobilizer (Clifford, 2014). These women were seen as especially concerning because their ethnic backgrounds seemed to challenge the Anglo-Saxon dominant narrative (J. Nolan, 2004; Zimmerman, 2002). In addition to fears of ethnic dilution, Tyack (1974) believes this fear of feminine control over teaching was a response to the increased demands for women's rights and the rise of the New Woman.

Apple (2001) maintains that as the demographics, budgets battles and balances of civil rights and power continue to shift in our own time we see this same resurgence of control over education. Rather than directly addressing societal problems that seem out of our ability to control, or perhaps our willingness to pay to treat, we turn to the quicker, cheaper action of controlling the curriculum and the teachers who are to use it (Giroux, 2013).

Apple (1988) says when the autonomy of teachers becomes threatening and must be controlled, the state determines a new purpose for education. In the late 1920's when progressive or activity-based education was losing favor, William Chandler Bagley of Teachers College blamed the feminization of teaching as the emasculating cause of the weakness of education (Kliebard, 1995). Currently, education is being taken over by those who blame schools and teachers for perceived failures in national and economic advancement (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Blackmore (1999) points out that *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in

Education, 1983) utilized a discourse of crisis to justify national, state and local intervention and regulation over teachers. Casey (1993) uses former Secretary of Education William Bennett as a prime example of a conservative White man with no degree in curriculum or instruction and no experience in a p-12 classroom, who can nevertheless stand in judgment and authority over an entire nation's educational system. He likened the failing of our schools to an act of war and his solution further indicated exactly who he blamed for this sabotage teachers being allowed to waste time with mindless lessons because their principals were not being tough enough in controlling them. Like the demonizing of "welfare mothers", another gendered pejorative construct conservatives trot out, teachers were positioned as wasting national resources and endangering the children they should care for (Giroux, 2013).

Closer to home and more recently, Texas' Governor Greg Abbot named Mike Morath, a financier and head of an investment firm, as the state's next Education Commissioner of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) which oversees the 1,200 school districts and charters (Hope, 2015). This followed an attempt earlier this year by the State Board on Educator Certification to allow Texas school districts to hire superintendents who had no educational experience (McGee, 2015). Biklen (1993) argues that the future of education has been determined too important to leave to the judgment of teachers/women, establishing them as "neither real workers nor real managers" (p. 47). What to teach is deemed too important/dangerous to leave to the person who Shulman (1987) asserts would most likely have the greatest knowledge of her content, her students and how to engage the two. Dewey writes that

The teacher alone can make that course of study a living reality... as long as the teacher, who is, after all, the only real educator in the school system, has no definite and authoritative position in shaping the course of study, that is more

likely to remain an external thing to be externally applied to the child. (Kliebard, 1995, p. 74)

Dewey (1902) rightfully points out that the teacher, having the syntactical understanding of her students, their needs and interests and the educational culture would be the most successful at developing the curriculum as long as this is kept out of their hands then less meaningful learning will occur, yet the teacher will be held responsible for it. Lightfoot (1978) asserts that this system supports the values of the dominant male hegemony without giving women a say in what those goals are. By placing blame rather than empowering teachers to identify problems and use their knowledge and expertise of their students and curriculum to create solutions and goals we miss an opportunity for schools to actually be places of transformation. Finally, Giroux (1988) warns that the result goes even further than gender imbalanced administration, to curriculum and pedagogy being determined by those who are not teachers or even educators but instead laypeople, most often men.

Reyes, Wagstaff and Fusarelli (1999) and Apple (2002) note that the most influential voices on education reform come from groups focused on competition, efficacy and political ideology. Hartman (2013) claims that education, and social studies especially, are viewed by conservatives as a “Trojan horse of social engineering” (p. 114) and as such, must be vigorously reined in and controlled or very fabric of the American family could be destroyed. Indeed, the political and cultural conservatives claim that standardization of the curriculum is crucial to protecting children from liberally biased teachers (McGreal, 2010). As such, the curriculum cannot be entrusted to teachers but developed by those outside of the left leaning educational system. “We are adding balance. History has already been skewed. Academia is skewed too far to the left” said Texas State Board of Education member and dentist, Dr. Don McLeroy (McKinley Jr.,

2010, para 6). This extends even to casting historical figures as holding opinions in alignment with current ideological battles: for example in a recent debate over the portrayal of Sam Houston in Texas history books, Republican Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) member Pat Hardy, insisted that the revolutionary Texan be characterized as a conservative. “I just never hear Sam Houston referred to as a liberal. And those of us who liked Sam Houston want to keep him on our side.” (M. Smith, 2014, p. 1). Additionally, the conservative public statements of the board (G. Collins, 2012) directly correlate with political conservatives fears of feminism (Strong-Boag, 2014) in particular.

The highly influential religious leader Pat Robertson denied feminist as actually working for women’s rights but rather “It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians” (Apple, 2001, p. 153). In education, this fear about feminism has manifested itself not only in the increased control over female teachers but also the home-school movement, which while keeping the mother-teacher symbiosis denies the public participation piece (Sherfinski, 2014).

Fundamentalist Protestant Christianity aligns itself with business interests, a relationship stretching back to the earliest days of Calvinism (Stark, 2005) and has evolved in America into a media fueled evangelical-capitalist resonance machine under the mantle of conservatism (Connally, 2008). Conservatives have used this economic and media power to create within the education a system that internalizes, in the very people being subjugated, the legitimacy of patriarchal control and the existence of a neo-liberal meritocracy (Wetherall, Taylor, & Yates, 2001). Wilkins (2012), contends that neo-liberalism assumes a rational individual “empowered, self maximizing subject in pursuit of success and autonomy” (p. 768), ignoring the imbalances of information,

inclusion, access and agency. Several studies (Apple, 2004; Ayers & Ayers, 2011; MacLeod, 1995; Mohanty, 2013) have asserted that this worldview minimizes all inequities to simply the result of individual factors such as talent, hard work and skill or the lack thereof, acquitting all strata from recognizing the classed, racialized and gendered institutional practices of control. However, by ignoring the true inhibitors of success the powers that be must look elsewhere to place the blame for the failure of the education system, the teachers.

In this neo-liberal educational system the quality of the teacher is judged on their objective, supposedly apolitical transmission of legitimate knowledge (Apple, 2004). Standardized, and thus supposedly equal, exams and other qualitative measures used to prove the inadequacies of these teachers (Au, 2016), are framed as unbiased, unemotional and thus masculine (Dillabough, 1999; Kerber, 1980). Meanwhile, the teaching profession has been assigned to the feminine, as such grouped with emotional and subjective characteristics (Grumet, 1988; Walkerdine, 1986), and thus untrustworthy in its opinion or judgment.

The educational system, according to the neo-liberal position, is to be reformed by profit-seeking mechanisms of privatization (Fabricant & Fine, 2013), commodification, standardization, regulation, and examination (Mohanty, 2013), and as such is an overt method of subordination (De Lissovoy, 2010; Gore, 1993). The 2017 appointment and confirmation of Christian conservative and for-profit charter school champion Betsy DeVoss, over the vociferous opposition of educators, indicated that this model has support from the highest levels of power (Goldstein, 2017).

Fitz, Zucker, and Bay-Che (2012) argue that this vision of meritocracy has been one of the most effective ways of convincing women to reject identifying themselves as feminists and in turn, be less likely to recognize and actively fight against gender related

subjugation. If women accept that the system rewards in equal measure equal effort they will internalize their failures or struggles as students or teachers and leave unchallenged the structures stacked against them.

### **Controlling What is Valuable**

Apple (2004) writes “Schools not only control people; they also help control meaning.” (p. 61). By prescribing not only the content, but also assessing student and teacher performance, the state determines what is valuable or legitimate knowledge. It further determines one’s access to power and status in our society on the basis of one’s ability to remember and recite this particular information. Cornbleth (1985) concurs, writing that in the packaging and presentation of material, history curricula legitimize certain groups and ideas and throw doubt on others, frequently by simply ignoring them. Bourdieu (1977) adds that the categorization of information into important and unimportant classifications was essential to the preservation of current strata of power. He states that by using the education system this form of social reproduction is camouflaged as being merit-based and resulting success or failure within this mechanism is owed to one’s level of intelligence and hard work, rather than privilege and access. The support for this theory is present in the persistent gaps in achievement on standardized tests, which are founded on the imposed curriculum (Mendoza-Denton, 2014). These tests are ironic components of No Child Left Behind (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. § 6319 , 2008) and Race to the Top (US Department of Education, 2009) legislation, because the espoused point of the programs was to identify and close differences in achievement based on race, ethnicity and gender (Jahng, 2011; Onosko, 2011).

Instead they have deliberately led to a further entrenchment of these differences (McNeil, 2000; Nichols & Berliner, 2008), and the blame for the failure shifted off of the enduring inequities in society and onto the shoulders of teachers who simply must not be working hard enough. Au (2016) refers to this as Meritocracy 2.0, in which the very policies being enacted as anti-racist or post-racist are what is perpetuating the inequities. Furthermore, the test scores supposed quantitative impartiality disguises the problems within the content itself and the purpose it serves. As Boss Tweed famously said, “In counting there is strength.” The focus shifts to who has larger or smaller numbers rather than examining critically who decided what counts and what gave them that power to arbitrate.

The arguments may have changed over time or become strategically subtle (Thurman, 2012), converting from blatant nativism and racism into more palatable synonyms of neo-liberal meritocracy, but at the core they serve the same purpose. Community, efficiency, functionalism and hierarchy are such widely accepted purposes that educators have moved other ideas to the forefront, hiding the former curriculum (Apple, 2004) not out of shame or subterfuge, but because they have become the established hegemony.

Because it is a crossroads of what most people hold dear children, citizenship, wealth and identity, social studies curriculum development has become the flashpoint of education, with various factions striking and sparking against one another (Ames, 2009; Apple, 2002; 2001; Au, 2016; Cimbricz, 2002; Giroux, 2013). For many years, social studies has had a complicated and involved relationship with government, particularly in the “play of ideological, economic, sociopolitical, religio-cultural and personal determinants” (Clifford, 2014, p. 21). On the surface, current educational policy, rooted in standardization and accountability, is aimed at ameliorating and aiding the

disenfranchised (e.g. No Child Left Behind), hiding the deficit assumptions about these subaltern groups (Urrieta, 2004). Furthermore, the notion of improving student performance is masked by underlying structures promoting social efficiency and maintenance of the status quo, as evidenced through the NCLB's consequent influence upon curriculum, pedagogy, and teacher input. These dominant educational models of social efficiency seen today originated in the early 1900s, with movements towards scientific curriculum making and the permeation of economic principles in education championing greater (social) efficiency for schools (Shepard, 2000). The reorganization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act through No Child Left Behind (US Department of Education, 2002) intensified this push toward an assessable standardized curriculum the analysis of which was intended to reveal progress, stagnation or regression within our system.

Today, non-educators make decisions about social studies curriculum, in Texas and elsewhere (Rothman, 2015), for political and ideological rather than pedagogical reasons (Salinas & Reidel, 2007). The power sharing relationship between teachers and administration eroded and became ever more asymmetrical during the 2010 term of the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) (McDonnell, 2005; Ravitch, 1995; Reese, 2005; Resnick, 2006; Scheurich, 1997). To quote Republican state senator and outspoken opponent of the Texas SBOE Kel Seliger, the “lawyers and dentists and things like that” (Texas Freedom Network, 2010) on the school board see educators as the very root of the problems in U.S. History classes (Ames, 2009; Robelen, 2010). Legislatures, government appointees and school boards tend to be made up of the elite classes (Salinas & Reidel, 2007) who use a façade of democracy to preserve, especially at the high school level, their own social status resulting in schools and subjects being turned into

mechanisms for control and social reproduction (Counts, 1930), even when teachers and students attempt to challenge it (Aronowitz, 2012; Salinas, Blevins, & Sullivan, 2012).

### **Controlling What is History**

What gets to be defined as real, important or valid history is controlled by the government through the crafting of curriculum standards, the adoption of textbooks and the administration of tests those in power determine what is the official knowledge (Apple, 1992; Lindaman & Ward, 2004). Scott (1990) explains that this narrative while unlikely to be a complete fabrication is nonetheless “the self portrait of dominant elites as they would have themselves seen...It is designed to be impressive, to affirm and naturalize [their] power...and to conceal or euphemize the dirty linen of their rule.” (p. 18). In other words, history creates and is created by the image of those in power. As Nash, Crabtree and Ross (2000) detail, history curriculum is of special importance, and thus endures the greatest debate because its purpose is the teaching of ideology, identity, representation, civil rights and justice. Several studies have also shown that social studies in particular was seen by many as falling away from its core purposes of uniting the country in a common American identity (Gagnon, 1989; Ravitch, 1990; Schlesinger Jr., 1991). Much of the changes to history curriculum have been with the overt and explicitly stated purpose of correcting the prevailing liberal bias in history classes and teachers (McKinley Jr., 2010; Thurman, 2012). In 1930, New York City School Superintendent Harold G. Campbell defended his silencing of history curriculum, which he saw as anti-Protestant and anti-capitalism, by saying that this issue “was not a question of historical facts, it was a question [of] whether all the true statements in the book ought to be taught to school children” (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 59). In the forties fear

that our nation was losing its patriotism and unity, and thus vulnerable to losing the war led to a crusade to increase the focus in schools on history (Evans, *The social studies wars: Now and then*, 2015). In the fifties, communism was thought to be lurking in the history curriculum, kept restrained only through the vigilance of such independent private media companies as *The Educational Reviewer* or the *American Legion Magazine*. During the civil rights era certain historical facts needed to be suppressed because the recounting of them, not inequality, caused unrest. On July 31, 2015, the College Board announced changes to their Advanced Placement U.S. History frameworks (Massey, 2015). The new guidelines are a response to the criticisms by such groups as the Republican National Committee and the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE), who claimed that the previous iteration “smells of [liberal] agenda” (para. 7) and was a “biased and inaccurate view of many important events in American history”(para. 5) with not enough focus on American exceptionalism and the success of capitalism and too much emphasis on the negative aspects of the country’s history. These elected officials do not deny the facts, but instead fear that teachers will use these facts to develop anti-patriotic opinions about the past in their students. Former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan warned, “We do a disservice to children when we shield them from the truth, just because some people think it is painful or does not fit with their particular views. Parents should be very wary of politicians designing curriculum” (Castro, 2010, para. 18). But today’s governing bodies seem to distrust individual rights and the people who are supposed to exercise them, ignoring experiences and viewpoints that differ from their own. In this so called democratic realism, the only way we as citizens can grasp the

impossibly complex workings of our government and society is in the small pre-digested pieces distributed to us from our leaders (W. Stanley, 2015). The Texas Republican Party went so far as to officially demand a ban on critical thinking because they see it as a threat to fixed beliefs and parental authority (Strauss, 2012). In 2014, thousands of Jefferson County, Colorado parents, students and teachers protested a board proposal that their history curriculum should not “encourage or condone civil disorder, social strife or disregard of the law” (Segal, 2014, p. 2) and instead should stick to a positive portrayal of the United States and “promote citizenship, patriotism, essentials and benefits of the free enterprise system, respect for authority and respect for individual rights” (Segal, 2014, p. 2). Giroux (2013) claims this is exactly why society has determined that teachers cannot be viewed as public intellectuals, because to do so would result in “pedagogy that might enable students to think differently, critically or more imaginatively.” (p. 462). Instead, they wish train citizens to respond and recall but not to evaluate or engage, except when it supports their narrative. For example, the Texas 11<sup>th</sup> grade U.S. History TEK 17 (D) asks students to “identify actions of government and the private sector such as the Great Society, affirmative action, and Title IX to create economic opportunities for citizens and analyze the unintended consequences of each” (Texas Educational Agency, 2011). So legislative actions for equity are positioned by this discourse as failures with negative results. Meanwhile in 9G “The student is expected to... (G) describe the role of individuals such as governors George Wallace, Orval Faubus, and Lester Maddox and groups, including the Congressional bloc of southern Democrats, that sought to maintain

the status quo” the bloody, violent battle for White supremacy is framed as simply maintenance of the status quo.

Faithfully, or fearfully, following these standards becomes simply a matter of swallowing *their* facts, determined legitimate by this distant body, while “pursuing ideas, raising questions, or offering comments” (Cornbleth, 1985, p. 37) are too frequently discouraged by teachers nervously eyeing the testing calendar (McNeil, 2000). The point of education, and social studies especially, is to critically examine society, as it concerns who we are and what role society had in creating us (Giroux, 1988). “There is a reciprocal relationship between justice in the present and honesty about the past” (Loewen, 2010, p. 15). Social studies should be a way to transform society not just celebrate it. Many studies (Hirsch & Ross, 2000; Kincheloe, 2001; VanSledright, 2011) argue that social studies can challenge dominant thinking through the acceptance of constructivism and by teachers developing analytic methods (Ochoa-Becker, 2007) for exposing control over the discourse. By educators admitting that all history is created through interpretations, a space is opened for agency within the teacher and the students to create their own view and also to understand how even their perspective was itself molded by the dominant culture. Parker (2003) writes that “educators are the primary stewards of democracy” (p. xvii) and that without the teaching of democratic enlightenment and engagement we will consign our citizens to the powerless idiocy of selfishness, and isolation. He believes that possessing a shared knowledge of what has harmed democracy and how to make it work are minimum requirements of an active citizenry.

As it is frequently framed by curriculum standards, history is a journey through possibly regrettable but isolated episodes that have been basically overcome (Barton &

Levstik, 2004; Cornbleth & Waugh, 1995; Epstein, 2009; Symcox, 2002). Difficult histories surrounding race, gender and class are attributed to specific bad actors rather than being recognized as woven into the very fabric of society (Brown & Brown, 2010), for fear the acknowledgment might be too divisive (D. Hess, 2004). This contradicts teachers' syntactical and substantive understandings (Schwab, 1964) of how knowledge is naturally legitimized and organized in historical study and curriculum (Salinas, 2006) as well as students' observations and conclusions of the world they inhabit (Sheppard, 2010). This credibility gap distances the students from both the material and the positive effects of learning social studies because it denies their funds of knowledge (Salinas, Rodriguez, & Lewis, 2015) and connections to history. It can also lead them to form incorrect assumptions about the level of oppression that is still occurring. For example, if women's issues are sidelined to just a focus on the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment it would seem that all of our goals are accomplished. Furthermore, when history is presented as constant progress, overcoming problems as a natural consequence of time, we removed not only the credit for agency from those who deserve it but the potential inspiration for empowerment by our teachers and students.

Instead students are taught to identify with a normalized and limited definition of who is an American citizen. Identification (Barton & Levstik, 2004) appears to be the driving stance, especially for Right Wing conservatives (Nash, Crabtree, & Dunn, 2000) promoting a single dominant narrative (Salinas, Blevins, & Sullivan, 2012; VanSledright, 2011; Wineburg, 2005) of the originalist perspective (Chancey, 2014) of our Christian (Fea, 2011) founding fathers and the exceptionalism of the United States (Barton & Levstik, 2004). Identification has become synonymous with Whiteness, masculinity and exhibitionism and testing methods, which enforce adherence to this limited identity. Those in power see no problem because "Whites are taught to think of their lives as

morally neutral, normative and average, also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work which will allow “them to be more like “us.” (McIntosh, 1989, p. 2). As with the ethnic studies battles in Tucson, Arizona, multicultural history is perceived as something different and deviating from true American history (Biggers, 2011). Ironically, Arizona State Superintendent Tom Horne used Martin Luther King Jr.’s dream that one day his children would be “judged by the content of the character and not the color of their skin” to justify the crusade to ban ethnic studies classes as post-racist (Palos, McGinnis, Fifer, Bricca, & Amor, 2011). Class, gender and color-blind narratives normalize male Whiteness. This view of history is predicated on deficit ideas of women and people of color as “less than” and claims that to acknowledge differences would be derogatory, pointing out their faults, what they lack, how they do not quite measure up (Lewis, 2001) rather than their strengths and agency within our past and present.

History, and social studies subjects in general, do not have to be this way. Inclusive, active citizenship is as an imperative goal of the social studies within a wider supportive school culture (Dewey, 1902; Gutmann, 2004). Franklin Bobbitt states that education has as its function the “training of every citizen, man or woman, not for knowledge about citizenship, but proficiency in citizenship” (Counts, 2013, p. 11). The National Council for the Social Studies (2006) concurs, announcing that the “primary goal of public education is to prepare students to be engaged and effective citizens... one who has the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to assume the ‘office of citizen’ in our democratic republic” (para. 2). This goal cannot be achieved with rote memorization, or by following a standardized curriculum and format for every student. To create active rather than passive citizens requires an ambitious teacher (Grant & Gradwell, 2010) who

actively constructs their course around relevant curriculum and pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Ambitious teachers (Grant, 2006; Salinas, 2006) and students (Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001) have and will continue to find more ways to push back for what they know is valuable and yet missing in our history curriculum. The foundation of this should be recognition of the heterogeneous identities of our fellow citizens and the understanding of the interconnectedness and interdependence we have to each other. As author James Baldwin testified to Congress in 1969 “I am the flesh of your flesh and bone of your bone; I have been here as long as you have been here –longer- I paid for it as much as you have. It is my country too. Do recognize that that is the whole question. My history and culture has got to be taught. It is yours.” (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 129). Because above all, citizens should be untiring in the cause for justice for us all (Gutmann, 2004) our shared heritage must be collaboration rather than assimilation. Our history curriculum is wrong because it is not truly and completely ours.

### **The Means of Control**

Standards alone do not tend to motivate or instigate change in the classroom but several studies show that high stakes of testing does, though not always for the better (Center on Education Policy, 2006; Goertz, Floden, & O'Day, 1995; Hamilton, 2003; Hamilton, et al., 2007; Lane, Parke, & Stone, 2002; Ravitch, 1995; Segall, 2003). Allegiance to teaching this official knowledge is maintained by standardized state level exams that students are required to pass to graduate and by which results teachers are judged worthy (McNeil, 2000; Nichols & Berliner, 2008). Numerous studies have shown that administrators pressure teachers to make changes to pedagogy and curriculum based on almost entirely on standardized test scores (Eisner, 2013; Lyon, 2005; Pennington,

2007; Seashore Lewis, Febey & Schroeder, 2005; van Hover, 2006). These standards and their corresponding tests create an environment similar to what Foucault (Foucault, *Discipline and punishment*, 1977) described as a micro-economy that “marks the gaps, hierarchizes qualities, skills and aptitudes” (p. 181).

Wayne Au (2007; 2009) concludes that social studies is unique in its relationship to testing. He asserts that when the results of testing give clear signals of success or failure and consequences, then there are consistent results in changing teacher behavior. This stance is supported by a host of qualitative and quantitative studies (Cornbleth, 2002; Cronin, Dahlin, Adkins, & Kinsbury, 2007; Fickel, 2006; Goertz, Floden, & O'Day, 1995; Grant & Horn, 2006). Teachers report that tests scores are viewed frequently and there is pressure to make their scope and sequence and daily lesson plans conform (Lyon, 2005; Pennington, 2007; Seashore Lewis, Febey, & Schroeder, 2005; van Hover & Yeager, 2007). While these teachers do not put much faith in the test as a credible measure of their students or themselves, they are convinced that parents and administrators think differently and act accordingly (Hoffman, Assaf, & Paris, 2001). In the current job climate, failure to conform and failure to perform can have consequences more dire than ever.

Cornett (1990) like Clifford's (2014) previously quoted social studies teacher, contends that teachers are frequently allowed to determine how they will teach but not what. This token autonomy may satisfy the teacher's perception of themselves as an intellectual professional enough to avoid resistance and rebellion to the content (Giroux, 1988).

Lawn and Ozga (1981) write that the state uses these rationed tokens of professionalism to appease and quiet teachers, while in reality the ability to apply the decision making skills and the technical craft of teaching is being siphoned away. Because in keeping with the concept, that which is treasured is measured, the pedagogy, the actual craft of

teaching is not valued and so can be “given away” to the teachers. It is the official content and narrative which is too important to be trusted to the teacher and so that is still evaluated by outsiders. Indeed the direct consequence of students not being able to recite and recall the official curriculum is immediately felt by teachers and manifests itself through threats of increased scrutiny, worsening working conditions or even job loss (Adnot, Dee, Katz, & Wyckoff, 2016). Thus, the test becomes a threat lever by which the state attempts to force teachers into compliance. This is because the test creates a threat rigidity reaction, which refers to how an organization, when feeling threatened or under attack, will tighten structures and increase centralized control while discouraging innovate and creative thinking (Olsen & Sexton, 2009). Administrators, feeling pressure to raise or maintain test scores will fall back on enforcing what is most defensible, even at the expense of what is most effective. Thus, the schooling environment becomes very constrictive, with changes emphasizing administrative control and educator compliance. The changes also limit educator feedback, while at the same time holding these same teachers responsible for the result, creating teacher hostility and disenfranchisement (Warrad, 2012).

However, Segall (2003) diminishes the importance of the overarching high-stakes testing discourses as a threat lever, and attributes ramifications (limited pedagogical freedom and curricular contraction) to educators inflating and overemphasizing the power of controlling discourse. He concludes that the tightening and constriction evidenced is due to educators perceiving a threat does not immediately exist. Hoffman, Assaf, and Paris (2001) state that while teachers do not put much faith in the test as a credible measure of their students or themselves, they are convinced that parents and administrators think differently and act accordingly. These are important finding, because consciousness of the attempt to control teachers, paired with the realization that

those mechanisms of control are relying almost entirely on the teacher's belief in them can potentially lead to the realization that they can be successfully resisted.

### **Responsibility Without Authority**

There is a reluctance to admit to the social reproductive factors that inhibit one's ability to rise. As Grumet (1988) has pointed out, instead of admitting to possible flaws in the neo-liberal reliance on schools as social mobilizers, we have instead villainized teachers without giving them any real say in the education system. Williams (1981) states that teachers are held responsible for dealing with the repercussions of everyone's decisions from the U.S. President to Congress to the School Board, from parents to the students themselves, becoming the scapegoat for society's ills (Kumashiro, 2012). Instead, teaching continues to reflect traditional familial patriarchal hierarchies with administration dominated by men. As one moves through the grades education apparently becomes too important to leave to women. While the majority of elementary school principals are women, by middle school that percentage has dropped to 42%, for high schools it slips further to 32% and only 14% of colleges and universities have women as their presidents (NCES, 2013). Apple (1988) writes that

It is not a random fact that one of the most massive attempts at rationalizing curricula and teaching had at its target a group of teachers who were largely women. I believe that one cannot separate out the fact of a sexual division of labor and the vision of who has what kinds of competence from the state's attempts to revamp and make more 'productive' its educational apparatus. (p. 37)

The increased control by administration/male over teachers/female has grown as education has taken on greater political significance and the increased demands of industry. Indeed the state cites industry models of efficiency not only to legitimize the

need for intervention but also the mechanisms and method that it will take. Llorens (1994) points out that teachers frequently do not recognize their lack of agency, having been socialized in the discourse of gender norms to be “good” which they equate with being quiet and accepting. Men using the same dialogue are seen as solving problems, while a woman speaker would be perceived as causing them just by recognizing them. Baxter (2014) notes that while there is not gendered way of speaking in general, women are rewarded for being cooperative in conversation and conflict and penalized for being assertive, even with other women. Women, as a group, within this necessarily continually reinforced male hegemony (Arnot, 1994), accept the legitimacy of a male-dominated culture and their subordination to it as natural (Rowbotham, 1973; Mahony, Hextall, & Menter, 2004; Strober & Tyack, 1980). Indeed, Clifford (2014) points out that to maintain hard won power within the masculinized hegemony, women are as likely as men to be the ones crushing any threat to the status quo. Acceptance of the patriarchy is reinforced and rewarded by bequeathing increased power and control, but only to those who work within prescribed spheres of influence while decrying deviancy on those who push for agency outside the margins (Clarricoates, 1980; hooks, 2004; Nicholson, 1994). This might be a factor in the normative tendency for teachers to shy away from conflict and controversial issues in order to maintain a civil and polite atmosphere in their classroom (Levstik, 1997/1998).

Another factor potentially limiting teacher resistance is the perception of teaching as one of the few careers flexible enough to manage the realities of being a woman, a mother (Kelly & Nihlen, 1982) and a wife in our society of continuing inequity of responsibilities at home (Family Caregiver Alliance, 2012; Kolhatkar, 2015; Stepler, 2015). An AOL article even listed teaching, along mostly service centered jobs, as one of “10 Careers that Fit Into Mom’s Schedule” (Papandrea, 2011). “What better way to stay

in sync with your school-age children's schedules than by following the exact same one as a teacher?" (p.3), implying incorrectly that a teacher's work ends when the students leave. This may create a forced choice, not apparent to outsiders, where working mothers may not feel they truly have other career options and thus are more susceptible to threat levers.

### **FEMINIZED RESISTANCE**

Resistance to that which one sees as incorrect, unjust and untrue is an imperative of active citizens. However, just as there are many forms of oppression, this study recognizes and legitimizes the varied forms of resistance. The validity and right to resist is not dependent on how many are engaged in it or how visible they are (Razmetaeva, 2014). As Caldwell (1991) says, "Resistance can take the form of momentous acts of organized, planned and discipline protests, or it may consist of small, everyday actions, seemingly insignificant that nevertheless validate the actor's sense of dignity and worth." (p. 396). The anthropologist James Scott (1990) articulates the daily acts of survival and resistance that avoided direct confrontation with power, restrained its rage, its public voice, and instead engaged "hidden transcripts of indignation" (p. 7). He argues that this controlling discourse is often enacted within the confines of spaces supposedly controlled by those in power but always in disguise. (Harney & Moten, 2013) Kelley (1993) discusses the overt compliance and consent that disguises and protects the rebellions and resistance of oppressed and disenfranchised peoples. Public challenges can also frequently be used as the justification for domination and control as the challenge to the status quo becomes conflated with challenges to what is proper, respectable or professional. Stromquist's (2015) study points out that the private sphere was

specifically designed as an especially effective controlling mechanism for women and restrains their opportunities for transformative action.

