

The Feminization of Teaching in America

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This paper chronicles and explores the feminization of primary and secondary education in the United States from colonial times to the present, exploring the causal and correlative effects of societal factors on women's participation in teaching. As the gender ratios of teachers changed, so did the pay and the social prestige associated with teaching. Scholars disagree about why teaching transitioned from a male occupation in the colonial period to a female occupation in 1900. Researchers have credited the varying need for teachers, the public's perception of early education, changes in views on the necessary skills for a teacher, and perceptions of men and women's characteristics and appropriate occupations.

Scholars disagree about how and why teaching became highly feminized in the late 1800s. It is often difficult, especially in historical studies, to distinguish between causes, effects, and coincidences. The teaching profession changed slowly, and the degrees of feminization as well as its causes differed across the country. Several themes run through all of these historical periods, affecting the degree and ways in which teaching was feminized. Careers open to men and women have changed. Society's perceptions of teachers and women have evolved. The hierarchy of education and the social status of teaching has affected its feminization. Society viewed the social and personal characteristics of teachers differently throughout American history. It is my view that all of these factors have evolved and interacted together, resulting in the trends towards and away from teaching as a feminized profession. This paper will examine American teachers at five time points: the colonial era, the early 1800s, late 1800s, early 1900s, and the present.

The feminization of teaching must be understood in the evolving context of American education. In colonial America, most young people learned necessary life skills from their parents or as part of an apprenticeship. The ability to read the Bible was valued. Teaching at that time was an occupation for young, white, well-educated men. Teaching was a part-time occupation, done mostly in non-farming months, or as a precursor to a full-time career for pre-professional men. In the 1800s, there was a movement towards universal education and a formalization of the once-informal education process, creating new educational roles such as principals, superintendents, and educational experts. All of these were predominantly male, though educational decisions were implemented by an increasingly female teaching force.

Industrialization, the availability of other jobs, and the perception of education affected the degree to which teaching became feminized. The industrial revolution created a wide variety of jobs for men; many of these jobs paid more than teaching. In the 1900s, men re-entered teaching as other occupations became acceptable for women, who were able to pursue careers outside of teaching. The feminization of elementary and secondary teaching coincided with educational and societal changes in the mid-1800s. Male teachers tended to come from lower-middle class backgrounds, attaining higher social status than their parents due to teachers' higher educational achievements. Today's teachers are predominantly women; they come from all class backgrounds; and they commonly teaching positions throughout their lives. Teaching is still a relatively low-paid occupation that brings little respect to teachers.

Primary and secondary teachers have never been viewed with high esteem in America, though they are well esteemed in many other countries such as Japan. Teachers were generally young, and the often-transient nature of teaching also led to its low regard among the professions. The low status made teaching societally acceptable for women in the 1800s, and the presence of many women in the field maintained its low status. The issue of gender has greatly shaped the public's perception of teaching--it has never been regarded as a profession of the same type as law and medicine (Rury, p. 10). "Until recently it probably was not accurate to speak of teaching as a career in the conventional sense of the term. Rather, teaching was a pursuit undertaken in one's youth, before starting the serious business of life--whether it was a career in a learned profession or business for men, or marriage and a family for women" (Rury, p. 11). The feminization of teaching and the status of women are integral in understanding the role and perception of teaching in America.

Colonial Period

Most education during the colonial period was given informally in family homes by parents and businesses as apprenticeships. Churches operated schools for the poor as charity and for moral and Christian instruction. Most children became literate so that they could read the Bible. Upper- and middle-class families hired tutors or paid to send their children to schools run by individual schoolmasters. The families paying for education expected teachers to "represent a social background and value system similar to their own" (Rury, p. 12), and most of the students were white and male. "Teachers as a group in colonial American were overwhelmingly white and male, largely middle-class and young, and often (though not always) well-educated--at least by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century standards" (Rury, p. 11).

Schooling was casual, sporadic, and unregulated. School terms could be as short as one month. Children usually studied in their homes during the rest of the year. Teachers would hold other jobs during the non-school months, and taught only when other jobs were not available. In the South and other rural areas, young, male, educated teachers traveled around teaching while preparing for professional careers before the responsibilities of raising their own families. In the urban centers of the North, established schools catered to the large populations of families with school-age children.

