

## THEIR FIRST GREAT PUBLIC PROFESSION

"Everywhere they were demonstrating their capacity as teachers; and, in some places they were becoming superintendents and principals of schools. Because of their prominence in this, their first great public profession, it came to be generally recognized that they should have a voice in the control of school affairs." So wrote Thomas Woody in his 1929 classic work, *A History of Women's Education in the United States*, as he explained how women's participation in school work had moved them closer to full suffrage.<sup>1</sup> Woody's observation would have seemed absurd a century earlier because men, not women, taught children and tutored aspiring young scholars. By the time he penned these words, however, teaching had witnessed a dramatic transformation in which women not only had filled the ranks of teachers and gained "a voice in the control of school affairs," but some hoped that through leadership of their new profession women would demonstrate to the world the public service of which they were capable.

The emergence of women teachers in the 1800s is remarkable considering long-standing Western traditions prohibiting women from this work. In one of the first recorded instances of formal teaching, ancient Sumerian priests passed the lucrative craft of accounting on only to their sons. Through the millennia various religions have disallowed the education of females, and they have certainly prohibited the engagement of women as instructors, tutors, guides, or religious leaders. Christian biblical dictates proscribing women from teaching influenced the early New England Puritan settlers who forced Anne Hutchinson to cease her popular public scriptural lessons.<sup>2</sup> Tradition demanded that men provide the religious wisdom to their communities, not women. Within the home, literate males led their families in scripture readings and taught children to read well enough to participate. Women were to respect and rely on men's authority; thus they were thought to have little need of education, much less were they to provide it.

Eventually as the lives of European settlers grew more complex, socially interconnected, and economically differentiated, tutors and

schoolmasters offered their services to families who could afford them. Some of these early colonial instructors were indentured servants working off their transcontinental travel expenses. A few had studied for a time in European colleges and universities. Such men tutored boys in the community to make extra money in addition to other employment. Occasionally schoolmasters established schools and academies and otherwise undertook full-time teaching duties. Only relatively well-to-do colonial families could afford tuition to these institutions.

As colonial populations grew, the demand for schooling increased. In the mid-seventeenth century, Massachusetts passed laws requiring parents to ensure that their children received an education. After the colonies declared independence, Massachusetts and Connecticut enacted legislation requiring local school tax collection to provide education for children whose families could not otherwise afford tuition to private institutions.

This expansion of schooling obviously required the services of an enlarged pool of qualified schoolmasters; however, such teachers were not abundantly available. A few of the men tapped for teaching duties had attended college and hoped to undertake promising careers in the ministry, law, medicine, business, or politics. These men usually did not envision school teaching as their final profession. Instead, they undertook the work as a means of establishing themselves in their communities while providing a socially valuable, yet relatively inexpensive service.

Typically, however, communities struggled to find educated and capable men willing to serve as schoolmasters. Ambitious men frequently pursued lucrative opportunities in other endeavors, and few communities taxed themselves sufficiently to support a well-recommended schoolmaster. As a result, men desperate enough to accept the meager wages and difficult working conditions of the classroom acquired the reputation as ne'er-do-wells who could succeed at little else. This reputation was further sullied by the popular perception that schoolmasters were inclined toward harsh disciplinary methods.<sup>3</sup> Walt Whitman evoked the pedagogue archetype when he wrote that "the word school-teacher is identified with a dozen unpleasant and ridiculous associations—a sour face, a whip, hard knuckles snapped on tender heads, no gentle, fatherly kindness, no inciting of young ambition in its noble phrases, none of the beautifiers of authority, but all that is small, ludicrous, and in after life productive of indignation."<sup>4</sup>

In spite of the paucity of well-educated and respected schoolmasters, communities initially refrained from hiring women for school teaching duties. First, women were considered less intelligent than men

and therefore an education would be wasted on them. Second, because women generally received little, if any academic preparation themselves, they had little to offer others. Besides, young working-class and poor White women commonly worked long hours as domestic servants in middle-class homes; therefore they hardly enjoyed the opportunity to attend school, much less teach. And in the plantation economy of the South, Black women who labored in enslavement faced severe punishment, sometimes death, if they sought or obtained any measure of formal education, on which appointment to teaching positions was contingent. Middle-class White women who might have had the time and resources to pursue education sufficient for teaching responsibilities would have lost status by venturing into the realm of paid labor. Any work outside the home would have conflicted with the traditional expectation that they manage their own households, thus pleasing their husbands and ultimately submitting to male authority.<sup>5</sup>

A few notable persons disagreed with the worthiness of providing formal education for women, however. In the year of American independence, Abigail Adams contended that the young democracy, grounded in Enlightenment faith in reason and respect for humanity, should offer educational opportunities to women as well as men. Adams implored her husband, John, that "if we mean to have Heroes, Statesmen and Philosophers, we should have learned women."<sup>6</sup> While Adams's plea was ignored, Benjamin Rush, a physician and another proponent of women's education, offered a different argument. He asserted that women could serve the country best by providing some modest instruction to their own children, especially their sons; therefore women should receive sufficient education to enhance their motherly duties. He explained: "The equal share that every citizen has in the liberty and the possible share he may have in the government of our country make it necessary that our ladies should be qualified to a certain degree by a peculiar and suitable education, to concur in instructing their sons in the principles of liberty and government."<sup>7</sup> Thus Rush provided generally accepted rhetoric justifying education for females: women should receive education for the benefit of their sons, and by extension, the republic. Consequently, Rush's ideology of republican motherhood failed to challenge existing gender roles and relations deeply, perhaps a requirement for its acceptance at the time.

In spite of its flaws, the ideology of republican motherhood justified a surge in women's opportunities for formal education from 1790 to 1850. During these years a variety of educational institutions at all levels emerged to serve the growing needs of women eager to avail themselves of this new privilege. Seminaries, academies, and colleges opened

their doors to female applicants. Some schools admitted females and males on an equal basis, while others were established only for single-sex education. Though curricula varied by institution, female academies in particular offered young middle-class women rigorous liberal studies that in some cases rivaled the quality of elite male academies.<sup>8</sup>

Women who pursued formal studies later usually taught their own children rudimentary academic skills. Some women took in neighboring children and offered them instruction as well. These "dame schools," as they were called, prepared children for eventual enrollment in schools or academies. Although dame schools are generally recounted in contemporary histories of education as an interesting, though hardly critical development in the rise of American schooling, Sally Schwager argues that dame schools represent a high point of women's authority in education because women set the schools up in their own homes, designed their curricula, prepared materials, admitted students, and in every respect controlled the conditions of schooling without oversight by supervisors or other governmental agencies.<sup>9</sup> They exercised their enlarged duties for republican motherhood in a spirit of independence unmatched by other endeavors available to them at the time. They saw as their mission the inculcation in youth of civic virtues as well as reading, writing, and other skills necessary for civic participation. Through teaching they believed they were performing a patriotic duty by contributing to the vitality of the young democracy, which consequently justified their larger role in community work.