Feminized forms of resistance, developed within the restrictive constructs of patriarchy, can be ignored, unrecognized and as marginalized as women themselves. The overt, the dramatic and thus the rare acts of resistance get plenty of attention, for by their very nature they require notoriety to enact change. But agency, what Delgado-Bernal (1997) defines as “the capacity to act and make a difference”, can be quiet, it can be internal, it can be small. Harney and Moten (2013) celebrate the small, the undercommons. They see effective rebellion not in the masculine armed thrust and parry of direct confrontation but instead to be “with and for” (p. 150) those rejecting state mandated thought and knowledge. Pratto (2015) redefines power in a relative and relational way as the ability to meet goals while still maintaining one’s well-being or survival. It is in the level of persistence, the constant pressure, an unrelenting spirit and drive for change, not how loud or how overt it is, that is the determinant of its eventual liberation. Austin (1986) says “The best resistance is often covert, unsuspected and guerilla like.” (p.53). This is the kind of resistance I believe is most often enacted by oppressed groups such as women and teachers, who have been allowed just enough privileges to be unwilling to sacrifice everything, yet are still compelled to do something. Butler (1997)reminds us that

We understand power as forming the subject as well, as providing the very condition of its existence and the trajectory of its desire, then power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbor and preserve in the beings that we are. (p. 2).

Within this subordinated identity we are controlled, but it also the source from which we can derive our legitimate claim to power and agency. Women in the New Republic

utilized their role as the caretakers of the future citizens to increase their own access to education. Teachers in turn could build off the expectations of motherhood-made-conscious (Steedman, 1985) as the foundations of their authority to make the best decisions for students? St. Pierre (2000) points out that we are “never outside relations of power, whether disciplinary or otherwise, then resistance is always possible” (p. 492) and indeed some form of change in power relationships is assured by this resistance even if it more likely to be small or temporary rather than dramatic and revolutionary.

In this way resistance is a defensive reaction that seeks to regain natural liberty and agency. However, as Giroux (2013) asserts, if teachers want to claim that authentic power and be more than salespeople of neo-liberal ideas, simply training future workers or shuttling future prisoners, we must engage in self-reflection and determine what we are willing to do about it. Schools are not neutral and knowledge is not neutral, so to “go with this flow” is not an apolitical act. He continues,

It is important to stress that teachers must take active responsibility for raising serious questions about what they teach, and what the larger goals are for which they are striving. This means they must take a responsible role in shaping the purposes and conditions of schooling. (p. 463).

He admits that much is done through the establishment of hierarchies of administration to strip away the ability of teachers to overtly engage in these resistive and active roles. However, hooks (1990) asserts that while, “I am located in the margin. I make a definite distinction between the marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as site of resistance –as location of radical openness and possibility” (p. 153). Rather than accept the ways in which society pushes us aside as ‘the other’ we must recognize the liberation in the difference. In this effort to utilize the

margins as the place in which we draw our strength, we must recognize the discourse surrounding and attempting to shape us into what is deemed a proper image.

Foucault (1978) points that only those impacted by, but yet on the outside of authority, even consider the question about challenging its monopoly on power. Because we are conscious of it, we can redefine the discourse, dismantle and repurpose it, to render it a tool for resistance by challenging and disrupting hegemonic meanings (Baxter, 2014). Indeed if we accept the post-structuralist framework, St. Pierre (2000) insists that we must then look first to ourselves as the primary architects of our oppression through our complicity in its construction and determine at minimum not to cooperate in this injustice. Parker (2003) for instance focuses on this development of consciousness, moving out of idiocy, where one is limited in their scope to the needs and fears simply for oneself and those immediately around them. He pushes us past the idea that moral people simply follow the rules to a higher level of citizenship, in which one evaluates the rules, regulations or laws against what is justice, striving for the common good while celebrating our diversity.

It is for this greater good that teachers must resist in order to regain their power and agency. When teachers feel they have no power within the educational hierarchy they respond in defensive ways (McNeil, 2000) such as omitting controversial and time intensive activities or topics, presenting material as something to be quickly memorized but not understood. Instead, these teachers shield their personal knowledge, their passion for their subject for fear that the students will shy away from rigor or even more develop a consciousness about the social reproductive nature of the system. Additionally this state interference results in what Au (2007) termed “knowledge fragmentation” (p. 260) whereby content is chopped up into discrete pieces, ignoring the structural interconnectedness of oppression and the system. By not resisting they become not only

an agent in their own oppression but in the reproduction of power hierarchies in future generations.

### **Spectrums of Resistance**

Recognizing both the need for change and the ways in which the powers that be attempt to shackle and stifle teachers striving for that change, I find that Solorzano and Delgado-Bernal's (2001) investigation of Chicana student resistance provides a fundamental premise for my study. They propose the litmus test of intent rather than the requirement of overt action, building off of Giroux's (1983) post-modern model that requires a critique of social oppression and a quest for social justice. Solorzano and Delgado-Bernal classify oppositional behavior into four groups; reactionary, self-defeating, conformist and transformational. These categories are fluid and overlapping, sometimes appearing within the same action or reaction.

While the authors are focused on students and base their definitions around examples from these young people, it is not difficult to draw parallels to teachers and construct examples from their experiences. Reactionary behavior is oppositional but not resistive, and does not display a consciousness of oppression or social justice. This might be demonstrated by a teacher refusing to submit lesson plans to administrators "because it's a waste of my time", rather than a critique on power dynamics. This behavior not only does nothing to equalize the hierarchies within the school but also justifies the administration's need to control.

Self-defeating follows a similar path, but is conscious at some level of oppression. Sannino (2010) recognizes resistance and obstructionist behavior as a beginning manifestation of teacher agency. Kindred (1999) says "Resistance is a way to say no, but it also expresses a desire for more engaging and less degrading work relations and

activities” (pp. 208-209). In this case the same behavior as before of not submitting lesson plans would be accompanied by the consciousness that the request represented a intrusion into the teachers autonomy and ability to determine the curriculum and pedagogy. However, like the previous level this simple defiance not only does nothing to deconstruct the mechanisms of control, it can actually be used to legitimize them.

Conformist resistance recognizes oppression and desires social justice, but works within the system and practices of their school. These teachers will turn in their lesson plan to the administration and save their grumbles for home in ways that are similar to Scott’s (1990) private transcripts. This teacher might enact her feminism by pointing out the women included in the textbook or TEKS but she would not challenge the curriculum itself. Clarke and Knights (2015) warn that this form of resistance can actually sustain and support the systems of oppression because the teacher and students’ success can be used as proof of the validity of the system

The transformational resistor goes even further, seeing the oppression inherent in the demand for the scripted lessons but recognizing that the principal and school are just gears or pieces within a broader system of oppression. Revilla (2004) recognizes this in Muxerista pedagogy, which is characterized by a production of new knowledge and the resistance to all mechanisms that maintain oppression even under the guise of social justice. The teacher achieving this level of transformational resistance also recognizes her own role in perpetuating her own restrictions. In this consciousness she taps into greater potential for real transformative change. However, by challenging the system in which she is not only oppressed but also benefited, she risks losing those privileges.

In between the conformist and transformational resistor, is what Yosso (2000) calls the resilient resistor. Like the transformational resistor, the resilient resistor brings about change. However she does not challenge all constructs of oppression, but instead

utilizes them to her own ends. A teacher using this stance would turn in lesson plans and meet all requirements of the administration but would use them to prove that she does not need supervision. She would also leverage this successful position into bringing about change within not only her classroom but her department and school. She is aware of and angered by the de-skilling and de-professionalizing of teachers and the lack of faith in their abilities. As a result, she will use her professional skills to not only teach the required TEKS ensuring her students will score well on the test they are all held accountable for, but will do so in a way that calls the system into question. The resilient resistor would push past what is required and restore marginalized people and topics.

Several studies (Allen, 2015; Bartolome, 2004; Irving, 1991; Ramsey, 2012) have documented such subtle but effective resistance of teachers who advocate and guide marginalized populations through the labyrinth of hidden curriculum rather than challenge the system itself. By not bringing the dominating structures down upon their heads, these teachers maintain a position where they can help their students and through them society at large. Salinas and Castro (2010) describe pre-service teachers who addressed the dominant narrative through a critique founded on their own life experiences. This requires a fluency of the language of education as spoken within the standards and reform movement, as well as knowledge of their students, their subject and their society.

### **Ambitious Teaching**

As such I believe resilient resistance overlaps with the definitions of ambitious teaching, as defined by Grant and Gradwell (2010), who remind that

[O]thers (e.g., administrators, other teachers) may not appreciate their efforts.

Ambitious teachers deeply understand their subject matter and they actively seek

ways to connect that subject matter with the lived experiences of their students. They often do so, however, while facing contextual factors (e.g., state curricula, state tests, unsupportive administrators and colleagues) that may push them in different directions (p. 6).

Facing down these contextual factors requires not only pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987), or syntactical understanding of her environment it also requires belief (Richardson, 2003) in what and how she has chosen to teach and sense of purpose (Barton & Levstik, 2004) about why she teaches. In the case of this study that belief and purpose centers on the teacher's understanding of the role of women in history, consciousness of the oppression of misogyny and patriarchy as well as the skill and will to resist it. The teachers of this study believed the way that women were treated by the curriculum, as well as the way teachers are treated by outside authorities, is wrong. In recognizing this wrong they felt compelled to do what they could to right it.

Just as the previously discussed marginalization of women in the curriculum is intrinsic to the continued effort to relegate women to a marginalized position in society, the centering of women in history can reinforce their essential role in society. Teachers who have deep wells of content knowledge and the pedagogical skill to share this with their students can, as Salinas (2006) writes, teach past the assigned curriculum with less fear of the threat levers of testing. These teachers can utilize the local histories as well as issues which are relevant to their students and communities to resist the constraints of the state imposed standards.

Feminism is by its very nature a movement to enable women to recognize their own value and transform it into power and unification. Frequently teachers who aspire to authentic and ambitious (Grant, 2003) ways of teaching had the support of a cohort of like-minded teachers (McNeil, 2000). Indeed as the incursions into teacher autonomy

increase, the pain over their loss of agency may lead to feminist consciousness and reaching out to others for support. “If pain does move subjects into feminism then it does so precisely by reading the relation between affect and structure, or between emotion and politics in a way that undoes the separation of the individual from others” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 345). Anyon (1982) warns that “While accommodation and resistance as modes of daily activity provide most females with a way of negotiating individually felt social conflict or oppression, this individual activity of everyday life remains just that: individual, fragmented and isolated from group effort.” (p. 45). As such, it was imperative to establish with these teachers a critical and resistant community, a forum in which to share their struggles and strengths. While finding ideological and pedagogical allies can be achieved by moving schools until one finds this cooperation, this is limited to those with the flexibility, privilege and economics options to do. Instead, we need to harness technological means of forming communities (Woudstra, 2013) to identify one another, collaborate and reflect (Zeichner & Liston, 1996) on their agency and provide the resources and support to encourage and embolden the teacher isolated in her school. By first becoming conscious (Freire, 2000) not only of power of our oppressors, but also the strength of our community and the imperative righteousness of our rebellion we can then begin to identify and implement our resistance.

## **Chapter 3: Methods**

### **STUDY PURPOSE**

Choosing a method begins with an examination of the essential question and purpose of the research (Crotty, 1998). The purpose of this particular study was to examine the creation of a feminized identity of teaching, to ask how this creates and is created by patriarchy. I examined how feminist teachers used their skills, knowledge and understandings to resist these hegemonic understandings embedded in the curriculum. While many studies have examined teachers in the current environment of standards and testing they have not examined these components from a feminist perspective. As such, this study was best served, first and foremost, by using a qualitative multiple case study approach. In this chapter I will cover the following topics: (1) theoretical analytical framework, (2) study context, (3) research methodology, (4) participants, (5) researcher positionality, (6) data collection and issues of trustworthiness, (7) data analysis, and (8) pilot studies.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

#### **THEORETICAL METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

Merriam (2009) writes that qualitative analysis begins with the understanding that the individual constructs meaning and reality. Qualitative analysis examines how life and experience is felt, understood, adapted and reacted to, while accepting and indeed valuing unique perspectives and thereby rejecting a positivist viewpoint of an absolute truth for all (Polkinghorne, 2005). As Crotty (1998) says, positivism demands a “world of regularities, constancies, uniformities, ironclad laws, absolute principles. As such it stands in stark contrast with the uncertain, ambiguous, idiosyncratic, changeful world we

know at first hand” (p. 28). While qualitative research is admittedly subjective, feminist theorists have argued against the assumption that quantitative positivism is neutral or objective, pointing out that the effects of gender bias in research questions, method and conclusions has been ignored (Bleier, 1986; Fee, 1982; Haraway, 1989; Harding, 1998). “Because knowledge is a productive activity of human beings, it cannot be objective and value free because the basic categories of knowledge are shaped by human purposes and values.” (Rosser, 2008, p. 57). Furthermore, in keeping with the requirements of qualitative research (Merriam, 2009) I used fieldwork observation and inductive strategy to create a conclusion, rather than test an existing theory. What mattered to this study was the question of how these teachers came to a feminist consciousness and through this view interpreted the current educational discourse, and what it impels them to do.

This question circles around issues of women and power. Feminism centers gender in examining and explaining phenomenon in our society. At the heart of this belief is that the sustained and systemic attempt to subjugate females by males explains the unjust hierarchal structure of our society (Jaggar, 1983). Liberal feminism focuses on understanding the systemic nature of patriarchy and works to achieve equality of opportunity within these structures. In this way it varies from Marxist or radical feminism, which seek to deconstruct current relationships and dependencies by recreating the class system or personal sexual and familial organizations (Miller, 2005). Stimpson (1980) further categorizes this debate as between “minimizers”, who wish society to disregard the current gender categories and differences, and “maximizers” who either claim the category, or accept it pragmatically but wish to empower it. Indeed, the divide between expanding the identity of women and completely recreating it is an essential schism within feminist theory (Byers & Crocker, 2012). The divisiveness in feminism (Carrillo Rowe, 2008) has hampered the full formation of a truly effective political

(Hancock, 2014) or social force (Snitow, 1991) especially in resisting conservative attacks (Strong-Boag, 2014). I wished to avoid this quagmire of debate and took instead, with my participant teachers, the maximizer approach as more realistic and effective.

Viewed through this lens, while the control of the feminized profession of teaching is normalized because patriarchy is normalized, this control can be challenged and pushed back. Feminist theory does not merely explain, observe and write about issues of patriarchal oppression, it also demands that one become an agent for change (Rosser, 2008; Weeks, 2004). In this way, the ideas of post-structuralism (Foucault, 1977) and specifically feminist post-structuralism (Butler, 2011; Baxter, 2014; Tilley, 2015; Weedon, 1987) were useful frameworks for my research because they critique the social problems and abuse of power, leaving room for individual agency and change while not absolving the individual in their own roles in the constructs of oppression. Using a framework of post-structural feminist theory to examine not only what the system is doing *to* teachers, but also what teachers are doing about it helps to reveal the power and agency on both sides of the equation.

Judith Butler's (1988; 1990; 2011) work is at the foundation of feminist post structuralism. She incorporates post-structural ideas of Michael Foucault with Pierre Bourdieu, John Austin and Jacques Derrida (Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2006). Accepting the idea of speech act theory, feminist post-structuralists perceive texts as "constructions rather than reflections of meaning" (Weedon, 1987, p. 162). Specifically Butler has looked at the debilitating effects discourse *can* have upon people. The emphasis is on *can*, for she does not assume a lack of agency for either side, while still recognizing the strength of the historical underpinnings of some words. In this way, language is reflective of the culture in which it is manifested and given power by these associations and how they enact the performance of roles, rather than limited through the exact or

literal meaning of the words (Barrett, 2005). As mentioned in the previous chapter, gender itself is a social performance (Brady & Schirato, 2010; Butler, 1988) enacted through the communication between people and society. “We need a theory of the relations between language, subjectivity, social organization and power” (Weedon, 1987, p. 12). It is this greater emphasis on the creative aspects of language that denotes change and agency. Questions of power are of central interest and reflect the interplay between discourse and hegemony. Discourse causes hegemony to destabilize and shift to the new prevailing ideas and constructs (Titscher, Meyer, Wodack, & Vetter, 2000).

Baxter (2003) points out that there are overlaps and cooperative possibilities within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Post-structural Discourse Analysis (PDA). For example, critical discourse theory and post-structural theory share the idea that “every text contributes –albeit in a small way –to the constitution of these three aspects [social identities, social relations, systems of knowledge] of society and culture.” (Titscher, Meyer, Wodack, & Vetter, 2000, p. 149). This approach to discourse analysis is grounded in the belief that one can interpret and comprehend experiences only with language, which is in turn situated within discourse (Gavey, 1989; Weedon, 1987). How we see ourselves, others and our position within the power structure is determined through the contact and interactions we have with each other and the language we use to position each other.

Additionally Judith Baxter (2002; 2003; 2014) was instrumental in refining the post-structuralist approach into a feminist method or FPDA (Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2006) and Nicola Gavey (1989; 2011) championed the method as a “theoretical basis for analyzing the subjectivities of women and men in relation to language, other cultural practices and the material conditions of our lives” (1989, p. 472). Because a FPDA method has a greater focus on how the intersections of gender and language create and

retain patriarchal power, privilege, status and influence (Barrett, 2005), it was critical to my analysis of how the administrative groups such as the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) and teachers each compete in the discourse to establish the legitimacy of their power to determine the curriculum. Furthermore I examined how these claims to rights and or control infringe or supersede each other. FPDA allows the researcher to more clearly recognize and interpret how these behaviors can defy logic or rationality and at times even work against themselves by internalizing the very methods of control.

One of the keys aspects of understanding the power of these mechanisms is how discourses are used to establish a hegemonic structure determining and delineating norms and deviancies (Cammack & Phillips, 2002), through persuasion rather than coercion (Fairclough, 2001), internalizing the validity of structures within the very people being controlled (Wetherall, Taylor, & Yates, 2001). “[P]ower is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms” (Foucault, 1981, p. 86). Indeed by disrupting hegemonic understandings of language, the common sense of these understandings comes into question. (Graham, 2005). In my own prior research I have examined the public pronouncements of Texas politicians, especially those involved with the Texas State Board of Education. A post-structural discourse analysis can assist in uncovering the ways in which they try to position their standpoints as hegemonic, shape understanding of knowledge and shift the positions of power back to their side (Ropers-Huilman, 1997).

This stance is supported by feminist post-structuralist perspective, which asserts that the subjectivity and invalidity of essential definitions of gender (Fraser & Nicholson, 1988) and patriarchy can be proven by the historic variation with which they have been manifested (Weedon, 1987). Indeed in connecting feminist theory to post-structuralist models, Baxter (2003) refutes the supposition that the two are at odds with each other.

She defends this claim by pointing out that in recognizing that women are not all the same, their goals and definitions of feminism differ and their intersectionality to race and class position (Davies & Harré, 1991) position them in various ways in respect to voice, agency and power. As such, one's research using this framework must be in keeping with this understanding and focus on "social projects which are pragmatic, specific, localized, contextual and issue oriented" (p. 23). This is a reflection of the ideas of Foucault that insist there is no clear binary of oppressed and oppressor (Baxter, 2002; Wetherall, Taylor, & Yates, 2001). So depending on this shifting categories and positionality the speaker and the discourse can be reproductive or transformative (Davies, 2000), with opportunities for disruption and agency. "Discourse transmits and produces power, it reinforces it but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (Foucault, 1978, p. 101). Further, the orders of discourse can contain both elements, revealing conflicts and power struggles.

In my research the examination of these interactions starts with the feminist teacher at the center and then their connections to the state, the local administration, students, other teachers and parents. I examined how they reinforced and affected each other in the contexts of meta-discourses and specific genres of interaction such as lesson plans, directives, letters, emails and standards. This follows the goals of FPDA scholarship being overtly related to gender issues of power, specific to a time, a place and a society (Gavey, 1989). FPDA as an analytic tool incorporates understanding of a shifting socially constructed knowledge and reliance on historical specificity even while rejecting the concept of one absolute truth (Ropers-Huilman, 1997).

Methodologically, FPDA can include an ethnographic approach by engaging in long term relationships with the participants and the data (Stacey, 1988). It also uses feminist lens in how research subjects are positioned as co-participants, assisting in the

interpretation and attempting to deconstruct the dominance of the researcher's perspective and bias (Barrett, 2005; J. Miller, 1987). Additionally, FPDA must be "self reflexive in calling attention to the sociological and ideological assumptions contained within any research process." (Baxter, 2002, p. 831) and is dependent on cultural insight (Titscher, Meyer, Wodack, & Vetter, 2000). The researcher is acknowledged as creating the determination of which text is important and which is ignored or discounted (Baxter, 2002). We take a side when we do nothing, when we see nothing; there is no such thing as completely objective (Wetherall, Taylor, & Yates, 2001).

As such, in combination with the feminist call to action, it seems not only possible but required that take a stand in the cause of social justice to bring about change. Furthermore it is my duty as a feminist researcher to document how that comes about. Developing the contextual understanding of the discourse grants one the tools to be able to understand the options available for resistance. In order to develop strategies to contest hegemonic assumptions and the social practices which they guarantee, we need to understand the intricate network of discourses, the sites where they are articulated and the institutionally legitimized forms of knowledge to which they look for justification (Weedon, 1987).

## **STUDY CONTEXT**

### **The State of Women's History in the State of Texas**

The discourse surrounding the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills social studies standards (TEKS) was exceptional in its polarizing character and the state school board's frankness about its aims to control the actions of teachers. Texas provided an exceptionally clear insight into how outsider control is influenced and excused by the hegemony of masculinism and patriarchy. In this way, an extreme example, defining the

concept in by demonstrating it in its strongest form, can also be a crucial one, “most likely to exhibit a given outcome” (Gerring, 2007, p. 89). Texas was recognized as being one of the worst states in terms of gender equality (Bernardo, 2015). As such, I believed it would likely be the place I would most likely to find women conscious of their oppression and forming resistance.

As reflected in new and modified regulations enacted in Texas in 2011, there has been a continuously evolving relationship between educators and their state government during the last several years (McDonnell, 2005; Ravitch, 1995; Reese, 2005; Resnick, 2006; Scheurich, 1997). Their power sharing relationship eroded and became ever more asymmetrical during the 2010 term of the Texas State Board of Education or SBOE. Business elites and radical conservatives have used their political and administrative powers in Texas to frame their actions as inevitable conclusions anyone would make upon logical reflection; in their words, common sense (Marshall & and Scribner, 1991; Salinas, 2006; Salinas & Davis, 1997). In their view the West, and the United States in particular, was certainly superior to anything else going (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Cornbleth, 1985). As former SBOE chair Dr. Don McLeroy D.D.S. wrote,

The West has relieved human suffering to a[n] unprecedented degree; the West has developed freedom to an unparalleled level, both in freedom of coercion be other men and in freedom of opportunity to rise above one’s original station in life. This is demonstrated by an incredible standard of living where even its “poor” are rich by global standards. It is also seen in the full political rights of all and the accepted equality of all –including women and minorities (McLeroy, 2009, para 1).

Physically and psychically women and non-White ethnic groups do not measure up, at least not in the space they take up in the curriculum (Schmeichel, 2015; Schmidt, 2010).

Of the 73 named people and organizations in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade U.S. History TEKS only 14 are women, only 9 are African American, only 5 are Latino/a, only one Native American group, the Navajo Code Talkers is listed, and most shamefully no Asian Americans whatsoever are named. (See Appendix B) This list actually is more inclusive than one finds in the other grades. Texas fourth graders, for example, are only required to learn about one specific woman: Lizzie Johnson a 19<sup>th</sup> century White millionaire cattle baroness (Texas Educational Agency, 2011).

The curriculum segregates women (Cassese & Bos, 2013), minorities, children and immigrants from the dominant narrative (Salinas, Blevins, & Sullivan, 2012) by clumping them together in chapters and standards or literally sidelining them to special interest in the margins of the textbook (Cornbleth, 2002). White men dominate the standards and are the body of the narrative. For example TEKS standard 3C asks students to analyze a laundry list of general peoples and topics, “women, minorities, children, immigrants, urbanization, the Social Gospel, and philanthropy of industrialists” (Texas Educational Agency, 2011) while General John J. Pershing’s accomplished leadership over the American Expeditionary Force during WWI is the sole topic of TEKS 4D (ibid). Thus women and people of color are described in a general way, rather than as distinct individuals, implying that events are happening *to* them, rather than recognizing them as active citizens (Schmidt, 2010). This viewpoint selectively privileges and represses information (Apple, 2002), puts blinders on students, blocks the people working from the margins (hooks, 2004) and does nothing to help prepare students to challenge concepts of inequity and nationalism (Levstik, 2000). Just as in the 1920’s and 1930’s (Britzman, 2003), those in power fear what they see as the diluting of proper (read White Anglo Saxon) America (Hartman, 2013; Zimmerman, 2002).

## **Outsider Control Over the Curriculum**

By its very nature a standardized curriculum comes from the top down, outside in, imposed on those inside the profession without regard to their input. Teachers protested that the SBOE “undercut our attempt to build a strong balanced and diverse set of standards” (Robelen, 2010, para.22). Indeed over 1,200 historians signed an open letter condemning the Texas standards as promoting certain board members’ own political and personal beliefs and biases (Scharrer, 2010). Freire (2000) argues that this kind of dismissal is based on the oppressors’ assistencialist ideas that the people do not know how to make competent decisions for themselves. This was made explicit by comments from State Board of Education member, Cynthia Dunbar, who stated that it was up to the board and herself in particular to make sure “the students have the best possible education, the best academic freedom, and that, why should other kids fall through the crack just because I knew mine were gonna be OK?” (Thurman, 2012). As a result, those in power construct history as they know it to be true, as they perceive it to be useful and deny any competency of the parents, teachers and students to make their own determinations. Indeed they defensively “stifle the discussion with inane comments about the reality of the charges being made” (Leonardo, 2007, p. 148) by asserting that they are the ones under attack (Scharrer, 2010) and championing their claim to the role of White Anglo Saxon men as the true emancipators and enfranchisers (Murthy, 2010).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The design of this research fell within the definition of a case study as “particular instance (object or case) and reaching an understanding within a complex context” (Mertens, 2010, p. 233). Case study’s flexibility in the use of the methods such as interviewing and document analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) allowed me to tailor

my approach, triangulate my findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1998) and thus more successfully examine and analyze the phenomenon within its context and constructing environment (Merriam, 2009). Feminist, female social studies teachers working within the Texas educational system comprised my bounded system (Cresswell, 2007). However, generalities can be made and important conclusions drawn by the vast majority of other teachers who, being women, in an increasingly standardized educational environment, face the same struggles to act upon their talent, knowledge and purposes. By incorporating multiple case study (Merriam, 2009) I was able to conduct a cross case analysis, increasing the validity and trustworthiness (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993) of my findings as well as increasing the value to the reader by providing more opportunities to draw comparisons to their own experiences.

### **Participants and Data Sources**

Data collection began in early April of 2016 and continued through March of 2017. All data was collected after I received explicit written approval from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Texas as well as the school districts, principals and teachers included in this study. Using qualitative research methods, as discussed earlier in this chapter, I assembled a variety of data sources. These included semi-structured interviews, classroom observation and artifacts, teacher autobiographies, reflections and correspondence.

#### ***Participants.***

I enlisted the participation of five female teachers who identified as feminists, and who demonstrated this stance through ambitious teaching that centers women and gender issues in their pedagogical and curriculum choices. All of the teachers were working within the requirements of the Texas social studies curriculum. The teachers

and their schools and school districts, except myself, will be referred to in this paper by the pseudonyms they chose for themselves. The use of pseudonyms is first of all to protect their privacy and confidentiality, but secondly as another form of data. Polkinghorne (2005) directs researchers to be conscious of the participants' choice of metaphor and symbolism. Analysis of the name they choose for themselves would seem to be especially valuable for this study, which examines the construct of their understandings as women and teachers. I purposefully chose my research subjects by using a snowball method (Merriam, 2009), building off of personal connections and friendships. Through these relationships I identified cases that were "information-rich, that is, good examples for study, good information subjects" (Patton, 1990, p. 182). I looked for teacher who had a feminist consciousness and enacted this in their classroom through curriculum decisions and pedagogy. When I asked them if they wished to participate in this study I explained this criteria as the basis for choosing them. Thankfully all I approached were gracious enough to agree to work with me. All of the teachers I chose were women, for while admittedly men can believe in and act upon, feminist beliefs, I was more focused on examining women's personal experience with the oppression of patriarchy and their feminized forms of resistance. Stanley and Wise (1983) argue that feminist consciousness is "rooted in the concrete, practical, and everyday experiences of being, and being treated as, *a woman*." (p. 18).

All of the participants were Texas social studies public high school teachers negotiating the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) as they determined the curriculum for their classrooms. These TEKS are mandated by the state and enforced through district benchmarks and for those teaching US History, the End of Course Exam (EOC). The results of these exams are not only used to identify students' qualifications for advancement or graduation, but also used to evaluate teachers, schools and districts.

Those students, teachers and schools who do not meet the cut score, as set by the state, are little different from Foucault's (1977) description of a shameful class whose existence is the measure against which "successful" schools can define themselves as such. As De Lissovoy (2010) explains, "The dominant forms of knowledge... that discipline, humiliate and exclude students, and refuse their entry into the circle of the 'good' are ultimately only expressions of the more fundamental work of domination itself." (p. 208). Because of this, schools had adopted various means of ensuring teachers were covering the prescribed curriculum.

I have known two of the teachers for more than ten years. We were participants together in an in-service teacher enrichment program that focused on increasing U.S. History teacher content knowledge and expanding critical thinking pedagogy. These teachers have both been at the same large suburban school, Roosevelt, for several years. They both teach US History since 1877 as well as other social studies classes such as philosophy.

The first, Alice Paul, was the primary focus of much of my classroom research since I began my doctoral studies. She had been teaching U.S. History, government and philosophy at Roosevelt High School for her entire nine-year career. Alice was born and raised in Texas. She attended high school in the same district she currently teaches in and earned her BA in history at an upper tier Texas university. She had a social studies composite as well as a history teacher certification.

The second, Molly Pitcher had a similar career background with Alice Paul. She too attended a Texas high school and earned her BA in history at an upper tier state university. She also had a social studies composite certificate and has been at Roosevelt High School for eleven years teaching US History and other social studies courses. She

was at the time of this study enrolled in a Master's Degree program where she was focusing on Women's History.

