Another Missed Opportunity: Gender in the National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

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As the Era of Accountability has given rise to the prevalence of curriculum standards and multiple educational stakeholders have engaged in the writing of these documents, the National Council for the Social Studies has revised its original standards document published nearly two decades ago. This study investigated what the revised document reveals in terms of gendered discourses. Through employing the tools of discourse analysis, the dominant discourses advanced in the document’s curricular recommendations were revealed. Two discourses prevailed in the analysis: gender imbalance with a narrow view of valued masculinity and gender-free with a hidden discourse of males dominating in those spaces. A discussion of the presence of trans and other gender identities in the document is included. As gender is sparsely mentioned in the curricular recommendations, and a binary view of gender is adhered to throughout, there is little guidance for curriculum writers and teachers to teach in transformative ways that challenge the status quo.

Keywords: gender, masculinity, transgender, national standards, social studies, discourse analysis, K-12

Introduction

Just as state and national content standards serve as a guide for classroom teachers (Marino & Bolgatz, 2010), the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) curriculum standards provide a framework for teacher educators, teacher education programs, and state boards of education. Developing standards that satisfy multiple stakeholders (including elected officials, teacher educators, teachers, administrators, and parents) is nearly impossible (Symcox, 2002). As the 1994 NCSS standards served to guide the majority of state standards (Lobes, 1998), it is possible the 2010 standards will have a similar impact in future years with the development of Common Core State Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014) and the College, Career, and Civic Life (NCSS, 2013) standards. Importantly, as of the fall of 2016, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) will require all secondary social studies teacher education programs to align their curricula with the 2010 NCSS standards (NCATE, 2010-2012). These standards, thus, have a wide ranging, profound, and lasting impact on social studies education in the United States in a considerably formal way.

While these standards have a significant amount of power in determining how, what, when, and why social studies is taught in both Kindergarten-12 education and teacher education, they have rarely been critically examined. The standards are relatively new and likely to guide the teaching of new social studies educators as well as the seemingly constant rewriting of different standards documents. This is an opportune time to delve deeply into the standards and to reflect on what we are including in our vision of 21st century social studies education.
Building on prior research surrounding gender and women in the curriculum, this paper critically examines the 2010 NCSS National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies for gender while using a broad definition which includes females, males, and other gender expressions. The research question guiding this study is: What gender discourses are advanced in the 2010 NCSS National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies? Perhaps more than for any other purpose, this inquiry is motivated by wanting to know what the official, though potentially hidden, position is of the NCSS regarding gender in connection to curriculum.

**Gender and Curriculum in the Literature**

**Textbooks**

Empirical research examining the presence of gender in curricular materials has been a consistent, though not predominant, theme in social studies research in the last half-century. Particularly with the rise of the New Social Studies in the 1960s, the Second Wave of Feminism in the 1970s, and the increasing number of women researchers paying attention to women and gender in the 1980s and beyond (Avery & Simmons, 2000; Chick, 2006; Clark, Allard, & Mahoney, 2004; Clark, Ayton, Frechette, & Keller, 2005; Reese, 1994; Tetreault, 1986; Trecker, 1971), gender has been a regular topic of inquiry in the social studies. Even with this traceable thread of gender inquiry, more is needed to remedy persistent gender inequities. Though the understanding of gender is limited within the field, there is a clear understanding of, and a desire to, increase gender equity in both curricula and instructional methods.

Textbooks and the content of social studies courses can be considered indicators of teaching and learning in secondary social studies classes in the United States. With the rise of multicultural education in the last two decades, women as an underrepresented group began to gain attention with regard to their presence in textbooks and curricular materials. In 1985, Mary Kay Thompson Tetreault published the Feminist Phase Theory, which was used as a framework to determine the inclusivity of curricula, thus giving a way of evaluating a variety of curricular materials. With her theory, the field had a new way of classifying the inclusivity of women in the curriculum. Before the publication of Tetreault’s phase theory, however, the absence of women in the social studies curriculum was a topic of investigation in the field (Trecker, 1971; Hahn, 1980). In 1985, Carole Hahn and Jane Bernard-Powers reviewed the social studies literature of the time and determined students in government and economics classes learned more about famous men than famous women as evidenced through their unequal presence in the text and photos of textbooks in these disciplines. They were also able to determine textbooks were still male-dominated, though less overtly sexist.