Eventually women's opportunities for teaching broadened beyond dame schools. Some communities experimented with hiring women to teach in local schools when men were unavailable or otherwise needed assistance. And because the number of marriageable males in some East Coast communities declined as young men pushed westward to seek their fortune, parents quickly recognized the value of preparing their unmarried daughters for possible school-teaching responsibilities. These "surplus women," as they were called, could support themselves through teaching, however modestly, and ease the economic burden on their families.<sup>10</sup>

By the early nineteenth century, both single and married women had begun to distinguish themselves in the work of schooling. For middle-class women, the stigma of working outside the home had begun to vanish as school teaching became a respectable occupation. At last some working-class and poor women also enjoyed access to the formal education and preparation necessary for teaching; they typically supported themselves through teaching even as they pursued their own studies.

A few enjoyed exemplary careers, such as the handful of New England women who worked their way through district schools and academies and eventually established prominent women's educational institutions. Sarah Pierce started her academy in Litchfield, Connecticut, in 1791. The academy quickly grew as enrollments increased and as she garnered financial support from the community.<sup>11</sup> Catharine Beecher taught at Pierce's academy before establishing her own seminary. In 1823, Beecher rented a modest room for her classes in the center of Hartford. From these humble beginnings, she created the Hartford Female Seminary complete with a large building, a full faculty, and an eminent board of trustees. Kathryn Kish Sklar notes that the Hartford Female Seminary was widely recognized as "one of the most significant advances made in early nineteenth-century education for women."<sup>12</sup>

Emma Willard founded the Troy Female Seminary in 1821, an institution designed primarily to offer women academic preparation as intellectually rigorous as that offered in elite men's colleges. So determined was Willard to see Troy realize this goal that she appealed to the governor of New York for funding by arguing that only educated mothers could foster the kind of individual character that would create prosperity; and because it was the government's duty to provide for national prosperity, the government should fund women's education.<sup>13</sup> Even though the governor did not allocate funds for Troy, the seminary eventually became an important center of women's intellectual, political, social, and economic growth. Finally, beyond Pierce, Beecher, and Willard, Mary Lyon established yet another school for women. After having worked with Zilpah Grant at the Ipswich Seminary, Lyon launched Mt. Holyoke in 1837, the first fully endowed women's institution.<sup>14</sup>

Like other women's institutions of the time, these seminaries prepared women for future careers as teachers. Pierce, Willard, Beecher, Lyon, Grant, and other leading educators of women advocated the notion that females were intellectually capable and that they should be trained specifically for a profession. Since teaching had become acceptable employment for White women across economic strata, the preparation for such work offered added reason for women to seek formal education. When women graduated, teaching opportunities awaited them. There was a catch, though. Most of these early jobs existed outside the Northeast and in remote regions of the continent. Many of them required young women to face physical danger in transit, difficult working conditions, and meager wages when communities had bothered to collect school taxes at all. Occasionally a woman arrived in her designated new community only to discover that no schoolhouse

existed. In spite of such daunting challenges, these women demonstrated their independence, resourcefulness, and intellectual capabilities. They impressed their communities, who in turn accorded them a large measure of respect.

While some extraordinary women graduates of seminaries and academies proved their mettle through teaching in far-flung locations, not everyone greeted educated women with open arms. When a Kentucky college for women opened in 1835, a writer for the local paper complained that the degrees awarded by the institution such as M.P.L., or Mistress of Polite Literature, took women outside their acceptable places in polite society. If the institution were to continue, he argued in the satirical piece, the degrees should be replaced by the "M.P.M. (Mistress of Pudding Making), M.D.N. (Mistress of Darning Needle)." "Well qualified Professors," he continued, could be found "from among the farmers' wives, and especially from some of the best regulated kitchens, to teach the young ladies the useful art of house-wifery." In the end, if graduates succeeded in "making their husband's fireside comfortable," then they could happily anticipate receiving the high degrees of "R.W. (the Respectable Wife), H.H. (Of a Happy Husband); and M.W.R.F. (Mother of a Well Regulated Family)."<sup>15</sup>

In spite of such resistance to women's formal education and to their expanded roles outside the home and in school teaching, women continued to pursue educational opportunities with a thirst and drive characteristic of persons long deprived. Perhaps American women possessed unique character qualities of independence and awareness that were forged in revolutionary times and further shaped by the rough wilderness and uncharted opportunities of a developing nation. Alexis de Tocqueville certainly thought so. In his landmark 1835 study, *Democracy in America*, the visiting Frenchman observed that "nowhere are young women surrendered so early or so completely to their own guidance."<sup>16</sup>

Yet even though single American women may have enjoyed an independence far greater than their European counterparts, de Tocqueville paradoxically noted that "the independence of woman is irrecoverably lost in the bonds of matrimony. If an unmarried woman is less constrained there than elsewhere, a wife is subjected to stricter obligations . . . [living] in the home of her husband as if it were a cloister."<sup>17</sup> While young single women might perhaps leverage the right to formal education and work outside the home into an independence somewhat unavailable to European women at the time, these rights met their strict limits in the institution of marriage. Thus women might enjoy radically

new opportunities at one stage of their lives while being expected to return to conservative, traditional limits at another.

Sally Schwager describes women's educational opportunities during this time as configured to satisfy both sides of the paradox simultaneously: "that education for women served the conservative function of preserving dominant cultural values of domesticity and subservience, while at the same time it provided women with the skills, the insights, and the desire to advance nontraditional values and, in some cases, even radical change."<sup>18</sup> Such a system ultimately set limits on the extent to which women might resist their traditional roles, even though it also allowed them to leverage such roles into expanded opportunities. Perhaps nowhere was this as true as in the formal creation of teaching as "women's true profession."

In the first half of the nineteenth century, hundreds of ambitious women taught in schoolhouses scattered through remote regions of the country. In spite of women's increasing presence in teaching, men still presided over most classrooms, especially in urban areas. The rapid spread of common schooling throughout the states and territories, however, created such an intense need for new teachers that local school officials struggled to find people qualified to fill available positions. Traditional factions preferred males, but they found it impractical to locate men willing to work for relatively low wages. Some communities dared to hire women, especially after hearing success stories about the capable women teachers educated and inspired by the likes of Emma Willard and Catharine Beecher. However, for large numbers of communities to hire women rather than men, voting, taxpaying citizens needed justification for the practice, justification powerful enough to compel the reversal of thousands of years of tradition.