I met the third teacher, Abigail Adams when we were co-panelists discussing our practices as feminist teachers at the Women's Empowerment Conference. Abigail was born and raised in Texas. Her mother was an administrator in bilingual education. She had been teaching since 2001, six years as an elementary English language arts and social studies teacher, and seven years as a U.S. History middle school teacher. In 2014 she began teaching U.S. History at a large urban high school. Perhaps because of how we met, our social occasions have all centered on women's issues and topics such as going together to see the movie, "She's Beautiful When She is Angry." (Dore, 2014). In this way too I recognize the influence and impact this has on her behavior and actions in what I observed of her in this research.

I worked with the last two teachers, Kate Chopin and Angela Gurley, when they were earning their Master's Degrees in social studies education. Their program centered issues of race, gender and class in challenging the dominant ways of teaching social studies. Their stated and demonstrated sensitiveness and focus on women's issues not only drew me to them as friends but also made it apparent that they would be important facets of my research. I was interested in how their recent college experience affected their views and sense of their own autonomy and power. Indeed, one important variable I was focused on was how the co-participants varying ages and tenure in the profession and their school would affect the resistant choices they make and the success of those decisions and actions.

Kate Chopin just began her teaching career in the winter semester of 2015. After earning her BA in history from an East coast university, specializing in Middle Eastern Studies and minoring in geography, she earned her Masters of Education in the

previously mentioned program. She was hired by a large inner city school district, but taught at a relatively affluent high school as a pre-AP World Geography teacher. In the fall of 2015, the school added ethnic studies to her teaching assignment.

Angela Gurley was in her first years at a local suburban school teaching US History and AP US History. She attended a Texas high school and a top tier Texas university where she earned a BA in history with special honors and minored in American studies. As discussed earlier, she earned her Masters degree in social studies education and a social studies composite teaching certificate.

### ***Positionality***

I have included myself within this group as a participant as well as an observer (England, 1994). I am a 45 year-old, middle class, White woman who has been active in feminist causes since I was a teenager. For my Master's degree work I focused on women's history and issues such as challenges to female control over reproductive rights and racist and sexist policies in public housing. As a 22-year veteran U.S. History teacher, still in the high school classroom, as well as a feminist researcher and PhD student in Curriculum and Instruction in social studies, I was grappling with the TEKS and the STAAR test as well as intellectual and ideological issues of gender, race, power and class. In keeping with the values of Harré, I've attempted to be "continuously on guard, openly self reflective to [my] own agendas, values and assumptions (Baxter, 2002, p. 831) however, I must recognize my own bias and privileges.

In keeping with the ideas of Lather (1992) and Silva (2013) I understood that actively attempting to diminish power hierarchies of researcher and subject and instead fostering relationships, would be more authentic to my framework and research purpose. In my personal relationships with these teachers, we had spoken frequently about the

issues of teacher agency and feminism. They were all aware of my intended dissertation topic and several had participated in previous research I had conducted. So, from the beginning, my presence was changing the discourse, which must be acknowledged. I also recognized that as the researcher, even working *with* my participants by sharing my data and conclusions with them and listening to their reflexive feedback (Reinharz, 2011) in an active way, the majority of the analysis reached was created by me through a subjectivist epistemology (Crotty, 1998). More importantly, this openness was loyal to my broader transformative purpose of feminist teachers working together with minimal power structures dividing us and limiting the support we can give each other. Furthermore, the benefits of another source of data and of insider perspective (J. Banks, 1998), in gaining the trust and confidence of teachers, interpreting discourse, the cooperative effects of all of our participation and the desire for transparency have reinforced my decision to include myself in this study.

### ***Data Collection***

Case study is strengthened by the collection of information relating to the historical and social context, the participants and the physical setting (Stake, 2005). One must dig through and uncover, rather than simply gather from the surface (Polkinghorne, 2005) and one must examine multiple forms (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993) to ensure its validity. The first phase of my data collection centered on the public discourse surrounding teaching as represented in the media. I collected public pronouncements around the issue through Google news search and Google alert by setting the notification of key words: Texas curriculum standards, Texas State Board of Education, Texas SBOE, Texas social studies, and Texas Education. I frequently shared these with the research group, as they did with me and each other. I focused especially

on 2010 and 2011 as the high point of the standards debate but continued throughout the study to the present. In addition, I transcribed the movie *The Revisionaries*, (Thurman, 2012) which documented the religious right's control over the SBOE and the resulting curriculum. There is a proverb that says, "the mountains are high and the emperor is far away" to explain that at times the proclamations and impositions of bureaucrats do not really reach lives of ordinary people. The widespread press coverage of the deliberations of the SBOE, the box office success of the documentary and my conversations with the teachers led me to conclude that it was important to understand the meta-discourse environment to better analyze why and what these teachers were resisting. As Saul (1992) points out, while the control of the discourse may be the source of strength for those in power, it also represents the chink in their armor.

Language – not money or force provides legitimacy. So long as military political, religious or financial systems do not control language, the public's imagination can move about freely with its own ideas. Uncontrolled words are consistently more dangerous to established authority than armed forces (p. 8).

Specifically through language and discourse one can resist and as such the language being used on both sides is the basis of research and analysis for this study.

### ***Interviews***

The second phase consisted of multiple open-ended interviews conducted throughout 2016 and early 2017. The interviews varied from one on one meetings, written questions and answers and group discussions. The data collected from these became the primary focus of my research and conclusions; especially as my research questions were focused on the teachers' internal motivations, perspectives and reasoning. Interviews are a long established source of data in qualitative study, allowing us to peek

inside the black box of the internal personal experience (Polkinghorne, 2005). Seidman (1991) advises having at least three types of interviews and so the first were discussions of the essential purpose and question and the participant biography and their role within the research.

Interviews, and the narratives constructed from them, are especially important in feminist research, in understanding how women develop their sense of themselves and perceptions of gender (Kahn, 2014). In the first place, it addresses women and teachers' lack of voice within our society and educational systems. I was sharing my position, platform and readers of this dissertation with my co-participants (Miller, 1987). The use of their stories as data validates and empowers them not by *giving them* voice but by recognizing and listening to it (Scott, 1991). As such I have included relatively long quotes from the teachers, with few or no edits in order not to interfere with their message.

The first interviews were one on one, frequently took more than two hours and were focused on the teacher's biography, their feminist stance and their views on the educational system, especially as it pertained to Texas, their school, department and the social studies curriculum. I was most interested in how they developed their own sense of themselves as women and feminists and how these identified affected their becoming and being a teacher. I wanted to examine how the discourse of family, community, the state and her own experiences went into this process. Grumet (1988) advocates the usefulness of autobiography as a data source, "scanning her narrative for a point of view, for a logic of action a theory of cognition, for a detail that suggests motives hardly whispered in the text." (pp. 79-80). We then moved to the participants' description of her current teaching process. I asked them to think-aloud (Shavelson & Stanton, 1975), through their feminist PCK (Shulman, 1987) and syntactical understanding (Schwab, 1978), detailing their process for me verbally. This way they explained their process for

choosing curriculum and determining the appropriate pedagogy for their subject and group of students. Using an open format and beginning with broad questions allowed other questions to emerge organically from our conversation (Merriam, 2009). This permitted the participants a shared control over the direction and emphasis and kept me open to what they deemed important. All oral data is a product of interaction between the people involved (Polkinghorne, 2005) and I was overtly attempting to ensure that the balance of influences remained as equitable as possible.

The second type was written reflections (Zeichner & Liston, 1996), which they did several times throughout the research period. These revisited previously discussed topics or were in response to changing events or circumstances. I found that giving the teachers time to think and respond increased the depth of their thinking and provided them and myself with subsequently more important insights than occurred when they answered verbally.

The next type of interview focused around the classroom observations. Before the each lesson we briefly discussed the objectives and purposes of the lesson and how the teacher thought this aligned with her feminist motivations. We also discussed any specific pressures she felt from outside her class and how that affected the subject and pedagogy of the lesson. To help increase the trustworthiness and validity of my observations, after the conclusion of the lesson, I asked for and documented the teacher's perspective of the lesson. I also immediately shared with her my general observations and conclusions asking for hers as well. As with all pertinent interviews, I recorded this conversation and simultaneously took written notes. On the whole however, the participants agreed with the conclusions I drew and only had additional ideas rather than corrections.

The fourth type of interview was our group dinner parties and gatherings, which were loosely structured around a series of starting questions and then flowed with the concerns, ideas remembrances of the teachers. This last type of interview especially benefited from the connections the women made with each other and the growth coming from the interaction of each other's statements (Polkinghorne, 2005). Furthermore, with these group dinner parties and outings, I endeavored to establish a transformative network (Woudstra, 2013) between feminist teachers and create a community and forum in which to collaborate and reflect (Zeichner & Liston, 1996) on their agency. Several studies (Apple & Teitelbaum, 1986; Ball & Cohen, 1990; M. Grumet, 1988) advocate shared autobiographical narrative as a means of teachers supporting each other, overcoming adversity, and dispelling misunderstandings. Freire (1972) concurs on the need for and power of cooperation, saying that it takes many people, experiencing and conscious of their own oppression, to enact real liberation and change. Crotty (1998) says "That being so, there is no escaping the need for the women of this world, in solidarity with one another to engage in a movement for deliverance from oppression and the attainment of equality" (p. 162). With this in mind it was my intention that this research not only satisfy academic and intellectual questions but also serve to directly help the women who generously agreed to participate find solidarity, strategies and strength from each other. To facilitate this at several points throughout the study process I invited my research participants to get-togethers. Most of the teachers attended a seminar with me at the War in the Pacific Museum that focused on women's history in WWII and we also toured the museum together. Abigail created a texting group that she labeled "The Wonder Women" which we used frequently to share links and comments pertaining to the study. Through an email group I created we also shared content material, articles and lessons.

This research method was inspired by the “Monday Night Lounge Party for Women” held weekly by gender studies researcher Mignon Moore (2011). She encourages its use especially in groups that are scattered geographically. As she explains this not only creates bonds with each other, it strengthens and foregrounds the participants connections with me and with the goals of the study. While I was explicit with the participants that these get-togethers were being used in my data collection and analysis I chose to write only basic notes during the meetings. Instead I relied on the digital audio recordings, which I listened to late, writing more detailed notes and reflections then. I also returned to these recordings repeatedly to build upon or clarify previous conclusions. I felt this was a better method both in order to facilitate the informal and relationship-based tone and to improve the validity of my observations.

At the conclusion of the data collection period I held summative interviews, focusing on the reflection and plans of each teacher after having participated in this research. In this way I hoped to document the effect of the consciousness raising and deliberation being part of this study caused. This also acted as a structured point for member checking (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009) allowing them to retain their voice within not only the data but in its interpretation.

### ***Classroom Observation***

In an effort to triangulate (Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Merriam, 2009) and to discover the complex interactions, it is important to personally observe the enactment of the teacher’s thought, motivations and practice in their classrooms (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). It was not sufficient to rely solely on the teacher’s self reporting for, “People do not have complete access to their experiences. The capacity to be aware of or to recollect one’s experiences is intrinsically limited.” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 139). While I

recognized that my presence in the room affected what I was observing by changing both the teacher's and the student's behavior to some degree, I felt the benefits of perceiving it myself outweighed these influences. I tried to make my presence in the room less disruptive in purposeful ways (Stake, 1995). I used an Inscribe™ audio recording device, which is imbedded in a ballpoint pen. Using this pen rather than typing had three advantages. First off, it made no distracting noise like typing might. Secondly, it automatically synced the recording to the notes and impressions I was forming at the time, allowing for more accurate reflection and analysis later (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Finally, because it did not look like a recorder, the students and teacher seemed less likely to dwell on the idea that everything audible was being documented. Next, I made repeated visits to each classroom and always sat in the same place in the room. The repeated visits and prolonged engagement were first to establish the validity of my observations (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993) but also to diminish the observer effect by establishing of a routine and normalcy to my visits.

Another important part of the observation was the collection of artifacts related to the lesson taught and the context they are being taught in. Much of these were gathered in the brief pre-observation discussion I had with the teacher and included lesson plans, unit plans, materials provided to the students, seating charts, classroom decorations and as well as subject specific relevant communication to or from the teacher and the department or school administration and TEA district snapshots. The artifacts were critical to understanding, not in of themselves, but in context of the overall picture (Polkinghorne, 2005). As the study continued the teachers began to send me more and more of the work they were doing in their classes. This seemed to be a positive effect of being part of the study, which I discuss in the results section.

I visited the teachers' classrooms repeatedly throughout the year, attempting to observe a range of units. I was interested in lessons they felt were feminist and or resistive to the dominant narrative or controlling factors of the school administration and state and also when it was simply a "regular" lesson. This was to confirm that even when they were not overtly focusing on feminist topics they were still incorporating a feminist framework into their lessons and classroom culture. During each observation I focused on identifying where how and when the teacher resisted the dominant narrative. I took extensive notes and audio recordings, using the method outlined above, focusing on the teacher's choice and presentation of the material and how she reacted to the students' receptiveness.

As discussed in the previous interview section, following each observation I met with the teacher to discuss what I had observed and ask for her interpretation of the events. I asked about and took note of any recent administrative action and or changes to the climate of their school, which affected the decisions for that particular lesson. After I left I immediately reflected on the observation and post interview and used my field notes to craft thick descriptive narratives (Geertz, 1973), which I shared with the participant for reflexive member check verification and collaboration (Reinharz, 2011).

### ***Data Collection and Trustworthiness***

By rejecting the concepts of positivism in favor of a qualitative and constructivist approach it becomes essential to detail the efforts to increase validity and trustworthiness of this study. No research is worth doing (or reading) if the results cannot be trusted or if they do not resonate as valid to the educators and researchers who are to benefit from the findings (Merriam, 2009). Elrlandson et all (1993) says

If intellectual inquiry is to have an impact on human knowledge...it must guarantee some measure of credibility about what it has inquired, must communicate in a manner that will enable application by its intended audience, and must enable its audience to check on its findings and the inquiry process by which its findings were obtained. (p. 28)

To establish this credibility I adopted multiple strategies as advocated by several experts on qualitative research methods (Gerring, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Merriam, 2009; Mertens, 2010). The first was prolonged engagement. My purposeful selection (Merriam, 2009) of research subjects from those teachers I knew increased the trust these teachers had in confiding their feelings, beliefs and practices, especially those not sanctioned by their administration. I have known each of the teachers for a minimum of three years, and in two cases more than ten. I observed twenty-one lessons over the course of the spring and fall of 2016. I discussed with each participant teacher the lessons she was implementing and the relevant curriculum or pedagogy, such as inclusion of people not on the TEKS or a non-traditional focus of an event through a woman's experience.

Repeated visits, interviews, meetings and observations helped increase the reliability by reducing the chance that I was examining an aberrant or outlier behavior or action. I attempted to paint a picture in the reader's mind by recording these observations with thick description (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Geertz, 1973). This will hopefully increase the transferability of the data. Triangulating the interviews, observations and other artifacts also enabled me to better understand the ways in which these teachers not only act and react within their environment but also how they interpret it.

This was supported by repeated member checks, both in person and by providing each teacher a unique and secure link to a Google Docs folder which contained copies of my observation notes of her classes, and transcripts of interviews. The teachers also used these folders to share materials from their classrooms. I also distributed all major drafts of each chapter to the participants. In this way I gave the teachers the extended opportunities to read over the transcripts and field notes and see my presentation of this data. I wanted them to feel free to give feedback if they felt I was not presenting their words or actions in the way in which they had intended or if they felt they had more to add. By asking the participants to conduct technical member checks, over specific facts and accuracy, as well as reflexive collaboration and interpretation (Cho & Trent, 2006; Reinharz, 2011) I not only increased the validity, but also gave the participants opportunity for further input and control, which was in keeping with my feminist protocols and framework (England, 1994; Fee, 1982; Lather, 1992; Silva, 2013). In the end, the teachers only added to the information and never asked me to change or delete any of the data or conclusions.

Finally, I triangulated the physical, oral and observational evidence, looking for support of statements and claims made. Jonsen and Jehn (2009) describe triangulation “as a systematic process for integrating multiple methods in order to offset researcher biases, decrease process distortions and increase the validity of the findings in the analysis of qualitative studies” (p. 124). This triangulation also increased the comprehensiveness of my work enabling both the reader and myself to derive a deeper understanding.

Furthermore my own experience as a part of this group facing oppression adds to the trustworthiness of this study. As Freire (2000) points out it is those who are conscious of their oppression who best understand the mechanisms of that oppression and

who are most determined to fight for liberation. As a female, middle class, White, Protestant and educated social studies teacher in Texas, I had to recognize my privileges that could obscure my comprehension and balance this against the syntactical understandings (Schwab, 1978; Slekar & Haefner, 2010) and insider positionality (J. Banks, 1998). My interest in doing this research directly sprang from my own struggles as a feminist woman, historian and teacher. I had to navigate the requirements and standards imposed on me by my administration and the SBOE that frequently contradicted what I understood as the content and purpose of social studies and history in general. I could not separate my perspective, my subsequent analysis or myself from my experience. Furthermore we must recognize the “scientific pretensions of neutral observation or description...that ethnographic writing is not cultural reportage, but cultural construction, and always a construction of self as well as other” (Stacey, 1988, p. 24). Rather than fight against it, I recognized it as an asset and documented through the post observation reflections (Mertens, 2010) the evolution of my insights and understandings. I included my own history, evolution and emergence as a feminist teacher in line with the other participants. Because I wanted to diminish, as much as possible, the differences between myself and the other women I have avoided any stylistic differences such as italics when telling our stories.

Breaking down the barriers between my participants and myself was especially useful as a confirmability audit (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). I also called upon my dissertation committee, especially Dr. Cinthia Salinas as well as fellow graduate students in my department at the University of Texas to help me determine the strength of my thesis, frameworks and conclusions. They also importantly helped me maintain my role as a researcher and academic, rather than slip back only into the commiserating role of fellow teacher.

### ***Data Analysis***

I analyzed the data repeatedly, looking for interactional and inter-textual discourse (Fairclough, 2001), feminist understandings and acts of resistance first by reading the transcripts, field notes and artifacts as a whole, looking for larger holistic meaning. I organized my material first by source and then chronologically. Next, by coding and chunking, using an iterative method (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009), and grounded theory, I determined two important broad themes (Mertens, 2010) that were shared across all participants. I shared these themes with my research participants to test the strength of my initial findings and to help me refine them (Reinharz, 2011).

After analyzing the interviews and observations of the research participants individually, as Merriam (2009) suggests, I conducted a cross case analysis using inductive analysis which Patton (1990) describes as “discovering patterns themes and categories in one’s data” (p. 453) rather than presupposing them. I then grouped the responses into these resulting categories and created a matrix of the data to better facilitate comparison and determinations. This let me refine my two broad themes into subthemes which were more particular to specific participants or groups of the participants experiences. However I thought it was crucial to reflect the spectrum of feminism and resistance without creating hierarchies or imposing a positivist conclusion of value or legitimacy.

### **Pilot Studies**

As I stated above, my own experiences and frustrations as a teacher have been the foundation of my research while in this doctoral program. My initial studies started with a broad view of teacher agency and state control through the standards and testing movement. One of the participants, Alice Paul, was the focus of my initial research. I researched specifically what pedagogical and curricular mechanisms she used to maintain

her sense of purpose as a history teacher in the uncertain time immediately following the 2010 adoption of the new social studies TEKS. This study was presented at both the College and University Faculty Assembly (CUFA) conference in November of 2012. I expanded on this theme in the following semesters by teaming up with fellow doctoral student Venkat Ramaprasad and adding a male U.S. History teacher in a different but similar school. This opened up another perspective from both sides of the research, which gave the ability compare and contrast as well as increase the reliability and transferability of my findings. We presented this study at the American Education Research Association (AERA) convention in April of 2013. I continued to observe and analyze the practices of these two teachers, which resulted in papers that were presented at both of these conferences the next year. With each class throughout my doctoral studies my focus on the topic of teacher agency and state control became more refined and framed by theory, specifically feminist post-structuralism. My initial foray using this frame centered around the speeches given by the four teachers from a range of subjects and grade levels and myself who had participated in the Women's Empowerment Conference (WECON) in the Spring of 2014. This work was chosen for a panel presentation at the AERA conference in 2015.

This dissertation work built on these studies by examining the state's attempts to control what is taught in Texas classrooms and teacher's actions to defend their autonomy. However, this study refined this initial question by focusing with a feminist post-structural lens on only female social studies teachers' choices specifically concerning gender in the curriculum and pedagogy. Simultaneously, I expanded the focus by looking at a larger number of social studies teachers, who varied in experience, background and school setting.

## Chapter 4: Results

### INTRODUCTION

The importance of investigating how resistant feminist teachers determine what and how they teach (Thornton, 1990) is commensurate with the increasing mandates and controls imposed upon them by local and state administrators (Au, 2009; McNeil, 2000; Valenzela, 2005). In particular curriculum development is where the conflicting sides confront each other and fight for control (Ames, 2009; Apple, 2001; Giroux, 2013). The intrusion into the classroom by outside reformer forces (Zeichner, Payne, & Brayko, 2015) has been ostensibly justified through disseminating fears that our educational system, and the country at large, is in danger of collapse and that loss of our dominance as a world power is imminent (Berliner & Biddle, 1997). In American education, just as in the neo-liberal view of the world at large, “control over social reproduction relies on conditions of permanent crisis” (Woods, 2012, para 19). On first glance, current educational policy, rooted in standardization and accountability, claims to be aimed at ameliorating and aiding the disenfranchised (Fibkins, 2015; McNeil, 2000; Nichols & Berliner, 2008; Valenzela, 2005). However, the notion of improving student performance disguises underlying structures promoting social efficiency and maintenance of the status quo. Indeed the social reproductive and repressive results of standardized testing can be revealed when disproportionate numbers of minority students are retained or prevented from graduating because of the scores on these measures (McNeil, 2000;

Nichols & Berliner, 2008). These mechanisms to promote equity then become the instrument of oppression instead (Valencia & Villarreal, 2005).

These systems of division and social reproduction have a long history. During America's Gilded Age, as education became a tool for the Americanization and industrial training of millions of immigrants (Tyack, 1974), it became increasingly micro-managed by native-born Anglo-Saxon men (Clifford, 2014; J. Nolan, 2004). During the progressive era the models were justified through the discourse of scientific curriculum making and Taylor's permeation of economic principles in education championing greater (social) efficiency for schools (Kliebard, 1995; Shepard, 2000). Into the current era, education was taken over by those who blame schools and teachers for perceived failures in national and economic advancement (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Their attempts at remediation through NCLB (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. § 6319, 2008) and ESSA (Every Child Succeeds Act, 114 U.S.C. § 1177, 2015) have had a consequent oppressive influence through assessment and standardized curriculum on teachers' pedagogy and content decisions (Center on Education Policy, 2006; Goertz, Floden, & O'Day, 1995; Hamilton, 2003; Hamilton, et al., 2007; Lane, Parke, & Stone, 2002; Ravitch, 1995; Segall, 2003).

In addition, assertions that we live in a post-feminist society ignore and disguise the systemic de-professionalization of teaching (Van Sickle, 2014). Rather, the neo-liberal educational system, with its mechanisms of privatization, commodification, standardization, regulation, and examination (Mohanty, 2013), is an overt method of

subordination (De Lissovoy, 2010; Gore, 1993). It works in harness with the war on women (Gilman, 2014) that is trying to reverse the achievements of female empowerment and reproduce the hegemonies of masculinism (Brittan, 1989), which naturalizes and justifies men's domination over women. Furthermore these policies are positioned as qualitative, objective, determinations of effort and merit. There is a reluctance to admit to the social reproductive factors which inhibit one's ability to rise. But, instead of admitting to possible flaws in the neo-liberal reliance on schools as social mobilizers, society has instead villainized the teachers without giving them any real say in the education system (Salinas, 2006; Giroux, 1988).

With the high-stakes test as the decisive measure of student, educator, and school success, there has emerged ample evidence regarding the negative consequences such as an inordinate class time on test-preparation and creating a test-centered classroom culture (Erskine, 2014; Sloan, 2005). Additionally, teachers have described the rigid fashion in which they were to teach and the frustration incurred with the lack of possession of pedagogical decision-making, (Margolis, Meese, & Doring, 2016). Wayne Au (2009), for instance, speaks of the increase in teacher-centered instruction, the direct relaying of test-related material, and the contraction of the curriculum. Finally, Salinas and Reidel (2007) demonstrate the limited role that educators play in selecting what content is taught, arguing that the selection of curriculum and state level testing policies are significantly influenced by a narrow agenda set by the business elite (Cimbricz, 2002).

However, while the intended/unintended consequences of NCLB-like policies are

clear, there is, however, ample evidence of educators who resist the curricular and pedagogical ‘mandates’ and embody notions of what Grant (2006) terms the ambitious teacher. The ambitious teacher is one who knows their subject matter, and maneuvers well within the high-stakes testing context. The ambitious teacher knows their students, the lives they live, and their worldview. This knowledge becomes more critical when the standardized curriculum appears to ignore or even contradict some of the students’ perspectives. Lastly, the ambitious teacher creates the educational space necessary for themselves and their students, even if their colleagues and superiors may not appreciate their efforts.

The contrasting findings regarding the influences of high stakes testing beg for further study. Additionally, little to no research has used a feminist perspective (Schmeichel, 2015) in examining how social studies teachers, facing and resisting a mandated and politically motivated curriculum enforced by testing, maintain their purpose in teaching about women from a critical historical standpoint. In response, through qualitative case study I investigated the following research questions.

1. What are the factors that motivate women to become feminist social studies teachers?
2. How do feminist social studies teachers view the mandated curriculum and accountability educational system and their position within it?
3. How and why do these teachers resist this system?

To investigate these questions I purposefully selected five female Texas social studies teachers, of various experience levels, who were committed to teaching a more complete history, with women centered in the curriculum. I examined from a feminist post structural perspective the findings from repeated and prolonged classroom visits, multiple interviews, emails and frequent gatherings of the participants, cognizant of my own positionality and theirs.

### **THEMES: OVERVIEW**

In pursuing these questions, I discovered that the results fell into two major themes. I pause here briefly to say that the term “results” was problematic because it implied something much more positivist than I was comfortable with. The terms “results” seems to imply the discovery and capture of **The Truth** rather than an exploration of truths the participants and I encountered (Polkinghorne, 2005). However, I was unable to find an adequately official or academic sounding alternative. So with this caveat I return to the traditional model of dissertations and describe the themes which I derived from my analysis of the results.

The first was an examination into the process of becoming feminist teachers. The second major theme explored how this feminism was enacted within Texas’ very conservative and patriarchal educational environment. These broad themes were further broken down into subthemes, which scaffold this building process. Examining how and when in their lives they became conscious and identified with feminism was very important because there was a significant degree of correlation between this and when and how they began resisting the status quo concerning women in the curriculum.

What I found strongly emerging from the data, especially in interviews, was the teachers' certainty that they are the final and best curricular and pedagogical authority for their classroom, what Thornton (1990) refers to as the gatekeeper. For the teachers in this study, their critical feminist stance informed their decisions about when and whether to open or close their classroom door to the state's intrusion. The contradiction between the dominant narrative being imposed on them and their substantive understandings (P. Collins, 2008) authorized and motivated their resistance to outside interference. They based this authority on their knowledge of the content (Shulman, 1987) and use this as their lever to shift away from the dominant prescribed narrative (Apple, 2001; Au, 2009; Giroux, 2013; Salinas, Fránquiz, & Rodríguez, 2016) to one that recognizes other voices, especially those of women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Gavey, 1989). This theme also focuses on how the teachers use their syntactical understanding (Schwab, 1978) of the school, district and state education system, focused so tightly around quantifiable measures (Mahony, Hextall, & Menter, 2004), and patriarchal norms and gendered roles (Jones & Hughes, 2016) as a means of empowerment rather than oppression (Segall, 2003). In this case I was expanding on the definition of both substantive and syntactical understanding beyond content to also include the culture and environment in which it is taught.

I have illustrated each theme with case study data from specific teachers from my five-woman group. While every teacher had some experience and response to each of the themes, there were certain teachers who highlighted some better than others. For example, Angela Gurley and Abigail Adams encountered the most resistance to their

authority and their content knowledge. Kate Chopin, working in World Geography and Ethnic studies, did not face a standardized test and had fewer constraints and pushback from co-workers or administration. However, not having the test meant that she had to rely more on her relationship with the students to get them to value the content and accept what she was teaching as valuable and relevant. She also demonstrated, almost as a scientific control the kind of quality ambitious feminist teaching that can occur when curriculum standards are broader, administration is supportive and the class has fewer outsider interferences. Molly Pitcher and Alice Paul best demonstrate how knowledge of one's educational environment can empower resistance and facilitate feminist goals in curriculum and pedagogy. While they have encountered a double standard in terms of their administration's expectations of female and male teachers, they have used this to their advantage and determined methods of resilient resistance. I focused on each of these teachers as the prime case study (Merriam, 2009) for sub-theme, but still included relevant, if less extensive data from their others enabling cross case analysis using inductive analysis (Patton, 1990).

### **THEME 1-BRINGING FEMINISM AND TEACHING TOGETHER**

The teachers' feminist beliefs and resistance to the imposed curriculum was firmly rooted in their own upbringing and education. Their evolution as women, feminists and critical ambitious social studies teachers thus is an important place to begin. These understandings established both for them, and this study, the foundation that bolstered, motivated and explained their subsequent forms of resistance (Delgado-Bernal, 1997; Scott, 1990).

The first subtheme examines when and how they became a feminist woman (Brittan, 1989; Butler, 2011; Green, 1998; Ochs, 1992; Ropers-Huilman, 1997). The evolution of their feminist identity followed patterns pointed out in previous studies (Marine & Lewis, 2014) and was fluid, resisting static or formalized definition or action (Griffin, 1989). This is also in keeping with a feminist post-structural framework, which recognizes that the self can be “a site of contradiction and conflict. The self is elaborate, complex and a site of ‘selves’ formed by multiple discourses” (Cammack & Phillips, 2002, p. 124). Neither their identity as feminists, nor the enactment of this identification followed a linear trajectory, there was no complete transformation but instead there were ruptures in the constrictions of oppression (Bailey, 2007; Erchull, Liss, Wilson, Bateman, Peterson, & Sanchez, 2009; Griffin, 1989; Weir, 1997), which was is in keeping with a post-structural framework. Yet each woman did prescribe to the same basic understanding of feminism as the recognition of the systematic privileging of men, especially elite, heterosexual White men within our society (hooks, 2000; Yoshihara, 2011). This sub-theme explores the influence of family and upbringing on the women’s identification of themselves as feminist. For many, the ideas and feelings did not coalesce into articulate understanding or theory until college.

