

4-26-2016

Where Have All the Teachers Gone? A Gendered Analysis of the Teaching Occupation

Reavey Alcott Fike
Macalester College

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/poli_honors



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Alcott Fike, Reavey, "Where Have All the Teachers Gone? A Gendered Analysis of the Teaching Occupation" (2016). *Political Science Honors Projects*. 72.

http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/poli_honors/72

This Honors Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Political Science Department at DigitalCommons@Macalester College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Political Science Honors Projects by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Macalester College. For more information, please contact scholarpub@macalester.edu.

**Where have all the teachers gone?
A gendered analysis of the teaching occupation**

Reavey Alcott Fike

Honors Thesis
Department of Political Science
Project Advisor: Lesley Lavery
April 26th, 2016

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
INTRODUCTION	4
THE TEACHING PROFESSION: A BRIEF HISTORY	7
RELEVANT LITERATURE	12
TEACHER MOTIVATION	12
TEACHER IDENTITY	16
WORK AND GENDER.....	18
TEACHING AND GENDER	21
METHODOLOGY	28
RESULTS	31
<i>Sample</i>	31
JOB PROSPECTS AND MOTIVATIONS	31
CHALLENGES	38
AGENCY.....	42
ANALYSIS	51
DISCUSSION	56
CONCLUSION	58
BIBLIOGRAPHY	61

Abstract

The status of the teaching occupation is at a critical juncture. Across the United States, school districts are scrambling to fill teaching positions as the number of people entering the occupation declines. This shortage has made urgent the need to better understand why teachers enter the occupation and why they remain in teaching. Women constitute a vast majority of the teaching force and are therefore the primary subjects of studies on teacher recruitment and retention. Despite this fact, current literature largely ignores the importance of gender in the teaching occupation. In this study, I examine how the occupational crowding of women into teaching has impacted the occupation itself. I ask, “What is the socio-political significance of teaching for women and how has this changed across time?” My research consists of semi-structured interviews with nine female teachers across two separate age groups. I analyze how women articulate their own motivations to teach and their perceptions of the teaching occupation. By situating these responses in the larger socio-political significance of the teaching occupation for women my study offers a more robust examination of the causes of the current teacher shortage.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor, **Lesley Lavery**. Thank you for giving me direction and encouraging me to keep writing. Most of all, thank you for believing in me when I didn't believe in myself.

Soren Dudley, thank you for being there always—for sharing in my frustrations and in my strides.

Ruthanne Kurth-Schai, thank you for encouraging me to follow my gut.

Patrick Schmidt and Rose Allen, thank you for offering your support and guidance throughout the many iterations of this project.

Lydia Chodosh, your grammatical wisdom and your laughter carried me a long way.

Francesca Zepeda, for talking through the bigger things.

Debbie Ruskay and Sue Clemente, thank you for sharing your time and generosity with me.

My parents, **Annie Alcott** and **Barry Fike**, thank you for listening to me and more importantly, for reminding me to listen to myself.

Introduction

The teaching occupation¹ is at a critical juncture. Across the United States, school districts are scrambling to fill teaching positions as the number of people entering the field declines. Nationally, enrollment in teacher preparation programs fell 30% between 2010 and 2014.² From Nashville, TN to Providence, RI school districts are struggling to overcome an inadequate supply of qualified teachers and in some states, the situation is particularly desperate. California saw a 55% drop in the number of people entering teacher preparation programs between 2008 and 2012.³ Districts had over 21,500 positions to fill for the 2015-16 school year, yet the state is issuing fewer than 15,000 new credentials a year.⁴

The crisis has made urgent the need to better understand why individuals become teachers and why they remain in teaching. Since the mid 1800's, women have occupied the vast majority of teaching positions and today, they comprise over 80% of all public school teachers.⁵ Given this simple fact, it is equally, if not more important, to know why *women* enter and remain in teaching and whether their motivations have changed alongside changes in the occupation. Gender is largely overlooked in current

¹ The distinction between “occupation” and “profession” is intentional. I refer to teaching as an “occupation” rather than a “profession” because the degree of professionalism accorded to teachers is in question.

² Ed.gov, “Preparing and Credentialing the Nation’s Teachers: The Secretary’s Annual Report on Teacher Quality.” [Title II, 2014].

³ California State Department of Education, “Annual Teacher Supply Report 2013-2014,” [California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2014].

⁴ California State Department of Education, “Annual Teacher Supply Report 2013-2014.”

⁵ Not all women have been equally represented in the teaching occupation. The majority of teachers entering the field were, and continue to be, predominately white, middle class women. Teachers of color and teachers of lower socio-economic status are consistently underrepresented.

understandings of the teacher shortage. When gender is considered, linkages are made quite bluntly: As more women gain access to previously male-dominated professions, fewer opt to teach. This simple explanation is not necessarily invalid, but promotes a limited understanding of teacher motivation and its relation to gender.

To understand why today's teachers enter and remain in teaching requires that we look to the history of teaching and its significance for women and bring a nuanced approach to the scholarly work on teacher motivation. In this study, I compare the motivations of two cohorts of female teachers that entered the occupation in different eras-- the first, before 1975 and the second, after the year 2000. By exploring why these women decided to enter teaching, the challenges they have faced, and their sense of agency, I consider if and how teaching's low professional status impacts individuals' motivations to enter and remain in teaching. I find that while recent entrants expressed more doubt in their decision to enter and remain in teaching, they were also more articulate and assertive in describing their motivation to teach. Their commitment to teaching was not overall weaker, but rather involved (or required) a greater amount of personal conviction. Women across cohorts consider administration to be the greatest challenge to their autonomy and motivation to teach. Those who entered the occupation earlier noted a decrease in professional autonomy over time. Newer teachers were most frustrated by high administrative demands combined with a lack of support. Taken together, my interviews suggest that as women gained access to previously male-dominated professions, they became more concerned with the perception of their work and value as teachers. Further research is needed to continue to evaluate the pervasiveness of this trend and its affect on individuals' motivations to teach.

In the next section, I provide a brief history of the teaching profession in the United States, highlighting its early feminization period and recent policy changes impacting teachers. In the following section, I review recent empirical literature on teacher motivation and scholarship on occupational identity. I then review literature on work and gender, devoting particular attention the feminization of the teaching occupation as it pertains to the nature and value of teachers' work. Next, I discuss my methods and data. I present my results and conclude by discussing the implications of my findings and suggesting avenues for future research.

The Teaching Profession: A Brief History

Women have not always represented a majority in the teaching occupation. From the Colonial era into the mid 19th century, the teaching occupation, like the educational system at large, was relatively informal. Most teachers were young, white men who taught part-time until their mid 20's when they transitioned to long-term professional work.⁶ Some women taught in their adolescent years, though most of their lives were confined to the domestic sphere as housewives and caretakers. Not until the mid 1850's, when the education system became more formalized, did teaching become a viable career path.⁷ As school structures and curricula became more standardized, so did the position of teachers. During this period women began to enter the field in large numbers, in part because teaching was one of the only jobs open to them outside the home. In fewer than fifty years, the teaching force was transformed. By the year 1900, women constituted the overwhelming majority of schoolteachers, giving name to what we now refer to as the "feminization" of teaching.⁸

The feminization of teaching coincided with a period of growing industrialization and urbanization, an increase in the variety of jobs available to men, and changing societal perceptions of education and the role of women.⁹ In the mid 1800's, early education reformers Catherine Beecher and Horace Mann were leading an active campaign to redefine the school system as it was known.¹⁰ Beecher and Mann saw

⁶ M.W. Rury, "Who became teachers?" [MacMillan: New York, 1989]; M.W. Sedlak and S. Schlossman, "Who will teach?" [Rand Corporation: Santa Monica, 1986].

⁷ Myra Strober "The Feminization of Public School Teaching" [University of Chicago Press, 1986].

⁸ David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America* [Basic Books: New York 1982] 83.

⁹ Rury, "Who became teachers?" 15.

¹⁰ Dana Goldstein, *The Teacher Wars* [Doubleday: New York, 2014] 22.

women as both the ideal and the pragmatic choice to lead classrooms. Their mission to feminize teaching was founded on the belief that women are superior to men in their virtue. In recruiting women teachers, Beecher and Mann championed the archetype of “motherteachers” whereby women were seen as indispensable agents in the moral education of children. This “benevolent” and “nurturing” conception of teachers formed the basis of the Common Schools movement and the establishment of the National Board of Popular Education, through which a new and feminized teaching corps was born.¹¹ Mann and Beecher also framed their mission as a cost-effective one. Women, they argued, would be willing to work for half of what men demanded. As education historian Dana Goldstein explains, it was through this feminization movement that “teaching became understood as less a career than a philanthropic vocation or romantic calling.”¹²

More than a century later, the teaching force bears close demographic resemblance to Beecher and Mann’s original vision. Today, the majority of teachers are white, middle-class, women.¹³ A teacher shortage between 1905 and 1925 produced modest salary increases and improved working conditions that made the job marginally more attractive to men.¹⁴ This, combined with women’s entrance into clerical and secretarial positions, de-feminized the teaching force slightly.¹⁵ By 1950, however, the proportion of women teachers had more or less stabilized with women occupying 70% of

¹¹ Goldstein, *The Teacher Wars*, 28-29; Grumet, *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching* [University of Massachusetts Press: Amherst, 1988] 40.

¹² Goldstein, *The Teacher Wars*, 31.

¹³ Richard Ingersoll and D. Stuckey, “Seven Trends: the transformation of the teaching force” [University of Pennsylvania: Philadelphia] 16.

¹⁴ Sedlack and Schlossman, “Who will teach?” 112.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 26.

all teaching positions and current data suggests that teaching is in fact becoming more feminized.¹⁶ In 2015, women made up over 80% of all public school teachers.¹⁷

Leadership positions, on the other hand, continue to be dominated by men. In the late 1800's, at a time when the feminization movement had reached all-time highs, men held 96% of administrative positions.¹⁸ Today, the gendered hierarchy in education has changed little. Despite women holding approximately half of all elementary school principal positions, middle and high schools continue to have the fewest number of women principals. And while the number of women superintendents has doubled since the 1990s, women still hold only 15% of all these positions.¹⁹ In this way, the feminized history of the teaching occupation-- and the gendered hierarchy that it produced--acts as a strong legacy in today's education system.

For scholars, explaining the historical and concurrent feminization of the teaching occupation has proven to be a difficult task. Distinguishing between the causes, effects, and coincidences in this historical period is particularly arduous. Some point to economic need for cheaper teacher labor in the expansion of the education system as the cause for teaching's feminization while others emphasize the "evolving perceptions" of women and teachers as a key factor. More salient in the literature, and more central to my argument, is how the feminized history of the occupation has impacted the status and nature of teachers' work. As I discuss in later sections, the crowding of women into teaching contributed to the occupation's low pay and led to a rise in bureaucratic control over teacher behavior. While the constraints placed on teachers have changed over time, these

¹⁶ Ingersoll and Stuckey, "Seven Trends," 16.

¹⁷ Ibid, 16.

¹⁸ Grumet, *Bitter Milk*, 39. Rury, "Who became teachers?" 29.