Catharine Beecher was more than prepared to address this matter. She had long maintained that women made natural teachers. For one thing, she argued they were better suited to working with children than men. More importantly, though, Beecher believed that women should have dominion over the domestic sphere, and by extension, any work associated with the home. Because children were considered part of the domestic sphere, Beecher contended that it should be women's duty to care for them and teach them. She held that teaching "is woman's natural profession. . . . It is ordained by infinite wisdom, that, as in the family, so in the social state, the interest of young children and of women are one and the same."<sup>19</sup>

Horace Mann, the first state secretary of education in Massachusetts and a childhood friend of Beecher's, faced the immense problem of identifying a capable and readily available source of teachers. When Mann assumed the position of secretary in 1837, he confronted the challenge of transforming the state's poorly funded and ragged collection of district schools into well-funded models of excellence and consistency. Although Mann's position initially carried very little power, he maximized his influence by studying the schools of the state thoroughly and compiling a series of twelve widely distributed annual reports that he hoped would embarrass apathetic communities into upgrading and improving their schools.

Mann devoted an entire report to addressing the impending shortage of qualified and trained teachers. He concluded that the practice of hiring women teachers would offer the most viable solution to the teacher shortage. He agreed with Beecher's contention that women made natural teachers because they inherently possessed several unique qualities. For example, he lauded women's natural maternal qualities. He held that the "greater intensity of the parental instinct in the female sex, their natural love for the society of children, and the superior gentleness and forbearance of their dispositions . . . lead them to mildness rather than severity, to the use of hope rather than of fear as a motive of action, and to the various arts of encouragement rather than to annoyances and compulsion in their management of the young."<sup>20</sup>

Another supposedly natural quality possessed by women teachers was their womanly affection. Mann held that women's affectional qualities outstripped their intellectual abilities, which made them quite suitable as teachers of the young. Moreover, he regarded the tender nurturance of the emotional needs of children as women's distinct calling: "If the intellect of woman, like that of man, has the sharpness and the penetrancy of iron and of steel, it must also be as cold and as hard. No! but to breathe pure and exalted sentiments into young and tender hearts . . . this is her high and holy mission."<sup>21</sup>

Some advocates of women teachers went beyond merely arguing that women made natural teachers to contending that they were clearly superior to men. The New York Committee on Hiring Women Teachers concluded that "while man's nature is rough, stern, impatient, ambitious, hers is gentle, tender, enduring, unambitious. One always wins; the other sometimes repels; the one is loved; the other sometimes feared." Beecher elaborated further: "That young women are the best teachers has been proved and acknowledged by those men who have made trial of the gentle sex in schools of the most difficult description, because of the superior tact and moral power natural to the female character."



Catharine's sister, Harriett Beecher Stowe, agreed. She contended that "if men have more knowledge they have less talent at communicating it, nor have they the patience, the long-suffering, and gentleness necessary to superintend the formation of character."<sup>22</sup>

Women, it was argued, would also bring a host of other advantages to the classroom if the public would only hire them. To begin with, Beecher explained that women tended to put their work first because of their self-denying nature. A second argument she forwarded played insidiously on Protestant fears of Catholic domination in the states. Since Catholics in recent centuries had begun to support the education of women and their employment as teachers, Protestants would have to consider doing so as well, she argued.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps the most compelling argument for the hiring of women teachers concerned cost. Because women had few other job opportunities available outside the home, and many women eagerly anticipated the chance for economic independence, education, and public service, large numbers of women enthusiastically pursued teaching. Consequently, they could be hired for relatively little money, certainly much less than that demanded by men. Male teachers customarily would not work for the wages offered by some districts. Beecher maintained that women needed lower salaries because they "can afford to teach for one-half, or even less, the salary which men would ask, because the female teacher has only herself; she does not look forward to the duty of supporting a family, should she marry; nor has she the ambition to amass a fortune."<sup>24</sup> In school districts where barely enough money could be raised to build a schoolhouse, much less to sustain an educational program, the prospect of hiring inexpensive labor proved irresistibly enticing.

Not everyone shared the enthusiasm for women teachers professed by Beecher and Mann, however. One of the greatest problems voiced by critics concerned women's ability, or perhaps inability to control their students, especially older males. Women were thought to be delicate and unable to discipline disruptive students properly. Certainly discipline concerned many communities because students were known to beat or even throw unpopular male teachers from the schoolhouse occasionally. One superintendent wrote in 1865 that "it must be acknowledged that in a few cases the 'big boys' are a little unruly."<sup>25</sup> Another simply indicated that a woman teacher should not be hired "for the same reason that she cannot so well manage a vicious horse or other animal, as a man may do."<sup>26</sup>

In spite of complaints about women's purported inability to control students, school districts around the country cautiously hired

women teachers, largely because in the final analysis the choice seemed expedient. Within a few years, however, school districts not only hired women, but actively sought them out. Horace Mann summarized: "Six or eight years ago when the employment of female teachers was recommended to school committees, not a little was said against the adoption of the suggestion. But one committee after another was induced to try the experiment and the success has been so great that the voice of opposition is now silenced."<sup>27</sup>

As teaching opportunities opened to them, hundreds of thousands of women prepared themselves for their new careers. In spite of the difficult working conditions and low wages, women found that school teaching offered them advantages previously unimaginable. First, women who intended to teach were justified in seeking their own education. When asked why they wanted to attend institutions of higher education, they could assure skeptical friends and family members that they needed education for their career plans. Some from humble homes might be able to study only at a district school before being summoned into local service. Others could seek higher education at a variety of institutions such as normal schools, academies, seminaries, and colleges. Higher education was no longer viewed only as ornamental or unnecessary for these women.

A second advantage offered by teaching was that because of the wages paid, large numbers of middle-class women were able to live independently of their families for the first time. Previously, daughters were expected to perform domestic duties within their family's home until they married and undertook these same duties for their husbands. Women customarily did not pursue paid labor because it demanded that their allegiance be split between work and their husbands or fathers. Teaching offered women a chance to pursue work that did not conflict with their expected social roles, yet still allowed them a measure of economic independence. Working-class and poor women whose economic needs outweighed their concern for social propriety could earn wages in the teaching profession, which had the added benefit of conferring middle-class status.<sup>28</sup>

With economic independence came a third benefit of teaching: social independence. Fewer women felt compelled to marry. Women had previously faced the choice of marrying men—even ones they despised—depending on their families, or living in poverty with no one to support them. Some women who married favorably found that the institution of marriage robbed them of their independence and self-reliance. A few chose to teach rather than marry. Others taught until a suitable marriage offer presented itself. Clearly teaching offered women new options.