While some young men providing tutoring would become professionals, most teachers were not destined for high status. In some areas, teaching positions and other jobs such as bell-ringing were set aside for people at risk of becoming social dependents, such as young single women. It was thought that when a woman married, her husband would provide for her and she would focus on raising children, so her job would not then be necessary or appropriate. Even in the colonial period, teaching was a relatively low-status occupation, performed only by young people or those with few other opportunities.

Women did not receive as much education as their male counterparts, and their illiteracy restricted their participation in teaching. In the late 1700s, the estimate of women's literacy was at about 45% (Strober and Lanford, p. 216). Prior to women's entry into the teaching profession, the public began to view women's basic education as worthwhile, largely so that they could pass religion and moral values on to their children. Women's literacy rate consequently increased.

1800-1850

Between 1800 and 1850, there were a multitude of social and institutional reforms as cities began to industrialize. White women's literacy rates nearly matched men's by 1850, and women began to have a larger role in primary education. Girls and boys were taught together in classrooms by the 1850s (Strober and Lanford, p. 216). Women began teaching younger children in classrooms, and men taught older children. During this time, an ultra-domestic feminine ideal reigned, known as the cult of domesticity and true womanhood. Women were supposed to be guardians of virtue and to build domestic, pure homes while isolating themselves from a world that grew coarser and further from religion. Society recognized the values of female nurturance as well as discipline in education. Teaching was one way in which women could work outside their own households while still being examples of purity and nurturance.

By 1850, the feminization of teaching had taken hold, especially in urban areas. Feminization was not a preference of schools at first. "School committees often searched in vain for men teachers before finally hiring women.... One major concern was discipline" (Rury, p. 16), but separating classes by age in larger urban schools made discipline easier. The cost savings of female teachers may have been a result of feminization, rather than its cause. It was difficult for schools to find enough male teachers to fill all positions. "Teaching paid poorly compared with other jobs that men could get in urban areas, and the demands of teaching in big-city school systems--with eight months or more of school each year--precluded men teaching as a part-time job. Simultaneously, the nineteenth-century ideology of 'domestic feminism' limited the range of occupations to which young middle-class women could aspire" (Rury, p. 16). There was a dearth of willing men and a plethora of educated, young white women qualified to teach for low salaries.

Rural school districts, with typically fewer job opportunities for men, mixed-age classrooms, and shorter school years, retained high proportions of male teachers. Families in the South and more rural areas tended to rely on home-produced goods, so the value of women's work was seen as higher than in more urban areas where manufactured goods dominated. The few women who worked as teachers in the South had salaries closer to men's than did women in northern and urban areas, probably because few people in rural areas possessed enough education to teach.

Young women were supposed to be pious, pure, submissive, and domestic, and were generally expected to become mothers, except for a few who had occupations caring for other people's children. In the 1840s, the National Board of Popular Education sent 600 female teachers to frontier towns in the West to educate children and bring prestige to small towns in the Midwest and West. These women were drawn from evangelical churches, and learned to rely on themselves rather than their families as they traveled out west. "Because the pioneer women teachers were highly intelligent and articulate, undoubtedly among the brightest persons in their home communities, teaching was the route they chose to achieve independence" (Kaufman, p. xxii). Throughout this time, women, particularly young, unmarried women, were considered the guardians of religious virtue, civilizing and bringing to God those around them. Some did so by educating young children.

1850-1900

The late 1800s were the crucial period in which primary and secondary teaching became a woman's occupation. Between 1850 and 1900, the major changes in the United States were increased western expansion, immigration, and industrialization. School districts, especially in cities, grew rapidly to keep up with these changes (Rury, p. 23). State and the federal governments took a greater role in regulating and strengthening schools, leading to a greater demand for teachers and rapid feminization of teaching especially in urban areas. The federal census during this time began to provide information about teachers' demographics. Prior to 1870, there were no uniform statistics on the percentage of female teachers in the US. More data were available from 1850 and afterwards. Different states and different areas of the country experienced feminization of teaching at different rates and in different ways (Strober and Lanford). By 1900, teaching was essentially female.