¹⁹ David Sadkar and Myra Sadkar, "Sexism in American education," [MacMillan: New York, 1989] 66.

underlying limitations have not. Today, teachers continue to earn less than workers with the same level of education and work experience.²⁰ And even if explicit examples of gender discrimination have subsided, teachers face a new set of bureaucratic constraints.

Beginning in the late 1980's and intensifying through the 1990's, the teaching occupation was impacted by an increased focus on educational accountability.²¹ An accountability movement obsessed with performance measures emerged from growing concern over how to measure teachers' impact on student achievement. In 2001, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was reauthorized as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The Act was designed to set standards, implement testing, and impose sanctions for low performance. New systems of accountability, required by the federal government, relied on state and local administration to manage and implement reforms.²² The result was a heavy focus on test preparation, forcing teachers to relinquish professional autonomy and conform to narrow and prescriptive curricular guidelines.²³ Additionally, the fixation on transparent and measurable results created a system where teacher performance was pegged to student test scores. The federal government in particular has sought to expand the use of performance measures linking individual teachers to student achievement data through top-down incentives such as the Federal ESEA Waiver program and Race to the Top, a competitive grant program created to encourage state and local reform.

²⁰ Grumet, *Bitter Milk*, 39.

²¹ Sedlak and Schlossman, "Who will teach?" 26.

²² Paul Manna, *Collision Course* [CQ Press: Washington D.C., 2011].

²³ Diane Ravitch, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* [New York: Basic Books, 2010].

Some scholars have gone so far as to characterize these changes-- primarily designed and implemented by men-- as yet another iteration of female subjugation. At the very least, these policies serve as constraints to teacher autonomy. Andy Hargreaves explains that the teaching occupation has seen several generations of bureaucratic control.²⁴ Today, teachers struggle to counter centralized curricula, testing regimes, external surveillance, and the economic imperatives of marketization. As opposed to earlier historical stages, teachers have less autonomy and fewer opportunities for collaboration. In particular, they hold less discretionary power over curriculum and decision-making and have experienced challenges to earlier gains in what Hargreaves refers to as “role expansion, diffusion and intensification” achieved through a more collegial teaching environment.²⁵

How these changes impact teachers’ motivations to enter and remain in teaching is unclear. Might they help to explain why fewer women are entering teaching? Or is the accountability movement just another evolution of gendered bureaucratic control placed on teachers? In order to address these questions we must better understand what motivates teachers and the impact of teaching’s gendered history on teachers’ work and professional status. I review the academic literature on both topics in the following section.

²⁴ Andy Hargreaves *Changing Teachers, Changing Times* [American Journal of Education, 1995], 600.

²⁵ Hargreaves, *Changing Teachers, Changing Times*, 600.

Relevant Literature

Teacher Motivation

Some scholars and policymakers concerned by the current teacher shortage have turned their attention to the relationship between individual motivation and the teaching occupation. Scholarship on teacher motivation has demonstrated that teachers report multiple motivations for entering and remaining in the field, some intrinsic and others extrinsic. Aspects thought to be inherent to the act of teaching-- such as working with children, sharing knowledge, and contributing to society-- might intrinsically compel teachers to the field. Extrinsic motivations refer to benefits such as compensation, work schedules and job security that are associated with but not inherent to teaching jobs. Though this distinction is both intuitive and informative, not all scholars distinguish clearly between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Some scholars, for example, consider “altruistic” desires a separate category while others assume that work on intrinsic rewards captures altruism. A few scholars seek to smooth these distinctions by differentiating between “personal utility” expectations-- how teachers expect to benefit personally-- and “social utility” expectations--the expected benefits to society that draw teachers to the field. Social utility values are most commonly linked with intrinsic motivations while personal utility values align more closely with extrinsic motivations. I will use the terms “intrinsic” and “extrinsic” in my review.

In recent years, strained state budgets and extreme political partisanship have heightened the need to identify the extrinsic variables that impact teachers’ labor market decisions and take swift action to increase teacher supply. As a result, scholars have focused their attention on isolating the relative influence of compensation and working

conditions as variables that, if manipulated, may have the potential to change teachers' labor market decisions. This research is aimed at measuring the "efficiency" of targeted initiatives or singular school characteristics, both economically speaking and in terms of student achievement.

The relationship between working conditions and teachers' labor market decisions is relatively clear. Across studies scholars find that teachers are most likely to remain in schools that offer mentoring programs, induction programs, teacher autonomy in decision-making, collegial support, adequate facilities, administrative support, and other community involvement features.²⁶ An evaluation of incentive programs aimed at recruiting new teachers in urban school districts found that among these factors, the presence of a supportive principal has a particularly large impact on job attractiveness while induction programs and teacher autonomy also have smaller, though still significant effects. In terms of school demographic characteristics, teachers are more likely to leave schools with higher proportions of low income, minority, and low performing students.²⁷ Evidence has consistently shown that public school teachers are also more likely to leave high poverty schools than their counterparts in medium-poverty schools. Inequities in teacher supply are also found in high-poverty as compared with low or medium-poverty schools and across hard to staff subjects, particularly in STEM,²⁸ Special Education, and English Language Development.²⁹

²⁶ Cassandra Guarino et al., "Teacher recruitment and retention" [Review of Educational Research 2006]; Richard Ingersoll, "Teacher turnover and teacher shortages" [Educational Research Journal 2001].

²⁷ A.M.Elfers et al., "Teacher mobility" [Peabody Journal of Education, 2006]; Richard Ingersoll, "Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: An organizational analysis" [American Educational Research Journal, 2001] 530.

²⁸ Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math

²⁹ Guarino et al., "Teacher retention and recruitment," 191.

The influence of compensation on teachers' labor market decisions is less clear. Research has shown that teacher salaries are positively associated with retention and that teachers who leave the field cite low relative salary as an important, if not paramount, factor in their decision.³⁰ Paradoxically, however, research suggests that while higher pay improves teacher retention and possibly even the quality of teachers in the field, teachers are not motivated by money in their decision to enter the field.³¹ Furthermore, the level and type of influence that salary has on teacher retention is disputed. Some evidence suggests that relative salary does not impact teacher transfer between schools, but does impact a teacher's decision to leave the profession.³² More exhaustive studies, however, point to the opposite finding that relative salaries do indeed impact teacher mobility between schools and districts.³³

Education scholar Catherine Sinclair also considers the nature of teachers' work and the influence of others in her work on extrinsic motivators for teachers. In a large-scale study administered to teachers before and after entry to credentialing programs, Sinclair identifies commonalities in teachers' initial motivators. In naming the "nature of teachers' work" as an appealing factor, these new teachers refer to the social environment of schools, cultural perceptions of teachers, and the perceived compatibility of the job with teachers' lives outside of work-- a factor often referred to as "life-fit."³⁴ If teachers' expectations about the type of work they encounter align with the reality of their

³⁰ Ingersoll, "Teacher turnover," 503

³¹ Guarino et al, "Teacher recruitment and retention," 183.

³² Li Feng, "Opportunity Wages, Classroom Characteristics, and Teacher Mobility" [Southern Economic Journal, 2009].

³³ Sean Corcoran, Sylvia Allegretto, and Lawrence Mishel, "The Teacher Penalty," [Economic Policy Institute: Washington D.C., 2010].

³⁴ Catherine Sinclair, "Initial and changing student teacher motivation and commitment to teaching" [South Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 2008].

experience, they are more likely to remain in teaching. Sinclair finds that the influence of family members, friends, past teachers, school career advisors, and the media also hold weight in teacher motivation.³⁵ Like other extrinsic motivators, these factors are more broadly related to the status of the teaching occupation in society.

Most scholarship acknowledges that extrinsic motivation is only part of the puzzle. Particularly in studies looking at pre-service or new teachers, scholars work to understand teachers' intrinsic motivations. Pre-service teachers in particular report intrinsic motivations as having a greater influence than extrinsic motivations in their decision to enter teaching,³⁶ perhaps in part because of the low relative compensation and status associated with teaching in many developed countries.³⁷ Intrinsic motivation also serves as a predictor for how long individuals remain in teaching.³⁸ In these ways, teachers' personal commitment and sense of fulfillment in the occupation are key to issues of recruitment and retention.

Scholars find that individuals are intrinsically drawn to teaching by a desire to work with children, intellectual stimulation, altruism, authority or leadership potential, and the social nature of the work. Among these factors, the desire to work with children, the opportunity for authority or leadership, and the social nature of the work are most positively associated with teacher retention.³⁹ That is, teachers who report these initial

³⁵ Sinclair, "Initial and changing student teacher motivation," 82.

³⁶ Jason Giersch "Recruiting the Next Generation of Teachers: An Experiment" [University of North Carolina, 2016]; Sinclair, "Initial and changing student teacher motivation," 84; H.M. Watt et al. "Motivational factors influencing teaching as a career choice" [Learning and Instruction, 2007].

³⁷ Watt et al., "Motivational factors," 174; Sinclair, "Initial and changing student teacher motivation," 83.

³⁸ Marjon Bruinsma & Ellen Jansen, "Is the motivation to become a teacher related to pre-service teachers' intentions to remain in the profession?" [European Journal of Teacher Education, 2010]; Sinclair, "Initial and changing student teacher motivation," 84;

³⁹ Sinclair, "Initial and changing student teacher motivation," 84; Watt et al. "Motivational factors," 175.

motivators are most likely to remain in teaching long-term.⁴⁰ Variations in teachers' intrinsic motivation are also found across experience level and gender. Experienced teachers, for example, are less likely than pre-service or new teachers to report altruistic motivations for teaching.⁴¹ Evidence on the relationship between gender and motivation is mixed. Some studies demonstrate that females are more likely than males to report intrinsic motivators for teaching, whereas others suggest little variation across gender.

Teacher Identity

A review of scholars' work on occupational identity helps us to better understand the relationship between teachers' extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Occupational identity refers to the "conscious awareness of oneself as a worker"⁴² and suggests that teachers' personal and professional motivations are highly intertwined. The first scholar to focus extensively on the personal-professional life of teachers was Jennifer Nias. Her seminal work, *Primary Teachers Talking*, involved an in-depth study with personal accounts from 99 primary school teachers regarding questions of identity.⁴³ Nias observed that teachers' identity are mutually shaped by personal experiences of teachers and the social, cultural, and institutional structures in which they work. Douwe Beijaard's study of identity construction among secondary school teachers builds upon Nias' work in this area.⁴⁴ He names the interplay between teachers' relationships with their pupils, their perceptions of their subject status, and the influence of the school environment as

⁴⁰ Watt et al., "Motivational factors," 174; Bruinsma and Jansen, "Is the motivation to become a teacher," 198.

⁴¹ Sinclair, "Initial and changing student teacher motivation," 86.

⁴² Vladimir Skirikov, "Occupational Identity" [Springer: New York, 2011], 693.

⁴³ Jennifer Nias, *Teaching and the Self*, [Cambridge Journal of Education, 1987].

⁴⁴ Douwe Beijaard, "Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Identity: An Exploratory Study from a Personal Knowledge Perspective." [Teaching and Teacher Education, 2005].

determining factors in the identity construction of teachers. His findings support Nias' and demonstrate that the culture of a school and its internal dynamics impact teachers' motivations and commitment as well as their perception of their role as teachers.