A fourth advantage of teaching was that women could control a physical space of their own: the schoolhouse. There were not many such female-controlled areas, especially public places. Arguably, married women governed the functions within their homes; however, their husbands still exercised ultimate authority there. Even though schoolteachers were supervised periodically by district administrators who rode from schoolhouse to schoolhouse, the women who taught in schoolhouses largely determined when the school day would begin and end, who could enter and leave, the arrangements within the building, and other conditions. In some cases the schoolhouse even provided women teachers with a place to live. The privacy afforded them granted a measure of freedom from the watchful eyes of community members, privacy they could not have enjoyed while boarding in the homes of community families or local boarding houses.<sup>29</sup>

A fifth important advantage women found in teaching was that it made them feel they were contributing to the public good. Said one teacher, "No profession affords greater opportunities for doing good than that of teaching; and we consider this as being the highest inducement to influence a person to engage in it."<sup>30</sup> Such idealism extended into several different social arenas. First, Beecher advocated the notion that women's work in teaching would aid in national unification. It was women's patriotic duty to teach and further the cause of nationalism.<sup>31</sup> Other women who felt socially empowered through teaching went on to become temperance workers, abolitionists, and suffragists.<sup>32</sup> If women had been confined to the home previously, teaching allowed them to expand their reach to the public sphere, where they might address larger social problems.

Women's willingness to take on the work of school teaching solved a thorny employment problem that otherwise would have stunted the common school movement and the promise of basic education for American children. However, not only did these ambitious women fulfill a social need, but they also reaped several significant benefits in return. Through their increased economic, political, social, and intellectual standing, they continued pushing the limits of women's traditional roles. In some ways, teaching allowed women to attain privileges previously available only to men.

As women filled classrooms around the country in the mid-nineteenth century, male teachers found themselves part of an increasingly "feminized" profession, feminized in that women constituted a growing proportion of the teaching ranks, but also feminized in the sense that the work had changed to fit traditional notions of women's

work. Some men departed the schoolhouse in disgust or in search of better wages. A few wondered what it meant that women held the same jobs previously reserved for learned men. Feeling socially isolated among ever-larger numbers of women, schoolmasters developed several strategies for preserving or enhancing their identities as teachers. One strategy involved establishing associations of schoolmasters where men in "women's true profession" could meet each other socially and discuss educational issues among those whom they regarded as their intellectual and social peers.

Associations and fraternal organizations were not uncommon in America during that time. Such groups proliferated in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, facilitated by at least two key technological developments. The penny press, which had made its way to America around 1830, offered an inexpensive means for organizations to publish newsletters and journals by which members could communicate from a distance.<sup>33</sup> Also, improved transportation through better roads, steamboats, and regional train systems allowed widely scattered members to gather from time to time. Teacher associations formed and dedicated themselves to sharing professional knowledge as well as to socializing. In describing the 1886 establishment of the Michigan Schoolmasters' Club, Leslie Butler explains:

What was the driving force that caused the pioneer educators to assemble despite extremely difficult travel, considerable discomfort, and expense involving a depletion of their meager resources? Some of the answers were that teachers— 1) Are more than ordinarily gregarious. 2) Desire to obtain solutions to problems common to all. 3) Are interested in new methods and techniques of teaching. 4) Anticipate profit and pleasure from exchange of experiences. 5) Desire to hear addresses by noted authorities from foreign countries and other states on new subjects and educational projects appearing on the educational horizon. 6) Desire to continue friendly and stimulating relationships.<sup>34</sup>

Male teachers found that the opportunity to socialize with each other held great appeal. Often schoolmasters felt limited in their social outlets because teachers generally were expected to live proper, upstanding lives relatively free of the vices such as drinking or slovenliness that had often tarnished the reputations of early schoolmasters. However, as Willard Waller explained, men who did not "smoke, drink, swear, or tell risqué stories" would tend to be excluded from "the confraternity of men in general, from all barber shop, pool room, and men's

club fellowship."<sup>35</sup> Thus if schoolmasters adhered to unwritten professional standards of behavior, they effectively were barred from socializing with other local men where such behaviors were customary and perhaps a demonstration of proper masculinity. Male teachers found a solution to this difficult dilemma by gathering in exclusively male teacher organizations. They did not have to chomp cigars or swill liquor to be accepted, yet they could still socialize with other men. Perhaps even better for them in the long run, these organizations eventually endeavored to improve the status and conditions of schoolmasters. The men in these groups eventually mastered civic affairs and became skilled political strategists at the local, state, and federal levels.

One of the earliest and most influential of these organizations was the American Institute of Instruction, organized in Boston in 1830. Membership in the institute was generally limited to elite educators and scholars of the time, mainly from New England. Most founding members taught in academies and the majority were college graduates. All members were men. Among other accomplishments, the institute was instrumental in lobbying for the creation of the office of the State Superintendent of Schools in Massachusetts, the position first held by Horace Mann. The group also successfully campaigned for higher teacher salaries. The institute provided members with a chance to talk, debate, and then to put their ideas into action utilizing political mechanisms.<sup>36</sup>

Even though women increasingly filled teaching positions through the middle of the 1800s, the American Institute of Instruction did not allow them to join until 1867. Women then quickly pushed the membership of the institute steeply upward. However, as women's numbers in the previously all-male organization increased, many male members, especially the older, better-educated, and more highly placed members, decided to leave. Some even left school teaching altogether to become professors or business executives. Essentially, as women moved into the organization, men chose to leave and were not replaced. This trend paralleled that of the larger teaching profession. Historian Paul Mattingly sadly recounts how this "incursion of females" signaled the end of the highly influential organization.<sup>37</sup>

Another such organization, the National Teachers Association, which was established in 1857 and later merged with two other groups to become the National Education Association (NEA), initially allowed women to join as honorary members, but only with the approval of the board of directors. Once approved, they could attend meetings, though they were not allowed to speak publicly at such gatherings. If women wished to address their colleagues, they could only discuss topics

assigned to them and even then they needed to prepare speeches to be read by male officers of the association. Generally, even though women constituted a significant proportion of teachers by this time, they were not well represented in the proceedings of teacher associations, nor were they allowed any meaningful leadership roles.<sup>38</sup>

Occasionally there were showdowns over women's circumscribed roles in teacher associations. At a gathering of New York teachers in 1853, Susan B. Anthony wished to join a discussion about why teachers were not as well respected as lawyers, ministers, or doctors. At first the chair denied her the floor because the association's rules prohibited women from speaking at such meetings. Anthony, however, caught many off-guard when she challenged the rule and requested permission to speak. A long, contentious debate ensued over whether she should be granted a special dispensation. Finally, when permitted to speak, she said:

It seems to me, gentlemen, that none of you quite comprehend the cause of the disrespect of which you complain. Do you not see that so long as society says a woman is incompetent to be a lawyer, minister, or doctor, but has ample ability to be a teacher, that every man of you who chooses that profession tacitly acknowledges that he has no more brains than a woman? And this, too, is the reason that teaching is a less lucrative profession, as here men must compete with the cheap labor of woman. Would you exalt your profession, exalt those who labor with you. Would you make it more lucrative, increase the salaries of the women engaged in the noble work of educating our future Presidents, Senators, and Congressmen.<sup>39</sup>

Later, a man in attendance told her: "As much as I am compelled to admire your rhetoric and logic, the matter and manner of your address and its delivery, I would rather follow a daughter of mine to her grave, than to have her deliver such an address before such an assembly."<sup>40</sup> Essentially, the fact that she had spoken publicly with force and intelligence had disturbed this man even more than her provocative message, which challenged the gender stratification of power and status sought by schoolmasters.