Teaching became formalized, and the percentage of women increased from 1850 to 1900. Schooling in the more urban North was more formalized, with more female teachers and sharp pay differences between men and women. When schooling became formalized, female teachers were seen as very desirable because they were seen as cheap, as better teachers of young children, and as more willing to conform to the bureaucratization of schooling. Male principals were employed to deal with disciplinary problems that their female teachers were unable to handle. Feminization occurred more in the younger levels of school, with the majority of women teachers working in elementary schools (Rury, p. 27). The image of the stern yet loving, young, single female schoolteacher was in place by the end of the 1800s.

Scholars disagree on which variables contributed most to the feminization of teaching during this period, and few data are available. The transition to formal schooling, the higher threshold for teaching participation, the improved opportunities for men, and the lower cost of women teachers are important factors. All demonstrate that women's role in society and employment are the result of a male-dominated society's needs.

The drive for universal education increased the demand for teachers and the associated costs of instruction, giving an advantage to schools that hired female teachers. Female teachers were paid about half as much as their male counterparts in standardized schools (Grumet, p. 39). In fact, some scholars attest that "feminization occurred because school districts were unwilling or unable to pay the rising costs of retaining male teachers as school terms became longer and teaching became less attractive to men" (Rury, p. 27). The wage gap between the genders was smaller in rural schools, possibly because there were fewer qualified candidates to fill teaching positions. Rural and southern areas tended to have more informal teaching with less discrepancy between the salaries of male and female teachers, and had mostly male

teachers or an equal balance of men and women (Strober and Lanford). In the 1800s, male teachers tended to remain in their positions longer than female teachers, which may explain some of the wage gap. Women often used teaching as a way to earn an income between their own adolescence and motherhood. Teaching began as a job that was expected to cover living expenses for a young, single person or to supplement other sources of income. As teaching became a women's career, the salary remained low even though a good number of female teachers never married and continued to teach.

Some scholars attest that the transition to formal schooling was most important. "The percentage of women in teaching in the period 1850-80 was highest in those states and counties where teaching was formalized and where the female/male salary ratio was relatively low" (Strober and Lanford, p. 234).

In rural areas where men had few career options, many more men were willing to teach for low salaries, and teaching feminized slowly. There were few occupations open to rural women, so few women worked. These also tended to be areas in which education was not very widespread and schooling took only a small portion of the year. "In rural areas, both women and men were willing to teach for low wages -- women because they had few alternative jobs and saw teaching as an ideal way station on the road to marriage and motherhood; men because they used their teaching salaries merely to supplement their earnings from other endeavors or because they saw teaching as a stepping-stone to other occupations" (Strober and Lanford, p. 218). Women and men were paid comparably, though men were sometimes given bonuses because they tended to be seen as superior disciplinarians.

As the industrial revolution progressed, men found better job opportunities elsewhere and the teaching profession, making room for women. "Male professional employment... was negatively associated with feminization.... Men were most likely to work as teachers in those states where they also were employed as professionals" (Rury, p. 26). In areas where many careers were open to men, like the urban North, there were few men in teaching. It was possible for women to become teachers because men moved out of teaching. "The most apparently explanation for the preponderance of women moving into teaching in the antebellum period is that a plethora of job opportunities became available to those young men who chose not to labor on the farms" (Grumet, p. 37). Requiring teaching credentials decreased the number of interested male teachers since they did not see teaching as a permanent occupation and were not willing to make an investment at a normal school or teacher's institute when formal preparation became required for teaching. In urban areas, a few men were willing to commit to teaching, and were rewarded with higher salaries (Strober and Lanford, p. 220). Schools wanted to have some male teachers available, particularly to instruct older boys. After considering all causes, it seems that the most important change in the late 1800s was that men moved out of teaching, allowing for women to become teachers.