Progress over the last 40 years has been documented in representation of women in United States history and civics books with qualitative and quantitative analyses (Avery & Simmons, 2000; Chick, 2006; Clark, Allard, & Mahoney, 2004; Clark, Ayton, Frechette, & Keller, 2005; Reese, 1994; Tetreault, 1986; Trecker, 1971). Two of the more recent studies investigating gender and textbooks (Clark et al., 2004; Clark et al., 2005) examined 19 world history and 18 United States history textbooks from the 1960s, 1980s, and 1990s. Their analyses indicated representations of social history are still outnumbered by political and military history, thus making women less prevalent in the books overall. In her analysis of three history textbooks used throughout elementary, middle, and high schools, Kay A. Chick (2006) found more males than females represented across the three levels and both within the text and images. This finding supports previous findings that gender balance is yet to be attained in the textbooks.
studied. As many social studies teachers use textbooks in their teaching, this underrepresentation and limited view of gender constrains the potential of teaching multiple perspectives of women, and teachers are thus charged with modifying inadequate materials.

Standards

Standards written and implemented by states and national organizations serve to channel curriculum taught in the classroom. National standards in civics, history, economics, and geography were written and published in the early 1990s, and many of these have been examined for the presence of gender diversity (Bernard-Powers, 2007; Crocco, 2008; Gonzales, Riedel, Avery, & Sullivan, 2001). Largely, these standards have been silent about gender related topics. Even though gender is noted along with race and ethnicity as important in shaping participation as citizens, The National Standards for Civics and Government (Center for Civic Education, 1994) mentions gender just twice (Crocco, 2008). A team of researchers (Gonzales et al., 2001) examined these standard and found that of the quotations located in the margins of the standards, just 9% were attributed to women, and all were European-American. While they noted these quotations are unlikely to be read by students, they serve as an indication of whose voices are deemed to be most significant and most worthy of study. The researchers caution the “ongoing neglect” (Gonzales et al., 2001, p. 123) of gender equity could lead teachers, who use the standards, to include the contributions of relatively few women in their instruction. The national geography standards, Geography for Life: National Geographic Standards (Geography Education Standards Project, 1994), similarly mention gender just once, and thus have been criticized for “reveal[ing] that gender [is] not taken seriously as a category or lens” (Bernard-Powers, 2007, p. 336).

The National Standards for History (National Standards for History Task Force, 1996), which addresses both U.S. and World History, do not fare much better in the inclusion of women. A contributor to these standards, Joan Wallach Scott (1997), who after receiving criticism of the paucity of women, responded the “compromise of political and social history” would “always lean to political history” and this decision “makes the systematic inclusion of women difficult” (p. 174). While she noted there was an increase in knowledge and research about the contributions of women in history and that the committees were cognizant of this, she also wrote, “there could be much more about women in these Standards” (p. 176). While educators increasingly view women’s history as a legitimate area of study in secondary social studies, the focus on political and economic history in the standards has proven to be a significant barrier to its full inclusion (Symcox, 2002). Finally, as Hahn, Bernard-Powers, Crocco, and Woyshner (2007) note, the Curriculum Standards for Social Studies, “give little explicit attention to gender” (p. 343). Though these researchers acknowledge the standards are broad enough to allow teachers to infuse gender into the curriculum, ultimately the authors stated, “NCSS’s failure to provide curricular examples aligned with the standards that are oriented to gender resulted in a missed opportunity to facilitate the inclusion of gender in social studies courses” (p. 343). Similar to the trend in the aforementioned social studies textbooks, curriculum standards seem to have provided little direction to teachers in terms of balancing the disproportionate presence of males in the curriculum. Notably, the studies presented here along with much of the gender work in social studies focused primarily on women and not a broad conception of gender. Published 16 years after the original document, the revised standards
warrant examination into the growth or stagnation of gender as a topic worthy of attention in social studies.