This is followed by the second sub-theme of their emergence and ongoing development as a feminist teacher. This encompasses not only their awareness that the state’s curriculum was historically inaccurate, but also that its treatment of women, coming from a highly restrictive and conservative perspective, was unjust and ineffective, cheating the students and society of what social studies classes can really achieve.

(Barton & Levstik, 2004; Parker, 2003). The natural fit of using a feminist pedagogy to center gender (Tisdell, 1998), encourage all students (Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona, 2009; Maher & Tetreault, 2001) and do so with care and compassion helped bring their personal beliefs about feminism and teaching history together. Lastly in this sub-theme I examined their decision to address what they saw as injustice and inaccuracy toward women in the curriculum. This involved not only their belief in their ability to enact change but also their acknowledgement of responsibility to do so (Schmeichel, 2015; Schmidt, 2012) because otherwise they felt they were complicit in the perpetuation of this injustice (St. Pierre, 2000). It is in this spirit that the importance of this research resides. If we as teacher educators and classroom teachers want to foster emerging feminist consciousness we need to understand how it evolves within the people we serve.

### **Becoming a Feminist Woman**

At its core, feminism is defined as the belief that women should be equal in our society but are not. The reason is due to systemic patriarchal forces that intend to preserve this oppression. Delmar (1994) expands further saying that “a radical change (some would say a revolution even) in the social, economic and political order” (p. 5) would have to take place in order to truly overcome this injustice. However, the identification of feminism is also a complicated social construction which, viewed from a post-structural position is thus interpreted and manifested in different ways (Frazer & Hutchings, 2014; Vanderisck, 1995; Yoshihara, 2011).

The women in this study became feminist in a variety of stages in their lives and from a range of pathways. In general, the more overt feminist messages they received

growing up, the quicker they were to recognize the mechanisms of patriarchy at work. Those who were to be exposed to it later on also were slower to see the effects on their lives. This is in keeping with the idea of that the self is constructed socially and externally as well as internally: indeed it is unclear where one's own construct and that composed by society begin and end (Ropers-Huilman, 1997).

### *Naming and Claiming Feminism*

Of all of the teachers in this study, Kate Sinnett was raised in the most overtly and actively feminist family, something she felt was a gift for which she called herself lucky. Additionally, the importance of history and teaching was instilled in her from an early age. Her mother was a social studies teacher and her grandmother, in her words a “wild feminist” was also theater professor who wrote books on local history and set up a museum. Her grandmother included Kate in the museum both as a historian and as a female. From an early age Sinnett was guided to recognize the limitations placed on women in our society and what she was supposed to do about it.

[She] talked to me about shattering the glass ceiling and including women in the dialogue about ANYTHING. Also I had to dress up in her historical reenactments (Betsy Ross, Dr. Mary Walker to name a few). (personal communication, 10/07/16)

A child of divorced parents, Kate was especially close to these women in her family who not only set an example of independence, intelligence, self worth and self-reliance, but also explicitly framed this as feminist.

The cool thing about my grandmother is that she was a major feminist. She would dress up like Dr. Mary Walker, who was the female surgeon during the Civil War. She petitioned to get Dr. Mary Walker into the Women's Hall of Fame for years and they kept kind of rejecting her and kind of laughing about it. They even had an exhibit that mocked Dr. Mary Walker and her fashion choices because she dressed like a man. She wore like a full men's suit and top hat. (K. Sinnett, autobiographic interview, 2/11/16).

Her grandmother's efforts to improve the Seneca Falls Women's Hall of Fame taught Kate that even in arenas that were explicitly about women's history there were exclusions (Schmidt, 2012). Thus she was attuned to look for gaps and listen for silences even as an elementary school student. "I started looking in my textbooks and listening for women & women's voices in school. And I noticed when it was missing" (personal communication, 2016). As she went through school she was drawn to strong female teachers who responded to her interest and drive especially in the area of female authors.

Being such an avid reader was a huge part of it because I began reading female authors early on and I some really, I had this one really awesome mentor in high school...she was incredible. She was my English teacher. She even offered to give up her planning period to do an independent study with me where we would discuss protest literature. It was this own class that we created my senior year and I read *The Awakening*, *the Invisible Man*, *The Jungle*, there were a couple more. But it was incredible and it was like my first real exposure to protest literature. I had read things on my own and I had always read poetry. Oh! And she exposed

me to Joan Didion. I read Joan Didion all through college. One of the greatest compliments I have ever received in my life in my creative non-fiction course was my professor said I wrote like Joan Didion and it was like the coolest thing on earth. I think being a reader and a writer helped me understand my identity as a female. (K. Sinnett, interview, 2/11/2016)

By finding mentors, both literal and literary, Kate was thus conscious of the role women should be playing in our collective narrative, and knew she had a responsibility to try to correct the injustice. Perhaps even more importantly she could observe how this should be undertaken, not simply that the patriarchy should be resisted, but what that resistance looked like and how well it could work.

As teachers and teacher educators this remembrance is also important because it highlights how influential we can be in fostering and refining critical thought among our students (Wertsch, 2000). Enthusiasm or belief is not enough. It must be paired with a pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987) about women in history, feminism and feminist thought. In Sinnett's case the teacher worked outside the prescribed class schedule and curriculum demonstrating not only a commitment to the cause but to resilient resistance (Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001). Furthermore, these persistent and resistant actions of her grandmother, mother and teachers gave Sinnett the blueprint of effective ways of acting on this responsibility to resist the dominant narrative.

Eventually my grandmother, after a long time, prevailed and they admitted her [Walker] to the Women's Hall of Fame. I got to go with her, my grandmother got to act as the living representation. So honestly just that love of history, social

justice, equality, fighting for you know. Everyone to have their place in the books and in the museums. It's just something I've grown up with. (K. Sinnett, interview, 2/11/2016).

As Sinnett grew up she constructed her own version of feminism and determination of how to enact it. As Weigman (2000) states, simply because feminism may be generational what is created is not a cloned belief. Instead like the woman herself, there is a reorganization of what is passed down into a new individual that is in turn shaped by her relationships (Guest, 2016). Kate laughingly said, "I haven't picked out a wave, but to me I guess feminism is just about feeling that women are strong and empowered. We can do anything, and all things, equal to or better than any other type of person." (K. Sinnett, interview, 2/11/2016). Her statement aligns with how she carries herself professionally, using her fluency and depth of historical knowledge as her means of claiming space for her students. Even more importantly Kate's feminist perspective, like that of her grandmother and teacher, translated into actions which benefited more than just herself.

### ***Feminism without the name***

Sinnett represents an outlier in the early start and overtness of her feminist upbringing. For the other teachers, the label of feminism was rejected or ignored by their mothers, even while they seemed to act on or embody feminist ideals (Butler, 1988; Gavey, 1989; Ochs, 1992). Molly Pitcher said despite how strong and independent her mother was, in her very conservative family, feminism was perceived as "telling men what to do." (interview, 02/24/2017) where women were wanted to take away men's

power and replace them as the group in charge. This extreme and inaccurate view of what feminism stood for prevented her mother, and herself initially from identifying themselves as feminists. I interviewed Angela Gurley's mother after she had participated in the 2017 Women's March. She said that she did not call herself a feminist and indeed rejected any kind of labels. So while she raised Gurley "to be independent" and recognize that she was "equal to anyone else" she did not feel the need to call that feminism. This reaction is in keeping with previous studies, which found that many women who seemingly otherwise aligned with ideas and principles of feminism were so concerned about the negative associations that they rejected the term (Aronson, 2003; Scharff, 2013).

Having only just met her, it was unclear to me if in this particular case the rejection of the term was from a lack of consciousness about the mechanisms of sexism and misogyny. Gurley's own interpretation of her mother's position was of course more personal and came from a greater understanding and relationship. In her written response to my analysis, Gurley brought in the complications of class and the impact this had on both her mother and herself.

As far as rejecting the label equates to not recognizing patriarchal mechanisms, perhaps. It wasn't a discussion at the table most nights.

It maybe worth mentioning that we were pretty poor for awhile and moved into working-class by the time I was a teenager, my parents never owned a home (still don't). My mom and dad worked, and worked, and worked, taking the bus to work because we had no car. So the notions of "work ethic" and "rugged

individualism" and the reality that my parents both worked hard all the time and little seemed to come from that revealed issues more related to false ideas of social mobility. That was something we were all conscious of. She made more money than my dad (at all times). I understood this dynamic - but it was never an issue in our home, it was just how we operated to pay the bills. I think she was too busy with the day to day to reflect on mechanisms of society. Maybe this is why my feminism is inter-sectional with class. (personal communication, 1/23/17).

Gurley's experience aligns with a critique that the feminist movement ignored the experiences and agency of working class women (Merrill, 2005). If the movement did not recognize and include this type of woman (Byers & Crocker, 2012), it should not be surprising that these women responded by not consciously claiming and in some cases even rejecting the feminist movement and the title feminist.

Alice Paul's mother also worked outside the home and frequently made more money than her father. Like Gurley, while this gave Paul an example of female autonomy and achievement, the tie to feminism was not explicitly stated. In Paul's case the gender dynamics created by her mother's work seemed to lead to a backlash and correcting gender balances in her family. Her mother deferred to her father's opinion in front of the children and framed her work around economic necessity rather than personal ambition. Paul was correspondingly slow to recognize herself as a feminist and at the beginning of this study was only beginning to enact this stance in the classroom. When

asked if she referred to herself a feminist in front of her students she had the following response

I don't know that I overtly say it but I'm sure that it's obvious. Just like I don't overtly say my political leanings, and I hope that that is not obvious I hope I do a good job of showing both sides. But I think that is a civil rights issue, just like I'm overtly a civil rights activist I don't think that that is as big of a deal, being open about that is not like being open about your political leanings. (A. Paul, interview, 03/16/16)

In the beginning of this statement Alice seems to conflate feminism with a political party affiliation. She had discussed on previous occasions her commitment to showing "both sides of the issue" and not endorsing any particular leader or political stance. She said that this reflected the political discussions her family had at home rather than any examples from her own high school education. Yet in the next breath she seemed to correct herself and define it as a civil rights issue that should be the position of all people of conscience. I believe that this reflects her growth and increasing commitment to feminism. As this study has continued, and Paul interacted more with the other teachers in this study she became open with her feminist stance. Additionally she recognized the mechanisms of patriarchy and incursions into women's rights more readily. However she still was at a less overt position than Kate or even Angela.

Abigail Adams was also raised by strong women but without the overt identification of feminism. She felt she was given a mixed message of being strong and fighting for what you want but in a traditional way. She felt this was a product of their

generation and being Latinas. She described her mother and grandmother's view of themselves as being merged with service to the men they were with. Her grandmother told her that "men answer to God but women answer to men." (interview, 03/23/2016). She said her mother, who became a school administrator, still seemed to shape her personality around whatever man she was with. "When she was with a Latino she was all 'La Raza', but in Kentucky she's all southern and traditional." (interview, 03/23/2016). The contradiction in her mother's strength in the work place (masculine) and pliancy in relationships (feminine) seems to have affected Adam's view of what she does or does not have to be. "I struggle with my identity. I'm proud of being a woman of color, being a professional. But I don't have to get married or have kids." (interview, 03/23/2016).

Adams further wrestled with gender performance (Butler, 1988). She was brought up to believe many of the traits she most prided herself on were masculine (Lawson & Lips, 2014; Lemaster, Storugh, Stoiko, & DiDonato, 2015; Williams & Dempsey, 2014). She frequently felt isolated and unsupported by other women who she felt seemed to need to apologize for their abilities or package them in some more appealing and less threatening way. Even her choice of joining the feminized teaching profession seemed to require a defensive response from Adams. She repeatedly said that she didn't have to be a teacher and could and may still do something else.

I was raised in a very traditional Southern family. My ideas of women's second-class status were tangled with issues of class but in a different way than Gurley's or Paul's. For them, the example of their mother working, and even being the primary, was a model of women's abilities even if the title of feminism was ignored or rejected. For

me, my mother and maternal grandmother's limited outside work was explicitly framed as indicators of middle and upper middle class status instead of being a statement or belief about their lack of ability. Even their allegiance to traditional titles such as Mrs. Julian H. Osborne or Mrs. Captain C. Scott Johnson associated them with the accomplishments of their husbands. In this way, like Adams' mother and grandmother, they rightfully laid claim their men's achievements as due in a significant way to their supportive efforts.

While I personally chose not to change my name, I did not perceive my parents' choices as anti-feminist. Instead it provided an early model of resilient resistance (Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001). Working within the constraints of their time, background and circumstances my mother and grandmother channeled their intelligence, talents and ambition through accepted feminine roles. In this was they aligned with feminism without identifying as such.

However, it was obvious to me that my grandmother especially chafed and resented the limits placed on her ambition. Many times growing up I heard the story of my great-grandfather's refusal to send his daughter to college. My mother remembered,

Your grandmother's father was of the view that a women did not need an education and yet she was his smartest child, next would have been George who was a chemical engineer, Don who was an aerospace engineer, Charles started college but did not finish. Her sister hated school and was thrilled that she did not have to go after high school. (J. Johnson, personal communication, 02/05/2017)

The lesson I was to learn from this was not only to be grateful for the opportunities I was given, and which had been denied to my grandmother, but also to see the unfairness and injustice of that denial being based entirely on her gender. Yet this was never explicitly identified as patriarchy, just “the ways things were” with the emphasis being that this was a concept of the past. But while my family not only supported, but demanded, I live up to my potential and were determined to remove as many barriers for me as possible, messages from my peers pushed in the opposite direction.

In both overt and covert ways the message I learned, in high school especially, was that you could choose to be intelligent or be attractive but not both. In my sophomore art class the boys ranked the girls in class and announced they were deducting points because I was smart. Once more I felt the injustice of this both personally and universally but had no name for it and seemed to be the only one noticing. The male teacher certainly did not find it worthy of correction. Not having a vocabulary for what I was observing lent to the sense it was normal if painful. This hegemonic presence limited my ability to see it as something that could be resisted. Much like Adams, I began associating subservience with femininity and achievement with masculinity. I decided to stop trying to be both, not seeing many examples that it was possible, and so went with the side that seemed easiest to fit into. I changed my name to Scottie, not only because there were so many Heathers it was confusing, but also because I did not want to be associated with “that type of person.” The movie *Heathers* only underlined the image of a Heather as pretty, vapid, using her intelligence only to gain popularity especially among boys. I was not yet to the point of claiming the many ways of “being a woman”

(Baxter, 2002; Butler, 1988), something that would only come to the fore truly in college and which I am discovering is a constant work in progress.

### ***Importance of Education in Feminist Consciousness***

Many of the women also came to their understandings through what they read and learned in school. This is an important point because it affirms the effect that education and teachers can have on consciousness raising (Freire, 2000). It is in this stage of their lives that the ideas and concepts many were raised with were finally named and identified for the first time. For Angela Gurley this explained the different positions she and her mother had concluded about the term feminist:

I call myself feminist because I can articulate my beliefs and I'm secure about that, this came with college (mom didn't go to college) and knowledge, and reflecting on life experiences. It's important to label myself a feminist because I embrace its meaning, it demonstrates my acceptance and stances on issues that matter. Also, [my daughter] will be brought up hearing me call myself "feminist," unlike I did, with my mom. However, as my mom grandparents [her] - she's the first one to buy her the books that empower her as girl, call out little girl stereotypes on the t-shirts she buys her, etc. etc. [She] will have the language and lenses to understand the mechanisms, because I've had a bit more room as an adult to contemplate and formulate these issues (personal communication, 1/23/17).

The importance of naming not only helps develop an epistemological framework but also allows the recognition of it in others (Ghee, 1990; Kripke, 1980). As St. Pierre

(2000) writes, “Once they can locate and name the discourses and practices of patriarchy, they can begin to refuse them” (p. 486). Naming the problem is a critical step in determining how to fight it, identifying your allies, and avoiding the barriers constructed to block your progress.

Furthermore, this stance reinforces the legitimacy not only of the goal of women’s equality, but that the problem still exists. While actresses might claim that we should no longer have to call ourselves feminist but simply normal (Hibberd, 2016), this is based on the assumption that sexism is an aberration rather than something systemically embedded in the foundations of our society. To label oneself a feminist announces your belief that there was and continues to be a patriarchy. It elevates the issue from a neo-liberal idea of one’s own struggles and accomplishments to a recognition of systemic forces of oppression outside and beyond of oneself (Williams & Witting, 1997). The importance of the label also helps to identify allies and theories, which help us understand and withstand our struggles (Aronson, 2003).

Alice recalled coming to feminist consciousness while taking her history courses. “I think I finally ‘woke up’ and realized that we were really only talking about White old men. I talked about with other classmates in college and then later in my cohort in [Teacher Training Program]” (personal communication, 10/05/2016). So while her classes, including her teacher preparation classes were teaching the traditional dominant narrative, the silence was noticeable to her and triggered a reaction. The discussion and support of the other students then helped her counter this conformist pressure.

However, it was during the two year teacher in-service she shared with Molly Pitcher and myself that she was given the explicit and detailed content and lesson support she needed to turn her consciousness into action. Once a month for two years we spent several hours learning content information from university professors who centered race, class and gender. We also went on multiple field trips around the country to study primary sources, to stand on the sites of momentous historical events such as the Pettus Bridge, witness the inauguration of President Obama or peek into the daily lives of 19<sup>th</sup> century working class women at the Tenement Museum. Even more importantly these were all buttressed by lesson plans and classroom supplies which we tested and adjusted for our own classrooms. We were then assigned to teach from these lesson plans and give feedback both verbally and in written reflections to the group about how effective or ineffective they were.

The immediacy and practicality of these workshops helped Alice develop her emerging feminist consciousness into her curriculum and practice. For Molly and myself it helped us overcome the barriers to undoing dominant narrative lessons. The time commitment to find resources, create lessons, produce materials can be daunting especially when one is alone and unsupported. It is so much easier to just slide back to business as usual when the pressures of school and home responsibilities start to build up. That the three of us were continuing to use, and build on, what we learned eight years ago in this grant speaks to the importance of similar programs being created for pre-service and especially in-service teachers.

Kate Sinnett, on the other hand, found resistance from her professors and even some mockery that clashed with her relatively highly developed feminist views.

History is a male dominated field, and I certainly felt that on the undergrad college level. I took an advanced course in Modern Middle East conflicts & violence (1948-present, it was an awesome class) as a second semester freshmen. The professor chuckled when he signed off on it and thought it was "adorable that I was going to give it a go." I wonder if he would have called a male freshman adorable. This class ended up being about 75% male. The professor ACTUALLY said to me once, as I raised my hand, "I'm always interested in hearing what the women have to say!" ...Which I think actually came from a good place, but was incredibly patronizing. (personal communication, 03/02/2017).

While the patronizing treatment from her professor would have probably offended most women, Kate's strong feminist background allowed her to recognize this behavior not only as a personal affront, but part of a system that tries to maintain its status quo through multiple means big and small. She said the dissonance created by being confronted with this kind of overt and even clumsy sexism motivated her to want to be in a position that would empower her to push back.

Angela Gurley, who had described herself as relatively unconscious of her "woman-ness" growing up specifically sought out a history of feminism class when she began her Bachelors in history. However, Gurley found herself conflicted over how other women were espousing a post-feminist -individual and neo-liberal accomplishment

stance (Erchull, Liss, Wilson, Bateman, Peterson, & Sanchez, 2009). She recalled the atmosphere in the class.

It felt very, ‘I am a feminist because I can do anything.’ It just got stuck there... its all in hetero-sexualized roles and I mentioned something about it. How it was all about White women. That was treated as an invalid statement and that bothered me...I think their framework was...I have problems too so don’t dismiss my problems as a White woman and that’s not exactly what I put out there. It wasn’t where I was at.” (interview, 2/18/2016).

The fellow students in her class seemed to be focused on a neo-liberal feminist stance that perceives equality as the ability to do anything one puts their mind to, and that this is evidence of equality. But Gurley understood that the intersections of oppression create a web of control that those within are not only unaware of in themselves, but seem especially blind about in others.

## **Becoming a Teacher**

### ***Why teaching?***

Until relatively recently teaching was one of the few professional outlets open to educated and ambitious women. Today, thanks to the efforts of previous waves of feminists, there are fewer jobs associated as being only for men. The women in this study could have entered a wide range of fields and in fact many other options were pursued or contemplated. That they did eventually choose teaching leads to an obvious question: “Why do you teach?” Some of the reasons, even from these ambitious feminist teachers were in line with very traditional motivations. Some followed their mothers and

grandmothers into the profession. Like those who saw teaching as a “back up” career, they knew that they would most likely easily find a job in the field, and one with good job security, if low pay (Rich, 2014). Teaching was also seen as compatible with their personal responsibilities to care for children and or parents. Yet, the main and driving purpose that all of the women repeatedly asserted was why they not only entered teaching but continue to this day is first the love history and furthermore their personal mandate to teach that history correctly by centering women and other marginalized groups in the narrative.

***Because my mother was a teacher.***

For Kate, Abigail and myself, teaching was a family business. Abigail said, “I’m coming from the perspective of the child of a bilingual administrator. My mom is a bilingual principal...so I’ve grown up with this my whole life” (A. Adams, WECON, 03/08/2015). This insider perspective did more than map a safe and known pathway to a career. It also gave these women and myself a view into teaching as enacting a greater purpose and construction of self. Thus this reason for teaching becomes complicated into more than following feminized and socially acceptable pathways or entering another accepted sphere. For my mother, grandmother and great grandmother, teaching was independence, both financial and societal. My mother carried her lesson plans and curriculum in big brown expanding files from base to base, across continents and oceans. They represented not only her safety net, in case she needed to support her children and herself, but also her separate self away from her family.

I see my education as an educator, then my classroom experience as a first grade teacher as segments that affected my thought processes, my choices and the way I

approached life in general. Even though I was not in the classroom, I continued education and my volunteer activities were educationally oriented (even if the one being educated was a canine). It was both a part of how I approached motherhood and my own identity as well (J. Johnson, personal communication, 03/07/2017).

She took justifiable pride in her teaching career and skills, which she was able to apply to many different facets of her life. For my mother being a first grade teacher became the lens in which she viewed her world. She explicitly and consciously approached mothering as a teacher, with everyday life events becoming teaching and learning opportunities, such as naming the color of our shoes as she put them on us. Even when she was no longer working for a paycheck she sought out volunteer opportunities where her teaching abilities would be utilized in service to others. Teaching also became a topic and even language that she and I could share that was separate from the discourse of mother and daughter.

Clifford (2014) writes that while the downtrodden lady, forced to work to keep body and soul together was a common plot in novels, the reality was that many intelligent and ambitious women looked to teaching for other reasons. For my grandmother and great grandmother teaching was certainly a help to the family finances but not a necessity. Both women had fathers who were able to support them. Instead it appears that service and forging independence, as a respected member of society was more valuable.

My great-grandmother Minnie was only a teenager and recent high school graduate herself when she was certified to teach. My father's impression was that teaching was proof that she was competent and mature enough to be on her own away from her parents. The respect and appreciation she felt from her three years of teaching was represented in the mementos she saved such as her classroom clock, school bell and the trunk she carried with her as she boarded with each of her student's families.

My grandmother Irene became a teacher during the Great Depression, but it had always been her career goal. She was very proud of her own academic record and saved commendations she received even from as far back as her elementary school years. She attended the State Female Normal School, later called Longwood and taught in Henrico County for a few years before finding a first grade position two miles from her parent's farm. During the Great Depression and World War II her income helped buy the few things the farm could not produce, though her father also had a job with the county. She continued teaching after getting married and having my father. Her intellectual drive, purpose and willingness to sacrifice was revealed to me when I learned that she went back as a full time resident student to get her Bachelor's degree from Longwood. She left her parents, husband and young son back on the farm, only seeing them on a few weekends. My own experience of spending time away from my family while earning my PhD makes me able to understand her drive to achieve her ambitions and at least in part the painful cost she and her family were willing to pay to help her get there. My father recalled about his mother Irene,

I know she took great pride in being a good teacher. She also was proud of being the first teacher so many of the residents of the county had and she was always pleased when they would speak to her and comment on how she was an important part of shaping their lives. All that fit very well into the family perception that

teaching is an honorable and praiseworthy profession and is also a civic duty. Successfully teaching meant that you could also feel that you successfully contributed to your family, neighbors and community at large. I am sure Mom would have identified herself as a First Grade Teacher before she identified as Charles Johnson's wife or Ned Lacy's daughter or (insert rank) Scott Johnson's mother (C.S. Johnson, personal communication, 03/05/2017).

Unlike my great-grandmother Irene always wanted to teach and continued to do so for decades. She found a way to separate herself from her traditional roles as wife, daughter or mother. She also saw teaching as a way she could improve her community. This was especially true in the very small rural town of Sandy Hook, Virginia. My great-great grandfather was the Superintendent of the Goochland County schools, but he was also the minister and founder of Ragland Baptist Church, which my parents still attend to this day. For my family teaching was thus intertwined with service to God and civic responsibility.

When I look at my own reasons for teaching history I see it as a way to educate active citizens who will use their agency to care for others. Service to God and country were bred into me in great part through my family's example, including my father's 32 year career in the Navy. Thus teaching was more about continuing a pattern of service than it was about apprenticeship (Britzman, 2003; Lortie, 1975) or wishing to conform to feminine roles (Butler, 1988).

Abigail Adams said that she has been surrounded by "schools and the function of schools my whole life" (interview, 03/06/2017). Her mother taught upper elementary for 10 years, then worked with at-risk students in alternative education and now was a bilingual school administrator. Her mother's teaching and work with at-risk populations was very consuming and meant that she was frequently gone for many hours. Adams said this taught her to value the commitment and strong work ethic teaching requires.

Despite serving oppressed and impoverished populations Abigail said her mother would not see herself as working for social justice. Like Angela Gurley's mother, she also would not call herself a feminist. These were conflated with liberal political stances, which she rejected. Instead Abigail's mother saw her work from a neo-liberal perspective as helping people help themselves, pulling themselves up by their bootstraps just as she did.

Initially Abigail followed her mother's conservative view of the world. She said she would not have called herself a feminist in high school or even when she was an undergraduate. Her college experience, where she initially pursued a degree in journalism, did not transform her view about women and gender or raise her to a feminist consciousness. Instead for her it was the liberal culture of the city where she began her teaching career and the perspectives the co-workers and friends she met there that raised her feminist and social justice consciousness. With this new perspective Abigail was only then able to use her own feminist lens and worldview to see past politics and titles. She could finally identify her mother's work as caring (Noddings, 1984) and critically transformative (Giroux, 1988) and pull from it feminist lessons she would carry into her own practice.

### *Caring for my family*

Teaching remains a feminized profession both in reality and public perception. There are negative effects because of this such as lower pay and status (Rich, 2014). However there are also positive aspects as well. Teaching has developed into a profession that acknowledges and adjusts for the myriad of responsibilities women in our society take on, especially that of caregiver (Tsouluhas, 2005).

For Molly Pitcher this connection was immediate and one of the driving concerns. When she was making the decision to pursue her career in filmmaking, her father and grandfather became ill. She remembered thinking that,

Okay, well I could teach. I had been teaching, I've been working as a substitute teacher for [her current] ISD and I had been doing that for like five years because I could still do my freelance work and still be there and I did history long-term positions and really liked it. I felt like now that we're settling down, this is a natural fit, a natural path to take and so that's how I ended up teaching. (M. Pitcher, interview, 02/19/2016).

Teaching for Molly was a flexible money earning option, especially when it was limited to substitute teaching. The idea of doing it full time was associated with becoming more responsible and taking on a greater caregiving role to her parents. But while love of teaching did not cause her to choose to join the profession, it did cause her to stay in it.

Caring for their children was one of the important reasons the other mothers, or potential mothers, in the group stayed in the profession. Kate did not have children yet but said that the vacation schedule allowed her to feel comfortable giving 110% during the school day and year.

I will never say that the vacations are not part of why I do it, because they are... [F]or those 9 months, 10 months it's my life. I'm there at 7-7:30 every morning I work in the tutoring center at night and I work through all of my lunches with kids I chase them down and I drag them into my room and I make them do something with me to give them credit and I live and breathe it for those months, and you

understand that, it consumes my weekends, it consumes everything. So I do think that those summer months are sacred and they are so important and so when I think in terms of being a mother, which I do want to be. I very much want to be a mother. I think that having that time to spend entirely with my children is incredible. It is one of the greatest sort of bonuses. So I do see teaching and motherhood as being compatible (K. Sinnett, interview, 02/11/16).

Caring for her students was a critical part of Kate's teaching style and even teaching identity. Her high school English teacher, whom she credited with channeling and fostering her love of literature and feminism, had modeled this for her. However, Kate wanted to balance this with the care and energy she wished to give to her own children and husband. She felt that teaching was a career that would allow her to do it, yet at the same time this belief was complicated by the issue of salary. She and her husband had discussed his staying home with their children and she was not sure her salary would allow that to happen.

The other teachers in the group agreed that teachers' salaries were too low for a family's breadwinner or primary support. Angela Gurley even confessed that she had discouraged her husband's budding interest in teaching, even though what attracted him was the social justice activism of her practice. She was concerned about losing the stability provided by his much higher salary from the technology industry (interview, 02/24/2017). Angela and I relied on the much higher salary of our husbands in order to pursue our advanced degrees and to push our family budgets past "just making ends meet". Molly Pitcher however, was supporting her husband's film making career and

this financial pressure was pushing her out of teaching. Teaching, like many feminized professions, pays less than jobs dominated by men and this income has been stagnant for the past forty years after adjusting for inflation (Rich, 2014).

The teachers also believed that there is a massive disconnect between performance and income, which caused them to reassess the cost and benefits of teaching in an ambitious and activist manner (Van Sickle, 2014). That the extra hours coaches worked were compensated, while their own work to improve academics or foster relationships with students was not, was viewed not only as unfair but based in sexism. The women felt this unjust was not only because most coaches were men but also because there were relatively higher stipends for male sports such as football (M. Pitcher, interview, 02/19/2016, group interview, 02/24/2017).