Even three decades later when women clearly dominated the teaching profession numerically, women were only grudgingly allowed the floor during association meetings. At the 1884 annual meeting of the NEA, May Wright Sewall had been invited to address the assembly in a panel discussion devoted to the topic of women in education. No pushover, she began by describing the rather unconscious manner by

which males in the association seemed to speak only among themselves even with large numbers of women in attendance:

Notwithstanding the fluttering of fans and the fluttering of ribbons, and the gay waving of plumes, and the glancing smiles, and the eloquent blushes from the audience, speakers have persisted in addressing their audiences as "gentlemen." Doubtless a preconceived supposition of who would be here has been more to them than the testimony of their eyes, and notwithstanding the major part of their audiences, save the audience of superintendents convened this afternoon, notwithstanding the major part of every audience has been constituted of women, gentlemen have absolutely been enabled to see them, and have persistently addressed the remarks, which women were assiduously endeavoring to hear and profit by, to men.<sup>41</sup>

A second way that male teachers bolstered their status was to promote the skills and qualities that only they supposedly could bring to the classroom. Schoolmasters argued that men were instrumental in shaping the character of children in ways that women could not duplicate.<sup>42</sup> Without men's help and guidance, children would grow into socially incomplete persons. More generally, male educators contended that their mere presence was needed in schools to lend a masculine tone to an otherwise female-dominated institution. Leonard Ayres in 1911 listed the specific masculine qualities he thought only men brought to their work:

Positive influences distinctly masculine in character. Masculinity. Man's viewpoint of life. Power. Elements of strength, of deliberative judgment, of logical power, of executive force. Positive convictions, practical sense, breadth of vision and sound judgment. Manly influence. Man's point of view on questions of civics, ethics and conduct. Vigorous, aggressive and ambitious attitude toward life. Man's interest in mechanical contrivances, helping to develop the practical inventive faculty in boys. Man's interests in and understanding of the fundamental principles of government and man's duties as a citizen.<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps one of the most important arguments articulated on the need for male teachers, though, was that men alone enforced proper discipline. A group of male teachers contended that to produce properly masculine men, "a boy needs forceful, manly control. He should learn

the grip and control of a man. If he is to become a manly man, he should hardly be deprived of the daily contact of a virile man. He also needs the strength of a man to control and direct his strong, boyish proclivities."<sup>44</sup> Conversely, to keep boys from becoming feminine, Henry Armstrong wrote in 1903 that to "develop a virile man," there should be more male teachers in schools. Otherwise, "the boy in America is not being brought up to punch another boy's head or to stand having his own punched in a healthy and proper manner . . . There is a strange and indefinable feminine air coming over the men; a tendency towards a . . . sexless tone of thought."<sup>45</sup> However, just as those who initially had resisted employing women teachers in the first place had maintained that women could hardly manage rowdy older boys, the new advocates of male teachers employed essentially the same argument, but this time to bolster men's value in a predominantly female profession.

In the mid-1800s, an interesting trend in educational employment developed in parallel with the emergence of women teachers. Local and state officials created the domain of school administration, a realm reserved from the beginning for men. Just as communities eventually had welcomed women into schoolhouses to perform duties derived from the notion of republican motherhood, so too did school districts hire men to assume new authority positions configured suspiciously like institutionalized, idealized versions of the family man, husband, and father. Though there was no flurry of editorials debating the merits of employing men in roles reminiscent of traditional male heads of household, a few school districts adopted the practice at first, and then as though finding a resonance in the collective psyches of local school officials, the practice proliferated with breathtaking speed. After all, when women had ventured into the classroom, they not only had broadened their acceptable sphere of work, but they also had stepped dangerously close to setting an unsettling new precedent for autonomy and independence from men's controlling influence. The danger was quickly circumvented, however, when male administrators appeared and exercised a measure of authority. School officials lauded the notion of paid male school administrators who could monitor female teachers and keep them from getting out of line.

The school supervisor was one of the first such administrative positions established, with supervisory duties varying by school type and perceived community needs. In urban schools, supervisors controlled instruction by administering promotional exams to students and by evaluating teachers' mastery of approved pedagogical techniques. They



also assisted with disciplinary matters, but the ultimate disciplinary authority resided in the male superintendent.<sup>46</sup> Supervisors of rural schools performed slightly different duties. They certified teachers and supervised teacher preparation programs. They also periodically made the rounds of country schools to observe teachers at work and to assess the quality of student recitations.

In urban school districts, the schoolmaster/principal teacher preceded the appearance of the supervisor. Boston schools, for example, employed schoolmasters in the early 1800s to head the instructional work performed in large, two-room schoolhouses. In these schools, schoolmasters typically taught older students in the second-floor room, while women assistants instructed younger children downstairs. Women assistants generally received little training for their work.<sup>47</sup> They also were expected to refer difficult disciplinary matters to the schoolmaster upstairs.

Eventually urban schools built multiclassroom, graded schools. From the beginning of these new institutions, school boards employed women to teach in individual classrooms and a male principal teacher or full-time principal to oversee the functioning of an entire school. With such a configuration, the charge that women were poor disciplinarians could be countered with the explanation that male principals in each building could handle any disciplinary problems that women might face.<sup>48</sup>

Women who taught in these schools, while perhaps not as physically daunting as some of their male colleagues, nonetheless found their own unique ways to manage their classes. Many of them reportedly prevented disruptions from older male students far more effectively than did their male colleagues.<sup>49</sup> May Sewall in 1884 described what she regarded as one of the finest contributions women had made to teaching:

The first visible effect of women's entrance upon the profession of teachers was the amelioration of discipline in the school-room. . . . [This] was the direct result of [their] inferior physical strength . . . which compelled women to substitute for the physical agencies that had before been used, spiritual ones. . . . It is true indeed that softer discipline, that moral suasion, that spiritual force, were resented by the big boys. He demanded the birch and the rawhide and ferule upon his teacher's desk as external symbols of the superior animal force by which alone he wished to be bound. Notwithstanding the big boy's resentment, which for a time worked out its purpose, and confined women teachers in the country to district schools in the summer, when the big boy could

not be there, notwithstanding that, the spiritual agencies substituted by women were necessarily soon adopted by men, and the growth of the moral powers, which had, perhaps by accident, or, at least unconsciously, been discovered by women, was thenceforth conscientiously and studiously developed.<sup>50</sup>