As teaching became standardized and universalized, teachers lost control over their classrooms and curricula. One-room schoolhouses were abandoned in favor of larger urban schools. Many female teachers, who had low status, reported to an often-male school principal. Superintendents and educational experts have also usually been male. "Several scholars have suggested that the prevalence of women in teaching has contributed to pressure to strengthen bureaucratic controls over teacher behavior and to "deskill" the profession" (Sedlak and Schlossman, p. 28). The negative view of women meant that professions with women were viewed as less deserving of esteem.

Though teaching provided women with paid employment, it did not further their careers in the ways that it did for men. Women tended to remain in teaching for a shorter period of time than men since they had to quit upon marriage. Women's younger average age and comparative lack of experience also contributed to their low wages. "Feminization in teaching did not mean more power or prestige for most women who became teachers. Instead, it contributed to the development of a two-tiered system of employment in education, one in which women did the bulk of the teaching under the supervision of an increasingly authoritative cadre of male administrators" (Rury, p. 29). Even though women constituted most of the teaching population, the leadership and decision-making positions were filled with men, many of who had little classroom experience. "In 1888, an investigator reporting to the Association for the Advancement of women declared that, whereas 67% of the teachers in the country were women, only 4 percent of those with

administrative responsibility were women" (Grumet, p. 38). The trend of few women in educational leadership roles continues today.

As machine-produced goods took the place of homemade ones, women needed a new source for income. "The classroom, the mill, and domestic service were the only options available to women who wished employment. Although teaching provided one of the few ways that women could see themselves as participants in the world outside the home, the rationale for their presence in the classroom replicated the sentimental rhetoric of child nurturance that was being heaped on motherhood" (Grumet, p. 84). Teaching attracted educated women since it was one of the few open to them.

Famed educational theorist Horace Mann wanted to match women's gentle manners, rather than the severity of male teachers, with innocent children. It was only after a child's mind had become tough that it should be subject to the "firm grasp of the masculine hand" of society at age twenty-one (Grumet, p. 55). Particular women such as Catherine Beecher "argued for placing educational responsibility in the hands of women, maintaining their submissiveness and elevating feminine self-sacrifice, purity, and domesticity into moral superiority that could be dispensed in schools" (Grumet, p. 40). The "cult of true womanhood" encouraged women to be self-sacrificing, moral, and to care for children. Society in the late 1800s both distanced mother from child and created the cult of motherhood. Women were isolated in kitchens and nurseries while their children were sent to standardized public schools. "The ideal of the teacher was one who could control the children and be controlled by her superiors" (Grumet, p. 43). Women and society saw teaching as an appropriate career for them outside the home.

While women supposedly have better capacities for nurturance, their entrance into the school system as teachers coincided with increased depersonalization and institutionalization of both curricula and relations between teacher and student. "The contradictions that evolved in the nineteenth century between the doctrine of maternal love and the practice of a harsh and regimented authority, between women's dominance in numbers and our exclusion from leadership, between the overwhelming presence of the women in classrooms and the continuing identification of men as the only persons with the capacity to know, are still present in the culture of schooling" (Grumet, p. 45). Perhaps the submission, piety, and sense of duty instilled in young women allowed them to carry out the depersonalized instructions of educational experts.

Female teachers were compelled to do the "dirty work" for a society that did not respect them or allow them to make decisions. Women established in the minds of children new, non-nurturance-based goals for success that favor males. Female teachers were considered more desirable than male teachers because their pliability and willingness to work for low wages made them ideal for the new uniform system of universal schooling. Scholars such as Grumet identified "the consistent and flagrant exclusion of female experiences from the organization and life of schools, from the theories and methods of pedagogy, learning, and curriculum theory.... The women who, by 1888, already constituted 63% of American teachers -- 90% in the cities -- permitted the methods of American schooling to violate their own experience of nurturance" (Grumet, p. 34). Female teachers embodied and taught gender roles to generations of young teachers who would grow up to perpetuate the sexist social system.