**Curricular Reform Models**

Central to my analysis is Tetreault’s (1985) Feminist Phase Theory. The theory serves as a framework for examining textbooks and other curricular materials throughout the social studies because it articulates a method for understanding and evaluating how women and their contributions appear in curricula. With her five phases, Tetreault outlined the following phases as ways to categorize a curriculum with reference to its inclusivity of women: male scholarship, compensatory scholarship, bifocal scholarship, feminist scholarship, and multifocal relational scholarship”.

Phase One indicates a universal male experience with knowledge being created by and for males with little explicit attention given to females. In Phase Two the absence of women is recognized, yet little is added to the curriculum. In Phase Three the inclusion of women occurs as women and men occupying different spheres throughout history are noted and the exploration of oppression of women begins. Phase Four recognizes the stand-alone worth of women’s contributions and a “pluralistic conception of women” (p. 374) emerges to complicate a previously simplistic view of women in the curriculum. In Phase Five, the final, and most advanced, a gender balanced approach occurs where “women’s and men’s experiences [are fused] into a holistic view of human experience” (p. 371). In a broad analysis of gender, this framework may appear outdated or incomplete as it looks to evaluate materials based upon their inclusion of women specifically, and does not consider multiple masculinities or the transgender community. As the data were being analyzed, however, this theory was used within this particular study as it proved to be the best fit for revealing the stance and discourses present.

A second framework, the Approaches to Curriculum Reform model (Banks, 2004), was initially consulted, though ultimately abandoned, because it broadly considers areas of diversity. Tetreault’s (1985) model, thus, could avoid the inherent issue of focusing on one expression of gender and how it appears in these standards. That lack of focus on gender was the primary reason for rejecting Banks’ model as the guide for this analysis and adopting, instead, Tetreault's model. While Banks’ stages of curricular reform model complements Tetreault's model when considering myriad diversities, ultimately Tetreault’s model was chosen as the framework for analysis because of its specificity regarding the topic.

**Methodology and Methods**

Engaging in discourse analysis (Gee, 2007/2011) requires attention be paid to how words build or diminish significance in the overarching discourse. Different tools were employed to reveal discourses around gender in the data. I coded for words and phrases related to gender in the entire 2010 NCSS National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies, though particular attention was paid to the three “Learning Expectations” chapters as these are where the curriculum standards are described in detail. These standards are organized largely by grade level into the “Learning Expectations” chapters and more specifically into the 10 thematic strands of social studies within each of those chapters. Each of the 10 thematic strands includes bulleted examples of purposes, processes, skills, and narratives of exemplary practice titled “Snapshots of Practice.” Both explicitly (gender, man, woman) and implicitly (mother, father) gendered words were coded. Names also were coded for gender and social status. In the instances of names or titles that are gender neutral, the context surrounding the name was used to
determine gender identification. When the “school board president” was mentioned, for example, the pronoun linked to this antecedent was used to determine whether this person was identified as female through use of the pronoun “her.” When a particular historical figure was named, such as Abraham Lincoln, it was coded at each mention as the presence of “one male historical figure” in order to determine the significance of this figure being mentioned in multiple areas throughout the document. The data were examined within and between chapters as well as within and between the 10 thematic strands identified by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) in an effort to reveal where and when themes of gender exist. Throughout data analysis, the constant comparative method was employed to maintain integrity of the codes and coding levels (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

More than an enumeration of names or gender markers, the analysis aimed to reveal the cultural underpinnings of this curricular guide in an effort to determine what messages looking between the lines reveals. Three tools (Gee, 2007/2011) of discourse analysis guided this inquiry: the fill-in tool, the frame problem tool, and the figured worlds tool. The fill-in tool is used to determine what information the reader is expected to fill-in to fully understand the context. Assumptions, predictions, and inferences are important in determining the position of a text. This tool helps uncover what the reader is expected to bring to the reading of the text in order to fully understand it.

The second relevant tool, the frame problem tool, flows directly from the fill-in tool, as it demands a wider analysis of the context within which the text is operating. Whereas the fill-in tool asks about what within the text is needed to understand it, the frame problem tool asks what around the text is necessary to fully analyze the data. The analysis uncovered what image of the world the given text promotes through the additional use of the figured worlds tool.