Through low pay but frequent time off teaching reflects and reinforces gender hierarchies by pushing families into relationships where the man is economically more powerful. In traditional families the ways in which people contribute to the overall wellbeing of the family is divided on gendered lines. Men support their family by making money and women by caring for their families through their time, physical presence and effort (Frone, Alfeld, Eccles, & Barber, 2006). Teaching allows women the time to be caregivers for their families, but not the salary to easily or comfortably support them financially (Moulthrop, 2005).

### *Teaching as a Safety Net*

Yet if teaching was not perceived as a high paying job, it was seen as a secure one, something to fall back on. Alice Paul said that she fell into teaching rather than choosing it, or feeling that it was a calling. Indeed, like Molly, it was her father's influence that led her to teaching. In Paul's case her father saw teaching as an insurance policy, a place where a woman could always find work:

My dad had always told me "Go on, get your teaching certificate, as a back up" so I think that was always in my mind. Then at freshman orientation, they asked if anyone wanted to be a teacher and I was like 'Oh, yeah, I want to get that certification' (interview, 02/16/2016).

She did not know how rigorous the program would be or how much of a commitment in terms of semester hours would be involved. But by that time, she had already discovered that teaching was a good fit for her, a field she felt she could not only count on for job security but also succeed in. She remembered thinking "This is what I want to do, this is where I belong." (A. Paul, interview, 02/16/2016). This feeling that she had found herself, only increased with her years in teaching. She said, "I can't imagine doing anything else. Like even talking about going to grad school and becoming a librarian I'm not ready to leave the classroom, like at all." (A. Paul, interview, 02/16/2016). Even her desire to continue her education was repeatedly postponed because of how much she loves her subject, her students and the impact she felt she had on them.

No matter what their pathway, all of the teachers in this study echoed Paul's feeling of purpose. They saw teaching as a way of channeling their love of the subject into service. In this way their experience aligns with women teachers of the past (Clifford, 2014; Crocco, 1999; Grumet, 1988) who saw education as a place to put into

action, their ideals toward improving their communities and country (Irving, 1991; J. Nolan, 2004).

*Because I love history*

All of the teachers in this study expressed a deep and long held fascination with history. This translated into a search for a career that would allow them to channel their interests. Angela Gurley recalled searching for an outlet for her historical curiosity after deciding to no longer pursue acting.

I didn't go to college right after high school, I was going to be a famous actress and then I realized this isn't satisfying, I don't feel smart, I feel dumb. I moved back to [her current city] and I stepped back and I was like, "Ok, what do I love?" and I realized I loved history...I developed this love of learning everything that came from the past and so it came to me that I could teach history. (A. Gurley, interview, 02/18/2016).

Gurley was not attracted to teaching for its own sake, nor for the love of children. Indeed none of the teachers in this study cited these factors as their first consideration, and only two even listed it as their secondary reason. None of them initially felt that teaching was something they would instinctively be good at. Instead teaching served as a vehicle to allow them to study history, a means to an end, which goes against the framing of teaching in our society as an outgrowth of innate characteristics that women have.

Indeed their deep historical knowledge base was to them a more important characteristic of themselves as teachers than any gendered role. It framed their perspectives on the world not just the classroom. Even before they were history teachers when they watched a movie, read a book, listened to a politician, they were constantly employing critical historical analysis (VanSledright, 2004). In this way the talent they

had for the subject of history was not only the reason they entered into education but also served as the foundation of their view of themselves as teachers. Their superior grasp of content was why they and others saw themselves as excellent teachers. It also became the strength they drew upon to resist the patriarchal status quo in social studies because they knew the subject better than the TSBOE and even frequently more than their co-workers. This will be examined in depth later in the paper.

### **Bringing it together -Becoming a Feminist Teacher**

#### ***Becoming feminist teachers***

The conversion or evolution from being a feminist to becoming a feminist teacher is the most important for the purposes of this study. If we can understand what factors led to this change, then we can help our students achieve this consciousness, and bring about real work toward social justice (Pérez & Williams, 2014).

As discussed in earlier in this paper, teaching became categorized as a female profession for a variety of reasons yet with a common result. The increasing levels of control enacted over teaching as well as its fall in professional prestige was in step with this shift toward hiring women. Teaching then occupied a contradictory position because it was both a way for women to step into the professional world yet at the same time was firmly within the feminine sphere. This next section examines how following an approved feminine role can be converted into an act of gender rebellion and resistance.

A range of overlapping factors inspired the conversion to activist feminist teachers. All felt there was something wrong with the curriculum, through what was being done and by what was left undone. They found, or were found by, ambitious

feminist teachers who opened their eyes to old oppressions and new possibilities. Many looked out into their classes and saw a population that was not reflected in the curriculum or served best by traditional pedagogies. Others were aggravated by the sexism they saw in the profession of teaching. They converted these factors into feminist activism through teaching. Current political shifts and regressions, which to them seem a return to a more naked and hostile misogyny, also served to strengthen their resolve to identify as feminists in their classrooms and to resist, persist and teach.

### ***Feminist Mentors***

When Molly Pitcher began student teaching she had a very conservative cooperating teacher, who taught social studies much the way Molly had experienced it as a student. However, when this woman left for maternity leave Molly's student teaching was taken over by the department's chair. This teacher had a PhD, only taught Advanced Placement U.S. History and was a lesbian. Molly said that she immediately observed that the history this woman was teaching was very different from her first placement. This class and curriculum were much more inclusive and critical, especially as concerned women's history. Molly was unsure if this was because it was an advanced class or if it was an expression of the teacher's own values. What ever the reason, Molly became determined to follow this second example and take both the style and substance back to her regular US History classroom.

Alice Paul was in her first year teaching when she was accepted to an intensive in-service teacher education grant. While student teaching she had had an excellent cooperating teacher, however her exposure to ambitious teaching was limited to just a

few examples. Alice's early ideas about being more critical in her teaching was just beginning to form and mainly focused on teaching multiple perspectives, something she felt her own teachers had not done. (A. Paul, interview, 11/08/2012). However being in the grant exposed her to a much larger group of very committed and ambitious teachers who had volunteered to participate in a two-year program involving intensive content knowledge as well as pedagogical training. These teachers, and the lessons learned in the grant itself, gave her not just the impulse to teach differently but the practical tools and materials to do so.

Lortie (1975) warns about the social reproductive nature of teaching. Students spend thousands of hours observing the profession and coming to conclusions what it is supposed to be. This is further supported by socially promoted norms and ideals of teaching (Alsup, 2006). This is perhaps even more true for those who want to become teachers, who, due to their career plans, would spend a greater portion of this time and with a greater interest in observing their teachers (Britzman, 2003). If what they observed is uncritical, and devoted to the dominant narrative then the cycle can continue to the next generation. However in each of these teachers something caused a shift away from hegemonic constructs of history teaching. Studies have shown that many teachers are unaware of extent to which history serves to advance the values, needs and perspectives of dominant groups in society. However, the teachers in this study felt there was something wrong in the history they were being taught (Shulman, 2004), something left out, silenced or diminished and also something wrong in the way they were being given information (Kincheloe, 2001). Even for the attuned and conscious women in this

group it took the example of an ambitious feminist teacher to show them more exactly what the problems were in the mandated curriculum. Even more importantly these mentor teachers showed them how to bring about meaningful change, how to address and mitigate these oppressive patterns in their own practice. This is essential because as Giroux (1988) points out, criticism without viable alternatives is not only ineffective it allows the dominant to maintain their position.

### ***Mentorship and Models Provided by this Study***

In creating this study I knew that I would learn and benefit a great deal from the participation of these five women. However it was as crucial for me that they benefit as well. Just as I struggled to remove the hierarchies of researcher and subject, such as replacing the terms with research participants I also wanted them to have engaged with the ideas and each other and come out better for it. The data I uncovered during this study, revealing the critical role mentorship and modeling had in establishing these women's feminist teaching practices, only reinforced my intention. It was in pursuit of this that I brought the women together frequently in both social and academic settings. When asked directly if they saw value in meeting together Abigail Adams reflected, "The study does have me more carefully considering how I plan and deliver lessons I have autonomy over. Are there women, or people who identify as women, I'm inadvertently omitting? Is there a marginalized perspective I'm not considering?" (personal communication, 03/16/2017). This was echoed by Kate who wrote,

This study has made me more reflective of my practice, for sure. I very much consider myself a feminist and a teacher who subverts the curriculum as often as

possible, but I am also painfully aware that my curriculum does not often center on women. I'm a female and a feminist and a fighter but I also felt constrained with the volume of content I face. It's hard to synthesize these two things. The study has made me think more deeply about where I can **authentically** make my curriculum and lessons more inclusive... It has been great to have the opportunity to get together and talk with the other women in this study. For one, it helps us to not feel like test tube babies who are separated by cubicle. We see that we are like-minded and driven individuals who have some powerful perspectives and practices. There is a small network (I wanted to say coven) of women spread across school districts who have bonded over this experience, and can continue to collaborate positively (personal communication, 03/21/2017).

Indeed all of the women, including myself, felt we had gained greater insight into ourselves as feminist teachers. For many this expanded their pool of information and resources. It also tended to set the bar for active feminist teaching higher and improved our practice. These results reinforce not only the importance of mentorship and modeling but that supportive networks can and should be consciously created. We as teachers and teacher educators should facilitate this in our programs, and create structures that bring together multi “generations” of ambitious feminist teachers in high-interest, fun and supportive ways. These results indicate to me that the benefits are too important to rely on chance or serendipity.

### ***Feminism Inspired by Student Identity and Potential***

Abigail Adams, who had few explicit feminist models to follow in either her personal or undergraduate experience, came to her feminist identity as a teacher. The intersection of these two roles became important to her when the official curriculum challenged not only her substantive understanding of history but also of her students and her purpose in teaching history to them (Pagano, 1990).

One of many moments that made a big impression on me was when I took a group of east side 6th graders to tour the TX State cemetery and I had to insist the tour guide stop at Barbara Jordan's grave b/c he initially said we didn't have time. I knew my students would make a stronger connection with her rather than the White officers of the confederacy (personal communication, 10/11/16).

To her, the dominance of men in the curriculum, and in the wider narrative history took in public places, clashed with the identity of the students she saw in front of her. She says feminism and feminist teaching in particular is essential because of this.

We're the new majority! So half the people in law school are women. Half the people in med school are women. Over half the voters, women. There's a story to be told there. We haven't even had the vote for a hundred years! ...What do our girls think when they look at [pictures of the presidents on] the wall? What do our girls of color think when they look at that wall? Or a different sexual orientation? So we need to start teaching them like they are a real possibility of being on that wall."(A. Adams, WECON panel, 03/08/2015)

Her belief was that it is not only important to teach girls that they have potential but to teach them because they have that potential (Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona, 2009; Maher & Tetreault, 2001). In other words, if someone really is going to be a leader one needs to be sure to teach them in the best way possible and to the highest extent possible to prepare them to take on these obligations. My great grandfather did feel the need to educate a person whose intelligence he thought would only be taxed over juggling place-cards at a dinner party. When we truly expect more from our girls, and want to create a society where the boys accept this as normal and needed, we have to change our expectations as teachers along with our curriculum content.

Pitcher began to look outside her classroom as well to examine how public and traditionally masculine historic spaces could be reframed as feminine and feminist. She said “As I struggle with this question I’m made painfully aware of how much women really are excluded. I mean dang, to think of it from a local perspective. Dang.” (personal communication, 02/11/17). As it had for the other teachers, coming to initial consciousness brought out for Pitcher more and more observations of how the dominant narrative both in the classroom and how history is presented in society was ill-serving women. It also elicited a greater reaction from the teachers than it had in the past as their greater awareness of the problem led them to recognize the scope and pervasiveness of the issue

### ***Responding to students with feminist pedagogy***

There are many descriptions and definitions of feminist pedagogy. However there was a commonality between the teachers of this study, which also reflected the

academic theory of feminism (Coia & Taylor, 2013). These dynamics overlapped and built off of each other. The first characteristic was a centering of care and fostering a culture of community. The second was a disruption of the usual power dynamics to help foster a more authentic relationship within the first goal. This extended to respecting the voice and perspective of not only the students but also of historical figures marginalized by the dominant narrative. Lastly the purpose of each teacher was to not only raise the consciousness of their students but to give them pathways and blueprints for action.

For Sinnett, raised within a household in which feminist notions were pervasive, the persistent gaps she saw in her students' understandings galvanized her to center issues of gender in her class and to use feminist pedagogy to do so. She used her teacher position of authority to try to raise her students' consciousness of the systems of injustice and patriarchy, something she feared they were unaware of and thus did not resist (Revilla, 2004). Even more frightening to her was that some of her female students seemed to have internalized these oppressions and perceived them as the natural order.

I am teaching the [her graduate school teacher program]'s social justice stuff and I have a lesson on the gender pay gap. We were talking about it in the UK versus the United States and just sort of conceptually what it was. I said there was going to be a question about it on the test. I was going around asking people questions about it and things and I asked this one girl. "Remind me, what's the whole deal with the gender pay gap."

She said "Well, that's where women make less money than men" and I'm like "Awesome and explain to me why this happens." Even after we had talked about

this endlessly in class she was like “Well it’s because women just they can’t do stuff as well as guys can.”

NOOOOOOO!!!!!! She didn’t know!!! We are spending another day on this! I just laid on the floor and planked, laid face down with my feet together. They were like ‘She’s not going to move.’

‘No, I’m *not* going to move until everyone above me right now has a discussion about what is the better answer here. I just want you to have a discussion about that and I will get up’ (K. Sinnett, interview, 2/11/2016).

This moment represents several things in Sinnett’s understanding of feminism and the curriculum. First of all, she did not accept her student’s (female or male) belief that inequality was the result of neo-liberal forces, in this case that incompetency explained differences in pay (Scharff, 2013). Second, she was very overt and dramatic in this rejection, by actually laying down on the floor. This reveals not only her willingness to scrap literal positions of authority, but also to sacrifice time. She valued the concept so much she was willing to pay for it. The students were thus shocked into rethinking and given the time to do so, indeed she would not move on until it was fixed. Lastly, while she did unequivocally state that the student was wrong she left it to this student and her classmates to discuss and determine why.

Feminist pedagogy stresses the importance of voice (Maher & Tetreault, 2001) and for the teachers in this study this extended into a drive to include female primary sources. They saw this pedagogical strategy as being faithful to giving historic women a voice but also to recognizing their students’ abilities and perspectives (Shulman, 1987).

Primary source work shifts the position of power to the students and recognizes their abilities to determine meaning without the filtering or adjusting influence of others (VanSledright, 2011). Adams was especially focused on using even more

...centers and primary sources and really letting the children decide for themselves what they think about the flapper vs. Rosie the Riveter versus the 1950's housewife and really standing back and not saying much at all. Letting them draw their own conclusions with these primary sources. [When you ask] how have we brought feminism into your classroom...my reply is primary source (WECON, 03/08/2015).

Adams saw this pedagogy as a form of resilient resistance (Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001), in that she was still addressing time periods and topics required by the state TEKS but was disrupting them as well through feminist pedagogical choices. By choosing female perspectives in primary sources she was conferring her authority as the classroom teacher to support the legitimacy of these historical figures as being worthy of consideration. Secondly, by overtly transferring the job of interpretation and analysis to her students she was sharing the title of valid historical thinkers with them (VanSledright, 2004).

### ***Building relationships to foster consciousness and change***

In order to implement these feminist pedagogies, curriculum and consciousness into the classroom there must first be an authentic relationship between the teacher and the students. Abigail Adams wrote “Relationships, relationships, relationships. Its easy for educators to isolate themselves from their stakeholders, but its increasingly important

not to if we want to foster meaningful change” (personal communication, 07/26/2017). She believed that this helped her students bridge the gap of knowing but not believing (Wertsch, 2000) because they could put their trust in the teacher, even before they were willing to accept what she was teaching. Indeed Britzman (2003) says that the most successful students spend a great deal of energy understanding and incorporating their teachers’ values into what they produce. It is important, however, to maintain the balance of introducing material and ideas students may not otherwise encounter (Gutmann, 2004), and imposing a banking model (Freire, 2000), albeit feminist, in the classroom. Respect and relationships that are mutual, information and ideas going between teachers and students, rather than from teacher to student is critical to truly bringing about a transformative change in the classroom.

Alice Paul was also adamant about the importance of relationships in her feminist pedagogy, but she felt this was something that was not encouraged in her teacher education program. In keeping with her ingrained respect for authority she did not initially question whether this was the right way to teach students:

Not to knock it...but I remember they were very firm about you not being there to be [the student’s] friend...I took that to mean I could not be friendly. I think I was like, black and White, these are the rules, and you know kids aren’t going to work for you if they don’t have a relationship with you. Plus, that really wasn’t my personality so I was trying to fake it. I learned very quickly that if you build relationships with students they will work for you and if they don’t like you or

don't respect you they are not going to work for you and so I think that I'm good at that, building relationships (interview, 02/16/16).

She went further to say that she felt that female teachers were better at forming these relationships. She saw them as being more empathetic and caring (Noddings, 1984). This empathy she felt was crucial not only in reaching the students but in connecting them with history. A primary goal of social studies is to get students to care about other time periods and peoples (Parker, 2003): for Paul and the other teachers this started on the classroom level. They rejected productivity models and data driven curricular and pedagogical choices in favor of relationship building (K. Nolan, 2015).

It is worth noting that while relationships and care were viewed by the as essential to their practice and an important component in feminist pedagogy, some other studies have highlighted the personal cost of care on the teacher (James, 2010). Britzman (2003) notes that this image of the good and caring teacher is counter to being a worker because any attempt to receive just compensation, respect or control runs counter to this caring, selfless image. Care can also be problematic if its effectiveness is measured by results on curriculum-based standardized tests. As mentioned before this encourages the belief that students fail because the teacher did not care enough (Cammack & Phillips, 2002). It also perverts the purpose of relationships as only being the means to an end rather than a valid goal within itself.

### ***Recognizing Sexism in Society and in the Profession***

Teaching is tangled in our society's understandings and performances of gender in unique and significant ways (Butler, 1988; Weedon, 1987). While teaching is

understood as a feminized profession (Clifford, 2014; J. Fraser, 2007; Tyack, 1974), male teachers and certainly male administrators have a significant effect on the environment. The recognition and struggle with gender based inequality and power structures motivated the teachers to act on their feminism in relation to their school, not just their classroom.

Molly Pitcher resisted entering teaching, in part because her father told her she should become one.

Honestly, I rebelled against it, and do you know why? Because it was a man telling me what to do. So I rebelled against it, I totally rebelled...I did it after my dad died, I probably wouldn't have done it if he was still around. (M. Pitcher, interview, 2/19/16)

His belief in her ability to teach came from seeing how well she took care of her little sisters when she would come home from college, rather than how well she was doing in her history studies there. He saw her as a natural teacher. However, while this belief that teaching is instinctive or a calling, is pervasive (Britzman, 2003; Cammack & Phillips, 2002) it was not part of Pitcher's decision. For her it was reversed, with her knowledge and love of history taking her into the classroom more than a care for "little ones." Yet even that was complicated. She gave up a chance to do freelance film work in Los Angeles because her parents and grandparents were aging and needed her closer to them and help care for them. Teaching was also a career she felt was flexible enough for her to be a mother and wife, especially if her husband was going to continue to work in the independent film industry.

Ironically, her sense of sexism in teaching came about when the free time perform these traditionally feminine roles was threatened. She saw weekends and evenings vanish as she and her female co-workers worried over lessons, spent time with students and accepted extra duties assigned to them “for the good of the kids”. She remembered a breaking point being when she and the rest of her PLC were trying to determine a common meeting time. When she suggested Saturday, her assistant principal immediately said it was unfair to take away the men’s weekend, saying they were coaches and already gave up enough of their time. She responded that, “They do work extra hours, but they get a stipend and a whole lot of perks.” (M. Pitcher, interview, 2/19/16). She saw this decision as completely gender-based and decided then and there to resist and refuse to support this inequality. She began to reduce the amount of hours she was working after school. As long as teachers continue to volunteer their work school districts will take advantage of it. In recent years she saw the new female principal as improving the equity of treatment and expectations.

For Adams, the co-workers she found herself working with further heightened her sense that it was up to her to rectify the errors she saw in the curriculum. “I became more conscious women were not being properly addressed in the curriculum by simply being a woman who teaches History which is typically taught by White men.” (personal communication, 10/11/16). For Adams, being the target of overt and egregious sexism and prejudice, rather than only experiencing them abstractly, spurred her into action for herself and others. This catalyst for her active feminism was in keeping with her earlier experiences as a very young woman. She recounted her tipping point into becoming a

feminist as stemming from a waitressing job she held long before she started teaching. The culture at the restaurant seemed to accept not just sexist behavior but sexual harassment. She initially dismissed it as just the ways things were and there was nothing she could do about it. It took the example of a co-worker who successfully filed a formal complaint with management that opened her eyes. “I saw that women could stand up for themselves. That you could speak up and still keep your job.” (A. Adams, interview, 03/06/2017). She carried this understanding with her into her teaching career and it enabled her to push back with less fear.

### ***Current Events Spurring and Steeling Their Resolve***

Like it did for many others in the feminist community (A. Hess, 2017), the election of Donald Trump motivated the teachers in this study to do more. The overtness of his misogyny and the seeming acceptance of his stance by voters, especially the women who voted for him, raised their anxiety about what the future held. Alice Paul “He has made it ok to be a bully.” (A. Paul, interview, 01/10/2017). All of the teachers not only participated in the Women’s March, they were very public about their actions, not only posting on social media but also discussing it in class. They felt that they could not ask their students to actively fight for social justice without doing it themselves. Additionally, they wanted to show explicitly how to be resistant and active citizens. Through these actions they wanted to present a counter-narrative in which feminism is normalized rather than sidelined as either radical or irrelevant. As a group the women had at various times paraded and protested, boycotted or supported, wrote and called

politicians, supported PACS and other lobbies and at minimum voted. We all shared our history of activism and its effectiveness or ineffectiveness with our students.

At our February dinner, Alice Paul discussed the posting flyers for the march to inform her students and encourage them to take part in what she saw as the part of the current civil rights movement. She was surprised and disappointed when other teachers at her school, one of whom was the sponsor for the school's social justice club, prevaricated and avoided the issue. Molly Pitcher chimed in and said "It's not because he doesn't agree. I think it's a cover my ass thing." (interview, 02/24/2017). But Angela countered, "But isn't that a false sense of fear about losing your job" implying that teachers avoid discomfort or controversy by hiding behind fears of being fired. While some of the teachers knew a specific example of a person being fired for their activism they also agreed with Angela's point and were not going to use fear as a reason they did not stand up for their beliefs.

The Women's March also revealed to the teachers "how far haven't we come". Molly said her very conservative family, was fine with her being liberal but participating in the Women's March was going too far. Alice said that her feminist mentor teacher was now estranged from her father. "He won't even talk to her." (interview, 02/24/2017) because she was part of the Women's March. They were shocked and dismayed that feminism was the line in the sand for so many when they did not even think it should still be a question among intelligent modern people. Angela Gurley pointed out that the Women's March was in her mind such easy and non-confrontational feminism that it was even more surprising for there to be such an extreme reaction to it. However, for Alice,

Molly and Angela these rejections and acrimony signaled that they must be even more publically resistant. Molly Pitcher wrote the following on her classroom white board after the election:

I love you no matter your race.

I love you no matter your nationality.

I love you no matter your abilities.

I love you no matter your religion.

I love you no matter your gender, gender identity, or orientation.

I love you no matter your economic status.

I believe in you.

I am here for you.

I will stand up for you because you matter.

(Pitcher, classroom observation, 01/10/2017)

Her co-workers were concerned Molly would be reprimanded for posting what they saw as a potentially inflammatory or controversial statement. However, while at first her assistant principal seemed nervous about what she had posted he nonetheless did not ask her to take it down. Instead her gesture helped bring the issue and potential feelings the students might be grappling with to his attention.

One of the teachers in my school said he had wanted to go to the Women's March but was afraid he would get in trouble with parents if someone saw a picture of him there. I shared this story at the dinner party and we all agreed we would welcome such a parent challenge. These examples reminded me of Segall's (2003) observations that teachers

were restricting themselves needlessly by overestimating the possible repercussions of their behavior.

Abigail Adams felt discouraged by the election, but not in the reaction of her students or even her school. She said she reflected for a full day on why both the election and the reaction to the march came as such a surprise to her. She concluded it was because she had not listened to enough voices outside of her own sphere. She described her school (both students and staff) as being very liberal. However she felt that society at large, especially older White men obviously still had issues with race, class and gender that seemed not only antiquated but also alien to her.

That caused Adams to spend a great deal of time giving a platform to the current administration. She felt an obligation to present the issues but also did not want to simply tell the students what to think. She wanted them to decide what was right and wrong. Because Abigail trusted and respected her students' abilities she felt it was necessary to give them all of the information, rather than just that which reinforced her, and perhaps their, viewpoints (Gutmann, 2004). Adams said that she also wanted to model for them what she wanted from society. "We need to talk to each other and not just judge the other side." (interview, 03/06/2017). She felt if we only silence and marginalize those who we don't agree with, we are continuing the patterns we claim to be against. If she did not practice and model listening and considering, she could not expect her students to do this either. Abigail voiced these conflicting feelings when I asked her to reflect if she found value of being in an open study, knowing and working with the other participants rather than an anonymous one.

Seeing similar attributes in others can actually be a little unnerving in that it can mirror how strong women can make some people uncomfortable, including ourselves.

While we rightly have cause for being upset, frustrated, etc. but what are we going to do about it? How are we not going to minimize others who have differing beliefs and live in an echo chamber? How do we listen without advocating - even with one another? Is there room for negotiation/mediation with those on the opposite end of the values spectrum? Basically, I've come away with more questions than answers and am a little frustrated with those who share similar views. A recent example - I just saw an article on the left criticizing Justin Trudeau because he isn't doing enough for women. He's only been PM a little over a year, has a half female cabinet and openly calls himself a feminist. We can't nit pick our few remaining champions in power and expect others to jump on board. He is trying in such a notable way and changes such as lower cost for child care take time. Examples such as his have me really considering how to approach feminist topics in a way that is not so critical and off putting, but more of a celebration of all we've accomplished and overcome. Please ask me if this doesn't make sense as I'm still trying to better articulate my current feelings regarding our place (feminist Social Studies educators) in this taxing political climate.

(personal communication, 03/16/2017)

Adams struggled with the idea of teachers being advocates for certain stances. While she had earlier discussed that she had a firmer rejection of racist comments or viewpoints (interview, 03/23/2016) than she did with sexist ones she pointed out in her March 16, 2017 response that she had opened up the space to allow this as well.

You asked if I would allow discriminatory views for any other group (or something like that) and the truth is I do feel an obligation to work out, hear out and allow minority voices, even when they are distasteful, because I value free speech/expression that is not hate speech. For example, a Hispanic male student recently pushed back on Jim Crow - "Both fountains have water? What's the problem?" (He did not say so in jest. He was serious.) Of course I pointed out they were clearly unequal facilities, sometimes there were not even colored facilities to choose from, and more. I also used it as an opportunity to talk about why some communities of color did not want to desegregate. For example, Black teachers at Black High Schools (ex, Anderson HS) were at risk of losing their jobs and strong communities they worked hard to build. Voices such as his are more important than ever. He obviously isn't alone. Why does he feel this way? What can we do to listen without casting judgment and closing off our rooms to such views and basically denying their existence? We have to admit there is a problem and approach it head on before we stand a chance at changing and perhaps building a bridge between our two Americas. It sounds cheesy, but I really believe it.

Her actions are in keeping with the feminist pedagogy discussed earlier in which the teacher and student-power positions are mitigated (Tisdell, 1998) as much as possible and the interpretation of history flows in multiple directions (VanSledright, 2004). She also believed that from a tactical standpoint liberal and progressive people were not benefiting their cause by always castigating the other side.

Yet at the same time I feel one must be cautious about being the instruments of our own oppression by countenancing ideas and motives which are racist, sexist and elitist (Freire, 2000). The idea that strong women needed to understand they made others uncomfortable and by implication make their message more palatable and inclusive was also concerning. Gold (2016) warns that “Talking about perspectives without talking about power can imply an equivalency of viewpoints that brings with it a very real danger of erasing historical injustice” (p. 33). Furthermore, as Dillabough (1999) points out, we should not accept the Kant idea that to be “professional” teachers must be apolitical. This would first off leave the overtly political agenda of the SBOE unchallenged and unquestioned, but also reduces teachers to responders and enforcers of the dominant rather than resistant actors. This would continue the spheres and roles our patriarchal society has already consigned to women, and women in the history curriculum.

### ***Impact of Earlier Consciousness***

There appeared to be a correlation between when the time in their lives these teachers identified as feminist and how much that framework is incorporated into their teaching. Kate and myself were exposed to feminist ideas and theories at a relatively

early age, her through her family and me through my undergraduate and graduate research specialization in women's history and women's studies. Angela had a later start in feminism but joined Kate in a progressive and critical teacher education program. Early on as teachers, we recognized and focused on correcting the inaccuracies and injustices of the male centered history curriculum. Importantly all of us had made feminist lesson plans and materials during our teacher training. We could hit the ground running and thus could better resist the mandated material.

This emphasizes the importance of explicitly feminist themes in our teacher training programs. We must not assume that even women come to our classes with developed feminist consciousness. However we can see through the different paths but similar results of Kate, Angela and myself how effective early introduction, sustained and consistent message and practical support can be in fostering real change in the classroom.

## **THEME 2: RESISTANCE AND PERSISTENCE: ENACTING FEMINISM IN THE CLASSROOM**

For the teachers in this study; Abigail Adams, Angela Gurley, Alice Paul, Molly Pitcher, and Kate Sinnett's their understanding of themselves as women and feminists as well as their PCK (Shulman, 1987) is how they saw themselves as teachers (Dillabough, 1999; Ticknor, 2010). It is from this position (Alcoff, 1988; Maher & Tetreault, 1993) that they drew not only their impetus to resist but also their ability, a sub-theme I refer to as "the right to veer from the state's narrative." Their teaching was a space of agency, resisting what they recognized as an unjust, incomplete and inaccurate dominant narrative.