Regardless of their actual success in managing their students, the popular contention that women needed men's help with disciplinary matters persisted. In describing the tenacity of this view, David Tyack concludes that, "the presumed superiority of men as executives and disciplinarians seems to rest more on male vanity than on evidence."<sup>51</sup> The rationale that men were needed for disciplinary control was employed to justify hiring male administrators in multiclassroom schools in spite of contradictory information. Strober and Tyack observe that "from the beginning, sex segregation was part of the design of the urban graded school."<sup>52</sup>

Rural school districts also added supervisors, or superintendents as they sometimes were called, but ostensibly for somewhat different reasons. Elected school officials generally thought that teachers needed significant guidance, particularly as women moved into the work. School committees, while willing to offer advice, did not necessarily know how to teach well themselves because teaching experience was not a prerequisite for committee service. Rural school districts solved this perceived problem by hiring supervisors who then rode the district circuit of one-room schoolhouses to oversee teachers' work. Though many of these early supervisors had little or no instructional experience from which they might offer teachers assistance, what they reliably brought to their work was the fact that they were men.

One reason proffered by school committees on the need for supervisors' guiding presence was that women as a group tended to move in and out of teaching quickly. Some taught only briefly before leaving for marriage. Others departed because of difficult working conditions or to care for family members needing their daughters' assistance. Such transience was deemed unprofessional.<sup>53</sup> However, men moved in and out of teaching, too; but they typically left for better pay, improved working conditions, or greater authority and prestige. Their transience was not criticized as it was for women. Instead men were thought justified in seeking better opportunities. Clearly in most school districts, though, teachers of either sex hardly were paid sufficiently or treated well enough to remain firmly committed to the work for extended periods, leading historian Thomas Morain to conclude that teaching was not women's work, but rather it was youths' work.<sup>54</sup> As long as

women teachers were perceived as transient, though, school committees easily could justify hiring supervisors.

By some accounts, early rural school supervisors did little to improve teachers' work. To begin with, school committees assigned supervisors the herculean task of visiting numerous schoolhouses spread over great distances. For instance, a study of rural Pennsylvania teachers revealed that supervisors visited their classes only fifteen minutes to eight hours in a year.<sup>55</sup> Once supervisors made it to the classroom, they could offer little guidance in structuring the educational program because they generally lacked curricular training. This state of affairs led Willard Ellsbree to conclude that "infrequent visits of the superintendents, coupled with the absence of any well-defined program of studies, could not conceivably result in any appreciable improvement in teaching."<sup>56</sup>

If rural supervisors generally were unable to effect significant improvements in the quality of work done by district teachers, one wonders why they were hired at all. After all, they commanded higher salaries than teachers, and their employment reduced the pool of money otherwise available for teacher salaries. They were not hired to any appreciable degree when teaching was performed primarily by men. That men were systematically granted authority over women whose positions became ever more subordinate is a fact that cannot be dismissed as irrelevant. Even as women escaped the immediate control of husbands and fathers by becoming teachers, male supervisors may have been viewed as surrogate family males who made certain that women stayed within their culturally defined gender-role boundaries.<sup>57</sup> Language used to describe the relationships between female teachers and male supervisors frequently evoked male-centered family relationships. For example, Aaron Gove, superintendent of Denver schools, explained that any advice teachers might have for their superiors "is to be given as the good daughter talks with the father."<sup>58</sup> Women generally had little choice in accepting this new layer of control, leading Strober and Tyack to conclude that "difference of gender provided an important form of social control."<sup>59</sup>

Not surprisingly, teachers did not always welcome the addition of supervisory personnel in their work. However, superintendents charged with the task of compiling local annual school reports generally did not see fit to include teachers' opinions on this matter. Neither did reports that included the statements of school committee members. In spite of the omission of their voices in official reports, teachers found ways of expressing their dismay with the controlling element added to the profession. A Rochester teacher complained that the supervisory

system "needs not much trial to secure its abandonment at once," and further that the \$1,000 annual superintendent salary could well be cut and used for the tuition fund.<sup>60</sup> Rural teachers had little supervision and preferred it that way. A survey of Nebraska teachers suggested that even with sporadic and marginally helpful visits by supervisors, only 4 percent believed that better supervision was necessary.

When Vermont schools moved from one-room schoolhouses to multiclassroom buildings with building supervisors or principals, the women teachers believed they had lost much of their independence, pride, and sense of purpose. One teacher explained: "For so many years I had been the one who settled everything. . . . That was one of the hardest things for teachers who had always been in a country school to come into a graded school—because you had to follow rules and regulations." Another explained that in one-room schoolhouses "you were on your own. You didn't have to answer to anyone." One teacher summarized: "I was the boss—that's why I liked it better, I suppose."<sup>61</sup>

As school districts hired administrators, the structure and practice of school teaching changed. Teaching was reconfigured in incremental steps to align ever more closely with the traditionally acceptable duties, roles, and constraints of women. It became "feminized" in a functional sense. Even before individual teachers faced their first classes, these transformations had already affected the means by which they received training and superintendents selected them. Institutions that prepared teachers shifted the focus away from subject matter such as mathematics, science, and literature, and toward pedagogical methods. Horace Mann initially had recommended this curricular change for normal schools, which a variety of teacher preparation programs later adopted. Some argued that requiring teachers to learn advanced academic concepts wasted everyone's time because teachers only needed to know what they would use in the classroom. As a result, normal schools and teacher training institutes increasingly required teachers to study how they would convey their lessons more than they considered the content itself. Teacher certification exams changed accordingly. This curricular shift arguably repelled some men who might otherwise have been interested in teaching.<sup>62</sup> It also reduced the possibility that intellectually talented women could engage fully with challenging subject content as their male peers could in other programs or institutions of higher education. By so restricting the content of teacher preparation programs, college-educated administrators could, through their supposedly greater intellectual authority, exercise increased control over teachers.