According to Gee’s definition, figured worlds are most simply explained as “theories and stories that we humans use to understand and deal with the world” (Gee, 2011, p. 63). Figured worlds are stories of how the world looks or how it should look as represented in the text. This became critical to this analysis because the images of life presented in this official curriculum guide are indicators of how the authors want to portray what is valued in the document. The data were analyzed by using the fill-in tool, the frame problem tool, and the figured worlds tool in discourse analysis (Gee, 2011). Specifically, these aim to determine what contextual clues the reader needs to fill-in when reading, what the larger context or frame for the standards is, and what the authors of the standards advance as the bigger idea of what the world is or how it should be. As the intention of this inquiry was to determine the discourses regarding gender in this document, a quantitative analysis aimed at determining statistical differences was not employed. These three tools were chosen and used throughout the analysis period in an effort to not only uncover elements of the discourse, but to reach toward convergence, which leads to a more robust analysis. When these three tools indicate or uncover similar aspects of the discourse, the analysis becomes trustworthier and aids in the validity of the findings (Gee, 2011).

The figured worlds tool became the most important instrument of inquiry in this analysis. Following Gee’s (2011) six question sets, the data were re-coded and analyzed in comparison to the codes revealed through the fill-in tool and the frame problem tool. The analysis was strongly influenced through the systematic answering of questions such as: “What figured worlds are relevant here? How consistent are the figured worlds here? Are there competing or conflicting figured worlds here? What sorts of texts…could have given rise to these figured worlds?” (Gee,
2011, p. 95-96). These answers, connected to coded data, informed the heart of the analysis and the answer to the research question of what gender discourses are advanced in this document.

**Limitations**

Inherent to the document and the times in which it was produced, it was likely that I was going to find little, if any, mention to a non-binary depiction of gender. While gender is a social construction and many cultures reject the notion that there are only two genders, male and female, the dominant discourse in the United States is that two genders are typical and anyone living as a blend of the two or in a third space entirely is atypical. An additional limitation is the unknown application of this document to the development and planning of lessons that are taught in Kindergarten-12 schools. Currently, many states require teachers to adhere to their state standards instead of these published by NCSS, thus making these curriculum guidelines a mere suggestion beyond student teaching. Particularly when teachers are required to adhere to an alternate document, these standards may get lost in the sea of standards. These are used to inform the writing of state standards and are recommended in teacher education programs across the country, so while their impact in individual classrooms is unknown, their use has the potential to permeate multiple standards documents and lessons in untold ways.

**Findings**

**Gender Imbalance**

When looking at the total number of male and female names, inclusive of all coding categories, the numbers do not appear to be notably discrepant. With 67 females, 72 males, and one individual who is not identified as male or female, it appears as if general consideration to including both females and males in the examples and “Snapshots of Practice” was given. Table 1 shows the frequency counts for each main code. When these numbers are broken apart, however, the image of the curriculum, students, teachers, and their world is less than a gender-balanced one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Unidentified</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Grades</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Grades</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1</td>
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Selected Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Unidentified</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Adults</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Figures</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In examining the number of historical figures named throughout the document, their names revealed a discrepancy in both gender and grade level. In Thematic Strand Five: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions, the second Snapshot of Practice listed four female and four male historical figures as topics about which students were to research and report. This seemingly conscious attempt at gender-balance offered the names of individuals throughout
history who also had varied social identities such as persons with disabilities, people of color, or non-Americans. One mention does not a discourse make, however. While it appears as if a conscious attempt at gender-balance was made in this example, no historical figure of any gender is mentioned anywhere else in the recommendations for the early grades leaving any choice for the inclusion of women to be filled-in by those using this document for curricular guidance.