The implications of these findings are twofold. First, they suggest that the intrinsic factors motivating teachers are not as inherent to the nature of teachers' work as previously thought. Rather, teachers' identities and motivations are influenced by teachers' own personal biographies and micro-level experiences, such as their interactions with students, parents, and colleagues. Second, Nias and Beijaard's findings imply that teachers' intrinsic motivations are in turn informed by extrinsic factors and thus, the two are highly interconnected.

Christopher Day elaborates on the interconnection between intrinsic and extrinsic factors in his treatment of teacher identity construction as layered or stratified.⁴⁵ Day contends that in addition to the personal biographies and micro structures that Nias and Beijaard describe, teachers' identities are influenced by meso and macro structures. Meso structures are identified as the social/cultural/organizational formations of schools and teacher education while macro structures are the broader social and cultural features at play in government policy and rhetoric.⁴⁶ According to Day's model, teachers' identities are influenced by these structures in overlapping and even contradicting ways. Teachers' personal values, beliefs and ideologies together with their experiences in school environments are thought to both reflect and impact the social, cultural, and institutional structures with which teachers interact. In this light, the intrinsic factors thought to attract

⁴⁵ Christopher Day, Alison Kington, Gordon Stobart, and Pam Sammons, "The Personal and Professional Selves of Teachers: Stable and Unstable Identities" [British Educational Research Journal, 2010].

⁴⁶ Day et al., "The Personal and Professional," 611.

individuals to teaching are necessarily shaped by how teachers' work is conceptualized in broader socio-cultural and political structures. Put simply, understanding teachers' identity as multi-layered makes it difficult to make any hard distinctions between what is intrinsic versus extrinsic in teacher motivation.

A look at teachers' occupational identity also challenges the notion that what motivates teachers is consistent across time. While some scholars identify common values, beliefs, and practices that shape teacher identity, most scholars consider teacher identity to be informed by contextual factors and therefore as a "situated" rather than a "static" identity. Zembylas and Chubbuck engage with the question of structural change in their political approach to understanding teacher identity.⁴⁷ They posit that taking a political perspective to conceptualizing teacher identity (and thus, teacher motivation) requires an understanding of the teaching occupation as historically contingent. Teacher identity is not only situated in broad socio-cultural and political structures but also in time. Thus, in order to understand what motivates teachers in the current context, we must examine both the structures that influence identity construction and the history of those structures. Only by adopting such an approach can we begin to identify the historicization and politicization of teacher identity and engage more critically to understand how certain motivators are fabricated conceptually and iterated in practice.

Work and Gender

In looking at the socio-cultural and political structures at play in teachers' identity construction, it is impossible to ignore the fact that teaching is a highly feminized

⁴⁷ M. Zembylas and S. Chubbuck, "The intersection of identity, beliefs, and politics to conceptualizing 'teacher identity'" [Routledge, New York, 2014].

profession-- both numerically in terms of the high proportion of women in the occupation and conceptually in terms of how teachers' roles are characterized. Considering gender in our analysis of the larger structures at play in identity construction therefore adds an important, if not critical, layer to the existing scholarship. In this section, I explore how gender acts as a structural force in all women's work before critically examining its role in the teaching occupation. Below, I will highlight two prominent debates within feminist scholarship on work and gender. First, I consider the value placed on women's work and second, I examine more closely the relationship between women's agency and structural forces.

A key debate in the study of work and gender lies in the question of how women's work should be valued in relation to men's work. To this end, feminist theorist Julia Kristeva identifies a split in feminist thought.⁴⁸ First is the liberal position, which seeks equality between women and men. That is, women's work should be valued as equal to men's. Next is a generation of thought that seeks to emphasize the special qualities and strengths which women possess and altogether reject using "male" as the standard for women's value. That is, women's work should be valued independent of men's. As Nel Nodding explains, "the emphasis here is on moving women's best work into the public sphere."⁴⁹ In this vein, the differences in women's work should be embraced and valued in their own right. Karen Offen divides the argument over the value of women's work into two separate camps: individualist and relational feminists.⁵⁰ Individualists, like the first generation that Kristeva outlines, aim to eliminate differences in privilege and rights

⁴⁸ Sandra Acker, *Women and teaching: A semi-detached sociology of a semi-profession*, [Falmer Press, Sussex, 1995].

⁴⁹ Nel Noddings, "Feminist Critiques in the Professions" [Sage Publications, 1990], 393.

⁵⁰ Acker, *Women and Teaching*, 395.

across gender. Relational feminists, on the other hand, are gender sensitive in their recognition of the unique value of women's work.

Another division in the scholarship on occupation and gender exists between scholars who emphasize structural determinants (culture and institutions) as constraints to women's work and those who emphasize women's agency and choice within these larger structures. The work of Julia Evetts provides a useful framework for understanding this literature.⁵¹ Evetts' discussion of occupation and gender integrates concepts from both feminist perspectives on women's work and sociological studies of occupational identity. She outlines three main dimensions of explanatory theories pertaining to women's work-- cultural, structural, and action. The *cultural* dimension suggests that our image of women's careers, particularly those with a high concentration of women-- is influenced by images of what it means to be a woman. This dimension focuses on family and feminine ideologies as well as organizational cultures. The *structural* dimension explores how women interact with bureaucratic structures and how they are impacted by labor market shifts. Lastly, the *action* dimension examines how women's choices, decisions, and strategies interact with larger structures to create outcomes. Here, cultural and structural dimensions are thought to influence but not determine women's work. Many scholars who emphasize women's agency also sympathize with the notion that women's work should be valued independent of the male standard.

Tensions over the value and determinants placed on women's work are even more pronounced in the literature on highly feminized occupations such as nursing or teaching. A review of this literature also illuminates the relationship between value and agency.

⁵¹ Julia Evetts, "Analysing Change in Women's Careers," [Blackwell Publishers, 2000].

Many scholars see the feminized history of these occupations as part of an intentional project to stringently define women's roles in the public sphere. This view emphasizes structural determinants as inherently patriarchal and thus as constraints to women's work. In this way, scholars attribute the low relative value placed on traditionally female work or "caring professions" to their highly feminized composition. Other scholars have studied highly feminized occupations as an opportunity to consider women's unique strengths as workers and reject "men's work" as the standard for value altogether. Those who emphasize women's agency, or the "action dimension" of women's work, have highlighted female-concentrated occupations as critical sites of empowerment. Additionally, feminized occupations are considered transformative for women's entrance to the public sphere and thus crucial for female political development. Next, I explore these tensions as they relate to the teaching occupation specifically.

Teaching and Gender

The feminization of the teaching force is often taken for granted in analysis of the occupation's history.⁵² Dominant narratives chronicling the feminization of the occupation point to women's willingness to accept low wages and consider women's work as teachers to be a natural extension of their work in the domestic sphere. As recently as the 1980's, however, scholars have brought this history into question. New literature disrupts the notion of inevitability in the feminization of teaching and instead considers the role of women teachers as intentionally constructed. Where scholars differ

⁵² The processes of feminization and professionalization are both critical to the history of the teaching occupation. See page 25 for an explanation of how and why professionalization has developed in tension with feminization.

is on the question of how the feminization of teaching has or has not transformed women's socio-political status.

On the one hand, the teaching occupation is regarded historically as a unique and transformative site for female political authority. Michael Pisapia traces the expansion of the public education system in the United States as it relates to women's increased participation in the public sphere.⁵³ In a comparative historical analysis of American states between 1860 and 1930, Pisapia asserts that public education was the primary venue through which white women became involved in politics and gained entrance to the public sphere.⁵⁴ It was through their involvement in public education that such women became empowered as voters and exercised political authority to shape the state. He explains, "During the nineteenth century, women carved out a 'separate sphere' of civic womanhood distinct from the male sphere of partisan corruption, and they developed a 'domestic politics' rooted in feminine roles as mothers, caregivers, and home economists."⁵⁵ Pisapia finds that in the field of education, unlike in other welfare areas, white women played an active role in electoral processes and held appointments as officials and administrators. In this way, the expansion of the public education system was not only part of the maternalist movement to extend the caring values of the separate "domestic" sphere into civic life and public policymaking, but also was uniquely transformative for women's political authority.

⁵³ Michael Pisapia, "Public Education and the Role of Women in American Political Development 1852-1979" [University of Wisconsin, 2010].

⁵⁴ Michael Pisapia, "The Authority of Women in the Political Development of American Public Education, 1860-1930," [University of Wisconsin, 2010].

⁵⁵ Pisapia, "The Authority of Women," 32.

Several other scholars echo the formative role that women played in the expansion of the public school system. In her article, “Why Men Left: Reconsidering the Feminization of Teaching in the 19th Century,” Sarah Montgomery challenges the dominant notion that it was women’s acceptance of low wages that encouraged men to leave teaching in pursuit of higher professional positions.⁵⁶ Instead, Montgomery identifies the formalization of the public education system and the professionalization of the role of teachers as deterrents to male teachers who saw teaching as only a part-time endeavor. She critiques the work of scholars who point to urbanization, professionalization and extended school terms, demographic shifts, and the Civil War as explanations for the occupational crowding of women into teaching. Instead, Montgomery finds evidence that above other factors, it was women teachers’ commitment to making teaching a meaningful career even as the qualifications for and expectations of the work grew, that influenced the men’s departure from the occupation. Where men saw teaching as a supplement to other work, women’s strong identification with and commitment to the teaching occupation is seen as favorable to their professional development. This challenges the dominant narrative of subordination and instead reinstates women’s agency in the process of feminization.

Still, for many (if not most) scholars, the occupational crowding of women into teaching is understood as a barrier to teachers’ ability to gain status, autonomy, and rewards. Scholars trace this barrier to the early “feminine” conceptualization of teaching. In particular, they take issue with the conflation of “teaching” and motherhood” implied in the dominant narrative of the feminization of teaching. In her analysis of teacher

⁵⁶ Sarah Montgomery, “Why Men Left: Reconsidering the Feminization of Teaching in the Nineteenth Century,” [Temple University Press: Philadelphia, 2009].

recruitment materials from 1940-2000, Christine Wall interprets the gendered representation of teachers through iconography.⁵⁷ Her work builds on earlier observations that communicative symbols and “gendered codes” generate truths about the role of women teachers. Wall finds that visual images of teachers depict men and women differently. Images of women, unlike those of men, conflate the occupation of mother and teacher into one and reinforce male/female gender dualisms. Though Wall acknowledges the possibility that these images simply reflect teachers’ existing societal roles, she argues that they actively contribute to “the maintenance of gendered occupational segregation in teaching that continues into the present...”⁵⁸ Put simply, the feminized conception of teachers helps to explain teaching’s low status.

Wall is not alone in considering the conflation of “motherhood” and “teaching” a constraint to women’s socio-political status. Scholars Jo-Anne Dillabough and Sarah Montgomery support Wall’s analysis and problematize the idea that the value placed on women’s work as caregivers was fundamentally changed by the feminization of teaching.⁵⁹ That is, they dispute the notion that women’s entrance into the teaching occupation--from mother to teacher-- marked a shift in how society values women’s work. They maintain that women’s work as teachers, like their work as mothers, is valued as an act of service. “Women teachers therefore emerge as a devalued entity unless they are serving others,”⁶⁰ explains Dillabough. In this way, teachers’ work, like

⁵⁷ Christine Wall “Picturing an Occupational Identity: Images of Teachers in Careers and Trade Union Publications 1940-2000.” [Routledge, 2008].