A second important shift occurred in the amount of preparation prospective teachers needed for certification. School administrators set progressively stiffer certification requirements. This in turn meant that teaching candidates needed to attend special summer programs or enroll in lengthy teacher preparation institutes. These changes effectively discouraged potential male teachers for several reasons. Because men tended to supplement their regular teaching salaries by holding agriculture-related summer jobs, they would have had to sacrifice some of their traditional wage-earning activity to attend summer school. Besides, teachers were expected to attend these programs at their own expense.<sup>63</sup> Generally, men calculated that the additional training required for their certification was hardly worth the low wages they would earn as teachers. Women, however, had few other alternatives; thus they were more willing to bear the greater load and expense. This situation led Edward Thorndike to conclude in 1912 that "there is evidence that raising the requirements quickly increases the percentage of women among those securing [teaching] positions in elementary or secondary schools."<sup>64</sup>

Teachers also lost autonomy, status, and authority to the same degree that administrators simultaneously gained in these three areas. Essentially, power in educational employment shifted upward as administrative strata emerged. Administrators expected greater deference from teachers. While teachers had not previously enjoyed much job security, administrators increasingly certified, examined, and otherwise set requirements for teacher employment. These broadened powers essentially gave administrators more control over teachers and their tenure. Teachers knew not to cause trouble or their certification might not be renewed. Superintendents who hired teachers preferred women because they were less likely to question administrative authority and policies than men.<sup>65</sup> Likewise, administrators favored single, rather than married women because the latter had husbands who occasionally complained about district practices. In time, administrators imposed progressively greater restrictions on teachers' employment and practices, thereby tipping the power balance further toward themselves.

These three changes and others arguably constituted the construction of teaching as women's work. Men were less inclined to study pedagogy than subject content. They were not as likely to increase their level of preparation for teaching without commensurate monetary, status, or power rewards. And they undoubtedly were discouraged by the increased subservience demanded of teachers especially because submission was deemed a desirable quality for women at the time, but anathema to a properly masculine demeanor.

The gradual construction of teaching as women's work intensified what was already a strong trend in hiring women teachers. In the mid-1800s, women constituted a significant and growing segment of the teaching force. After the Civil War, however, they accounted for the majority of all teachers and their numbers continued to increase well into the twentieth century. Men, on the other hand, left teaching in droves. From 1899 to 1906 alone, the number of male teachers in the United States dropped by 24 percent.<sup>66</sup> This happened even as the overall number of teachers continued to increase. Apparently this did not occur because women crowded men out of teaching positions, but rather because men decided to leave.<sup>67</sup> Thomas Morain, in his study of nineteenth-century male teachers in Iowa, suggests that "departure, not displacement seems to have been the pattern."<sup>68</sup>

Not all men chose to leave, however. The men who remained struggled to redefine themselves in a profession not only increasingly made up of women, but also restructured around women's traditionally defined gender roles. School boards and superintendents charged with hiring teachers usually sought male candidates, but they tended to avoid hiring the men who applied because such men often did not fit traditional standards of masculinity.<sup>69</sup> Supposedly masculine men would not have been attracted to the positions as they were increasingly configured. Sociologist Willard Waller cruelly concluded that teaching had therefore become "the refuge of unsaleable men and unmarriageable women."<sup>70</sup>

By the turn of the twentieth century, women accounted for over 70 percent of all teachers.<sup>71</sup> At that point, the shift in the makeup of the teaching force had become inescapably clear and it stimulated a flurry of public discussion. Suddenly, school men, journalists, academics, school officials, and a variety of other concerned citizens expressed outrage over the phenomenon.

One reason widely advanced for men's exodus from teaching concerned the low salaries that many regarded as unattractive to capable men. To produce salaries likely to entice men back into teaching, though, taxpayers would have faced increased school taxes, a change likely to ignite protest. Not everyone agreed, however. In his 1908 article, "Why Teaching Repels Men," C. W. Bardeen explained that "it is not a matter of wages. Professionally fitted men teachers get a higher average salary than the average incomes of lawyers, physicians, clergymen, and business men in their communities." Rather, other factors were more important, he argued. Bardeen did admit that men were deterred from teaching younger children because of the low salaries, though.<sup>72</sup>

A more important reason for the decline of male teachers, according to Bardeen, concerned the fact that men regarded teaching as poor work. He explained that "teaching usually belittles a man. . . . His daily dealing is with petty things, of interest only to his children and a few women assistants, and under regulations laid down by outside authority, so that large questions seldom come to him for consideration." He continued:

It is a hireling occupation. . . . The ordinary man teacher is entirely at their [school trustees'] mercy. The law makes them the authority as to course of study, regulations, selection of teachers, equipment, and supplies. . . . They are in a state of dependency upon trustees elected to office without special knowledge of the needs of the schools or the relative qualifications of teachers. . . . It is otherwise with the lawyer, the physician, the business man. Provided they earn enough to keep out of debt they are their own masters. They can come when they like, go when they like, do what they like.<sup>73</sup>

Ella Flagg Young concurred with Bardeen's assessment. She explained in her 1900 doctoral dissertation that perhaps the most potent influences keeping men from teaching were "the mechanism, drudgery, and loss of individuality which the method of organization and administration has tended to make characteristic of the graded school."<sup>74</sup>

Essentially, as teaching had been constructed as women's work, it had become far less desirable for men. A group of male teachers explained, "the profession has become so feminized that men have felt a loss of social standing while engaged as teachers."<sup>75</sup> One writer distilled the situation: "The business of school teaching is coming to be considered a woman's business, and therefore, offers less attraction to young men than formerly."<sup>76</sup>

Men disliked being associated with women's work and they also frequently complained about working with women. One New Jersey superintendent said:

Of my own knowledge many young men have been driven from school because of their intense dislike to being (using their own words) "bossed by women." . . . Those men, many of them, were forced out of school because of their intense individualism, because they were strong, because they had reached an age where it was imperative that they be instructed, directed, controlled by one of their own sex, and by a man larger and broader, both physically and mentally, than each youth felt himself to be.<sup>77</sup>

A final reason commonly offered for why men left the classroom concerned the Civil War. Thousands of men left teaching to fight in the war and women typically replaced them. When the war ended, though, men did not return to teaching in significant numbers, partly because some had died or suffered wounds in battle, and partly because the postwar salaries available were insufficient to attract them when greater opportunities existed elsewhere.<sup>78</sup>

The men who continued to teach needed to find ways to preserve their sense of masculinity among their female colleagues. One way for them to do this was to aspire toward becoming educational heroes or martyrs. Within schoolmasters' clubs and associations, the great educators in American history were hailed as models of the profession. Icons of educational leadership and innovation, and the lone champions of scholarship amid armies of apparent mediocrity were visions that inspired male teachers everywhere to distinguish themselves in this otherwise degraded work.<sup>79</sup>

A second means of bolstering men's flagging masculinity involved recruiting more of them into teaching to form something of a critical mass of males. Male educators usually led these efforts. The Male Teachers' Association of New York City, for example, published a pamphlet in 1904 describing why they believed more men were urgently needed in schools:

At the present time over ninety percent of all the boys in the United States leave school without ever coming in contact with a single male teacher. . . . The elementary schools of the great cities of our country are almost entirely under the control of women teachers. The few men that are in the elementary schools are largely in administrative work. . . . Formerly women were employed as teachers because such a practice was deemed expedient. Men were then considered the ideal teachers. While this ideal has largely passed away among administrative agents, and the tendency is rapidly gaining ground to place all the agencies of education in woman's hands as her particular function, yet we have found, as teachers, that parents decidedly prefer men teachers. The increase in the number of women in the schools has been a most rapid change, and unprecedented in the educational history of the world. It has had as yet scarcely the sanction of a generation.<sup>80</sup>

In 1911, Leonard Ayres circulated a survey to leading male educators in New York City requesting their opinions on the need for hiring men. One survey question concerning whether schools needed men

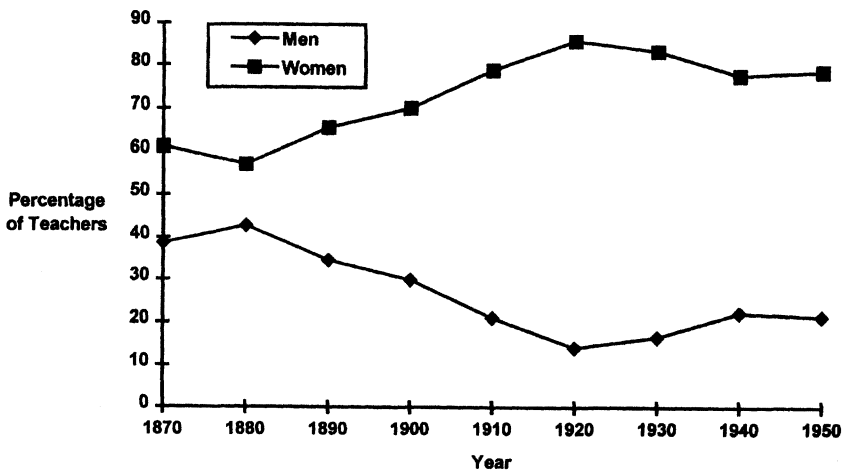


was answered in the affirmative by a resounding 98 percent of the respondents.<sup>81</sup> He then presented the results of this survey to the city commission on teachers' salaries hoping that a large-scale recruiting effort might result. Other groups similarly sought to increase men's presence in schools. Districts throughout Oklahoma actively sought and hired male teachers even though a number were unqualified. Some received rapid promotions to superintendencies to help preserve male leadership.<sup>82</sup> In 1938, Phi Delta Kappa, an entirely male organization of educators, published a widely circulated pamphlet designed to encourage promising young male students to become teachers.<sup>83</sup>

A final important means of making teaching more appealing to men involved the creation of male-identified niches such as coaching, vocational education, other manual trades, and certain high school subjects such as science and mathematics. Administrative positions held particular appeal because supervisory work had been structured from the start to suit masculine-appropriate gender definitions. Bardeen idealized the position of the superintendency because "the kinds of men chosen for these places are those who are least subject to . . . defects. . . . But the rank and file of men teachers are still seriously deficient."<sup>84</sup>

FIGURE 1.1

Percentages of Male and Female Teachers, 1870–1950\*



\*For a detailed breakdown of the data charted in this figure, see *The Statistical History of the United States from Colonial Times to the Present* (Stamford, CT: Fairfield Publishers, 1965), 208.

In spite of these efforts to end the shortage of male teachers and recruit men into the profession, the overall percentage of male educators continued to decline until well into the twentieth century. In 1870 women held 60 percent of all teaching positions compared with 40 percent for men. Three decades later in 1900, women held 70 percent and men 30 percent. By 1920, the overall percentage of women educators peaked at 86 percent, while men held only 14 percent of all school positions, *including* supervisory and administrative jobs.<sup>85</sup>

Hidden within these larger statistics on the percentages of female and male teachers are subtle geographical, economic, and cultural variations. Katz and Ellsbree have maintained that urban schools were feminized before rural ones. While there is evidence to suggest that this was the case for some areas, it did not occur consistently. For instance, rural areas of Canada that either were poor or had lumber jobs for men were feminized before government-funded schools in urban areas. Also, Quebec saw faster feminization because the region had a long-standing cultural tradition of Catholic nuns who served as teachers.<sup>86</sup>

Strober and Tyack have speculated that the feminization of teaching correlates with the formalization of schooling, where formalization is defined as a measure of the length of the school term and the number of teachers per school.<sup>87</sup> Formalization entails longer school years, state standards for funding, "more 'professional' and intrusive" supervision, a decrease in the female/male salary ratio, uniform curriculum and certification regulations. They explain, "we suspect that it was not only economic factors but also this increasingly administrative direction [toward control] that made rural school teaching less attractive to men."<sup>88</sup> John Rury has argued, however, that feminization may not have been tied so closely with formalization as much as with high levels of school participation. Additionally, percentages of male teachers varied by geographic regions according to the degree to which men also could work in the learned professions. In such areas, the proportion of men teachers was the highest.<sup>89</sup>

The nineteenth century witnessed a remarkable transformation in the demographic characteristics of teachers. While at the start of the century, men accounted for virtually all of the teachers in the country, one hundred years later women held the majority of teaching positions. The number of teachers increased dramatically, too, as education progressed from a privilege reserved for the social and economic elite to a benefit, if not a right, of all American children. Women helped alleviate the chronic shortage of qualified teachers resulting from the popular common school movement. While early teachers, male or female, were

people whose families could afford to educate them—which necessarily meant that they had some degree of privilege—by the turn of the twentieth century, persons of virtually every social and economic class could aspire to teaching. Finally, while most teachers were White, after the Civil War, Black men and women rapidly entered teaching, especially in schools built for Black children throughout the South. By 1900, as many as 20 percent of women teachers in the South were Black.<sup>90</sup>

During the nineteenth century the structure of teaching also changed. While in 1800 male teachers generally worked by themselves in schoolhouses with little, if any supervision, by 1900 teachers increasingly found their curricula structured, their work monitored by an expanding system of administrative supervisors, their certification requirements regulated, their salaries centrally fixed, their work days and years extended, and their loads increased. The independence and curricular freedoms that teachers had enjoyed previously were minimized as administrators, mostly male, took on the work of making decisions for them.

I argue that it was not coincidental that teachers' independence and decision-making powers were stripped away just as women dominated the profession numerically. The male educators who remained had to assert their masculine qualities somehow, thus many became administrators to control the labors of women just as fathers and husbands long had done in the home. Administrators did not appear in significant numbers until women began filling teaching positions. As administrators assumed more control, male teachers felt less comfortable remaining in the classroom. They either left teaching or found other ways to pursue masculine-appropriate work within the profession. Teaching had become a woman's profession—controlled by men.