The gender imbalance in named historical figures increases in the middle and high school grades. Table 2 shows the complete listing of males and females in the Learning Expectations chapters. With three non-fictional females named within the middle grades section and none in the high school section, it is clear that females in this document are given a near zero status as important figures throughout history. The three females mentioned within the secondary education sections include: The Grimke Sisters and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Herein lies an intricacy of coding that reveals more nuances to the paucity of females in these sections. An early coding decision to count historical pairs of people as individual people led to the enumeration of the Grimke sisters as two females. Similarly, Lewis and Clark, though often referred to in relation to one another, were coded as two male historical figures. When looking at the Grimke sisters, however, it can be argued they are additionally devoiced, as they are not given first names or identities outside of one another. Even though their identities were conflated, the mention of the Grimke Sisters is the one area in the entirety of the document where Tetreault’s (1985) third phase of bi-focal scholarship is seen in how the chosen women were activists against women’s oppression. With their mention, a glimmer of the Women’s Rights Movement nods to the political oppression faced by women in the 19th century. Interestingly, these women were also used as examples in Tetreault’s foundational work of the second level of compensatory history. The included women, The Grimke Sisters and Harriet Beecher Stowe, found notoriety in traditionally male spheres and exhibited traditionally masculine behaviors in order to be noticed. These outstanding women are recognized in history for transgressing gender boundaries and achieving previously impossible goals because of their status as women. They are classic examples of Phase Two women. These mentions, however, are disproportionate both to the size or subsequent waves of the feminist movement and to the number of males mentioned as major players in the history of the world. Other than these three females, no additional females or people of trans identity are mentioned as significant players in history worthy of mention in the snapshots of practice or in the descriptions of the thematic strands.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical Figures by grade level and gender</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Grades</td>
<td>Marian Anderson, Helen Keller, Sacajawea, Amelia Earhart</td>
<td>Martin Luther King, Jr., Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Nelson Mandela, Franklin Chang-Dias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Grades</td>
<td>Grimke Sisters, Harriet Beecher Stowe</td>
<td>Lewis and Clark, Lincoln</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In using the fill-in tool to analyze the overall discourse advanced in this document, it is possible the authors of the standards intended for the readers to fill-in any gaps left by the necessary editorial decisions and priority to make this a usable document. Relying on the readers to supplement with missing content is reasonable and articulated in the introduction as the document is frequently referred to as a framework, however it is negligent for such a gender imbalance to go unnoticed or unaddressed in a document that is likely to live in this iteration for years to come. Since the authors indicated the purpose of this revision was to update the previously published standards document so it “incorporates current research and suggestions for improvement” (NCSS, 2010, p. 3); it is disappointing that such a stark gender imbalance was left unnoticed. My simple frequency count reveals this curricular framework advances the two lowest phases in Tetreault’s Feminist Phase Theory (1985), including the least desirable, the phase of “compensatory scholarship” as the predominant recommendation for secondary education.

Consistent with Joan Wallach Scott’s (1997) critique of the *National History Standards* (1996), there were no women mentioned as exemplary models who were successful in

<table>
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<tr>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Artemis</th>
<th>Frederick Douglass</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John Brown</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lincoln</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frank Lloyd Wright</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Zeus</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Washington</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saddam Hussein</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Marco Polo</td>
<td>Keith Ellison</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thomas Jefferson</td>
<td>President Lincoln</td>
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<td></td>
<td>George Washington</td>
<td>Abraham Lincoln</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mao Zedong</td>
<td>Deng Xiaoping</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hu Jintao</td>
<td>President Kennedy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JFK</td>
<td>(Daniel) Shays' Rebellion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nat Turner</td>
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traditionally women’s spheres or who made contributions to social history. This lack of presence, expressly excludes Tetreault’s (1985) Phase Four of feminist history and Phase Five of relational history from this document and from the socially constructed figured world. By leaving women out, this document presents an image of the world as one where women simply do not matter as much as men and the figured, or typical, world presented is one of gender imbalance.

