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## Guidelines for Manuscripts

### Aims and Scope

The Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies seeks to publish manuscripts in the *Journal* that focus on any of the following:

- Creative ways of teaching social studies at the elementary, secondary, and higher education levels
- Research articles
- Explanations of new types of materials and/or equipment that directly relate to social studies teaching, particularly those developed and/or implemented by teachers
- Explanations of teacher developed projects that help social studies students and teachers work with community groups
- Reviews of books and other media that are relevant to the teaching of social studies
- Analysis of how other academic disciplines relate to the teaching of social studies

### Instructions for Authors

All manuscripts must adhere to the following formatting guidelines. Manuscripts that do not meet the guidelines will be returned to the author without going out for peer review. The editors of *Social Studies Journal* accept submissions on a rolling basis. However, calls for manuscripts are issued for both regular and special issues.

- Type and double-space submissions using 12-point font and one-inch margins
- Include any figures and/or images at the end of the article
- Authors are responsible for obtaining copyright permission for all images

- Average manuscript length is between five and fifteen pages, though exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis
- Follow guidelines of the current *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*
- Do not include author name(s) or other identifying information in the text or references of the paper
- Include a separate title page that contains the title of the article, author(s) name(s), institution(s), and email address(es)
- With submission email, authors must attest that the manuscript is original, not under review elsewhere, and not published previously
- Papers must be submitted as Word documents to the editors at: editors.ssj@gmail.com

### Journal Information

*Social Studies Journal* is a biannual publication of the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies. The *Journal* seeks to provide a space for the exchange of ideas among social studies educators and scholars in Pennsylvania and beyond. The editors encourage authors both in and out of Pennsylvania to submit to the *Journal*.

All manuscripts go through a blinded peer-review process. In order to encourage and assist writers, the reviewers make suggestions and notations for revisions that are shared with the author before papers are accepted for final publication. The editors encourage authors in both K-12 and higher education settings to consider submitting to *Social Studies Journal*.

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### From the Editors

We are excited to share the Spring 2020 issue of *Social Studies Journal* (SSJ), a publication of the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies. As always, we seek to confront current issues in SSJ, which is why our lead piece this spring is an article written by the editors about the personal and professional implications for teaching social studies in the midst of COVID-19. In this article, Sarah and I share some of our personal experiences and conversations we have had as parent-scholars and some ideas for how we *begin* to proceed by looking back at past scholarship published in SSJ.

Three other articles in this issue address important social studies topics. Scott Metzger explores effective inquiry questions and how they can be used to design a unit of social studies instruction. As more districts adopt the NCSS C3 *Framework*, this work is extremely valuable to the effort to organize social studies around inquiry.

Erica Southworth, Rebekah Cleaver, and Haley Herbst encourage social studies teachers to “push past margins” by conducting micro-content analysis (MCA) to estimate gender bias in textbooks. The authors assert that since teachers do not have time to review their textbooks with traditional and time-consuming content analysis, the MCA is a practical tool for more quickly identifying gender-biased content.

Also writing about gender in the social studies, Brandon Haas and Tracy Tilotta argue

that social studies curriculum must include modern gender issues, such as those brought to light in the #metoo movement.

We are pleased that SSJ continues to publish important pieces about pressing social and political topics that must be centered in the teaching of social studies. As such, we would be remiss not to mention the state of race relations in the United States given the sociopolitical backdrop during which this issue is released. **The SSJ editorial team stands with the Black Lives Matter movement and is committed to anti-racist social studies education that addresses the anti-Blackness that pervades and infects our society. We will continue to do our part to dismantle master narratives that purport myths and lies that further White Supremacy.** Plans are in progress for an upcoming themed issue to that end.

As a final note, our themed issue set to publish this Spring has been moved to Fall 2020. The themed issue will broadly explore interdisciplinary approaches to teaching economics in social studies will feature Jill Beccaris-Pescatore, Associate Professor of Economics at Montgomery County Community College, as guest editor. Manuscripts are accepted on a rolling basis but are due for the themed issue by July 15.

Sincerely,  
Jessica B. Schocker, Editor  
Sarah Brooks, Associate Editor

## HOW SHALL WE PROCEED?: TEACHING ABOUT AND DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Jessica B. Schocker, Penn State Berks  
Sarah B. Brooks, Millersville University

It's ten o'clock on a Wednesday evening when I (Jessica) tiptoe down my stairs, stepping on a pile of construction paper crafts as I reach the last step. Our dinner leftovers are cold on the counter; the sink is piled full; my Golden Retriever is at the back door patiently wagging her tail. I quickly take care of the dog and the mess and make my way into my home office where my husband is working on a job application. My keyboard is buried under a peculiar pile of pipe cleaners, model magic, a package of unopened dry-erase markers, several small Bob books, the remnants of a cut-out homemade puzzle, and a lone American Girl doll shoe. There is an orange piece of plastic that I cannot identify for a moment until I touch my space bar to wake up my computer and realize it is sticky; the orange plastic is the broken cap to a glue stick. I rummage in a desk drawer for my stash of peanut butter cups and find mostly wrappers, but I'm in luck; one lone piece of candy is left.