⁵⁸ Wall, “Picturing an Occupational Identity,” 333.

⁵⁹ Jo-Anne Dillabough, “Gender Politics and Conceptions of the Modern Teacher: Women, Identity and Professionalism” [Routledge, 1999].

⁶⁰ Dillabough, “Gender Politics,” 384.

other domestic work, is characterized as affective labor,⁶¹ forever cementing its lesser socio-political value.

An understanding of teachers' work as affective, and thus marginalized, labor is based in the idea that capitalist structures reproduce and reify gendered hierarchies. Nicole Bolton and Daniel Muzio see the historical and concurrent feminization of teaching as a strategic attempt to develop a more profitable organizational structure where male privilege is secured through the construction of salaried hierarchies.⁶² Even if men who benefitted from teaching as a part-time endeavor saw women's full-time entrance to the field as a threat, they were able to maintain their privilege within the system through male-dominated leadership structures that subjugated women's authority and value as teachers. Women teachers, in this way, are seen as exploited subjects in a male-centric labor market.

Many have argued that the creation of gendered hierarchies in the feminization of teaching has led to the de-skilling of women's work.⁶³ Ironically then, the professional gendered project has resulted in de-professionalization of the occupation. Scholars among the likes of Bolton and Muzio, MacDonald, and Dillabough explain that because teachers work within masculinized structures of authority-- both numerically in terms of the disproportionate number of male administrators and politically in terms of their ability to shape education structures-- the version of "professionalism" imposed on teachers is

⁶¹ I refer to affective labor as a form of immaterial labor, such as domestic work, that is marginalized in the labor market.

⁶² Bolton, Sharon, and Daniel Muzio, "The Paradoxical Processes of Feminization in the Professions: The Case of Established, Aspiring and Semi-Professions" [Sage Publications: Los Angeles, 2008].

⁶³ Bolton and Muzio, "The Paradoxical Processes of Feminization in the Professions"; Victoria-María MacDonald, "The Paradox of Bureaucratization: New Views on Progressive Era Teachers and the Development of a Woman's Profession"[History of Education, 1999]; Dillabough, "Gender Politics."

itself masculinized. Here, scholars identify a paradox. In drawing on the stereotypical image of the “caring” female, masculinized structures devalue women’s work and their socio-political status.⁶⁴ At the same time, however, masculine control over teachers centers on masculinized notions of “professionalism” that prize efficiency and contradict the notion of women as caregivers. Dillabough goes further to say that “teacher professionalism” is “used by the state as a political device which gives the impression of liberation (e.g. collaboration, 'empowerment'), but simultaneously de-skills and de-professionalizes teachers to the point of exploitation.”⁶⁵ Hence, women’s professional and political development as teachers is continually stifled by gendered hierarchies.

In Summary

It is clear that teachers’ motivations and identities are highly complex. As I have discussed, studying teacher motivation requires that we take a closer look at the ways in which teachers’ self conceptions are influenced by current and historical conceptions of teachers. The literature on both occupational identity and the feminization of teaching suggests that gender plays an important role in how teachers are conceptualized. In particular, gender serves as a structural force in both the working conditions that teachers face and a barrier to how their work is valued. Studying the feminization of the teaching occupation alongside existing literature on teacher motivation helps us to understand how and why women’s motivations to teach may have changed across time. Additionally, exploring the changing socio-political significance of teaching for women may provide further insight into why fewer women are opting to teach. In taking an approach that is both historically contingent and gendered, my study fills a gap in the current literature

⁶⁴ Dillabough, “Gender Politics,” 387.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 387.

and explores if and how teachers' motivations are impacted by the education hierarchy and their perceived positions within that structure.

Methodology

Guiding my study is the question, “What is the socio-political significance of the teaching occupation for women and how has this significance changed over time?” Based on my reading of the existing literature, it appears that the teaching profession has and continues to represent a paradox in the socio-political development of women. The occupation serves as a transformative site for women’s socio-political authority and at the same time, a symbol of the undervaluing of women’s labor. I expect that this main tension-- historical subordination of women alongside women’s pursuit of socio-political authority as teachers-- remains consistent even as the strategies or axes of structural control change.

In this study I turn to teachers to articulate their own motivations and perceptions of teaching. I take a semi-historical approach to understanding the relationship between individual teachers and the structures that influence their work. By conducting interviews with two separate cohorts of teachers and asking participants to articulate their initial and changing motivations to teach, I am able to get a sense of why women are drawn to the field and the stability of their motivation over time.

The first cohort of teachers in the study consisted of women that entered the occupation before the year 1975 and the second cohort consisted of teachers that entered the occupation after the year 2000 and before the year 2015. I conducted a total of nine semi-structured interviews in which I asked both cohorts the same key questions regarding their motivations and self-perceptions as teachers. All interviews were conducted over the phone with recorded audio. The duration of each interview was between 20 and 40 minutes. This format allowed me to make comparisons across

interviews given that the same key questions informed all nine interviews. It also granted me the flexibility to ask follow-up and clarifying questions, grant appropriate detours, and re-order questions if necessary depending on the progression of each interview. Likewise, respondents were able to bring up unexpected topics and influence the trajectory of the interview. I intentionally did not ask respondents to reflect on the gendered history of the occupation.

I selected study participants using a snowball sampling method. I recruited my initial contact for the first cohort of women through the Berkeley Retired Teachers Association (BRTA). My initial contact for the second cohort of women was recruited through network of alumni from University of California at Berkeley's Developmental Teacher Education (DTE) program. Initial informants nominated other informants that met the determined eligibility criteria of the study: self-identification as woman, entrance into teaching between the years 1955 and 1975 or between 2000 and 2010, and at least three years of teaching experience. This latter component allowed me to capture changes in individuals' motivations to teach over the course of their careers. Participants could be either retired or actively teaching. In nominating new participants, initial participants were asked to consider others who would contribute diverse perspectives.

I asked my informants the following questions:

1. Why and when did you enter teaching? What were your other job prospects at the time?
2. What was your perception of teaching before and/or upon entering the occupation?
 - a. How did this perception align or not align with your own motivation to teach?
3. Has anything challenged this motivation since your entrance into teaching? If so, explain in detail.
 - a. Can you point to any specific policies or events that have challenged your motivation?

4. When you think about your agency in the occupation, how much power do you think teachers have?

Based on the literature I reviewed, I expected women in both cohorts to cite altruistic motivations for entering the teaching occupation. I expected women in the younger cohort of teachers to report a more diminished sense of agency than teachers who began teaching in an earlier time period. Similarly, I expected women in the older cohort of teachers to report a diminished sense of agency between the time they entered teaching and their retirement. This, combined with women's increased access to previously male-dominated fields, was predicted to yield a decline in women's motivations to teach.

Results

Sample

The sample of teachers I interviewed came from two districts-- one suburban and one urban. Despite geographic similarities, these teachers came from different school sites, subject areas, and shared different prior experiences. Of the five teachers in my sample who entered teaching before 1975, four were fully retired and one had a part time teaching position. Among this cohort, the earliest year of entry was 1961 and the latest, 1972. These teachers taught into the early 2000's, though several took time off when they had children. On average, they each spent close to 35 years teaching. All spent the majority of their teaching careers in California and in a suburban district, though two also had experience teaching in other states. Two were high school teachers and the other three worked for most of their career in elementary schools. Many had experience working in specialty areas in addition to the traditional classroom setting-- one taught music, another special education, and the third, English language learners. Among the second cohort of teachers in the sample, all were full-time general education teachers. Three taught elementary school (1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade) while the fourth taught middle school. Two taught in an urban district and the other two in a suburban district. On average, they each had six years of teaching experience. The earliest year of entry was 2001 and the latest, 2013. Only one teacher in this cohort had taught at multiple school sites.

Job Prospects and Motivations

The majority of women in the first cohort of teachers (those who earned their credentials between 1955 and 1975) explained that their entry into the teaching

occupation was expected, if not encouraged. Mary,⁶⁶ Susan, and Helen, and Carol all highlighted the lack of job prospects for women at the time.⁶⁷ For some, teaching seemed to be the most desirable option. As Helen explained, “It just seemed like a very good career to go into.” Susan echoed this sentiment, saying, “I thought it would be a fun job, a good job for women... you had retirement, you were taken care of.” Carol, on the other hand, spoke of being actively counseled into teaching, despite her strong interest in other career opportunities. While still a student in college, Carol “fell in love with anthropology” and was intent on being an anthropologist. After being cautioned by her counselor that there were no jobs for women in anthropology, she pursued landscape architecture. This time, her counselor explained more explicitly that the only available employment avenues were in secretarial work, nursing, or teaching. After learning that a friend was pursuing her teaching license, Carol remembered thinking, “This might be a viable career.” She explained, “It wasn’t my first or second or third choice, but I kind of just made the leap that way.” Karen, an outlier in this trend, explained that she first pursued a job in computer science and had the opportunity for career advancement and higher pay, but found the work unfulfilling and sought out teaching as a job that would be more intellectually stimulating.⁶⁸ She admitted that her initial motivations for teaching were idealistic and did not entirely match the reality of the job. Mary also expressed interest in becoming a math professor and teaching in institutions of higher education, but

⁶⁶ All names referenced are pseudonyms.

⁶⁷ Susan (part-time teacher), interviewed by the author, January 2016.

Helen (retired teacher), interviewed by the author, January 2016.

Carol (retired teacher), interviewed by the author, February 2016.

Mary (retired teacher), interviewed by the author, February 2016.

⁶⁸ Karen (retired teacher), interviewed by the author, February 2016.

was deterred by what she describes as female math professors being “really badly treated.” She, instead, went on to teach high school math.

These women, now mostly retired or working part-time, remember their initial motivations to teach being a desire to work with children and the stimulating “nature of the work” more broadly. While many cited idealistic motivations, the majority of women had family members and friends who inspired their interest in teaching and therefore also had an understanding of the realities of the job. Mary explains, “As you can see, I didn’t go into it blind because I did have these contacts and because our family was poor I knew it didn’t pay a lot.” Her admiration for some of her high school teachers combined with her love for learning math was what affirmed her own decision to teach. When Carol thought about becoming a teacher, she remembered teachers in her own life that had helped to inspire her own love of learning. Helen also remembers being encouraged by a teacher mentor. Her motivations, like others’, were relatively vague. She explained, “girls were not given many choices and I thought I would make a good teacher.” Karen remembers feeling a “calling” to education that was unlike what she felt in her previous office jobs. She was inspired by a book about alternative education that emphasized the idea of the “free child.” Overall, these teachers shared a common desire to work with young people and pointed to the influence of others as important in their own decisions to teach.