The men noted as examples of important people to teach also fit into a narrow narrative of men as holding power politically, making important advancements in political and work/labor spheres, and are not lauded for their roles in personal or social arenas. Men such as Abraham Lincoln, Saddam Hussein, Thomas Jefferson, Mao Zedong, and John F. Kennedy fit into a narrow category of politically powerful and important men who have made history through their political offices. This limited view of what important men do is as disturbing and paralleled by women only being lauded when performing the acts of politically important men. This perpetuates a narrow vision of masculinity and pigeon-holes men into only being valuable contributors to history when they have achieved certain political advancements. This absence of females in the public and private spheres alongside the presence of solely males in public spheres contributes to the overarching gender imbalance discourse that has dominated for decades. As the national organization of social studies teachers and researchers neglects the contributions of an entire group of people in its curriculum recommendations, the result is a limited view of masculinity and the continued silencing of females as valued voices in the curriculum and in our classrooms. Naming and counting females and males is not enough to analyze the discourses dominating the field. An in-depth analysis into what and how these historical figures are being portrayed, how they are relating to one another, and who is holding the power is critical.

**Gender-Free**

In the “Other Adults” category of analysis, I coded for anyone who was neither a teacher nor a student, and who was not considered to be a historical figure. This list included people named as: *school board president, mayor, or state legislator*. At first glance, these terms indicate a positive shift to including all genders; however, when analyzed, nearly all are connected to an antecedent revealing the gender identification of those people holding positions. Perhaps more than any other category of analysis, through employing the figured worlds tool, an image of females as a group with less expressed power than men was revealed. Of the six mentions of females in this category, only one was given social and political status in *school board president* with the others being unnamed as an *accident victim*, or as a parent participating in the classroom, Mrs. Li. Of the eight males in this category, five were given significant status as in the specific mention of a famous reporter, Ken Burns, or as *mayor, state legislator, westerner*, or identified with the title *Dr.* Of the three mentions not explicitly tied to a politically significant position, two are connected to marital status and another, *Manuel*, is a friend who participates in a pen pal program with a third grade class. From this image of world in this document, women are not as present in political spheres and do not hold statuses similar to the men in their communities. The figured world here is one where few women have gained access equal to that of men.

In the Early Grades section, the name of one student, *Isturez*, was given no corresponding pronoun. A search to find a predominant gender identification of this name was inconclusive after conducting Internet searches and through talking with colleagues from a variety of
linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It is in this section that the idea of a transgender or gender-free person is mentioned. This single mention opens the document to the possibility of a non-binary conception of gender. The intention is difficult, if not impossible, to determine from a single instance, but this is perhaps an example of this document working outside the bounds of Tetreault’s framework.

Genderless terms such as *tribal elder* and *human-made features* are used throughout each of the Learning Expectations chapters without corresponding antecedents, as well. Subtracting gender from these roles reveals two conflicting ideas: a gender-balanced approach was finally realized or that the elimination of gender attached to these roles potentially could be a strategy employed to avoid the real work of reaching toward gender equity. While it is a laudable discursive step moving from *man-made* to *human-made*, and the motivation is likely to be inclusive, the result can read as avoidance of the bigger issue of paternalistic hegemony. This shift indicates a post-gender society where all, regardless of social identity, can participate in these large activities and perhaps very implicitly, the trans community can be included. Without a clear indication of the motivation, however, the effect of the change must be taken in context with the other elements; unfortunately deferring to the reasoning of past precedent or avoiding the work of seeking out previously marginalized voices to use as examples results in the continued dominance of males as a social group and does so in the most formal of ways. Without additional evidence of a gender-balanced approach, the subtraction of explicitly gendered terms cannot be understood as advancing a gender-balanced curriculum, and instead indicates that Tetreault’s (1985) Phase One of “male scholarship” still holds a privileged status among those recommending exemplary curricula.

**Discussion**

In evaluating the “good reasons” or “deep sense making” (Gee, 2011, p. 96) of why this stark imbalance exists, multiple alternatives arise. Only men have held the office of the presidency in the U.S.; women were not awarded political suffrage until 1920; politics has been largely dominated by men; men have been responsible for authoring history because of historically situated social and cultural labor divisions between the genders, and the general male-dominated hegemony that dictates so much of the study of history endures (Elshtain, 1981; Lerner, 1997). While many of these reasons are factual, they do not begin to explain the lack of gender balance in a curriculum guide published in 2010. A growing body of research within social studies has been paying attention to gender equity for over three decades and, both textbooks and standards documents have been studied and found to be lacking in the area of gender balance.