In order to understand the feminization of teaching, we must examine what is meant by femininity and the feminine gender as a construct. The cult of true womanhood and the Victorian society dictated that women should be submissive and virtuous. There were few alternatives for women who did not want to live this stifling life. "It is possible to speculate that young women entering teaching in the antebellum period were not rushing to the classrooms in an excess of passion for the young. It is probable that they were trying to escape the passivity and dependency that the feminine ideal and the cult of motherhood conferred upon its daughters--or they may have been seeking the world of work in order to escape the childcare demands of a large family of siblings," especially in the country (Grumet, p. 48). These young teachers often boarded in the home of one of their pupils, receiving food and board and under constant surveillance. Though teaching did not provide great freedoms, some women were willing or happy to postpone or avoid marriage and childbearing, with the greater restrictions both would bring to their lives. As men left teaching, women were able to adapt to this low-status, subservient yet pious career.

1900-1950

Teaching and elementary and secondary education began to resemble today's educational system by 1950. The reduction in agriculture and move to the cities continued between 1900 and 1950. New jobs opened up in cities and the suburbs that grew around them. The baby boom in 1950 created the need for even more new teachers, straining educational resources further. "The growing feminization of the teaching force was counterbalanced by a teacher shortage between 1905 and 1925. During these years, modest salary increases and improved working conditions made teaching more attractive to men, especially when potential earnings in teaching were compared to depressed salaries in other occupations" (Sedlak and Schlossman, p. 26). As clerical and other office-based positions became open to women in the early 1900s, women had more attractive options to teaching, and teaching de-feminized to some degree. The combination of the lack of attractive male jobs and new female jobs brought a good number of men into the teaching force, which had become almost all female. "The percentage of male teachers increased quickly, climbing to 25% by 1940, leveling off through the 1960s, and reaching nearly 30 percent in 1970, a percentage higher than at any time since 1890" (Sedlak and Schlossman, p. 27). As in the late 1800s, the women in teaching were affected by male employment trends and other women's opportunities.

As enrollment rates climbed, the teacher shortage put pressure on school districts to allow older and married women to teach. "From the 1850s to the 1920s, most U.S. communities hired only single females and usually forced them to quit teaching once they married. This pattern was rooted in colonial-era social policy, which made every effort to distribute scarce public resources--including jobs as teachers, bell ringers, and the like--among potential social dependents" (Sedlak and Schlossman, p. 28). Women would sometimes postpone or even hide marriages to continue teaching. Between 1923 and 1950, school districts generally dropped the practices of banning married women from teaching. Progress began in urban districts, with rural districts being less likely to allow married women to teach.

Men and women entered teaching for different reasons. "For many women, teaching was a means of status maintenance, while for men it more often served as an avenue of social mobility" (Rury, p. 41). The men who became teachers often had exhausted other career paths or had few opportunities because of their social class or life circumstances. Since teaching was one of the highest-status careers open to women, they were often overqualified for it but could not rise further in status except by marrying professional husbands. "The fact that women were restricted to a narrow range of professional career options meant that teaching attracted a disproportionately large number of well-educated and talented women from relatively high-status backgrounds. For men, on the other hand, teaching appears to have functioned as an important means of entering the educated professions" (Rury, p. 41). Male and female teachers both benefited because teaching was more respected than blue-collar jobs, but it was relatively low-paying and did not provide women with the possibility of real advancement.

Women were well represented in low-status teaching jobs, while men dominated powerful positions, even in the educational field. "While women constituted nearly 62% of elementary school principalships in 1905, men occupied almost 95% of all high school principalships and nearly all school district superintendencies" (Rury, p. 27). Women did not make progress in gaining leadership roles. "In the early part of the twentieth century, more than half of [principalships and other] leadership positions in supervision and administration were held by men" (Sadaker and Sadaker, p. 59). Even in the education of young children, women remained subservient to men.

American schooling had become uniform by the mid 1900s. Regional differences, which had been so pronounced during earlier time periods, became less so. "According to the 1950 federal census the American teaching population was almost universally three-quarters female" (Rury, p. 34). The school year was nine months long, even in southern and rural areas. Women would often enter teaching in their twenties, leave around age 28 when they had children, and return to teaching in their late 30s as their own children entered school (Rury, p. 37). Many women were making a lifelong commitment to teaching as a career outside of the home. Teachers often unionized to improve their working conditions. By the mid 20th century, the proportion of teachers with college degrees increased, and teachers were generally trained in

regular colleges (Sedlak and Schlossman, p. 35). These improved conditions made teaching more appealing to men and older women.