The second cohort of women, those who entered teaching between 2000 and 2010, faced a job landscape that was significantly different from what the first group of women experienced. This difference was evident in how they spoke about their job prospects as well as in how they articulated their personal motivations to teach. For many

of these women, the decision to teach was less obvious. Kate, now a fourth grade teacher, has an undergraduate degree in biology.⁶⁹ While in college, she was on the pre-med track, taking mostly chemistry and biology classes and working in laboratories. It wasn't until the end of college that she decided against going to medical school. Kate explains, "I love science and I think it's interesting but in terms of the nitty gritty of the research, it wasn't for me. I didn't enjoy the day to day." She was especially deterred by the cost of medical school. Instead, upon graduating, Kate spent five years working at a 6th grade science camp in California, through which she became passionate about teaching. She explains, "I liked working with kids and I was good at it."

Liz, now a third grade teacher, was a financial consultant for six years after college.⁷⁰ It took her almost a year to decide that she wanted to change careers. She thought of teaching as a job that involved more passion. "It wasn't for the financial gain or even the career advancement so I guess it just seemed like a job that was more tied to you personally rather than another career where you would just clock out and go home." While a financial consultant, Liz spent some time tutoring students at a local food bank. She really enjoyed it and wondered how she would like being a teacher full time. Her commitment to teach in public school was solidified by her teacher training experience. She says, "I really do believe in teaching in public school with kids who are not usually receiving the best services in general in life." Nicole, a middle school teacher who entered teaching in the early 2000's, also expressed political motivations for becoming a public school teacher.⁷¹ She says, "I was brought up to be really supportive of the workers and make sure that working families and their kids got the education that they

⁶⁹ Kate (elementary school teacher), interviewed by the author, January 2016.

⁷⁰ Liz (elementary school teacher), interviewed by the author, February 2016.

⁷¹ Nicole (middle school teacher), interviewed by the author, February 2016.

needed.” Nicole expected the work to be difficult but was committed to being a public school teacher “because that was the highest need.”

Sarah was the one teacher in this cohort who considered teaching almost exclusively in her job search.⁷² She stated confidently, “I have always wanted to be a teacher, even since I was a little kid.” Her passion for working with kids inspired her to major in elementary education in college and enter a teacher residency program upon graduating. Sarah, like the women in the first cohort, attributes her motivation to teach to her positive experiences with her own teachers growing up. She explains, “I admired a lot of my teachers and I had a lot of really great teachers that I really looked up to. I thought they really cared about me and wanted me to do my best job in learning and those were the adults I had the most interaction with besides my parents.” Her perception of teachers on a personal level was very much connected to her own motivation to teach.

While these teachers shared a strong sense of altruism in their commitment to teaching, their motivations did not come without doubt. Unlike the previous cohort of women, some of these young teachers were more wary of how teachers are perceived and about the rigor of the occupation. While friends and family played a similarly influential role in their motivation to teach, these influences were not always positive or encouraging. Kate goes as far as to say, “My mom is a teacher and I swore I would never be a teacher. She just worked really hard and there was a lot of politics at the school that she was at.” In one instance, Kate remembered her mother getting a new principal and it becoming “really hard with the dynamics at work.” Watching her mother struggle and work outside of school hours for low pay served as a deterrent in her own motivation to

⁷² Sarah (elementary school teacher), interviewed by the author, February 2016

teach. When she eventually decided to go to graduate school for education, she recalls that certain members of her family were disappointed. She states,

There were a couple things my family members said to me about it that made me kind of wonder about my family's views on educators. And I think that part of that just has to do with it being a female dominated profession. I think my family, especially being inclined towards science, had different hopes for me especially in choosing fields that were maybe considered more rigorous or more prestigious.

Her grandmother in particular expressed concern. Kate considered that her grandmother had been disappointed in having spent her life as a housewife despite being highly intelligent. She felt that it was “a let down to choose a profession that had been available for women for so long.”

Liz expressed related concerns in her decision to switch careers. She struggled to decide whether or not to leave her financial consulting job, in part for financial reasons, but also because of her perception of the occupation. “I was totally invested in my current career and my current job so it was a big deal,” she stressed. “I had this impression that becoming an elementary school teacher was, for whatever reason, not challenging-- that it was easy. Here I have this other career and now I’m going to ‘revert’ back to being an elementary school teacher.” Liz knew it would be difficult work but did not expect it to be intellectually challenging. She laughs about this perception now, but at the time, “the self-identity piece of it was hard.”

Kate and Nicole also highlighted this self-identity piece to varying extents. The stress that comes along with national education debates has weighed personally on Kate. She explains that she feels conflicted and questions her self worth when political debates about unions come up. Kate hesitates on this and says, “But I feel good about the work

I'm doing day to day so I try to focus on that." She explained that some of her concerns about self worth come from the fact that as a 35 year old, she still babysits two nights a week because her teaching salary is not enough to cover her rent. Kate says, "I think the low lying effect that I have a second job is a little bit frustrating and makes me wonder if I'll stick in it." Her sense of self worth was particularly called into question when she received a layoff notice-- a "pink slip"-- during her third year of teaching: "It was so devastating to get a pink slip and then have to go back to work and teach with the kids and I really started questioning, 'Is this really for me?'" Kate remembered thinking that her hard work and her positive evaluations no longer mattered. "It was so heartbreaking to me and I spiraled into this really deep depression that lasted four or five months even after my pink slip was resolved." She noted, "I felt like I wasn't being valued. So I took that really personally even though I know it wasn't personal." Nicole expressed similar feelings about receiving a pink slip. She explains that for new teachers, this is particularly difficult.

As someone with more years of teaching experience, Nicole shared, "I'm definitely not there anymore, but even now sometimes it's the outside forces that makes me throw up my hands." Even as a tenured teacher, she feels as though every year is a fight against "the demonization of education," and teachers specifically. Sarah felt that the problem derived from a lack of understanding of why and how students are struggling in schools. Teachers, she noted, get a bad reputation for things that are beyond their control. She felt that a conversation about "how hard it is when students' basic needs are not met" needed to enter into the dialogue. For Sarah, this lack of recognition is a "constant battle."

Challenges

When asked what, if anything, has challenged their original motivations to teach, women across cohorts named administration as the most significant obstacle. This response was almost unanimous. While some teachers named specific policies (i.e. an increase in testing) or budget changes (i.e. layoff notices), most named administration directly. In some cases, the administration was seen as the face of certain policy or budget changes, where in other cases administration was named as an obstacle unique to these changes.

Teachers in the first cohort-- those who entered teaching between 1955 and 1975-- saw administration as both responsible for poor working conditions and as a constraint to their autonomy. Carol explains, "You really are at the mercy of your top administrator and I cannot say that's been a pleasant experience." Susan agreed, saying, "You have some good principals and then some awful ones." While some administrators were "less taxing" than others, remembered Carol, "That's where you lose your power. It depends on the administrator at your school site basically." In her earlier years teaching, during the 1960's and into the 70', Helen recalls being told by the administration at her school that she was required to wear what she considered "church clothes." Despite having a knee injury, the district insisted that she wear high heels. "I tried to get them to agree to wear low heeled shoes and that was out of the question. Teachers wear high heels." But it wasn't just high heels, she trailed off, it had to do with her whole appearance.

Other women pointed to the uptick in administrative surveillance on teacher practices as a constraint to their work. The principals, Carol explained, "set the tone for how much control a teacher had, what you could do with what you had, and what they

allowed you to be.” In one example, Susan remembered having a principal who hired what she refers to as “curriculum police.” These “police” were allowed to enter the classroom without notice and ensure that each teacher was in the exact same place in the prescribed curriculum. Beyond the surveillance aspect of it, these teachers were frustrated with what they saw as administrators overstepping the authority of teachers to impose certain curriculum. Moreover, these teachers often found the proposed curriculum to be inappropriate for their students’ needs and abilities. “They tried to say, ‘You have to do things this way.’ It didn’t work. But they certainly tried. They thought they knew better how to do what I did,” described Mary.

Some observed a definite increase in administrative constraints over time, while others saw mixed trends. Both Carol and Susan felt their autonomy decrease over their teaching careers. Susan said, “There is much less teacher choice... I kind of left teaching when that whole ‘test till you die’ came in.” She specifies that it became more adversarial between teachers and administrators. “That wasn’t true when I started out,” she claimed. Carol saw the decrease in her motivation to teach as directly related to an increase in prescribed administrative guidelines. When she began, she received a set of learning goals for her grade level and designed her curriculum accordingly. “It was my job to bring each student to achieving on scholastic tests and that was challenging and it was more of an art. You got to put yourself and your own personality and your own strengths in all subject matters into action,” she highlighted. Carol explained that by the time she returned to teaching after taking a few years off to raise her children, “everything had turned around and the pendulum within education had swung back and everything was written in stone in your curriculum and your curriculum could not be deviated from.”

This diminished opportunity for creativity within the teaching occupation left Carol “bored” and without the intellectual challenge that initially motivated her.

Helen and Mary mentioned similar changes, yet their responses indicated neither a clear increase nor a clear decrease in administrative challenges. Mary explained, “I had been teaching long enough that you see the same fads come and go and the same kind of new training which was actually just the old training with a different name and a little tweaking.” Despite being frustrated by certain administrative policies, Helen noted an improvement in working conditions over the course of her career. Upon entering the occupation, she reflects, “I was teaching 8 periods a day without break. I didn’t know any better. It was extremely hard work.” By the time she finished teaching, “things were certainly better.”

The younger cohort of teachers did not have the same longitudinal perspective. Like the previous cohort, however, most teachers saw administration as the greatest obstacle in their work. While some articulated the obstacle being the administration’s constraint on teachers, these teachers more often noted the administration’s lack of support as the biggest challenge to their work. Both Liz and Sarah felt like they were going “above and beyond” their own job duties whereas the leaders of their schools and districts are putting in work that is less than adequate. As a new teacher, Liz says, “I think the only thing that has challenged [my motivation] at this point is administration, because we have really strong teachers at our school but our administration has not been.” Rather than constrained, she has felt overburdened. It can feel disheartening, she explains. Liz has questioned, “Why am I doing all this? Yeah, it’s for the kids and it’s for society but

it's also taking a toll on myself personally," she worries. Kate talked specifically about a lack of support from the administration at her school.

I'm trying to do what they tell me right now and that's hard because I don't feel like there's enough support or materials or time to do all of those things well and I don't feel supported. It's just massive I can't even tell what it feels like to not feel not supported by your supervisor in what's not an easy job to begin with.

Kate is clear in distinguishing between autonomy and a lack of support on behalf of the administration. Where she taught previously, there was little principal oversight. Kate had the autonomy to design her own curriculum and saw herself as a more engaging teacher. In her new school, administration places high demands on teachers without the necessary resources or structural support to be effective.

This second cohort echoed similar frustrations to the first cohort of teachers with regard to the administration overstepping teachers' authority. Nicole argued that "there are still things where teachers are being made to do things they know are not right." Kate hoped that in going forward, as she gained seniority as a teacher, she would be able to better advocate for her curricular control. She hoped that in the future she would feel more comfortable standing up to the administration and saying "This is a third grader and this is what a third grader really needs." Sarah, despite being a beginning teacher herself, has already taken on this role. She has been frustrated by the lack of urgency on the part of the administration paired with blame on teachers "for not doing enough." The ways in which administrators seek to support teachers, in her experience, is misguided. Similar to the more veteran or retired teachers I interviewed, Sarah saw new policy being introduced without accurate evaluation of what was needed on a classroom level. Her rhetorical response to administrators was, "If you ever spent a moment in the classroom you would have known this wasn't going to work."