They saw themselves as expert teachers (Lachner, Jarodzka, & Nuckles, 2016; Moallem, 1998) and as such see outside authorities, whether it be the principal or the Texas State Board of Education (TSBOE), as less competent and qualified to make substantive decisions about their specific classrooms, curriculum and students (Margolis, Meese, & Doring, 2016; Thornton, 1990). The teachers defensively asserted what they felt should be the determining qualifications, first and foremost a broad and deep knowledge of history (Shulman, 1987) and especially their knowledge of groups outside of the prescribed standards and textbooks (Wills, 2001) which is the second subtheme called “gaining the knowledge to resist.” As discussed earlier, these women had an impressive educational background in social studies with several holding advanced degrees in the subject. Frequently their content knowledge concerning women and history, and what they saw as their responsibility to teach this (Barton & Levstik, 2004), surpassed the expectations of their students and so a third subtheme I determined from the data concerned the push-back faced from male students and staff. For some of the teachers, their knowledge of women in history challenged the predispositions, values and understandings of their co-workers (Britzman, 2003). As a result the final subthemes focused on the forms of resistance, how these feminist teachers were able to use their content knowledge both within time periods women are expected to appear and those they are not (Schmidt, 2012) to resist their co-workers adherence to the dominant male-focused historical narrative.

### **What gives you the right to veer from the state's narrative?**

When answering the question “What gives you the right to veer from the plan of the district, or Texas State Board of Education’s ideas about what is the official history?” Kate Sinnett, like the other participants, said that she doesn’t think anyone gave her permission to stray from the mandated curriculum but she does it anyway. “It’s not so much as if I have the right to veer from a plan or not, its more that I feel students should have the right to a broader and more inclusive history” (personal communication, 07/26/2016). Abigail Adams also invoked her students while lambasting the TSBOE. “I have the right to veer from our state board because their bias made our TEKS very political and showed a blatant disregard for historical accuracy...So long as we teach the TEKS we are legally obligated to teach, we have the liberty to adapt/include more history that is reflective of people who teach and learn in our classrooms.” (personal communication, 07/21/2016). Because she has a wealth of non-dominant historical knowledge she could not simply ignore it and feel she had taken care of her students (Pagano, 1990).

Angela Gurley also felt she knew too much about history to just stick to the TEKS, “So I can’t say I have the right or even permission. But I do have a historical imperative to disturb the TEKS, so I do it anyway.” (personal communication, 07/21/2016). Even Alice Paul, who especially early on was at times the most reluctant to directly challenge the authority of the state or school, still felt compelled to teach people, events and perspectives that she felt were being left out and which she hadn’t been exposed to until after her high school education. “I don’t know if the have ‘the right’ to

do this...I just try to do the best I can every day. I want to try my best to present all the facts/both sides of the story/with as little bias as possible. At the end of the day I want them to be critical thinkers and have a ‘real’ understanding of America...the good and the bad. I guess because I did not. I was only ever taught the sugar coated version.”

(personal communication, 07/22/2016). Because these women have pursued historical degrees and actively searched for courses, books, articles and continuing education that taught them about women and other marginalized groups, they were driven by the sense that the current mandated curriculum was wrong in multiple senses (Bartolomé, 1994; Epstein, 2009). First, the teachers expressed that the history itself was wrong because it was inaccurate and incomplete and are troubled by the sense that their own high school education was at times negligent in these areas. These teachers consciously refused to repeat the same error in their own classrooms. Secondly these teachers had come to a consciousness that the exclusion, marginalization, silencing and diminishing “of the other” was wrong because it was unjust. They recognized the bias in the school board’s narrative because they knew how to listen for silences and what has been left out, diminished or marginalized (hooks, 2004; Schmeichel, 2015; Schmidt, 2012). For both reasons they felt it did not prepare their students to be effective and active citizens in a complex inclusive society (Maher & Tetreault, 1993; Parker, 2003; Wills, 2001). It is troubling to consider how many teachers do not know what they do not know, much less have the historical and feminist imperative that these teachers have.

### ***Gaining the Knowledge to Resist***

When we gathered together for our frequent dinners, the conversation was salted with historical references, which acted as conversational shorthand. While this was admittedly an exhibitionist (Barton & Levstik, 2004) stance, it also served to evaluate and confirm that we were all working from the same higher level of historic knowledge and also as feminist teachers with an activist drive. I believe this is a remnant of having to prove one's expertise, especially to new co-workers or students. This conclusion is further supported by the way each of these teachers, when asked about their autobiography, first stressed how many years she had been an educator and what degrees she had or was pursuing. All of the women described their interest in history or cultural studies as being the driving force behind their decision to enter into teaching. They all have bachelor's degrees in history or geography. Several also had or were working toward Master's degrees from highly competitive universities. This background qualified them as accomplished in studying social studies as well as teaching it. Thus they are active researchers and creators of the curriculum they teach, not just passive recipients of the state script.

This raises the concern of whether the focus on degrees and accomplishments in keeping with a feminist stance. Some studies have asserted that measures of academic success are biased toward masculinized activities and behaviors, which requires women to adopt these characteristics if they wish to have power within the system. This conclusion though seems to follow an essentialist framework (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995), that there are intrinsically feminine or masculine traits, which can

only be plagiarized by the opposite sex. However others believe gender is a social construct and is fluid rather than static (Chodorow, 1999; Butler, 1990). These measures of accomplishment could have been viewed as masculine simply because women were denied access to them and as a result were not allowed to manifest them. I would argue that this gendered labeling becomes invalid and inaccurate, as more women achieve these measures of success.

Some studies have argued that the focus on grades, degrees and awards has been one of the most effective ways of convincing women to reject identifying themselves as feminists and in turn, be less likely to recognize and actively fight against gender related subjugation (Fitz, Zucker, & Bay-Cheng, 2012; Lemaster, Storugh, Stoiko, & DiDonato, 2015). However, as more women earn degrees and in fact surpass men in college attendance (Francis, 2016) that does not mean women believe the system is equal, even if they feel can compete with men. Indeed, women who engage in stereotypically masculine attitudes and personality traits are actually more likely to be feminist because they believe through their own experience that women are as capable as men (Lemaster, Storugh, Stoiko, & DiDonato, 2015). This same research and others (Witt, 2011) has even shown that some of the current appeal of post-feminist stances is the misunderstanding that feminism is about weakness and victimization. Bailey (2007) explains further that previously disparaged gender performances have been embraced by third wave feminism and the demarcations of acceptable and non-acceptable are perceived as forms of oppression and categorization in of themselves. The teachers in this study felt that their accomplishments were greater because they had to be stronger

and work harder than if they were men. They did not assume society recognized this on equal terms, or agree with people such as Sheryl Sandberg (2013), that we live in a meritocracy in which our work will always lead to the same level of achievement as it would for men (hooks, 2013).

Additionally, the idea of resilient resistance is predicated on the pragmatic acceptance of the systems that are currently in place with the idea to change them from the inside. It does not aim to tear down this system, but instead to work it, to use the masters tools to create a new system in the future (Williams & Dempsey, 2014; Sen & Östlin, 2007). Solorzano and Delgado-Bernal's (2001) "goody-two shoes" (p. 325) was able to use her reputation to enable others to engage in more overt forms of resistance, She also used her education in the cause of social justice by leveraging her knowledge into jobs that could serve her community. Atkins and Vicars (2016) point out that "The privileges that come with the performance of normalized identities can make them virtually compulsory and they are often reified and reinforced by, and through institutional orthodoxies and practices." (p. 253). Women in this study were able to achieve positions of power by promoting their masculinized identity but upon achieving that membership they were able to engage in critique and enact positive change.

## **Facing Pushback**

### ***Facing Pushback by Male Students and Staff- Angela Gurley***

Even with this knowledge and expertise there is too frequently resistance to a teacher taking critical feminist stance. Angela Gurley, like the other women in the study, chose an academically rigorous path to teaching. But, as a student teacher nearing the

end of her master's degree program, she was confronted with a difficult cooperating teacher who refused her almost any autonomy in the classroom. She reflected, "That was such a gender situation too. There was so much, even to the point in his last evaluation of me. He constantly, ...minimized my competency." (personal communication, 02/16/2016). However, her own sense of her worth, abilities and talent, coupled by the support of her teacher education program, helped to buoy her through this discouraging time.

Once in the field, hired by a large suburban high school, Gurley found her knowledge initially challenged by male students.

I do my best to have a command of the content and that's what I think of first....When I came in, the boys are always trying to be smarter than me. I've noticed that and that I can put that down very easily, very quickly. That's easy to do but it happens... I had to show that yes, I am a woman and I'm teaching history [even if] you want to see a man that knows history. (personal communication, 02/16/2016)

This student preference was surprising to myself and the other women in the study because we were used to students favorably comparing female teacher's PCK to that of male teachers. In our schools, male teachers were almost always coaches and focused their attention on athletics more than academics. A possible explanation for the difference may be that at Angela's school US History was a privileged level in which the principal excluded coaches from teaching. The students expected male teachers in all of

the social studies classrooms, and at Angela's school assumed those men in US History to be the highest qualified. Angela's presence then challenged that order.

Kate Sinnett also faced male students' resistance, but in a more subtle and passive aggressive manner. In one observation I heard them telling each other not to bother to continue the discussion over gender roles because, "They will just jump on you." (K. Sinnett, classroom observation, 10/14/2016). Rather than recognizing through Sinnett's classroom marketplace of ideas that their initial statements had been flawed by generalities, stereotypes and even slut shaming, the boys initially retreated and reaffirmed among themselves. Kate said that these male students were used to holding the automatic authority in classes and so her inclusive and challenging approach was unsettling for them. However, she felt this new discomfort was important for them to experience.

These students would also try to shift their teacher into feminine nurturing stances (Bhana, 2016) by accusing her, albeit in a joking manner, of being frightening. "You scary, miss." This happened most overtly when she redirected or challenged the class. However, she never lost her composure and always used facts to support her suppositions, something that she also demanded of them. She reflected on this lesson writing,

The internalized sexism with students is a weird thing to grapple with. On our final day of focusing specifically on gender we talked a bit more about double standards, sexual harassment, and prevalence/normalization of sexual assault. Many of the students were so resistant to accepting the idea that women still get a raw deal when it comes to these issues. It might be less painful to deal with this if

the room was split but gender, but it wasn't so simple - as you saw in your observation. (personal communication, 10/21/2016)

However, Sinnett's persistence and persuasiveness paid off. Her superior command of the subject matter and her professionalism allowed her to resist their attempts to shift the discussion back to their assumptions and prejudices about gender while providing a model for all of the students to engage in a more thoughtful and critical manner. For example, in the next class she had them read an article about the A&M chalk talk. She said the students

...were appalled that such language and humor was used at an event for female athletes. I jumped on that opportunity and we did another one of our discourse practice rounds which went as such:

Me: "People need to know how to take a joke. If you didn't think the A&M chalk talk wasn't funny, that's your problem."

They then had 30 minutes to do research and to respond to me. They KILLED it. And I was so proud that I quite literally was moved to tears.

From "A" (male): "About 15% of Texas A&M females claim that they have been sexually assaulted at campus since starting in the fall, according to a survey released Monday. Therefore, this type of joking is not good on campus" (personal communication, 10/16/2016)

Because she knew the topic was important she kept working until the students reached consciousness of the injustice as well.

Some of Angela Gurley's male students had also felt challenged by her egalitarian approach to discussion and position taking. She felt that they were unused to having to support their opinions and so claimed that she only challenged them and their ideas. Not only did she feel that they would not have confronted her male co-worker this way she also felt that they had been emboldened by the example of Donald Trump. "This year is so charged." Alice Paul concurred with this assessment and said she had experienced similar situations. She said "They seem gleeful that they have a mascot." (A. Gurley and A. Paul, interview, 02/24/2017)

For these women, even though their position as teacher and adult placed them in a position of authority in the classroom, their gender was categorized as subordinate (Calabrese-Barton, 1997). The behavior of these male students reveals that they felt the authority bequeathed to them by a patriarchal society gave them the right to challenge not only the teacher, but the content she was presenting. In response though, the women's knowledge base allowed them to push back on the student's default assumptions.

Several of the other teachers, have also had to develop knowledge-based strategies to deal with dismissive or disrespectful male students. Abigail stated, "If people see that you are passionate about what you teach and that the students buy in they will support you." (personal communication, 07/26/2016). This helps her move her students past the stage of knowing but not believing (Wertsch, 2000). In this, Abigail points out the different groups that are judging her competence, the students and the school staff, and how each of their reactions to her can alter the other's perceptions. The staff can undermine or support the student's acceptance of a teacher and in reverse the

students' opinion on the expertise of a teacher (S. Banks, 2010) impacts the way co-workers treat a fellow teacher.

For Gurley, the other teachers in her Professional Learning Community or PLC, who were all men, echoed the student's presumption that she was less qualified.

My PLC lead...when I going to get my new assignment and it was going to be six APUSH [classes] and I was just asking their opinion and he was like, 'Don't scare the child!' and we are the same age. But then he goes, 'Don't scare the child, umm, girl, uhh, umm colleague.' I just let him sit back...it might appear that I'm used to it, and I am used to it but I'm just, that to me was very clear about how I was perceived. But at the same time when I'm perceived that way, but I'm also, I believe, intimidating, because I keep trying to challenge and push... Its comical to me because clearly he got that, we are approximately the same age but I'm smarter than the guy (personal communication, 02/16/2016).

Gurley believed his statements were as a result of her previous interactions with him where she kept trying to push for a new scope and sequence. She felt that he say her as more intelligent and dedicated than he was and that this was threatening.

"He doesn't know what else to do so he's a teacher. [He] wants to do good but doesn't want to do great. He wants to close the door, lock the door at 4:45 and... just dust off the lesson from last year and I'm like can we change it a little bit?" (personal communication, 02/16/2016).

The PLC's leader's intimidation and discomfort at being challenged resulted in his trying to belittle Gurley. He characterized her as being overwhelmed and unprepared

as well as and referring to her as child and verbally highlighting her gender. I believe that he was trying to maintain the hegemony in which he, with his current skill and knowledge base, could maintain control. If she, and the feminist ideas she was promoting could be diminished, his ignorance of the history would thus not affect his claims to authority.

***Facing Pushback by Male Students and Staff- Abigail Adams***

Abigail Adams also faced a department that was mostly men. Likewise they resisted her attempts to have the PLC incorporate more women and feminine perspectives in their shared curriculum.

I hesitate to say this but history is typically dominated by, it's HIS story, by men. So that has been the biggest struggle, my department was mostly men, mostly White men, and so when you bring up the theme of this perspectives or the female perspective of color [their reaction] it is almost comical...A couple of things I literally heard, "How long would Herstory take, 5 minutes? This was from a member of *my* department, I was the department chair! And another thing they said was "Nobody would take that class." (personal communication, 3/8/2015).

Abigail's anger that they refused to respect her position as department chair, as well their mockery of her suggested feminized curriculum suggestions is clear. She was disappointed, first of all, that another history teacher would be so ignorant of history outside of the dominant patriarchal narrative, and even further angered that when presented with it he was so dismissive. Adams had, in the past, effectively relied on her

content knowledge to push for change, utilizing accepted masculine rankings and credentials of authority. However, she felt that these male teachers simply didn't want to put the time into learning enough to teach it and so dismissed its importance instead. This correlates to the impressions many of the researched teachers had about the work ethic of their male co-workers.

In my own experience as the department chair and only woman in the high school or middle school history departments of my school district was also fraught with gendered tensions. They were all coaches and deferred to the athletic director's decisions above all others, prioritizing athletic responsibilities over lesson planning. This led them to an even greater reliance on the textbook and school provided lesson plans and activities. However they could defend their actions by framing them as faithfulness to the state mandated curriculum. My encouragement to include more material, especially that about women, could thus be discounted and ignored because it was not part of the official knowledge (Apple, 2000).

This is a manifestation of the true power of the official curriculum. The social reproductive mechanisms of standards and testing privilege the viewpoint and values of the dominant (Giroux, 1988). Thus their low opinion on its worth was reinforced, by the state's marginalization of women in the TEKS and state mandated test. Success on these measures can be used to justify and maintain the status quo.

## **Forms of feminized resistance**

### ***Using content knowledge of neglected histories.***

This approach of teaching required topics from a different standpoint necessitates a deep knowledge not only of the dominant narrative but also of the history that challenges this masculine, White, elite perspective (Apple, 2001; Blevins, 2011; Kincheloe, 2001; Salinas, 2006; Wertsch, 2000). Knowing something is missing is not enough, one must know what and how to fill the silence. Each teacher in this study was able to draw upon their extensive knowledge of women's history to push back the margins and allow her students to see women beyond the roles and time periods (Schmidt, 2012) the TEKS have granted them.

Gurley described including Elisabeth Gurley Flynn, the partial inspiration for her pseudonym, when teaching about labor unions, a topic she feels is already watered down in the TEKS.

I want my students to see woman as workers and activists and that when they think of women in history they don't walk out of my class thinking women in history played only two roles: 1st: stayed at home 2nd: marched in the streets to get the right to vote. Then looking at the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire not so much as an example of the bad conditions and lack of regulations during the time, but of the woman that mobilized before and afterwards to pressure for change in labor AND to push for political rights (thus women's suffrage). So I link labor and suffrage movement together, I see that as reframing. Then when we've moved

through labor and suffrage, we'll look at race with black woman in the suffrage movement, were they united with White women? Excluded? (Gurley, 07/21/2016)

Indeed, it appeared to the teachers in this study, that these boundaries on who the TEKS authorizes as legitimate change makers, or approves of only certain pathways to change is one of the significant and disturbing consequences of the official curriculum. Molly said at our August dinner party, "They cherry-pick from history." (M. Pitcher, interview, 08/07/2016) leaving out violence and law breaking, civil disobedience as effective means of challenging the status quo.

There is also blindness to feminized forms of resistance or influence on society. In this version of history, for example, women's suffrage was granted by men (Thurman, 2012), rather than the result of women such as Alice Paul and Lucy Burns forcing action. This underscored for the teachers why it was important to directly address concepts of feminism and the feminist movement with their students. A major hurdle in their classes was trying to correct their student's, male and female, definition of feminism as simply a form of oppression of men. Secondly they needed to push back against their student's perceptions that we had reached a post-feminist society. This fallacy was unfortunately was supported in the dominant curriculum through its selection of exceptional women that had either overcome or never faced significant barriers to success. Molly Pitcher stated that when she has confronted this post-feminist standpoint with her students she does not initially directly challenge these perceptions, instead asking them to think about ways they can use there supposedly unfettered abilities to help others. She tied this to her own personal beliefs as a social justice Catholic. 'Its not a matter of 'What can I do

for other women? It's a matter of what MORE can I do" (M. Pitcher, interview, 02/24/2017). With the current political climate the teachers felt a special urgency to empower their students, especially the female ones, to know how they can and must participate in their democracy and society.

There was also a positive exponential effect on the teacher's content knowledge about women. As they learned new information it highlighted for them what other gaps in history they had not even considered. Molly summed up for the rest of us when she exclaimed at our February dinner "How did I not know this?" (interview, 02/24/2017), castigating not only her own teachers but herself. This attitude motivated us to find out the unknown, unknowns ignored in the TEKS. We shared articles, lesson plans and attended symposiums together that focused on revealing women's history. The teachers reached out to each other through our dinner parties, text group and email threads for advice, information, materials and affirmation. This not only increased our knowledge but our conviction that teaching just to the TEKS would be supporting not only an inaccurate history but would make us gears in the patriarchy's mechanisms of oppression.

***Replacing well-known figures with people classified as "others".***

In much the way the teachers were going to move past well known figures in WWII, Gurley had her students begin their civil rights unit by writing on the classroom whiteboards all of the people and events they could think of relating to the topic. She then led the class in reflecting on why they thought they knew those people. When the list was complete she asked them to question this list and to open their concept of Civil Rights to include grassroots. She defined the concept as activists who are "the bottom,

local level, starting from nameless faceless people. Start a movement, start activism, start pushing for change.” (Gurley, classroom observation, 02/19/2016)

Gurley-So typically, who has NOT heard of Martin Luther King?”

Student- Laughs

Gurley- Yes, we’ve all heard of Martin Luther King right. Malcolm X, Rosa Parks these are the ones we focus on when we hear about the Civil Rights Movement. Do you agree?

Student- Yes (Gurley, classroom observation, 02/19/2016)

In this way Angela was satisfying her responsibility to “cover” the TEKS but is doing so in a resiliently resistive method (Yosso, 2000). She used her student’s prior knowledge as permission to move on. She directly acknowledged the dominant narrative (Apple, 2001), but also pointed out its effect of limiting students understanding of a topic (Giroux, 2013).

So grassroots, the point of that is really to break that up in our brains as Civil rights has leaders and that's the end of it. But it's really all about the masses, that mass movement, it takes masses of people. That takes people that you’ve never heard of who had a lot to do with everything that happened in the civil rights movement that we now study. Even if we are studying things for example like sit ins and segregation and voter discrimination. People are active and challenging. Alright? (Gurley, classroom observation, 02/19/2016)

She then built on this conclusion by drawing on her own more extensive knowledge not only of other members of the Civil Rights movement not mentioned or required by the

TEKS, but also her knowledge of engaging pedagogy (Shulman, 1987) to help the students to expand their understanding (Vygotsky, 1978). Angela wanted the students to see their own possibilities for resistance and enfranchisement by bringing up people more accessible and less legendary. As Epstein (2001) points out, “Thus, it is not enough simply to include Martin Luther King, Jr., in lessons about American democracy and racial diversity.” (p. 43). History must also be taught in a way that works within and also expands the student’s epistemological understandings (Gutmann, 2004). So Gurley started with the students limited perception of who or what is a civil rights leader, and then pushed those boundaries so that they will view not only other “grassroots” activism as legitimate but their own possible connections.

Potential student resistance can be overcome by moving students, accustomed to a traditional definition of history, through that curriculum and then past it. As long as leadership and protest appears to be the domain of the heterosexual male, it is denied to those that find themselves outside this definition.

Because Gurley opened the door and leveraged her authority as a history teacher to validate the grassroots people as worthy of historical attention, the students followed suit, bringing up people they had not deemed correct to put on their original lists.

Student 1-- You were saying like grassroots, there was a teenager before Rosa Parks who actually sat on the bus first.

Student 2-- Oh, I heard about that!

Student 3- But they didn't they want her to be the face of it because she was too young so they put Rosa Parks up, because she was like an editor of a newspaper or something like that? (A. Gurley, Classroom Observation, 02/19/2016)

At this point Gurley was able to step in and build up their example with specifics and historical details, further validating both the students and the person they are recalling.

Gurley- Good! Very good, there was someone else her name was Claudette Colvin and she was young, she was darker skinned, as far as the tone of her black skin, she was also pregnant so that played into her being the sort of figure that would take on this bus boycott. In fact we are going to talk about her today in our activity. Very good! So grassroots, the point of that is really to break that up in our brains as Civil Rights has leaders and that's the end of it. But it's really all about the masses, that mass movement, it takes masses of people. That takes people that you've never heard of had a lot to do with everything that happened in the civil rights movement that we now study. Even if we are studying things for example like sit ins and segregation and voter discrimination. People are active and challenging. Alright? So that's what WE are going to look at. We are gonna look at some the people you may not have heard. Although [Student name] informed us about Claudette Colvin, we are going to include her. So that's what we are going to do. “

The class watched a brief video Gurley had found online, *Mashables Unsung Heroes of the Civil Rights Movement*. The video highlighted the contributions of Nannie Helen Burroughs, Ella Baker, Pauli Murray, Bayard Rustin, Fannie Lou Hamer, Claudette

Colvin, Fred Hampton and Angela Davis. It began with an introduction that directly addresses the limited scope of people and events as presented in most American history classes.

History books don't often value the stories of people of color, favoring a whitewashed version of the past over the harsh honesty of historical racism. This spin makes history more comfortable, especially for those who don't want to confront their role in the oppression of people of color.

A direct challenge to this sanitized version of the past is Black History Month — a time to explicitly honor the struggles, triumphs and excellence of the black community.

But discussions around Black History Month are often dominated by a handful of names, such as Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks and Malcolm X. Though these activists deserve recognition and appreciation, they were not the only change-makers who inspired action around racial justice.

There are countless heroes of the racial justice movement who are often denied the platform to be celebrated. Though the impact of their work is still felt, their names and contributions aren't widely known.

It's time for that to change.

Join us in celebrating these unsung heroes of civil rights and racial justice, each of whom deserve a salute this Black History Month — and beyond.

(Anderson, Dupere, Frisbie, & Romano, 2015)

Gurley went past race to also intersect with gender and sexuality. She wanted her students to see the work of these activists as valuable, but also recognize the patriarchal systems in play that prevented them from being given more recognition. For her, it was not enough to acknowledge that the grassroots, the unsung thousands who did the legwork, were frequently female, but also to have her students question why their influence was not allowed to expand and grow beyond these roles. So after the film she directed them to reflect on what they had seen and to draw conclusions.

Gurley- So that is a very, very small sliver of those we've never heard about.

Have you heard of any of them specifically?

Student- Claudette Colvin

Gurley- Claudette Colvin, ok good any others? What do you notice about them the majority of them?

Student- A good portion of them were like they did exactly the same thing as other people they just weren't camera friendly, like the gay. A few of them were gay and one of them was fifteen and pregnant.

Gurley- Right, right. So why didn't those become our leaders do you think? Why would that alone change the fate of them being the leaders?

Student- They didn't want their sources of their movement to be questionable.

Like to have reasons to disagree with them other than what they are fighting for?

Gurley- Oh, OK.

Student- They wanted a truly credible source

Gurley- So they were concerned about a distraction, there is some question. So who gets to set the role there, who gets to set who is a distraction and who is not? Who were they trying to make it ok?...Does that make sense?... Are they the black leaders? No? [Student name] why do you say no?

Student- Because I feel like that wouldn't matter as much. I feel like they were trying to convince White leaders so they wanted a completely credible and clean source, you know? (A. Gurley, Classroom Observation, 02/19/2016)

Gurley had, through her choice of subject matter introduced the idea of masculinized binaries (Connell & Messerschmidt, Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept, 2005) to her students but allowed them to come to the conclusions themselves. The students became conscious then of how female, homosexual, poor, pregnant and/or young renders you less likely to be given positions of leadership, even by others facing oppression.

Gurley- For the White leaders. What else? Who else do you notice. There are two big ones right? Here I have Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. What else do you notice about this sliver?

Student-Mostly female

Gurley- Mostly female. Right? And those of you who are going to look at Ella Baker, really look at her role as a female. Kind of breaking this idea of the male leaders are the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. Yet, that grassroots are women. Women are the ones who push it. Pushing even back in the 1900s. (Gurley, Classroom Observation, 02/19/2016)

This lesson demonstrated several things Gurley and the other women had used throughout the year to improve and expand their student's understanding of who and what is history. First, she resisted her PLC's scope and sequence, eliminating or streamlining lessons she determined through her content knowledge were less important, and knew through her pedagogical experience were being taught inefficiently (Shulman, 1987) in order to make room for that which she felt was critical to her syntactical understanding of history (Slekar & Haefner, 2010). She supported this with district assessment scores that were higher than her peers using the levers of control within testing for her own purposes (Grant, 2006; McNeil, 2000; Nichols & Berliner, 2008). Secondly, she knew the history beyond and outside of the standards, challenging her department and their unknown, unknowns. Furthermore she acknowledged her student's prior knowledge and conception of the topic, then utilized a high interest and professionally created resource -the Mashable video, to assist them in expanding their perceptions (Epstein, 2001). In this way she was helping them question historical positionality and epistemology (Salinas, Fránquiz, & Rodríguez, 2016)

These tactics, utilized together, helped diminish any resistance her students might have had that these new civil rights figures were not as legitimate historically as those they were already more familiar with. Many of our students in this study come from a position in which the dominant narrative echoes their hegemonic understanding, not only of history but also of society. However, even those who fall outside of this frequently demonstrate an internalization and appropriation of the official narrative. The student's resistance to feminist consciousness may even manifest itself subtly in repeating

politically correct answers but not actually believing them (Wertsch, 2000) something noted in critical teacher education classes. To try to avoid this, Gurley and the other teachers structure these lessons around the student's own conclusions.

These lessons and strategies were positively recognized by Gurley's administration, if not her PLC, affording her greater latitude as she entered the next year. She was optimistic as well as excited to utilize this greater influence on her department and planned to continue to push for more ambitious lessons (Grant, 2003) in subsequent units.

***Including gender and women in unexpected time-periods.***

Alice Paul and I had also put forth effort to include women into unexpected places by examining issues of gender and highlighting female voices during the Imperialist Era, specifically the conquest of Hawaii and the Philippines. In general, the official curriculum marginalizes women in wartime to their supporting roles as nurses or temporary factory workers (Schmidt, 2012). In the TEKS specifically there is no mention of women at all in the standards focused on Imperialism (Texas Educational Agency, 2011). Yet studying this era has numerous opportunities to examine gender and women's actions and perspectives (Long, 2014). For instance Paul showed her students a series of political cartoons concerning the United States' acquisition of Hawaii and the Philippines. In both cases the United States, as symbolized by Uncle Sam, is seen as a suitor for a young and attractive female version of the territory to be acquired. Paul had her students discuss the implications of this depiction. She wanted them to recognize the ways in which gender roles extended to people's perceptions of their nation's relationship

to other countries, specifically the hegemonic understanding that the natural order of men dominating women extended to the United States' assumed right to rape and pillage certain countries. Furthermore she exposes the official mythology, promoted by the TSBOE, of America as only taking the willing, that these territories and people in which we expanded, were asking for it and we never took anyone by force (Murthy, 2010).

In my own lesson I had students discuss the pros and cons of annexing the Philippines. They used primary sources I provided to them to, understand different historic points of view and rationales these people had on the issue. One of the sources was the Philippine Women's Suffrage Organization. This group argued against annexing because they, unlike American women already had the right to vote in 1899. The inclusion of this piece is important for two reasons. The first is that it includes women's voices alongside men's and in doing so establishes their validity in the discussion. Secondly it was important to me to show that, despite my student's preconceived notions of American exceptionalism (VanSledright, 2011), a point of view strongly encouraged by the TSBOE (G. Collins, 2012), in women's rights we have been and continue to be behind other nations. That the Philippines was more progressive on this issue never failed to surprise the students.