1950-2000

After the Second World War, there was a renewed focus on the employment of men in all professions and on the importance of children as America's future ability to compete with other nations. "The social composition of the teaching population began to change once again, this time reflecting a somewhat higher level of recognition of the teaching profession's importance in the life of the nation" (Rury, p. 41). Since society still saw men as more important and influential, this renewed interest in teaching brought men, some who received college educations from the GI Bill, into the teaching profession. Both women and men pursued teaching as a lifelong career, though women tended to aspire to teaching while men used it as a secondary career. "Recessions in the 1970s and 1980s, coupled with enrollment declines due to lowering birth rates, led to cuts in staffing which eliminated the jobs of many younger teachers. As a consequence, the mean age of teachers rose nearly everywhere" (Rury, p. 41). As other occupations became open to educated women in the 1980s, women entered other professions and teaching became slightly less feminized. "The work schedule of the modern teacher/mother is not nearly as constrained by social pressures as that of her predecessors" (Sedlak and Schlossman, p. 28).

In general, the social patterns measured in the 1950s continued through today. Teachers' unions continued to ensure job security and improve working conditions. Women occupy nearly all of the elementary teaching positions, while high school teaching jobs are split about equally between men and women. Women still hold few jobs with administrative power, and are overrepresented in early education. "By the early 1970s, less than 1 percent of school superintendents were women; women were only 13 percent of elementary school principals, 3 percent of junior high school principals and a mere 1.4 percent of high school principals" (Sadker and Sadker, p. 66). There are still many social barriers that prevent women from gaining positions of power in the educational system, including lack of mentorship and informal communication with others in power. Women must have higher credentials than their male counterparts to be hired into positions of administrative power in schools. Women are often channeled into non-leadership administrative positions such as counselors and personnel managers (Sadker and Sadker, p. 67). In this way, schools become an early organization in which children are not exposed to female leaders.

Discussion and Conclusions

It is important to understand the gender demographics of teaching, because the feminization of teaching went along with a changing view of early education in America. Since women occupied the majority of teaching positions from the mid-1800s through today, society's view of teachers is largely a result of how society views all women. The results of the feminization of teaching were significant for both teachers and the teaching profession. "No single subject is more central to the history of the teaching profession than the changing role of women in American society" (Sedlak and Schlossman, p. 28). Teaching was a relatively low-status profession early in America's history, and young women's entrance into the profession secured its low prestige.

Scholars of education and women's history debate the causes of the feminization of teaching. Some believe that the major factor behind feminization was the economic need for cheaper teaching labor as education became available universally in America. Others say that a changing view of what a teacher should be and the evolving perceptions of women made women a good match for teaching. Several scholars also suggest that the societal definition of young women as submissive and moral made them easily manipulated into accepting a standardized education format with curricula designed by male experts. Still others say that men left teaching as it became more demanding and better jobs were available to them, whereas young women were qualified, cheap and easy to hire, and had few alternative occupations. All of these factors worked together in different ways throughout the country to result in the feminization of primary and secondary teaching by 1900.

This review of teaching from the colonial period to today shows how the degree of feminization changed as a result of the changing job markets for men and women and the perceptions of women and teachers. When society needed more women to enter teaching, the aspects of teaching that seemed appropriate to women were emphasized: nurturance and morality. When teaching emphasized discipline and national duty, more men became teachers. For much of the history of teaching, few careers were open to women outside of their households. Women were willing to teach, therefore, even if salaries were low and working conditions were poor. Men became teachers only when teaching fit as a pre-career occupation or when it was more desirable than the other jobs available to them. Women entered teaching most rapidly between 1850 and 1900, because of the variety of alternative opportunities available to men, the needs posed by standardization of schooling, and the compatibility between the desired role of a teacher and the perceived attributes of women.