Agency

The way that teachers viewed administration was highly intertwined with how teachers' perceived their own agency within the education system. While teachers across the board perceived that their agency was being challenged on an administrative level, the ways in which they interpreted and evaluated their overall agency was mixed. In general, teachers felt a high level of agency in their relationships with students and among other teachers at their respective schools. While there was some evidence that this agency has diminished over time, other evidence points to an increased amount of system-wide agency as a result of collaboration with other teachers and in their advocacy for student interests. On a system-wide level-- beyond the teacher-student and teacher-teacher level-- there was even greater variance in how teachers' perceived their agency. Some felt disempowered and reiterated the power of administration as a constraint, but others noted considerable improvements happening over time, specifically highlighting the role of unions and professional organizations in creating meaningful change within the system.

Some teachers interpreted their agency on a classroom level and expressed feeling a strong sense of control in this setting. They tended to equate agency with autonomy. Helen explained, "I think that teachers have an extremely large amount of power because we are almost kings of our own classroom and we decide on our own curriculum and we collaborate together. And what we decide on in the classroom are the decisions we make." The role that teachers play in the lives of children, Helen testified, is "tremendously important." Susan concurred: "I think it was a great profession because you went to a job where you felt like you were doing something." Most agreed but many also observed a change in classroom autonomy over time. Karen said, "There's part of it

when they close the door they can do whatever they want to but districts have gotten more and more into prescribing a set of textbooks they use.” She put the onus on teachers to exercise autonomy regardless of administrative constraints. Karen suggested, “A good teacher can take the textbooks and use them to teach the needs of her particular students.” In her own experience, Karen recognized that she likely had more agency than teachers in other schools or districts. Still, she thought that even in more prescriptive districts, “the experienced, good teachers deviate the manual and make their own lessons to teach to the standards.” Still, she reiterated that it was only in “exceptional cases” that teachers have autonomy. “In a lot of situations, they don’t have a whole at as far as choosing the curriculum or the books they read or sometimes even how to approach it.”

Susan and Mary also observed a variation in teacher agency across districts and over time. When asked how much agency she perceived teachers to have, Mary responded, “Not enough by any means. To some extent, it depends upon where the person is teaching.” Susan explained that in comparison to when she began, “Teachers have much less choice. We used to be able to do much more fun things.” She points to the high-stakes testing movement as partially responsible for this change. Karen also found the pressure of high-stakes testing as a major inhibitor of her agency in the classroom. She saw the testing and the curriculum that came with it as inappropriate for student learning. Like Susan, she voices, “I was glad when I got out and I didn’t have to do all the testing with the kids. It was really inhumane to do as much as we did.” While Karen and Susan spoke of testing in relation to student learning, their quotes also indicated a frustration with how the high-stakes testing movement de-legitimized the knowledge of classroom teachers.

Less experienced teachers similarly described this policy as having a negative impact on their sense of agency. Sarah stated, “I clearly see what these kids need and we are not doing what they need.” She finds it hard to have respect for her superiors when she feels as if they are de-valuing her experience as a teacher. Liz also expressed an unwillingness to expend her energy on asking for more administrative support or advocating for better policies because “there is going to be backlash or it isn’t going to happen.” The perception that the administration did not value her opinions was interlinked with her perceived lack of agency. While Liz did mention statewide testing as a constraint to her power as a teacher, her response was more focused on poor administrative communication and the lack of support as limiting to her agency.

As I noted earlier, the second cohort of teachers were more likely to underscore the negative societal perceptions of teachers as a challenge. This related to their perceived agency. Where and how they saw their agency as teachers play out was varied. Some teachers agreed with the first cohort in regard to their agency on a more micro level. Liz explained, “I think that I have total control and agency over my classroom, I will say that. But in terms of affecting the entire school or systematic change, through the administration, that would benefit all teachers, I don't. I feel like there is a false sense of agency.” When she referred to a “false” sense of agency, Liz talked about the administrative demands placed on teachers in a similar way to Sarah. Rather than seeing administration as a “constraint” to teacher autonomy, Liz has found administration to be unsupportive and ineffective. This, in itself, has had a constraining impact on her own agency. She explained, “I feel like administration asks us to be agents... yet there is really no follow through.” Liz elaborates, “I feel like there is a lack of trust, where I have

asked for certain things before and it hasn't happened, so I've tried to be that agent and I've gotten nothing or the opposite happens.” For this reason, Liz felt that although she is technically authorized to have agency, she has had little incentive to act on it.

Kate was especially discouraged by her lack of agency. She shared, “I think that’s the hardest part of the job is that I don’t feel like I have a lot of control or agency.” Like Liz, she felt that her agency and autonomy was constrained by high administrative demands combined with inadequate support. She said, “It’s been really hard not to feel supported or valued and I definitely feel like my performance is somewhat affected by not feeling like my administrator gets or supports me, or even understands what the day to day job looks like.” This, she confessed, has challenged her long-term motivation to teach. “It’s just massive,” Kate continued. “I can’t even tell what it feels like to not feel not to feel supported by your supervisor in what’s not an easy job to begin with. It’s a hard profession, and I feel somewhat isolated by it.” In wavering in her commitment to teaching long term, it was obvious that Kate’s motivation was directly connected to her perceived agency.

Despite the diminished agency that came with administrative demands, teachers pointed to their collaboration with other teachers as a place where they held certain power. Whether it was with colleagues at a school site or formal involvement in professional organizations, teachers saw collaboration as critical to their agency. Karen remembered working with teachers who taught at the same grade level on a project to design new, engaging curriculum that integrated science, art, and environmental education. Together, these teachers were motivated to find creative ways to improve their own teaching and better serve their students’ needs. They applied for outside grants to

attend professional development trainings at a local science museum and supported one another by taking the time to observe each other's teaching and provide feedback. When Helen spoke of her agency in the classroom, she also pointed to collaboration with other teachers as key. Carol and Mary pointed to their involvement in professional organizations and the teacher's union as instrumental to enhancing teacher agency.

Unlike Helen and Karen, Carol found that due to administrative constraints, she had little agency in a school setting. Instead, Carol found agency serving as a representative in her teacher's union. Now, as a retired teacher, she is on the statewide legislative committee, taking trips to the capitol to advocate for retired teachers who are still working in some capacity. She thought, "In that aspect I think we've had some say in the way that policy is originated."

Many teachers spoke of their participation in unions as a direct response to the lack of agency they felt on a system-wide and societal level. Mary, for example, also talked about the teacher's union as an important counterforce to the poor working conditions imposed on teachers by the system at large. She reflected, "I think teachers by and large are not looked at real well by society. There's the old saying that 'If you can, do, if you can't, teach,' which I really resented...through the union and so on, we had more power." In addition to being active in the union, Mary was on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. In these ways, she worked to shape policy and working conditions in response to what she saw as disrespect from society. When Helen spoke about seeing improvements in teachers' working conditions, she also credited the union. "Teachers unions were a tremendous help in setting the rules for teachers' benefits," she contends.

Nicole, a teacher in the second cohort, reiterated the importance of the union and also named the teachers at her specific school site as being an important source of support. She said, “I feel very supported by who I teach, I don’t feel supported by the public at large.” For her, it was the agency she had on a classroom and school wide level that motivated her teaching. She elaborated,

The teaching staff is awesome. We’ve got a really tight union in [her school district] so that makes the communication part between administration and teachers a lot better. You know, if you have a strong union you feel a lot more empowered in your district. But it’s more the outside forces make me feel like they don’t even have a clue-- like our government, our decision makers, our education policy being written by people who haven’t stepped in the classroom or who haven’t been in the classroom for years. And decisions being made without teacher buy-in or teacher notification. A lot of things that make me want to scream and quit but it’s never because of my school or my students or my parents.

Once teachers are tenured, she explained, they have greater agency. Still, even with strong collaboration among the teachers at her school and the will to push back against certain policies, Nicole has found her agency in state and federal decision-making to be very low. She pointed to the lack of coherence and state variation in the public education system as a particular barrier to system-wide agency. Nicole, however, focused on her agency on the classroom and school level as a means of making meaningful change. She interpreted teachers to have “a lot of power” and the ability to make a difference in the lives of kids and their parents. “Whether I can make a difference on a bigger scale, I hope I do eventually,” Nicole said. Her immediate concern was making an impact on her students and working closely with the union to ensure that staff and students were supported. Like others, she saw teachers’ power as being strongest on a local level, “the smaller picture.”

Sarah's experience has been different. Still a relatively new teacher, she has found it difficult to exercise her agency even on a micro level. "Everything is hard, my classroom is hard but then everything beyond that is too," she felt. Sarah, like others, spoke of her agency as directly connected to how she was valued as a teacher. She has felt the demands placed on teacher by administrators to be both debilitating and insulting to teacher agency. Many professional development workshops have felt ineffective, if not condescending. Her principal was a prime example. Sarah explained, "She doesn't know basic things about my grade level and when she tries to give me feedback I know that some of the things that she says are not best practices." This came in tandem with a feeling of disrespect on a district wide level. "I don't feel valued as part of my district. There is a lot of fluff in saying 'We value our teachers so much' but then there is no action behind that." Like Liz, she referred to feeling a false sense of agency. In her experience, this has been related to a "culture of fear" where other teachers are afraid to call attention to practices they know are inappropriate or not functioning well.

Unlike Nicole, who relied on her fellow teachers and the union as a basis of support, Sarah felt that in order to make real change and have agency on a micro-level, she would need to leave classroom teaching and become involved in system-wide reform. As a classroom teacher, she is involved in committees and takes on leadership positions when she can, putting in extra time to come up with new ideas to improve school structure and student learning. Still, Sarah said, "I can't manage those systems that are going on outside of my classroom while I'm in my classroom so that's been kind of frustrating and I think that's just the disconnect." She saw herself working beyond the classroom in a couple of years. "It takes a lot to change a system as large as the public

school system,” she recognized. “But that is something on my radar...that’s definitely on my career goals-- really thinking of some out of the box alternative solutions because what’s happening right now is not working for a lot of schools or kids.” As a classroom teacher, she doesn’t have enough agency to do what she thinks is necessary for her students and for the system at large.