Alice was also insistent on including women in other areas of society such as science and business. She utilized the PBS documentary *Makers: The Women Who Make America* (Goodman & Mason-Wagner, 2013) as the basis of her curriculum. The film investigates how women have contributed in multiple fields to the construction of our economy, culture, government and scientific understandings. Paul created an activity to

help direct her students' viewing of the film that not only reinforced its messages but extended those to intersections with class, race, and sexual preference. (A. Paul, classroom observation, 05/09/2016). This approach was part of her continuing overhauling of her curriculum. Her goal was to "try to incorporate women throughout ALL of my units now...not just teach women in the progressive era and with the ERA. It's not perfect yet...its been a slow process but I think I do a better job every year." (personal communication, 03/21/2017).

As a highly respected teacher of nearly a decade, whose student consistently scored highly on district and state assessments, Paul, like the other women in this study did not *have* to change her curriculum. Indeed there could even be a perception that they should not, in case they in some way negatively impacted these results. However, due to their own evolving and growing understanding of history as properly including more than the accomplishments of white elite men, they felt compelled to change. Consciousness and knowledge snowballed. The more they knew, the more they wanted to learn and the more they wanted to do with that knowledge.

***Reframing gender and women in expected time-periods.***

While some of the teachers replaced well known male figures with women and added them to areas where they were not usually included (Schmeichel, 2015; Schmidt, 2012) Abigail Adams and Alice Paul found that even in time periods that women are expected, such as the 1920's and 1950's they were able to use their deeper understanding to trouble the way they were portrayed. Abigail Adams admitted that this required more effort. "How do you plan these things? How do you really implement feminism? I

really think deliberate planning. Your questioning is key, and not answering your own questions and really just see what happens” (A. Adams, WECON, 03/08/2015).

However, to have the confidence to do this required that she knew enough about the subject to recognize that the questions even need to be asked. Furthermore she had to be willing to create discomfort and dissonance in her classroom and yet be able to bring them back (D. Hess, 2004). Adams recounted the student’s conclusions about the flappers they had learned about in the 1920’s unit and how she had to challenge this understanding. In this case the students were using biblical frameworks to classify these women.

Why Joe do you think the flapper is a Jezebel? Right away they think flapper, prostitute. I’m not sure how that happens but it does. I think if we talked more about men drinking and smoking and dancing [instead of focusing on just the women doing this] that wouldn’t come up...One of my female students questioned the idea about how flappers were presented [by the textbook]. It infuriated her so much, it just naturally came up and she said ‘So basically they are calling these women whores!’. So then how do we go from that to Rosie the Riveter? (A. Adams, WECON, 03/08/2015).

Abigail was able to see the incomplete and disjointed history that focused on stereotypes of female behavior and ignored the cause and effects and connections between them. In response she researched and constructed lessons using primary source activities from women and scaffolded them with big central questions.

Women are expected within the decades of the 1960's and 1970's. This is the time period of the second women's liberation movement, Title IX, birth control, the legalization of abortion, and women entering a peacetime workforce in unprecedented numbers. The TEKS includes the second wave of the women's movement even while it clumps their movements along with other disenfranchised groups (Calabrese-Barton, 1997).

(9) History. The student understands the impact of the American civil rights movement. The student is expected to (B) describe the roles of political organizations that promoted civil rights, including ones from African American, Chicano, American Indian, women's, and other civil rights movements; (Texas Educational Agency, 2011).

Molly Pitcher approached this topic from a different angle. She had her students investigate music in the 1960's-1980's as a form of social protest and mechanism for social change. Students were randomly assigned genres and had to find a singer or band, which exemplified this type and period of music and affected or reflected transformative influences on society at large. The students tended to gravitate toward male examples, especially in country music and rap. Admitting it was sometimes hard to find transformative rather than reproductive female examples Pitcher expanded the students scope by drawing from a pre-prepared list of examples. (M. Pitcher, classroom observation, 05/16/2016). This broadened her students understandings about the feminist movement, gender norms and methods women use to affect change.

***Pushing back to make space for all voices.***

Alice Paul addressed gender roles in the 1950's to instigate reflection by her students on how gender performances (Butler, 1988; 2011) are determined and enforced within their own time and communities. She used a feminist framework not only in her resistant choice of content (Schmeichel, 2015; Schmidt, 2012) but also in her pedagogical decisions that built safe avenues for all of her students to contribute and feel heard (Bartolomé, 1994; Bhana, 2016; Britzman, 2003; Rinehart, 1999).

In the TEKS there is no direct mention of women in the 1950's, except implied within the Baby Boom and increased consumerism (Texas Educational Agency, 2011). Paul used the dominant narrative (Apple, 2000; Cornbleth, 1985; Giroux, 2013; Salinas, Blevins, & Sullivan, 2012; Wertsch, 2000) as a starting point, which helped pave the way for the more contentious content she would eventually lead them to (D. Hess, 2004). Like Gurley, she had them start with their prior knowledge of the dominant narrative, listing what they already knew about the topic. Then she had her students read a selection taken from "The Good Wife's Guide" and write a reflection piece on how it made them feel. Next she turned their focus onto themselves and their own time by asking follow up questions, "Do you still see this attitude? What are the arguments for feminism? Why were/are some women anti-feminist?" (Paul, classroom observation, 3/4/2016). One of the students asked, "What if they didn't want to follow this?" Paul answered, "I like that question, lets let people write and then we will address that question." After several minutes of silent writing Paul directed the students to share with their tablemates. Paul followed their discussion with a PowerPoint lecture in which she

carefully highlighted the information required in the TEKS. Where she slowed down though and engaged the students was in a critical examination of the time period. For example the expansion of car ownership and the government's expansion of the highway system was duly and quickly noted but television and its effects on gender roles was given much more space and consideration. She reminded the students of the upheavals of the 1930's and 1940's and invited them to hypothesize the impact this may have had on people's desires to return to more traditional roles. Paul encouraged feedback and discussion on the effect shows like *I Love Lucy* and commercials had on women and men's understanding of their proper gender roles. Additionally, Paul was directing the students to investigate their own constructions of gender and their understandings of its place in their own society's hierarchy and assignment of roles (Green, 1998).

Through her pacing and pedagogical choices such as silent writing, pair share, and open discussion, Paul made sure that everyone's thoughts were given space to develop on their own and then to be heard. In this way she was acting on an important feminist principal that all voices have value and that effort must be made to create space for those who may be silenced in the current power structure (Baxter, 2002; Sowell, 2004). It was apparent that other teachers in this group also valued discussion over debate, parity over power and collaboration over competition. In my own class I used debate only as a way for students to take on historical opinions and perspectives. The Imperialism activity discussed earlier was framed overtly as being about empathy and understanding different points of view (Barton & Levstik, 2004). Kate Sinnett, also emphasized this within her World Cultures class. She made sure that all students, male and female, had a chance to

speak and placed herself in amongst the students rather than behind a podium. The purposes of their discussions was to present information and formulate opinions, not to win the argument (Sinnott, classroom observation 5/23/16). To scaffold this goal she had them move around the room, their physical positions revealing their ideological positions. She shifted with them and praised them when they moved around, she modeled listening and thinking with an open-mind.

It was interesting that there was so much focus on cooperation, because as discussed in an earlier theme the teachers had felt they needed to prove things to their male co-workers, to debate and stand up to them. The autonomy they gained from this conflict, however, was channeled into creating a non-confrontational space for their students.

### **Using Syntactical Understanding to Inform Resistance**

Syntactical knowledge is defined as “the ways in which truth and falsehood, validity and invalidity are established” (Slekar & Haefner, 2010, p. 10) and substantive being the way in which that approved knowledge is organized (Schwab, 1978). As discussed in the previous theme, these feminist teachers have a syntactical understanding of social studies that is frequently at odds with those of their co-workers, students and administration. Within a subject such as history, the state has a vested interest in determining and controlling both the syntactical and substantive (Apple, 2001; Giroux, 2013; Wertsch, 2000). In maintaining that a patriarchal and neoliberal construction of history is perceived as the only valid and true version, the state has also assigned value to its constructed assessments and controlling measures. These standards and their

corresponding tests create an environment similar to what Foucault described as a micro-economy that “marks the gaps, hierarchizes qualities, skills and aptitudes” (1977, p. 181). However, when the perception of inadequacy comes from bodies, entirely removed from the student’s life, priorities or needs, how can these gaps be seen as relevant? This is the essential role of the test. It privileges certain items of knowledge relevant simply because Texas is going to test it, without having to continue the debate with historians, teachers, students, or parents. By holding something the student does perceive as valuable hostage, i.e. graduation, the state can force curriculum allegiance without actually having to prove the item’s actual worth. This then creates a derived demand for standards by students onto their teacher. Thus, the test becomes the threat lever (Olsen & Sexton, 2009) by which the School Board attempts to force the teachers into compliance. While teachers don’t put much faith in the test as a credible measure of their students or themselves, studies have shown that they are convinced that parents and administrators think differently (Hoffman, Assaf, & Paris, 2001).

In the interviews and observations undertaken for this study, I found that the feminist teachers understanding of these principals and values was not an acceptance of the official narrative or hierarchy. Instead, they felt that having a substantive and syntactical understanding of the standards and assessment environment was critical to subverting it. By recognizing what their school administrators valued, what they checked on and tabulated, the teachers were able to then add or alter the hegemonic syntactical and substantive organization of history to what they valued. The teachers felt that the administration did not have a vested interest in the topics covered, the way the state board

of education appeared to, only in the PEIMS scores. As long as those were maintained, the teachers could do what they wanted with the curriculum and the pedagogy.

The first subtheme focuses on earning this right to be ignored, through tenure, test scores, relationships with administration and pursuing leadership positions. In this subtheme I examined the different facets of how the teachers' syntactical understanding of the current educational system was utilized for resilient resistance (Yosso, 2000). The next subtheme centers on fighting masculine positivism with feminist constructivism. This topic incorporates analysis into the teacher's use of the idea of teaching as mothering (Casey, 1990; J. Fraser, 2007; James, 2010) and how they transform that into what Kleinfield (1975) describes as a "Warm Demander".

### ***Earning the Right to Be Ignored***

Angela Gurley and Abigail Adams were initially unable to convince the other members of their PLC's to change, but instead of falling in line with the group they closed their doors and followed their own scope and sequence. This seemed a common form of initial resistance, and as it was implemented early in their tenures appeared to be the most compliant, at least on the surface. While the feminist teachers knew the importance of the material, their co-workers did not recognize their, or the materials credibility.

Angela Gurley faced a significant amount of pushback from her PLC lead. She determined to resist him first by working within the systems of stratification and status that he and the other members of the group would respect. She overtly exhibit her historical knowledge, not only describing quickly and in detail the topics she was going

to teach but also directly challenging him to support the rationale behind his historical choices. Her confidence in challenging the status quo was based on her deep knowledge base of both official curriculum and the counter narrative, which she recognized was being sidelined, silenced or ignored by the men in her department. She employed compliant resistance methods by co-opting traditionally masculine traits and forms of communication to interject her feminist curriculum.

I know, as a teacher, I never have enough time, and that's true, but I do - with some cleverness and creativity - have time to go beyond the TEKS. I do not subscribe to the idea that the district or the state have the official history. They only have the history they officially want me to teach...I understand that a high school history course will have exclusions and concepts that are watered down, but my job is to teach history, not to simply be a vessel of picked over bits of history to define for students. (personal communication, 07/21/2016).

Gurley is intent on adding the missing accomplishments and struggles of silenced and marginalized peoples and countering patriarchal focus of the state and district standards (Epstein, 2009). She challenged what she felt was her PLC's outdated experience, backing up her position with her in-depth education. She went forward with her own plan and the resulting success helped her administration's confidence. Not only did her students complete even the enriched curriculum in a shorter time than her co-workers, they also scored higher than the other classes.

However, her resistance was compliant (Clarke & Knights, 2015; Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001) in that she relied on interest intersection; specifically the benefit

higher scores on benchmarks, AP and STAAR tests gave to her school and department. By satisfying the administration, student and parent's concerns she was then able to defend her position. The teachers believed that it was not necessary to convert parents and administration to their feminist and critical consciousness, just the students. However, if the students had failed these outside measures these authorities would have moved in and ratcheted up their control for the good of the kids. The students themselves would have been more likely to reject the legitimacy of what they were being exposed to, raising such dreaded concerns "Is this going to be on the test?", which I believe reveals lack of confidence as much, if not more than, lack of interest.

Additionally this resistance is compliant (Clarke & Knights, 2015) because it involved fitting into masculinized modes of gaining acceptance and respect (Arnot, 1994; Baxter, 2014) rather than transforming them. All of the teachers, except Kate Sinnett who taught a course without a state exam, used these dominant and patriarchal measures of success, such as standardized testing to shield her classroom. Alice Paul felt this was her first requirement and that after reaching this she was authorized to move past it to more critical material. Adams and myself had reached a level of confidence and reputation within our schools that we had stopped even being concerned in any significant way about our students passing state end of course exam. Given this latitude and freedom the teachers were able to then determine their own more qualitative determinations of success such as engagement, growth and verve. However, by utilizing masculine quantitative and exhibitionist tactics these teachers, and myself, were essentially being better men in order to be allowed to be women.

Furthermore, the teachers were more likely to add to the required curriculum rather than skipping or eliminating anything the state had deemed valuable. They found that these resilient resistive approaches less vulnerable to challenge. In Gurley's specific case she was then able to utilize the school's authority because the administration began directing the rest of her PLC to follow her lead. In my case, this allowed me to reject the imposition of outside curriculum and pedagogy such as CSCOPE that other teachers in my school were forced to adopt. However, most of the teachers were not content to simply change what was happening in just their own classrooms, but to affect change in the way their entire departments or PLC's addressed women's history.

They started the process of changing their department's traditional and patriarchal versions of history by drawing attention to the problem and asking the department to explain/defend their adherence to the status quo. When this did not succeed in shifting their plans the teachers strategically and temporarily retreated to their own classrooms. Abigail Adams echoed the feelings of the other women in the study when she said that she felt it was important to reserve direct confrontation until she had established value for the curriculum within the existing system (A. Adams, WECON Panel, 3/08/2015). In other words, they felt they needed demonstrate in public ways their students' success on both the traditional and expanded measures. Only then did they feel they had enough leverage with administration to affect more widespread change.

Angela recognized her PLC's over emphasis on male centered topics, specifically wars, and asked her department to rationalize the time cost when at the same time they were claiming there was not enough to include her suggested material. The answer she

received was ““Oh I think you know why we do that. It’s because we’ve always done that.” (A. Gurley, interview, 2/16/16). This lack of reasoning crashed up against and was in fact subsumed by her driving purpose to teach from a feminist and critical stance. Her co-workers might not have a reason for why they taught what they did, but Gurley certainly had a very clear and defined motivation. This gave her the courage, and in her mind the authority, to change the scope and sequence at least for her class.

For example, she reduced the number of days spent on the World War II unit, even while adding material on Japanese internment, an examination of gender and propaganda and an intersectional reinterpretation of Rosie the Riveter. Reconfiguring the scope and sequence also freed up time for an in-depth treatment of Civil Rights, which she addressed from what she called a grassroots approach, moving past Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks and focusing instead on those who do not fit in the masculinized and racialized binary (Connell, 1995). This was important to Gurley as part of her aim was to have her students recognize themselves as agents of change. She concluded that if they only saw Whites or men as having agency or authorized leadership positions how much harder would it be for her students to be conscious of their own agency and potential?

Abigail Adams also preserved time to examine women from multiple perspectives, both named in the TEKS and not, such as Phyllis Schlafly and Barbara Jordan. Especially with those named in the state curriculum she felt it was important to subvert how the state was using the inclusion of these particular people. The teachers all agreed that Phyllis Schlafly's inclusion was intended to cast doubt on the need and

legitimacy of the feminist movement (group interview, 08/07/2016). Paul took this head-on by insuring there was space for her students to engage the topic and really examine or challenge it, drawing their own historical conclusions (Barton & Levstik, 2004; VanSledright, 2011). She saw this as in direct opposition to the approaches of her co-workers. She said, if they referenced modern women at all, they used direct teach and banking models (Freire, 2000) almost as if the women were vocabulary words. This attention was also at odds with the department-wide prevailing feeling of haste brought on by the approaching end of course exam. Adams, confident her students would pass the exam, saw no need to rush through the counter-narrative in order to spend weeks and weeks in reviewing the TEKS (personal communication, 9/17/16). In fact, Adams planned to expand on this in the coming year, for example, by having her students analyze Jordan's speech on the impeachment of Richard Nixon. As she had in other topics, Adams was using a feminized and feminist position to not only familiarize her students with the dominant narrative but also to subvert what she saw as the state's intended meaning or message.

***Fighting masculinism positivism with feminist constructivism.***

The way the social studies curriculum is organized and tested in Texas leads to a positivist stance that implies it is unbiased and impartial. The multiple choice format has only one answer, implying that history is made up of correct answers instead of the field being defined by debate, opinion and theory (VanSledright, 2011). The traditional, and apparently state preferred, history class is presented as unproblematic, and embedded gendered, race and class values manifested as the themes American exceptionalism,

capitalism and race blindness its overt goal (G. Collins, 2012). In such an environment, challenging the positivist, and thus masculinized viewpoint (Bleier, 1986; Fee, 1982; Haraway, 1989; Harding, 1998), through constructivist critique, initiated by teachers and explored and determined by the students, becomes a powerful form of feminist resistance (Outhwaite & Turner, 2007).

Several of the teachers attempted to accomplish simply by having students examine the TEKS for themselves. The students became first conscious of the inequities in coverage in the most basic terms. They discovered in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade US History TEKS there are 57 men and 14 women named. Of the men and male dominated groups that 43 are White, 9 are African American, 4 are Latino, and one group is Native American. Of the women, the students determine that 9 of them are White, three African American, and two are Latina.

This lesson exemplifies concepts of resilient resistance. In the studied schools, the teachers were required, as part of so-called best practices, to post the objective or objectives addressed by the lesson, and the lack of such posting counted against them on their teacher evaluations. The requirement is so widespread that pre-printed TEKS “Mastery Cards” can even be purchased for the purpose of easily posting the exact wording and avoiding deviation from the approved standard as explicitly stated in their advertisement.

- Insures Compliance with TEA Mandates
- Visually Links Lesson Plans to Student Expectations
- Assist students Familiarity with Precise STAAR Test Verbiage & Format
- Positive Assessment From Walkthroughs & Observation
- Visually Insures Teacher Maximum Compliance

- Easy Access to Re-Teach Low Performance Bench Mark Sections
- SAVE TIME!

(Academic Core Group Inc, 2016).

The teachers were thus following the school directive, creating a compliant optic easily observed by an administrator, but using it in a critical way to have students examine the purpose, value and social reproductive function of the TEKS.

However, not all students recognized disparities or silences within units or topics, especially when they themselves are part of the dominant group. In my own classroom I asked the students what the TEKS' language and requirements reflect about the goals of specific standards. Frequently in my predominantly White and middle-class setting, the students did not notice the imbalance within an individual TEKS without scaffolding. They had a tendency to accept the textbooks and standards as unbiased or even most disturbingly, real history. However, when asked to explain what other words, topics, and important people could be used, the student's view tended to shift. For example, when examining the US History TEKS 5B,

“(5) History. The Student understands the effects of reform and third-party movements in the early 20th century. The Student is expected to: (B) evaluate the impact of muckrakers and reform leaders such as Upton Sinclair, Susan B. Anthony, Ida B. Wells, and W. E. B. DuBois on American society” (Texas Educational Agency, 2011)

I asked my U.S. History class to list as many suffragettes as they could name. This caused several groups to campaign for someone besides Susan B. Anthony. However, one female student responded with “Why did we need to pick one?” A male student

pointed out that it said “such as” but the first student countered with “You know Coach \_\_\_\_\_ is only going to do what’s listed”. Several female students campaigned for suffragettes such as Alice Paul and Lucy Burns, women we had been learning about in class. The students concluded it was because the TSBOE did not want to teach about people who broke rules or challenged authority outside of approved methods.

Several schools and PLC’s had designated review times especially in the spring as the exams drew nearer. These easily could have devolved into banking models of recitation of the state’s mandated version of history. Following such practices would have also eroded the validity of the counter narrative the teachers had spent so much time on constructing with their students.

However, I observed Angela Gurley and Alice Paul resisting these trends and instead using the mandated test practice time as a space for both critique and resilient resistance, something I myself had done. Depending on the classroom makeup they would give their students district assigned benchmark questions, or Advanced Placement released questions. Then they would lead their class in recalling the factual information of the question just as was expected of them by their administration. However, they then shifted this classic review into something much more critical and resistant. Just as they had done with analysis of the TEKS throughout the year, they had their students analyze how the released exam question was asked and what perspective was being pursuing and privileged. Next they had their class discuss what people and events seemed to be more prevalent. Finally they examined which women, African Americans, Latino(a)s, or Asians, if any, would likely be on the test. In this way the teachers had their students use

their practice tests as primary source data in a lesson in historical standpoints and the mechanics of structural oppression, even while “gaming” the system and ensuring their students would pass the tests.

These activities were clear examples resilient resistance because they started with the mandated curriculum. They were also highly effective. For not only does it mean teaching past the test, about concepts and values the teachers knew were important but untested (Salinas, 2006), but also challenging the silencing or omission of ideas within the curriculum and the mandated state test (Ingersoll, 2003; Nolan K. , 2015; Ochoa, 2007). Having the students view it themselves through a critical lens challenges their own ideas that curriculum is neutral or an unbiased and correct version of history (Apple, 2000; Au, 2009; Evans, Schooling corporate citizens: How accountability reform has damaged civic education and undermined democracy, 2014; Hicks & Taylor, 2008). This in turn sets the stage for them to reframe how they see the rest of the curriculum and even society. It does require teacher action because the students would most likely not have been aware of or debated the topic otherwise. However, by having the activity and subsequent debate be student-led, not only are the conclusions made more authentic and conscious raising for the students, but the lesson was more defensible if challenged by administration.

Indeed because the students were frequently more successful than their peers in other more traditional classes these resistant techniques affected more than just their students. The teachers in this study held little stock in how much the tests indicated their or their students abilities, knowledge or skill, much like those in previous research

(Cimbricz, 2002; Segall, 2003) they knew that administration, parents and co-workers did. As found in other studies they perceived that administrator's concern and subsequent threat rigidity (Olsen & Sexton, 2009) concerning teacher curricular and pedagogical choices was based mostly on standardized test scores. The flip side of this was that if scores were high, administrators were relatively unconcerned about what or how the teachers conducted their classes. Indeed they were frequently interested in what was happening only so it could be replicated in other classes. As such the feminist teachers using this leverage, not only to gain the right to be left alone (Clarke & Knights, 2015), but to successfully shift their departments to a more critical and inclusive historic framework. In some cases administration asked them to take on positions of leadership in hiring, curriculum writing and as department heads. Others administrations recognized the liability of allowing a business as usual approach and began either hiring or moving those with similar ambitious teaching styles into US History, the only state tested subject in Texas high school social studies classes.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In order to foster critical feminist agency in the classroom we as teachers and teacher educators must first recognize the spectrum of feminist understanding and enactments. The purpose of this study was to examine the development of activist feminist teachers. This research was built upon a three part conceptual framework. The first of these is that feminist consciousness needs to be nurtured in teachers rather than assumed to be present. Second, that the enactment of feminism can take on many forms and is affected by the contexts of time, region and class. Third that feminized forms of resistance, which frequently veer from traditional ones and as such tend to be dismissed and marginalized, must be recognized as legitimate and effective. Using a feminist post-structural theoretical lens helps one to clearly see this spectrum of understanding and resistance and recognize the inherent agency as well as oppression.

### **Research Questions**

The results presented in the previous chapter addressed the following research questions.

1. What are the factors that motivate women to become feminist social studies teachers?
2. How do feminist social studies teachers view the mandated curriculum and accountability educational system and their position within it?
3. How and why do these teachers resist this system?

The first question was designed to illustrate the multiple pathways by which teachers reach a point of feminist consciousness and what were the important factors which led them to apply these understandings to their work in the classroom. The second question was intended to gain insight into how the teachers, using their feminist frameworks understood and responded to the mandated curriculum. I was curious about their impressions of their own power within a seemingly highly regulated educational system. Previous studies had returned a variety of results on the effect of curriculum standards and exams on teacher behavior. By examining a subset of teachers with a strongly held feminist viewpoints I hoped to clarify these results. My intention for the final question was to illustrate real life examples that could be applied to the readers' own circumstances. I wanted not only to issue a critique of the system, or simply amplify those of others, but instead provide real life alternatives that had been shown to be effective even under the relatively constraining circumstances of the state of Texas.

Furthermore, all of the questions and research methods in this study were intended to facilitate the teachers' voices in the discourse of curriculum control. This was most apparent when the Texas State Board of Education dismissed teachers' feedback when it did not align with their agenda. Additionally on the district and school level, teachers are being removed from substantive decision-making due to administrative threat rigidity. In a small way it was my intention to restore some of level of teacher autonomy by using this dissertation as an amplifier for these women's voices, opinions and means of resistance.

## **Overview**

These findings were based on data collected over a year from five feminist Texas high school social studies teachers, Abigail Adams, Angela Gurley, Alice Paul, Kate Sinnett and Molly Pitcher. In keeping with feminist research frameworks (Lather, 1992; Reinharz, 2011) I included myself in the research. Not only was I also actively teaching high school U.S. History during this study, my inclusion helped to break down the hierarchies of researcher and participant. I was going through the same struggles and successes as the other women and this helped them be more open not only to sharing their stories but also to trying new ideas and shifting their practice to a more consciously feminist perspective (Ropers-Huilman, 1997; Sowell, 2004)

All of us were working within the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards created and then implemented by the Texas School Board of Education (TSBOE) beginning in 2010. The state attempted to enforce teacher compliance to covering these prescribed US History standards through a high stakes test called the End of Course Exam. Failure on this exam impacted student's ability to graduate and was a factor in teacher evaluations, placement and job security. However, especially as time passed and these teachers' understanding of the structure and content of the test increased, they were less and less concerned about deviating or going past the TEKS.

The results of this case study emerged from numerous interviews, group meetings and classroom observations. My examination and analysis of the collected data uncovered transferable concepts and practical methods that concerned becoming an ambitious feminist teacher. I discovered the many roads to feminist consciousness and

its manifestations but also uncovered common pathways. For all of the women, including myself, coursework in college, mentors and support networks were all critical components of our journey. I mapped out these results into themes and subthemes with the comparative case studies providing supporting evidence of the range of feminist experiences and resistance.

*Bringing Feminism and Teaching Together* was the first theme. This broad categorization encompassed the formation of the women's understandings of feminism, of teaching, and the intersection of the two. The teachers' development as feminists followed two different paths, which I organized into two major subthemes. The first was an overt consciousness of feminism and patriarchy, which was fostered throughout childhood and teenage years. This early start meant that feminism had a much more direct and substantial impact on personal and professional choices. It was unsurprising then that this particular teacher was the most overt in her feminist teaching practice, the most aware of inequities and sexism in her content and the most comfortable challenging traditional pedagogical practices.

However, this experience was unique in the group. The second, experienced by the majority of the participants, I called *Feminism Without the Name*. In these cases while women were viewed as competent, strong and equal, if not superior in ability to any man, the mothers modeling these traits did not accept or identify with feminism. As such the women raised this way had to have influences from outside their family to change their perspective on feminism. Feminist consciousness emerged from their college classes, new communities, mentors and in-service teacher education. As a result,

when they reflected on their mothers and themselves with this new feminist lens they recognized in their lives feminist actions where previously they had found none. From this appears to have emerged a determination that feminism is more importantly something you do, not merely something you claim to be.

The participant's road to feminist consciousness also had a direct bearing on their enacting of resistant feminist practices which makes up the second major theme, *Resistance and Persistence: Enacting Feminism in the Classroom*. I found that both students and staff frequently resisted the feminist viewpoints of many of the participants. Perhaps unsurprisingly this resistance was especially true of men, but also some women and girls seemed to cling to accepted narratives and roles. The feminist teachers in this study thus had to establish for themselves and others the legitimacy of their resistance to the patriarchal dominant narrative as presented in the mandated curriculum. The results also reveal to me the varied ways these teachers acted upon and resisted this state approved version of history. The earlier the teacher had discovered and claimed feminism in her life or career, the stronger, more overt and more confident was she about acting on it even in the face of students or co-workers who insisted on the status quo.

However, it is critically important not to discount the range of resistance. If we are only to recognize the most confident and only validate that which is the most transformative we will miss the very people who not only need the most encouragement and support, but who represent the most common experience. Rather than focusing on those with the greatest individual change we should add together all of the small and moderate ruptures in the dominant narrative and practice. In doing so we will see that the

sum of these small movements results in a significant movement towards the inclusive curriculum and pedagogy we are trying to reach.

These themes and subthemes highlighted in this work indicate to me that feminist theory, gender inclusive content knowledge, and practical applications for the classroom need to be a major component of our pre-service and in-service teacher education programs. Indeed the task of supporting active feminism in the classroom is more important than ever given the changing political landscape following the 2016 election.

The results described in the previous chapter provide the basis for the findings for this study and this final chapter. The first finding is that family and childhood experiences shape and can foster or delay but do not prevent the eventual identification of women as feminists. However this consciousness cannot occur in a vacuum and those patterns set down by our biography will simply replicate without outside inputs such as critical education and feminist models and mentorship. Secondly, the length and directness of the path to feminism affects its enactment in teaching long after the moment of consciousness. This leads to the next findings in which the teachers varying forms of feminist resistance are tied to their journey to feminism. In the following sections of this chapter I will discuss the implications of this study for our field, specifically ways in which teacher and pre-service teaching programs can use these conclusions in order to foster earlier and more active feminist teaching. Lastly I will reflect on the limitations of this study and the possible avenues for future research.

## **THE INFLUENCE OF BIOGRAPHY ON FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS**

The findings of this study indicate that childhood examples and models provide the basis of later consciousness. This is not surprising as we are made of our experiences within our society. I examined specific biographical journey of these feminist teachers. Their development as feminist women and as intellectual teachers was merged together into becoming and being ambitious feminist teachers. However, it is important to say again that feminist identity and certainly ambitious feminist teaching is not an elevated level one reaches after a linear progression. While the landscape of those spots may have had similar elements, there was not a “promised land” which by crossing into its borders could induce or even indicate a complete and permanent transformation. Instead the creation of an ambitious feminist teaching identity was a constant expedition. There were multiple and circuitous paths which stopped and started at different places for different women.