The perception of teachers and the perception of women evolved together, and contributed to the feminization of teaching, particularly in the 1800s. Teachers were supposed to set desirable moral and behavioral examples for their students. Young women were seen as good examples of these. Men were employed as teachers especially in the higher grades to provide role models for older boys and to discipline them. Teaching has never been a high-prestige career in America, and the entrance of women perpetuated its lower status. It was first an occupation undertaken by young men who planned on professional careers or needed extra income during non-farming months of the year. Teaching has generally had a low retention rate compared with other careers. "In a society which was permeated with sexist conventions about success, the identification of teaching with women often meant that teachers were held in low esteem" (Rury, p. 10). As society's view of women improved and more men entered teaching, its status as an occupation has improved somewhat.

The feminized state of teaching has been both a boon and a burden to the women who teach. Female teachers historically postponed or hid marriages to maintain their careers. It was not until the mid-1900s that married women were allowed to continue teaching, but when they did, it was a career that integrated relatively well with childrearing. The teaching schedule has excellent "mommy hours," with afternoons and evenings free, plus summer and winter vacations that correspond with children's vacations. Since there is less of a hierarchy among teachers, it is easier to take time off and then re-enter the workforce than it is with other careers. Unfortunately, the salary and prestige of teaching are very low, and the mother-friendly benefits of teaching may contribute to maintaining it as a low-prestige career. The teaching hours and part-year schedule are well suited to women with children, making the profession fit easily into traditional women's lives, but this has contributed to the feminization of the profession, leading to lower salaries and prestige. Teaching also has a relatively low retention rate compared to other occupations, especially for women (Sedlak and Schlossman, p. 32). "Those who defected were mainly wealthier, smarter, and more often married than those who continued to teach" (Sedlak and Schlossman, p. 33).

Standardized education has both "maternal" and "paternal" goals: to nurture individual growth, but also to provide discipline and to mold children into the ideals of a society defined largely by their fathers. The female teacher used gender roles to integrate personal and national goals, fostering uniform communities while instilling American ideals such as "self-reliance, freedom of choice, and independence of mind" (Grumet, p. 40). "The promise that women would bring maternal nurturance into schools was sheer sentimentality, as it denied both the aspirations of the common school movement and the motives of those women who came to its classrooms in order to escape the horrifying isolation of domestic exile" (Grumet, p. 56).

Sexism against women continues to influence scholarship about women in teaching. Academic studies of teaching often assume that female teachers are less committed to their jobs than male teachers. Even modern scholars have blamed teaching's low prestige on women's supposedly low aspirations and preferences for working with people via direct teaching rather than wishing to move into educational management positions (Acker). Surveys show that women teachers may have less interest in becoming principals, but it is not clear that this is due to women's lower commitment to teaching rather than societal conventions or principalships interfering with childrearing. Modern scholars also attribute women's lower salaries to their focus on families, even though for most of teaching's history, female teachers have been

banned from having children or even marrying. Little research has been done on female teachers' views on their jobs and how they view their subordinate status in the educational field. Teaching is one of the highly feminized "semi-professions," like nursing and library-keeping. Feminization has contributed to teaching's low status. Teaching's low status has allowed its feminization, and these factors have interacted to perpetuate the secondary role of women and teaching in society.

Though teachers have always had an important role in creating new generations of educated, active citizens, they have received little respect for it. "Teachers have been burdened for centuries with a schizophrenic image of their talent and qualifications. Two competing stereotypes emerged, each grounded in traditions of recruitment. One portrayed teachers as unqualified, ill-suited ne'er-do-wells; the other, as members of a learned intelligentsia" (Sedlak and Schlossman, p. 35). As teaching became a woman's occupation in the 1800s, the minimal educational standards for teaching increased and women achieved that higher level of qualification. "Regardless of criticisms levied against their preparation or ability, teachers have customarily possessed superior educational credentials and higher measured intelligence than the national average" (Sedlak and Schlossman, p. 37). As women and men move towards equal standing, occupations currently dominated by women will hopefully receive the higher respect and prestige that they deserve.

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