Table I

Job Prospects and Motivations	
<p>C1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Altruism ● Desire to work with kids ● Positive influence of family and friends ● Entry to teaching expected/encouraged ● Intellectually stimulating ● Vague articulation of motivations ● Socially acceptable position for women ● Teaching one of few available job options 	<p>C2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Altruism (perhaps heightened) ● Desire to work with kids ● Mixed influence of family and friends ● Access to previously male-dominated professions ● Strong conviction to teach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Expressed personal and societal scrutiny in decision to enter teaching ○ Political commitment to public education ● More concerned with low status and prestige of teachers
Challenges	
<p>C1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Overstepping teachers' authority and professional knowledge of curriculum ○ Prescriptive guidelines on teacher image/dress-code ○ Poor working conditions ● Diminished autonomy over time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase in standardization and high-stakes testing 	<p>C2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Overstepping teachers' authority and professional knowledge of curriculum ○ Accountability and high stakes testing ○ Layoff notices ○ Poor working conditions ○ Low value placed on teachers ○ Lack of support ● Personally impact of administrative constraints <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Questions of self-worth
Agency	
<p>C1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agency on student-teacher and teacher-teacher level ● Administration as a barrier to agency on higher levels ● Collaboration between teachers as source of agency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improved working conditions over time ● Diminished agency over time 	<p>C2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Less agency on student-teacher and teacher-teacher level ● Administration as a barrier to agency on all levels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ False agency ● Need for systemic change to enhance teacher agency ● Agency connected with sense of value/self-worth

Analysis

I find that teachers' real and perceived status within the hierarchy of the education system may indeed impact their motivation to teach. As predicted, the changing socio-political significance of teaching for women has made the limitations of the occupation more pronounced. As these structural changes occur, there are also shifts in the way that women articulate their motivations to teach. The common narrative linking gender and teacher motivation implies that as women gain access to other occupations and teaching loses its socio-political significance for women, the limitations or structural constraints of the teaching occupation become more pronounced. As a result, women are less motivated to teach and feel a relative lack of agency in the occupation. My findings suggest there is some truth to this narrative. I find, however, that neither the structural factors nor teachers' personal motivations are changing in a linear or expected way. That is, the relationship between personal motivation and structural change is not as straightforward as previously implied.

First, my work suggests that women's motivations to teach are not singularly impacted by the structural legacy of subordination in the teaching occupation. In line with the research on teacher motivation, teachers expressed the influence of family and friends, the desire to work with children, and altruism as important factors in their decision to teach. While women in both cohorts expressed similar motivations, the way that they articulated those motivations and the type of influence they ultimately had on women's decision to teach were quite different. Newer teachers were more articulate and purposeful in describing their initial motivation to teach. In some cases, there was an implied defensiveness in their decision to enter teaching. This defensiveness appeared to

be a response to both negative societal perceptions of teachers as well as teachers' internalized perceptions of the occupation's subordinate position within the education hierarchy and in relation to other job prospects. Unlike the first cohort of women, these women had significantly more access to previously male-dominated professions, many of which offered career advancement and higher salaries. Teaching was not as obvious a choice of career. Their awareness of this fact, in some cases, led to more pronounced and altruistic convictions to teach, as opposed to weaker ones.

Women in the first cohort were significantly more vague in how they articulated their motivations. The influence of others in their decision to enter teaching was encouraging and mostly positive. This is not to say that these teachers were unaware of the low status of the occupation, rather that it had less of an impact in women's decision to enter teaching. With more limited access to the job market, women's decisions to enter teaching were less contested and came with relatively more ease. As a result, their motivation was less scrutinized or personally questioned, particularly during the earlier years when teachers experienced more autonomy within the profession. Conversely, for women in the second cohort of teachers, the conviction to teach seemed to be associated with a degree of personal investment and personal scrutiny not found in the first cohort of women. Similarly, or perhaps because of this initial motivation, teachers interpreted administrative decisions as direct reflections of their self-worth and as a challenge to their personal investment in teaching. Their perceived value within the system was very much connected with their personal motivation to teach. While these women expressed greater concern with their value as teachers, the result appeared to be a re-articulation of motivation rather than a decrease in motivation. Most notably, new teachers

demonstrated a level of personal investment in their decision to teach above and beyond what teachers in the first cohort articulated even though their overall evaluation of the occupation was more negative.

Second, my research does not indicate that the occupation has become either more or less repressive to women's agency as teachers over the past 30 years. There was consensus among the two cohorts that administration remained the main challenge to teachers' motivation. Women in the first cohort saw administration as a constraint to their autonomy in the classroom. For these women, autonomy was considered essential to their agency as teachers. Most indicated a decrease in teacher autonomy over the course of their careers as a result of increased administrative control over curricula and accountability standards. Women in the second cohort likely never experienced the same degree of curricular autonomy as women in the first cohort and thus, did not have a point of comparison. These women saw their agency to be most impacted by how they were valued as teachers. The messages they received about their value were communicated through both larger societal perceptions of teachers (as seen in the media or from close family members) as well as through communication with the administration in their respective districts. The high demands that administrators placed on teachers' workloads combined with a lack of support gave these teachers a sense of powerlessness. Teachers in both cohorts saw administration's imposition of inappropriate standards and curricula as delegitimizing to teachers' professional knowledge. They considered this a fundamental example of administration overstepping their bounds without respect for teachers and contributed to teachers' perception that they were undervalued within the system.

While teachers overwhelmingly agreed that the administrative hierarchy within the education system was repressive to their agency, the ways that teachers interpreted agency was varied. Many teachers expressed having a high level of agency on the classroom level and less on a district or system-wide level. Others, however, viewed their lack of agency on district or system-wide levels as debilitating to their classroom level agency. In order to enhance their agency within the classroom, they saw the need to exercise agency on a policy level. These teachers looked to collaboration with fellow teachers, involvement in professional organizations, and the teacher's union as sources of agency that held the potential to bring far-reaching benefits to teachers and students.

This variation in how teachers interpreted their agency challenged the notion that the structural hierarchy in education determines teacher agency. Teachers were certainly impacted by the structural hierarchy in repressive ways, but they also reinserted their agency within the hierarchy and demonstrated the will to resist subordination. While many teachers saw administrative constraints increasing over their teaching careers with increased standardization and the implementation of accountability and performativity measures, others highlighted the important work of teachers' organizations and teacher's unions in improving working conditions and advocating for their students. In other words, my results reflect simultaneous changes in both the administrative constraints placed on teachers and in teachers' will to resist those constraints and assert their agency.

The hierarchical constraints placed on teachers have certainly changed. Women were once obligated by administrative forces to follow strict dress codes and prejudiced considerations of marital status in order to uphold a prescriptive image of the ideal female teacher. Today, the constraints that women articulated were less explicitly gendered.

Teachers saw their agency and autonomy challenged instead by an increase in accountability and performativity measures. As the literature suggests, although the constraints placed on teachers have changed over time, the fundamental hierarchy set in place during the feminization period has not. The administration, still overwhelmingly dominated by men, continues to develop and enforce new mechanisms of control while teachers, mostly women, employ counterstrategies to resist those mechanisms. This process is by no means unilateral. As teachers assert their agency and challenge the hierarchy, the mechanisms of control continue to evolve.⁷³

Together, my findings indicate that the relationship between individual motivation and structural change is not as straightforward as previously implied. My research does not show that the occupation has become either more or less “repressive” to women’s agency as teachers. Nor do I conclude that women’s motivations have altogether changed. Rather, as I explain in the following section, as the teaching occupation becomes less socio-politically significant for women and the limits placed on teachers change, women re-articulate their motivations to teach and simultaneously work to re-articulate their positions within the system.

Discussion

My participants were not asked nor expected to reflect on the gendered history and structures of the teaching occupation. Thus, I am unable to draw direct conclusions as to how gender impacts their perceived agency and value. Despite this, my participants' responses invoked important connections to the literature on teaching and gender. In this section, I revisit the relationship between teachers' agency and structural change as well as the contradictions in how teachers are valued. I suggest that the way in which teachers articulate their initial and sustained commitment to teaching reflects a continued struggle to re-articulate their agency and value in the occupation.

Teachers face contradictions in how their work is determined and valued. On the one hand, the teaching occupation carries with it a legacy of female subordination derived from the historical and concurrent gendered hierarchy in education. On the other hand, the occupation can be seen as a site of female empowerment where teachers continue to challenge the constraints of their position and work to assert their agency within the system. Additionally, there is a paradox in how teachers are valued. Teachers are constructed, conceptualized, and valued as altruistic agents, yet it is the same altruistic image of teachers that permits their work to be undervalued in the labor market. In re-asserting their commitment to teaching and striving to improve their working conditions, teachers are implicitly working to re-define their agency and value within the system.

In this process, teachers are placed in a double bind. If they seek improved status, compensation, and agency, they are no longer seen as altruistic agents. In reasserting their altruistic motivations, however, teachers adopt and reinforce the very ideals that justified their undervalued status in the first place. Thus, in considering the socio-political

significance of teaching for women, we find that although the occupation played a pivotal role in women's political development initially, the foundations upon which their entry to the occupation was built continue to serve as barriers to teachers' autonomy and authority.

The teacher shortage may be a result of shifts in the job market and in the changing landscape of job opportunities for women. However, the way that teachers' work, and women's work, is undervalued remains fundamentally unchanged. Not until these values and the ongoing contradictions in the teaching occupation are recognized can we begin to understand teachers' behaviors in the labor market and address issues of recruitment and retention currently undermining public education.

Conclusion

The feminized history of the teaching occupation continues to impact teachers today. There is wide consensus that the gendered conception of the occupation accounts for teaching's low professional status. Despite growing scholarship on teacher motivation, few scholars have examined whether or not teachers are reflective of their subordinate status within the education system. My study suggests that teachers' motivations may indeed be impacted by how they conceptualize their agency and value on a systemic level. In other words, the legacy of teacher subordination may help to explain why the number of women entering teaching is in decline. Above all, my research points to the need for more critical studies on the current teacher shortage. In an effort to integrate theory and practice, scholars conducting empirical research on teacher motivation and teacher supply should take into serious consideration the breadth of scholarship on occupation and gender and on the feminization of teaching specifically. My intent in conducting this study was to begin to bridge this gap.

My methodology, however, includes several limitations. First, my use of snowball sampling may have attracted teachers that shared similar characteristics and experiences with one another. In addition, the fact that my respondents volunteered to participate as opposed to being randomly selected may have attracted teachers that exhibit higher levels of agency to begin with. The small sample size also makes it difficult to generalize beyond my interviews.

My sample is also perhaps limited by the lack of career diversity among participants. All study participants were either still teaching or had retired late in their career. That is, there were no respondents who left the occupation prematurely and

therefore my sample does not accurately reflect the high rates of attrition common to the field. Further, it is possible that differences in how younger teachers articulate their motivations may be more a reflection of their limited experience than of the time period during which they entered teaching. Future studies should attempt to structure questions in such a way as to better account for this distinction. My results also do not consider how differences in participants' pre-service training may have impacted their responses. While the majority of my participants completed traditional licensure programs, two participated in alternative, though rigorous, licensure programs. Lastly, the all-female composition of my sample raises important questions. Although I consider gender to be a structural force that impacts all teachers, future studies should explore the differences in how such forces impact male and female teachers and whether or not their motivations vary as a result.

The geographic aspect of my sample also deserves attention. While the educational climate in California often indicates and influences nation-wide trends, it does not serve as a representative case. California consistently ranks among the worst in the nation in regard to student test scores, student-teacher ratios, high school dropout rates, and funding distribution. The Bay Area, as a specific sub region, is also unique. Teachers' attitudes are likely in tune with the history of progressive politics and strong union presence in the area. As a result, teachers in the Bay Area may experience more autonomy and exercise more agency than other teachers. Teachers in other regions, however, may face greater administrative constraints and be even more affected by the history of subordination I identify. A larger and nationally representative sample of

teachers is needed to corroborate my findings as well as identify further distinctions among teacher cohorts.