Only one of the women had explicitly feminist models. In this case the effect of her teacher education program, focused on social justice and critical historical frameworks meshed with and was strengthened by the substantive and syntactical understandings she had been raised with. As such she was fully committed to this stance even in her first practice teaching assignments. When she did graduate and move into her own classroom she had a fully formed feminist framework and purpose. This is not to say that she did not reflect, adjust or improve her pedagogy and curriculum, simply that she was refining something she had from the start, rather than only coming to it later or having to break up patterns of thinking and viewing.

All of the women had mothers who demonstrated by the actions, if not by their words, that they were intelligent and hard working and expected the same from all of their children regardless of gender. Some used these skills to expand their role within

prescribed feminine spheres such as volunteer work or genealogical associations. They channeled their ambition and achieved independent positions of power and authority within these socially acceptable feminine spheres. They also helped their spouses pursue their careers and took justifiable pride in the accomplishments they helped bring about. Other women needed to work in order to support their families. Their independence was in service to others in their provider and caretaking responsibilities as a mother. They did not pursue careers to be more fulfilled or to challenge themselves, though this may have occurred. Rather they had to pay bills, keep the roof over everyone's heads, and their families fed.

Several of the women had mothers or grandmothers who were also educators but did not frame their teaching as a feminist act. For them teaching was an avenue not only for their ambitions but also for their service to the community. This aligned with their conservative neo-liberal stances of wanting to help people help themselves. Because they saw social justice and feminism as being liberal positions they could not align these stances or recognize or identify with them, even as they enacted their precepts.

None of these models could be completely defined as traditionally feminist. When they achieved independent achievement it was within acceptable feminized not feminist roles. When they moved out of feminine spheres to the workplace, sometimes making more money than their husbands, it was not for its or their own sake, but for the good of the family. Yet these examples laid the base of equality for their daughters. The women of this study not only knew, but also believed in gender equality, because they had seen for themselves that women could be successful and strong. They had an example of women having identities separate from their families. They believed their mothers to perhaps be even more capable than men, yet frequently saw these women acting subservient to their husbands. The injustice and illogic of that kindled an

understanding about patriarchal structures that would catch fire when given proper fuel later on.

What is most interesting about this last group was the uncovering of what on the surface seem to be anti-feminist models acting as guides and patterns of overt feminism. This did not merely include negative models, where upon the observer sees what they do not want to emulate rather than what they do. Instead the data revealed to me how feminist action is both created and affected by the context in which it happens. This finding is in keeping with a feminist post-structuralist perspective. Gender, patriarchy and the responding feminist stance are all constructs of our society (Fraser & Nicholson, 1988), subject to the variants of individual and historic circumstances (Weedon, 1987). Baxter (2003) points out the obvious conclusion that just as women are different, their goals and definitions of feminism differ. Even when they claim and recognize their feminism it can be complicated by their race and class position (Davies & Harré, 1991) as well as their agency, power and public or private voice.

With this understanding and conceptual framework I have endeavored to avoid binaries and clear definitions of power and oppression and instead focus on each individual circumstance in a contextual manner. I do not believe this makes the data so unique as to hold no broader lessons or transferability. Instead it opens up the view of what kind of actions and discourse can be recognized that even in the presence of reproductive elements and patterns one can still find within transformative elements and moments of agency (Davies, 2000). This led me to recognize feminism activism and engagement, even when those enacting it deny an allegiance or belief in the label or identity. This finding responds to Sowell's (2004) call to recognize the spectrum of feminist experience and actions and is important understanding to build upon. If one is only looking within hard boundaries for a specific pattern of feminism, a statement of

membership, then many possibilities for engagement and growth might be ignored or worse discounted and dismissed.

### **The Influence of Outside Influences on Feminist Consciousness**

A critical aspect in bringing those who might not recognize themselves or their background as feminist is the impact of outside influences. These forces redirect what could otherwise become a pattern of social reproduction into a force for change. Most relevantly for teacher educators, the data of this study revealed to me the impact and importance of college courses on claiming feminism as an important cause, seeing oneself as a feminist and acting upon these understandings. For the majority of the participants, even for the one who had been fostered in an overtly feminist environment, college provided the vocabulary and theory, which focused and articulated their instinctive conclusions about gender and patriarchy. These college courses built on the underlying but unformed unease and sense of injustice these women felt. Through defined vocabulary, theory, academic rigor and community these preformed feelings coalesced into frameworks and lens to view their world. Those that also provided feminist models of pedagogy and curriculum had an even greater impact for they directed belief into practical and applicable action.

Mentorship was one of the other key elements. Theory is incredibly useful and one of the aspects that teacher education programs do very well. However, applying that theory, converting it to action and trying it out on real, live, human teenagers (and no those last two are not mutually exclusive) can be much trickier. The mentors for these feminist teachers helped them retain their passion, belief and purpose even in the harsh face of reality. Others came from outside of education, such as watching co-workers protesting sexist harassment or their mothers' work ethic and determination

The benefits and lessons learned from all of their mentors nurtured them as women as well as teachers. Mentors taught these women that the status quo was not acceptable and must be fought against. Perhaps most importantly they proved that resistance was actually possible. In terms of their teaching these examples prove that standing up for your beliefs does not have to get you fired and can ironically be more effective in getting students to pass the state mandated exams. More than anything these mentors helped the women recognize and learn things that they were unlikely to have achieved on their own or certainly not as quickly. Significantly these teachers have appreciated the impact their mentors had on their feminist consciousness and the enactment of these understandings. As such they have committed to paying it forward by helping others find their own paths to resilient resistance, not least of which through their participation in this research study.

These findings concerning the importance of mentorship have ramifications on our system of student teaching. Having been a coordinator of student teacher placement I know first hand how difficult it is to recruit and retain activist cooperating teachers. However, the findings of this study, concerning the impact of mentors, underscores how essential the cooperating teacher is though, certainly as much, if not more than the school setting or student demographic.

Networking with other like-minded teachers is also a form of continuing mentoring. One of the goals of my study was to improve and enrich the teaching experience of the women participating. I wanted them to learn from the other women and me as much as I was learning from them. Too often we felt isolated and without allies on our campuses. Frequently our co-workers had been all men, and too frequently prescribed to a conservative view of history that at best unconsciously supported White, masculine and hetero-normative frameworks. It is hard to always hold oneself to a higher

standard if it appears no one care if you do so. First and foremost membership in this group forced all of us, especially myself, to really measure our feminist commitment to history by a new yardstick. I was certainly easy for me to feel I was addressing gender in my curriculum and pedagogy compared to my co-workers who overtly avoided misunderstood and or misrepresented the structures of sexism and patriarchy. However when we came together, either in person or through emails and texts, each of us had not only a new standard to meet, but help in reaching that level and encouragement to push for even more from ourselves.

### **The Lingering Effect on Teaching Practices**

Examining the data from a cross case analysis (Patton, 1990) produced many interesting and honestly alarming findings concerning the lingering effects delayed consciousness had on the teachers' resistant practices. Rather than feminist identification providing a clean starting point from which a set and timed pattern of increasing resistance emerged, there seemed to be a dampening effect that persisted. This was manifested in exponential and rapid growth on the part of some who had always identified as feminist or had come to it relatively early through college classes.

Yet those who came to feminism later seemed to have a slower conversion even over the same length of time or even when they were further along in their teaching career. Indeed there seemed to be a real obstacle of having to undo practices and substantive understandings. Those who began their teaching career with a feminist framework and purpose avoided this delay. Even more than personal history the character and frameworks of their teacher education programs had the biggest effect. They were able to translate these viewpoints into their practice and were very purposeful and conscious about the curriculum and pedagogy they employed with their students.

Each year they were able to build upon this to push even further and to develop even more explicitly feminist curriculum and pedagogy.

On the other hand those teachers who did not have this form of training were more likely to continue with traditional lessons and resist the dominant narrative in less overt ways. They were hampered by a lack of resources and the time to develop these new lessons. There was also the impact of the unknown unknowns. While these teachers were all more knowledgeable about women's history and feminism than their peers, in relation to each other, there were differing levels of proficiency. This had a lingering effect on how much they changed their curriculum in part because they may not have known enough to hear the silences or know what to fill them with. However, when they did find out new information and especially when they were given lesson plan supports they utilized them to continually improve the gender imbalance of their curriculum. This reaffirms the effectiveness of critical teacher education programs both pre-service as well as in-service. It also speaks to the persistent and effective forces within our society, which maintain the status quo of gender hierarchies even among those who have recognized and attempted to resist them.

#### **THE TEACHERS' VIEW OF THE SBOE AS THE INSPIRATION FOR RESISTANCE**

While exploring the path these teachers took to becoming feminist was important, it was in many ways of secondary importance to the purpose of this study. Belief in the ideas of feminism is crucial, but as the apostle James wrote in chapter 2, verse 20, "faith without works is dead." We must find examples of what to do with our critical feminist stances, what methods and techniques of resistance classroom teachers have tried and found to be effective in bringing about change.

Uncovering this data began with what events inspired and validated these feminist women's resistance in the first place. The teachers in this study viewed both the curriculum and the machinations of the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) through a feminist lens. The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) represented a form of history that to them had overt political overtones, stressing American exceptionalism, a neo-liberal view of society and capitalism and conservative and restrictive gender roles. More over they were angered that elected officials, who were neither historians nor classroom teachers, attempted to impose these flawed standards on them. The teachers in this study, like the thousands of others who protested these standards (Scharrer, 2010), rejected this version of history as not only incorrect but unjust, reflecting neither the complexity of the past nor of the present. The teachers understood that while the SBOE, local school boards and administrators may have the authority to control what happened in the classroom, there were many ways to resist, if only teachers would recognize and act upon them.

Additionally the teachers in this study believed that there was a societal level of patriarchal forces at play that went much further than their schools or Texas. They saw major oppressive and misogynistic forces manifesting themselves in teaching. First they were angered by the hegemony of outsider control, or at least the attempt to control, and how this interference on the part of people who were not teachers or historians was accepted in the teaching profession. They felt this would have been seen as absurd in other more masculinized ones (Apple, 1988). Second, they were cognizant of the lack of progress made in teacher pay (National Education Association, 2015) and some had specifically addressed this with their classes. They wanted to be sure their students understood the insidious subtlety of the wage gap hiding behind the differences in pay for feminized and masculinized professions (Levanon, England, & Paul, 2009). The

persistently stagnant wages for teachers, not simply across decades but also within an individual teacher's career they recognized as a mechanism of social reproduction (Rich, 2014). Teaching's work schedule allows women to fulfill their responsibilities as caretakers for their children, partners and parents, even while it reinforces the gendered nature of that assignment. The pay issue also encourages traditional dynamics of the husband as breadwinner.

Their syntactical (Slekar & Haefner, 2010) and substantive (Schwab, 1978) historic knowledge, the way in which they determined what was true, important and relevant, was and continued to be, crafted during their time as a student, as a pre-service teacher and as a teacher. Each new level of knowledge and understanding then put pressure on those gained before, causing the teachers to reflect back on what they had accepted as history. As such many were more likely than they had been earlier in their careers to recognize the troubling issues inherent in the prescribed state curriculum. Also their syntactical and substantive understandings of the educational system revealed gaps and cracks in administrative and state means of control that not only revealed its flawed authority but the means of resistance to that authority. These conclusions gave the teachers the impetus to resist the dominant narrative and to do it in a feminist way.

### **THE SPECTRUM OF FEMINIZED TEACHER RESISTANCE**

Feminized resistance does not always look like agency. Its methods tend to be more covert than masculinized forms of resistance. Yet this does not mean it is any less effective or legitimate. I drew from previous research that focused on overlooked forms of resistance by subordinated groups (Kelley, 1993; King, 2015; Scott, 1990; Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001; Yosso, 2000) and used these to more clearly analyze the information I was gathering. This analysis was also greatly facilitated by the utilization

of a feminist post-structural framework because this stance recognizes subtle and shifting positions of power and agency at play through the discourse (Baxter, 2003; Butler, 1990; Gavey, 2011; Weedon, 1987).

Emerging most strongly from the data were repeated and successful examples of resilient resistance (Yosso, 2000). This form of resistance, practiced most frequently by those who ostensibly have little power, in general does not seek to tear down the structures of power but instead seeks to leverage them toward critical and resistant uses. Foucault advises those who resist to “acquire the rules of law, the management techniques and also the morality, the *ethos*, the practice of the self that will allow us to play these games with as little domination as possible” (1997, p. 298). The results of this study describe the legitimate and effective methods by which these feminist teachers followed the dictates of their schools and the state but simultaneously used this adherence to undermine the system (Allen, 2015; Bartolome, 2004; Irving, 1991; Ramsey, 2012) mainly through their syntactical understanding (Schwab, 1978) and pedagogical content knowledge -PCK (Shulman, 1987).

The teachers’ methods of resilient resistance, just as their impetus to resist, were rooted first in their content knowledge. These teachers knew enough about the dominant narrative to be able to adjust, adapt, argue against, add to and attack it frequently with administrative alliances. Some argued against the scope and sequence their professional learning committees (PLC) had been using for years. They started changing the system by adjusting it, shifting the amount of time and days spent on certain topics that seemed to be reinforcing White and masculinized viewpoints of history. They used their knowledge of the TEKS and their syntactical understandings of the Texas educational system to adapt them for their own feminist purposes. Many used fast paced lecture models to get through information that was required, but which they personally felt had

little value to the subject or their students. With the freed up time they opened up spaces for neglected, marginalized or silenced historical figures, events and perspectives. They used primary sources and gave the students not only the skills but the time to really investigate.

However they not only added to the dominant narrative, they attacked it head on. Repeatedly the teachers called the TEKS into account with their students. They asked their students to not only evaluate the content but the reason it was being privileged and why other people, events and ideas were silenced or sidelined. Even when directly addressing the exam, the state's main level of control, they found tools and opportunities of resistance. They had their students analyze released End of Course Exams as primary source data. In doing so not only were they ensuring their students would succeed on the state required test but would be cognizant of how it was attempting to shape what they saw as official or authentic history (Apple, 2000).

They used the mandated curriculum requirements and exam as leverage, even though they had little regard for them, because they knew the administration did (Segall, 2003). In this way the teachers used their syntactical understandings not just of their subjects but of the educational system. They forged administrative alliances, gained through the interest intersection of standardized exam scores, to enable change, not only in their own classes but that of their departments.

In these lessons, like many others throughout the year, the teachers were also helping their students realize their own abilities as historians, that their interpretations and conclusions, their outside knowledge and understandings had validity (VanSledright, 2004). This was not gifted to the students from the teacher, which would replicate power hierarchies and demean the entire practice, but had to be earned. These teachers resisted larger patriarchal orders by opening space for many voices both historical and those of

their students. All were then held to a standard of critique where upon assumed and unearned credence and validity were challenged. Knowing they were pushing back against their students' hegemonic understanding of gender, the teachers scaffolded these practices, increasing the pressure and standards but always doing so with support and modeling what was expected. That the teachers opened themselves to critique was not only critical as an example for the students to follow but essential to maintaining the loyalty of their feminist perspectives (Tisdell, 1998).

This was more transformative than substitution or addition. A teacher can easily simply switch what is left out and what is put in. This simply deposits a different currency into the banking model. Rather these practices resist the power hierarchy of the state, the teachers and students. It validates the questioner's right to ask the question as much as it does the eventual answers they come up with. The recognition of agency is transformative. When students realize they can challenge the conclusions of history, or even what history is, they can expand this to challenging other hierarchical or oppressive areas of their lives and society (Barton & Levstik, 2004).

For these women teaching was an integral part of their activism (Casey, 1993), the way in which they hoped to affect change on not only their students but also their society at large. However it was not the only part, and most worked in other ways such as marching and demonstrating, lobbying, contributing financially or boycotting. Among all the teachers, they were open about their activism with their students. In doing so they shifted out of the neutrality in which teachers and women are supposed to occupy (Britzman, 2003; Gold, 2016). Instead they took up a greater cause in teaching social studies and in being feminist. The knowledge of history for its own sake they saw as trivial, exhibitionist or even worthless. However history as explanation for current circumstances and as a blueprint to change those oppressive and socially reproductive

structures was perceived as invaluable (Wertsch, 2000). It is in the same spirit that I hope lessons can be drawn from their experience to help other teachers and teacher educators, rather than simply research for research's sake.

### **The Factors Which Encourage or Discourage Activism**

I chose Texas for this study due to its extreme case of overt conservative activism, which impacted teachers through attempts by outsiders to control what was happening in the classroom through standardized curriculum and testing. In such an environment what did teachers feel like they were capable of resisting? How did they navigate the curriculum, while staying true to their syntactical and substantive understandings? My assumption was that the stronger the threat and control seemed to the teachers, the more covert their resistance and response would become.

For some of the teachers this was true, they changed their tactics to less confrontational or upfront methods. However, this did not reflect a change in their essential belief in feminism, women's abilities or their place in the curriculum. Instead what had altered was their perception of the best way to promote these understanding. They had observed in the national presidential campaign what they saw as an unsuccessful way of framing and selling anti-sexist and anti-racist perspectives and agendas. They responded by opening up their classrooms to all voices, even those they were viscerally opposed to. This was difficult for them but work they felt was important and true to their core beliefs. They were not running away from the issues, or their dedication to continue their resistance injustice, ignorance and hatred. Instead, like many other feminists in the country (A. Hess, 2017) they were reconfiguring her strategy and looking for more effective methods of resilient resistance (Yosso, 2000).

However, with the other teachers I discovered that the presidential election of 2016 was a tipping point where upon the mechanism of control and the patriarchal environment became so obvious and egregious that it inspired a dramatic counter reaction. This call to action was especially noticeable in Alice Paul. When I first began observing her she was the most reticent of the teachers, relying mostly on adding material to the dominant narrative. Her main manifestation of critical thought had been through presenting multiple perspectives. However significantly, her time with the like-minded teachers in this study and the structured reflections from a feminist lens facilitated a greater level of consciousness that reverberated throughout her teaching practice. This was elevated to an outspoken activist level however after the election of Donald Trump. Now she was not only pushing boundaries in her classroom but with her co-workers and administration. She was demonstrating through the Women's March not simply as her own person but advocating also it to her students. Her transformation from internal to external, from private to classroom to worldview was exceptional and underscores the impact of feminist interventions and supports such as included in this study.

#### **IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The most important conclusions from these women's experiences is that active feminism is not only a spectrum, but constantly in flux that moves in multiple directions. Being a feminist is a fluid and changeable as becoming one. It is shaped by events, personal and public, large and small. It can be buoyed or discouraged by how others perceive it, whether that perception is negative or positive.

Realizing the pressures that can thwart or discourage even the most committed feminist woman from applying her stance to her classroom practice tells us we need to work on consciousness raising and also practical applications. As recent national and

local events have demonstrated, women's rights and the cause feminism are not fait accompli but instead must be a continuous effort to maintain gain and unfortunately at times regain ground. As such, we should be vigilant as we create our pre-service and in-service programs to explicitly include feminist theory in order help give frameworks, shared vision and vocabulary to women who may not have been exposed to them before or to bolster nascent understandings in those that have.

As concluded from the data in this study, theoretical foundations must be buttressed with corresponding lesson activities and materials they can take with them straight into their classroom (Drudy, 2008). It cannot be assumed that beginning teachers can always make that transition from theory to application, especially during the pressures of their first years of teaching. The stresses and conflicting demands on veteran teachers can also impede their ability to undo the lessons they now realize support the patriarchal and dominant narratives of history. However, as seen with the teachers of this study, when feminist lesson planning and pedagogy is facilitated and supported, even in small or discrete ways, this creates a benevolent cycle throughout their practice. This study also reveals the benefits of bringing together teachers at different stages in their careers and paths to resistant teaching. Not only does such a network provide materials and techniques but also encouragement to continue resisting, what at times can seem like an insurmountable and impregnable system. This is not to replace one outside or mandated curriculum with another, but rather to scaffold the change we want to see take place by providing models to follow and experienced feminist mentorship to draw from.

## **LIMITATIONS**

There are limitations in all forms of research and this study is no exception. The first was the amount of classroom observation I was able to apply to this study. The

teachers were mostly teaching alone in different schools that were separated by fairly large distances. This, and my own work schedule as a practicing high school teacher and student teacher facilitator limited sustained and or spontaneous visits. This was compounded by the teachers' initial reluctance to have me visit if the entire lesson was not focused on feminism. Eventually they understood my interest in the more subtly and covert methods they were using to center gender in their classes, but this did not really kick in until most of the observation period was over.

However, to mediate this, I utilized repeated and in-depth teacher reflections, student responses and artifacts from the women's lessons to give a more complete accounting of their practices. The interviews also more directly addressed the majority of my research questions, which focused on the teachers' mindsets, viewpoints, frustrations and frameworks. Especially as some of the teachers were less overt in their feminist stance with their students than others, the interviews provided a way to open the black box of their internal thought process (Polkinghorne, 2005).

This study may also have benefited from contrasting the experience of these teachers with that of women whose views were more in alignment with the state's version of history. This would have more accurately reflected the political makeup of social studies departments, as would the inclusion of men. I think it would be interesting to see the impact of including each group, especially in the networking and support aspects of the study. What shifts would occur in the frameworks and attitudes of the participants? Greater openness and inclusivity would have followed feminist pedagogical practice and subjected our conclusions to the marketplace of ideas. As Abigail pointed out, when we only discuss and work with those who already agree with us we can become isolated and stagnant in a way that may hurt our cause in the long run.

## **POSSIBLE FUTURE RESEARCH AND FINAL REMARKS**

The purpose of research is to answer questions, yet many times these answers only lead to new questions. We build new conclusions that will be used to extend the current understandings and to provide stepping-stones for further investigations. One such question could be focused on the examining the difference teaching regular or advanced/high performing students has on feminist teacher practices. Are students who are successful in the current system and dominant narrative more or less likely to accept feminist challenges to these constructs? While this study focused on the teachers' feminist consciousness, an important follow-up would also be to document and analyze the level of impact they had on changing student's perspectives on gender.

Another avenue of investigation could be to compare and contrast teachers in differing regions and states. How impactful is the educational context on feminist teacher practices? Does teaching in liberal environment encourage active feminist teaching or does it lead to complacency? The impact of the latest election seem to suggest that teachers may become more, rather than less resistant when the stakes seem higher and society seems to be turning against them.

Finally I believe an examination of teacher preparation classes would be important to reveal how much overt feminist focused material was being implemented. As reported some of the teachers in this study felt that their teacher education programs could have done more on the issue. They stated that it appeared to them that gender equality and feminism were seen as battles easily or already won. However, when they entered actual high school classrooms and certainly with recent political and social events they found that not to be so. Furthermore we must not assume that those who display critical consciousness in one aspect of society, such as racism, recognize it in all other areas.

As seen in this study, even women who identify as feminist may still not see it as being a clear or pressing issue. Unless teachers' feminist consciousness is raised, they will not recognize the gendered oppressive forces at work in the educational system. Furthermore they will not recognize the role they themselves play in perpetuating and reinforcing these structures. Without this recognition there can be no resistance. Teaching becomes passive, which then replicates the patriarchal pattern of women being recipients and supporters rather than actors and leaders. It is my hope, through this study to lay out a pattern that others might follow in order to weave together ambitious teaching and feminist activism in social studies classrooms.

## Appendices

### APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

#### Biographical Interview

##### *Background*

Where did you grow up?

How old are you?

What was your family structure?

What factors affected your identity as a woman?

##### *Teaching*

Tell me your teacher biography

At what point did you decide to become a teacher?

Where did you go to college?

How long have you been teaching?

Have you taught at any other schools?

What subjects do you teach?

Have you taught any other subjects?

Did you go to college specifically to become a teacher?

If someone was talking about your class, what would they say, how would they describe you?

How would you see yourself in terms of your level of content knowledge?

What about your content knowledge of women's history?

Do you see a role in teaching of promoting social justice, active citizenship and equality?

### ***Intersection of Being a Teacher and Being a Woman***

What do you see as the intersection between teaching and being a woman?

Do you see intersections between teaching and motherhood?

Do you see a gender based difference between how you interact with your students versus if you were a man?

Do you see any gender difference between how fellow staff treat you versus if you were a man?

### ***Feminism***

Do you consider yourself a feminist?

What does that mean to you? / How do you define feminism?

Do you tell your students that you are a feminist?

What other ways does your feminism manifest itself in your teaching?

What other ways does your feminism manifest itself in your life?

### ***Intersection of Feminism and Teaching History***

How do you think women are included in the Texas curriculum?

What is your view on how women are framed?

Who is included and who is not?

When do women come up in your year?

When are women the central topic?

Have you noticed any population in your class as being resistant to these kinds of lessons?

## **CLASSROOM OBSERVATION INTERVIEW**

### **Pre-lesson**

What is the topic of the lesson?

How does the way you are framing women in this lesson align with the TEKS?

What do you want the students to take away from this lesson?

What do you for-see as being difficult about this lesson

Where did you get your content material for this lesson?

Did you write it yourself?

Is anyone else in your department teaching the same lesson?

If not, where did you get it and how are you adapting it?

How long have you taught this lesson?

How has it changed over time and why?

### **Post-lesson**

How do you think the lesson went?

What were the best parts?

What problems did you see?

What were you thinking when that happened?

Did the students come to the conclusions you thought they would?

How can you tell?

Where will you take them from here?

Will you change anything about this lesson for the other class periods?

Will you change anything about this lesson for the next year?

## **DINNER PARTY CONVERSATION TOPICS**

Plans for the upcoming year

2016 presidential campaign

Challenges to Hillary being about women in general

Women in WWII

Changes in teaching because of the study

Reaction to the 2016 presidential election

How have recent events affected your feminist teaching practice.

The 2017 Women's March

Why do you teach women's history?

What were the turning points in your feminist journey, personally and as a teacher?

#### **WRITTEN REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

Explain your choice of pseudonym.

Why do you think you have a right to veer from the plan of the district, or Texas State Board of Education's ideas about what is the official history?

What gives you the authority (at least to yourself but it could also be to others and why they allow these changes)?

Would you mind writing, or flow-charting, the path you took to becoming a teacher, specifically why teaching and not something else?

What were the turning points in your feminist journey, personally and as a teacher?

Lastly, how have recent events affected your feminist teaching practice?

### **Questions to those who had mothers or grandmothers who were teachers**

Would you reflect for me on how your mother and grandmother viewed their teaching careers?

Would they see it as a way of maintaining financial independence (or at least not having to be so dependent on the men's income for the family's well being)?

In what ways did teaching create an identity for your mother, separate from being mother and wife?

### **Questions about the effects of participating in this study**

First, what impact has the study had on your perspective and practice?

Secondly, has there been any value gained from meeting together with the other women in this study, rather than only being interviewed separately and anonymously?

**APPENDIX B: NAMED INDIVIDUALS FROM THE 11<sup>TH</sup> GRADE US HISTORY TO 1877 TEKS**

**List of all names following “including” in the US History TEKS**

Bradley	Omar
Chávez	César
Clinton	Bill
Eisenhower	Dwight
Friedan	Betty
Garcia	Hector P.
Harding	Warren
Kennedy	John F.
King Jr.	Martin Luther
MacArthur	Douglas
Marshall	George
McCarthy	Joseph
Nimitz	Chester A.
Nixon	Richard M.
O'Connor	Sandra Day
Obama	Barack
Parks	Rosa
Patton	George
Pershing	John J.
Reagan	Ronald
Roosevelt	Franklin D.
Schlafly	Phyllis
Tocqueville	Alexis de
Truman	Harry
Wilson	Woodrow

**List of all names following “such as” in the US History TEKS**

Addams	Jane
Anthony	Susan B.
Baker	Vernon J.
Benavidez	Roy
Bryan	William Jennings
Carnegie	Andrew
Carroll	Charles
Clinton	Hillary
Curtiss	Glenn
Darrow	Clarence
Dole	Sanford B.

DuBois	W. E. B.
<a href="#">Faubus</a>	<a href="#">Orval</a>
Ford	Henry
<a href="#">Garvey</a>	<a href="#">Marcus</a>
<a href="#">Gates</a>	<a href="#">Bill</a>
<a href="#">Goldwater</a>	<a href="#">Barry</a>
<a href="#">Graham</a>	<a href="#">Billy</a>
<a href="#">Hancock</a>	<a href="#">John</a>
<a href="#">Huerta</a>	<a href="#">Dolores</a>
<a href="#">Jay</a>	<a href="#">John</a>
<a href="#">Johnson</a>	<a href="#">Robert</a>
<a href="#">Lauder</a>	<a href="#">Estée</a>
Lindbergh	Charles A.
<a href="#">Lodge</a>	<a href="#">Henry Cabot</a>
<a href="#">Maddox</a>	<a href="#">Lester</a>
<a href="#">Mahan</a>	<a href="#">Alfred Thayer</a>
<a href="#">Marshall</a>	<a href="#">Thurgood</a>
<a href="#">Muhlenberg</a>	<a href="#">John Peter</a>
<a href="#">Roosevelt</a>	<a href="#">Theodore</a>
<a href="#">Roosevelt</a>	<a href="#">Eleanor</a>
<a href="#">Rush</a>	<a href="#">Benjamin</a>
<a href="#">Sinclair</a>	<a href="#">Upton</a>
<a href="#">Sosa</a>	<a href="#">Lionel</a>
<a href="#">Sotomayor</a>	<a href="#">Sonia</a>
<a href="#">Trumbull Sr.</a>	<a href="#">Jonathan</a>
<a href="#">Wallace</a>	<a href="#">George</a>
<a href="#">Walton</a>	<a href="#">Sam</a>
<a href="#">Wells</a>	<a href="#">Ida B.</a>
<a href="#">Willard</a>	<a href="#">Frances</a>
<a href="#">Winfrey</a>	<a href="#">Oprah</a>
<a href="#">Witherspoon</a>	<a href="#">John</a>
<a href="#">York</a>	<a href="#">Alvin</a>

Black- Included in pre-2011 TEKS

Green-Committee changed or added

Blue-SBOE changed or added

(Texas Educational Agency, 2011)

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