Reasons are varied as to why certain elements are often left out or are missing from the curriculum. Even though research indicates students are interested in history that relates to people and their daily lives (Barton & Levstik, 2004), overwhelmingly, the curriculum is focused on political or military history, which favors men and decentralizes women and other marginalized peoples (Levstik & Barton, 2011). Students can then read the absence of women as an element of the null curriculum that is not relevant or valued in the formal space of school. There also is the possibility that the figured world or the narrative the authors of these standards wanted to portray was motivated by the strong national progress and freedom discourses (Barton & Levstik, 2004). When authors focus on the nationalistic purposes for history and the activities that took place surrounding that narrative, men dominate because women were not allowed to be
involved in the formal process. Women, therefore, are not involved in the retelling of those stories (Barton & Levstik, 2004). Of course, women were always involved in the stories of the past and are still in the stories of the present. However, the way these stories are re-told through formal histories or even thorough standards can diminish their appearances because they are often tied to political movements or periods of activism that challenge the image the storytellers want to tell about the world (Kammen, 1991). Depoliticizing the past and the present in these standards is another potential reason for the absence of women in this document, as they have been in past histories. Often avoiding controversial or activist pieces of the past is a way the storyteller can control the image of the present (Kammen, 1991). There are other operational reasons as to why this neglect may have happened. It is altogether possible that the formation of the committee that writes these standards was comprised of scholars and teachers who value the presence of women in the curriculum, but that when the act of writing began this charge was lost among myriad choices and demands. It is possible that including women in an equitable manner was not one of the top priorities and was lost among the myriad elements considered during the formation and finalization of the standards. Additionally, a situational factor must be taken into account when we form standards committees. The diversity of the contributors and their commitment to topics of diversity in all areas must be attended to if we as an organization intend to commit to this core democratic value. The lack of follow-through in the projection of a world that represents men and women as equally valid contributors to our society in the NCSS standards is inexcusable given the consistent findings that gender balance is rarely attained, yet is something to strive for in our official curricula.

These standards present a figured world where gender balance and equitable representation does not exist. The authors of this document have neglected to be attentive to this issue and have thus rejected the transformative role of the official curriculum instead advancing the maintenance of the status quo in regard to gender. Women are portrayed as teachers and students alongside men, but in the relatively few explicit curricular recommendations, it is clear women are not valued as historical actors and are not given equal status with their male counterparts. The reader would need to fill-in a considerable amount of information if a world where women and men are equal was to be advanced in classrooms or in other standards documents. Leaving this responsibility to the reader to notice the absence, to fill-in the gender gap, and to enact a vision of a more equal, just world is simply leaving too much up to chance. The political implication of their absence is that a discourse of women as less than is reified, and indeed these standards resulted in another missed opportunity to advance the idea of a gender-balanced world.

In connection with Tetrault’s Feminist Phase Theory (1985), this standards document lacks in the area of recommending valuable curricular topics to educational stakeholders. When looking at the significant lack of mention of women as historical figures, it seems to have reverted to a Phase One of male scholarship. Little to no guidance is given for those using this curriculum guide to aid in the writing of state standards or aligning teacher education programs to NCATE standards. If gender is not explicitly included, there is potential for gendered perspectives and experiences to be forgotten. When the gendered experiences are forgotten, the vision of social studies as educating students to live as citizens in a diverse and interdependent world cannot be achieved.
Future Research

As the Common Core State Standards (2014) have gained considerable attention and adoption across the majority of the states, attention must be turned to these standards as well. The NCSS has issued “The College, Career, and Civic Life Framework” (2013) intended to help teachers develop and revise state standards in the four major disciplines contained under the umbrella of the social studies. As this document is implemented in the revision of state standards, it will be essential to understand how it influences the development of the newest versions of state standards. How the C3 Framework will supplement or replace the 2010 NCSS Standards is unknown as of yet, but surely as the Era of Accountability endures, our teachers and students will be exposed to an ever growing and ever changing set of standards. What is in those standards and what they say about whom and what we should be demand regular and systematic inquiry.

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