Still, my findings hold important implications for future research on teacher motivation and the current teacher shortage. First, they demonstrate that teachers' internal and external motivations to teach are highly interrelated and must be studied as such. Second, and perhaps more critically, they suggest that making minimal changes to improve teacher supply, such as adjustments to teacher compensation or improving recruitment tactics for new teachers, is not enough to overcome close to two centuries of teacher subordination. Instead, we must fundamentally reconsider how teachers are valued within the hierarchy of education and in relation to other professions. This is impossible to do without bringing gender more explicitly into the conversation of the teacher shortage. While praising teachers for their altruism may be a worthy practice, it is not a sustainable one. Instead, we must value teachers based on the true societal importance of their work and their ability to exercise intellectual authority.

Bibliography

- Acker, S. 1983. Women and teaching: A semi-detached sociology of a semi-profession. In S. Walker & L. Barton (Eds.), *Gender, class and society*. Sussex: Falmer Press.
- Apple, M. W. 1985. Teaching and "women's work": A comparative historical and ideological analysis. *Teachers College Record*, 86, 445-473.
- Bastick, T. 2000. The Measurement of Teacher Motivation: Cross-Cultural and Gender Comparisons. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Cross-Cultural Research (29th, New Orleans, LA, February 2000).
- Beijaard, D. 2000. "Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Identity: An Exploratory Study from a Personal Knowledge Perspective." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 16 (7): 749-764.
- Beijaard, Douwe, Pauline C. Meijer, Greta Morine- Dersheimer, and Tillema Harm. 2005. *Teacher Professional Development in Changing Conditions*. Springer Science & Business Media,
- Bolton, Sharon, and Daniel Muzio. 2008. "The Paradoxical Processes of Feminization in the Professions: The Case of Established, Aspiring and Semi-Professions." *Work, Employment & Society* 22 (2): 281-299.
- Clifford, G. J. 1989. Man/women/teacher: Gender, family, and career in American educational history. In D. Warren (Ed.), *American teachers: Histories of a profession at work*. New York: Macmillan.
- Cochran-Smith, Marilyn, and Mary Kim Fries. 2001. "Sticks, Stones, and Ideology: The Discourse of Reform in Teacher Education." *Educational Researcher* 30, no. 8 (n.d.): 3-15.
- Corcoran, Sean P., Sylvia Allegretto, and Lawrence Mishel. 2010. "The Teacher Penalty: An update through." *Economic Policy Institute*. March 30, 2011.
- Day, Christopher, Alison Kington, Gordon Stobart, and Pam Sammons. 2006. "The Personal and Professional Selves of Teachers: Stable and Unstable Identities." *British Educational Research Journal* 32, no. 4

: 601–16.

- Day, Christopher. 2002. "School Reform and Transitions in Teacher Professionalism and Identity." *International Journal of Educational Research* 37, no. 8: 677–92.
- Dillabough, Jo-Anne. 1999. "Gender Politics and Conceptions of the Modern Teacher: Women, Identity and Professionalism." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 20 (3): 373-94.
- Elfers, A. M., Plecki, M. L., & Knapp, M. S. 2006. Teacher mobility: Looking more closely at "the movers" within a state system. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 81(3), 94–127.
- Evetts, Julia. 2000. "Analysing Change in Women's Careers: Culture, Structure and Action Dimensions." *Gender, Work & Organization* 7 (1): 57-67.
- Feng, Li. 2009. "Opportunity Wages, Classroom Characteristics, and Teacher Mobility." *Southern Economic Journal* 75 (4): 1165-1190.
- Goldstein, Dana. 2014. *The Teacher Wars : A History of America's Most Embattled Profession*. First edition. New York: Doubleday.
- Grumet, M. 1988. *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Grissom, Jason, and Katharine Strunk. "How Should School Districts Shape Teacher Salary Schedules? Linking School Performance to Pay Structure in Traditional Compensation Schemes." *Educational Policy* 26, no. 5 (2012): 663–95.
- Guarino, C. M., Santibanez, L., & Daley, G. A. 2006. Teacher recruitment and retention: A review of the recent empirical literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 76(2), 173-208.
- Guarino, C. M., Brown, A. B., & Wyse, A. E. 2011. Can districts keep good teachers in the schools that need them most? *Economics of Education Review*, 30, 5, 962–979
- Hargreaves, Andy. 1995. "Changing Teachers, Changing Times: Teachers' Work and Culture in the Postmodern Age." *American Journal of Education* 103 (3): 326
- Hoffman, Nancy. 1981. *Woman's "true" Profession : Voices from the History of Teaching*. Women's lives/women's work; Women's lives, women's work. Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist
- Hoxby, C. M., & Leigh, A. 2005. Wage distortion: Why America's top female college graduates aren't teaching. *Education Next*, 5(2), 50-56. Press.
- Imazeki, J. 2008. Attracting and retaining teachers in high-need schools: Do financial incentives make financial sense? Retrieved from <http://www-rohan.sdsu>.
- Ingersoll, R. 2001. Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: An organizational analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(3), 499–534. 3758-01
- Ingersoll, R., Merrill, L., & Stuckey, D. 2014. Seven trends: the transformation of the teaching force, updated April 2014. CPRE Report (#RR-80). Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania.
- Jeffrey, Bob, and Geoff Troman. 2009. "Creative and Performativity Practices in Primary Schools: A Foucauldian Perspective." University of Manchester, Manchester, UK.
- Kirk, John, and Christine Wall. 2010. "Resilience and Loss in Work Identities: A Narrative Analysis of Some Retired Teachers' Work-Life Histories." *British Educational Research Journal* 36, no. 4 (August 2010): 627–41.

- Konstantopoulos, Spyros. 2014. "Teacher Effects, Value-Added Models, and Accountability." *Teachers College Record* 116 (1).
- Kyriacou, C. and Coulthard, M. 2000. Undergraduates' views of teaching as a career choice. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 16 (2), 117-26.
- Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. 2002. Teacher sorting and the plight of urban schools: A descriptive analysis. *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 24(1), 37–62.
- Loeb, S., Darling-Hammond, L., & Luczak, J. 2005. How teaching conditions predict teacher turnover in California schools. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 80(3), 44-70.
- MacDonald, Victoria-María. 1999. "The Paradox of Bureaucratization: New Views on Progressive Era Teachers and the Development of a Woman's Profession". *History of Education Quarterly* 39 (4). [History of Education Society, Wiley]: 427–53.
- Manna, Paul. 2011. *Collision Course : Federal Education Policy Meets State and Local Realities*. Public affairs and policy administration series. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Milanowski, A. T., Longwell-Grice, H., Saffold, F., Jones, J., Schomisch, K., & Odden, A. (2009). Recruiting new teachers to urban school districts: What incentives will work? *International Journal of Education Policy & Leadership*, 4(8), 1-13.
- Montgomery, Sarah E. 2009. "Why Men Left: Reconsidering the Feminization of Teaching in the Nineteenth Century." *American Educational History Journal* 36 (1): 219-236. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. *Perspectives on Politics* 12, no. 01 (2014): 274–75.
- Nias, Jennifer. 2002. *Primary Teachers Talking: A Study of Teaching As Work* "Teacher Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction: Herzberg's 'Two-Factor' Hypothesis Revisited." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 2, no. 3 (1981): 235–46.
- Nias, Jennifer. "Teaching and the Self." *Cambridge Journal of Education* 17, no. 3 1987. 178–85.
- Noddings, Nel. 1990. "Feminist Critiques in the Professions". *Review of Research in Education* 16. [Sage Publications, Inc., American Educational Research Association]: 393–424.
- Olashinde, M.O. 1972. An analytical study of the motives of primary school teachers for choosing teaching as a career. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 23 (2).
- Pisapia, Michael Callaghan. 2010. "Public Education and the Role of Women in American Political Development, 1852-1979," <http://www.library.wisc.edu/databases/connect/dissertations.html>.
- Pisapia, Michael Callaghan. 2010. "The Authority of Women in the Political Development of American Public Education, 1860–1930." *Studies in American Political Development* 24
- Pisapia, Michael Callaghan. 2012. "Teaching Marianne and Uncle Sam: Public Education, State Centralization, and Teacher Unionism in France and the United States. By Toloudis Nicholas
- Podgursky, M., & Springer, M. G. (2010). Market and performance-related reforms of teacher compensation: A review of recent practices, policies, and research

- (program on education policy and governance working paper series). Retrieved from <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/MeritPayPapers/Podgursky>
- Ravitch, Diane. 2010. *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*. New York: Basic Books.
- Rickman, B. D., & Parker, C. D. (1990). Alternative wages and teacher mobility: A human capital approach. *Economics of Education Review*, 9(1), 73-79.
- Rury, M. W. 1989. Who became teachers? The social characteristics of teachers in American history. In D. Warren (Ed.), *American teachers: Histories of a profession at work*. New York: Macmillan.
- Sadker, D. & Sadker, M. 1989. Sexism in American education: the hidden curriculum. In D. Warren (Ed.) *American Teachers: Histories of a Profession at Work*. New York: Macmillan.
- Sawchuck S. 2009. School leaders target salary reform toward newer teachers. *Education Week*.
- Sedlak, M. W. 1989. Let us go buy a school master: Historical perspectives on the hiring of teachers in the United States, 1750-1980. D. Warren (Ed.), *American teacher: Histories of a profession at work*.
- Sedlak M. W., & Schlossman, S. 1986. Who will teach? Historical perspectives on the changing appeal of teaching as a profession. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation
- Sinclair, C. 2008. Initial and changing student teacher motivation and commitment to teaching. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 36(2), 79-104.
- Skorikov, Vladimir B., and Fred W. Vondracek. "Occupational Identity." In *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, edited by Seth J. Schwartz, Koen Luyckx, and Vivian L. Vignoles, 693–714. Springer New York, 2011.
- Springer and Prince, C. D. 2003. Higher pay in hard-to-staff schools: The case for financial incentives. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Steele, J. L., Murnane, R. J., & Willett, J. B. 2010. Do financial incentives help low-performing schools attract and keep academically talented teachers? Evidence from California. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 29, 451-478.
- Strober, Myra H., and Audri Gordon Lanford. 1986. "The Feminization of Public School Teaching: Cross-sectional Analysis, 1850-1880". *Signs* 11 (2). University of Chicago Press: 212–35.
- Tyack, David B., and Elisabeth. Hansot. 1982. *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1980*. New York: Basic Books.
- Wall, Christine. 2008. "Picturing an Occupational Identity: Images of Teachers in Careers and Trade Union Publications 1940-2000." *History of Education* 37, no. 2. 317–40.
- Watt, H.M. & Richardson, P.W. 2007. Motivational factors influencing teaching as a career choice: development and validation of the FIT-Choice scale. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 75, 167-202.
- Watt, H.M. & Richardson, P.W. 2008. Motivations, perceptions, and aspirations concerning teaching as a career for different types of beginning teachers. *Learning and Instruction*, 18(5). 408-428.

- Weeks, Kathi. 2011. *The Problem with Work : Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries*. A John Hope Franklin Center Book. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Weeks, Kathi. 2009. ""Hours for What We Will": Work, Family, and the Movement for Shorter Hours." *Feminist Studies : FS* 35 (1): 101
- Zembylas, M. & Chubbuck, S. (in press). The intersection of identity, beliefs, and politics to conceptualizing 'teacher identity'. In H. Fives & M. Gill (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teachers' beliefs*. New York: Routledge.