My computer comes to life and opens to the grant proposal I've been working on in small intervals throughout the week. In the upper right hand corner, I have three alerts. My computer software needs to be updated, social distancing efforts are failing somewhere, and President Trump is coming to my town to visit a factory that produces masks. My heart rate accelerates, and I dismiss all three notifications, even the software update. I look at where I left off on the document open on my screen. The last

three words are "love my mama," and I remember snapping at my five-year-old daughter to stop touching my keyboard hours earlier. I start to cry.

My husband tells me not to be so hard on myself. I take a few deep breaths, willing my brain to focus and recruiting energy I do not have. "You've got this," I tell myself. I mindlessly hum the Barbie "Life in the Dreamhouse" theme song while I get back into a rhythm with my writing. A new alert pings on the screen; a student is asking for a letter of recommendation.

Another day, I am teaching on Zoom while my daughter sits at the small desk next to me tracing letters and then decorating each page as she finishes. My husband is wearing his headset and is focused on a webinar. For a solid forty-five minutes, we work like this; productive in our shared office space. I send my students to breakout rooms and while giving them a moment to get started, I praise my daughter's beautiful work. She bounces a little bit in her chair, proud, and puts her index finger to her lips, showing me that she is being quiet while I finish my class. A student tells me she is cute, and I can't help but feel proud.

My class ends. It was a good one! The students participated, and no one had connectivity issues. Behind me, I hear sounds of the crayon tin closing, papers being stacked and put away, and little feet running into the kitchen. The refrigerator door opens and my child drags the kitchen stool away from the sink so she can reach



her cup of milk. She comes back into the office and says, "I'm ready for some math." I pass her a workbook and give her a kiss on the cheek. She works independently for another thirty minutes while I answer a few emails and schedule our weekly Instacart order.

My husband pushes back his chair and tells our daughter, "it's time for Lunch Bunch on Zoom; let's go." They disappear, and I work for a while longer, cleaning up my gradebook and checking off small tasks from my to-do list. I hear my daughter's teacher, a superstar, say how happy she is to see everyone. I emerge later from the office to join my family for lunch, but they are already outside, kicking a soccer ball back and forth; the sun is shining. I enjoy a brief yoga class I've had bookmarked in a fitness app for a couple of days while they are outside. When they return, my daughter and I set up a science experiment her teacher posted on Class Dojo. Later that day, I meet a friend for a Zoom happy hour and tell her I'm pretty sure I'm doing a *fantastic* job.

### **What Does all of This Mean for Social Studies Education?**

Having read numerous articles, blogs, and social media posts about the juggling act many parents are performing right now, we know the above scenarios are not unique. We are also aware that the examples of Jessica's "struggles and accomplishments" in many ways highlight her privilege (e.g., a safe home, food to eat, resources to keep a child happy and busy, a strong internet connection). The two of us have shared (via Zoom, of course) that we vacillate between feeling very fortunate and very

anxious. We acknowledge that regardless of our privilege as employed (for now, anyway) educators, it is important to reflect upon what has quickly happened to our personal and professional lives. Further, as social studies educators, how could we not? We are in the thick of a historical landslide, a laboratory of social studies content. More people than ever are talking about the economy, global and local politics, public health and the common good, rights and responsibilities, the intersections of science and society, leadership styles, and more. As such, we social studies educators are uniquely positioned to step into this laboratory and get to work.

We are already starting to see this from many of our colleagues who are sharing quality resources for teachers and parents, promoting media literacy, and engaging in healthy debate (e.g., Caffrey, 2020). We are emerging from the infancy of this new reality and into what is going to be – as the cliché goes – "the new normal." It is time to start thinking about how we will teach *during* COVID-19 and how we will teach *about* COVID-19. As social studies educators, we have a job to do; that job is not impossible and as a field, we are poised and prepared to lead the way.

For years, social studies scholars have lamented the marginalization of social studies in the elementary grades (e.g., Fitchett & Heafner, 2010; Rock, et. al, 2006; VanFossen, 2005) and the narrowing of secondary social studies curriculum as a result of standardization and high stakes testing (e.g., Au, 2009; Burroughs, Groce, & Webeck, 2005). Then the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, and states did what previously had been almost unthinkable—canceled standardized assessments for the year (Gewertz, 2020). In some cases,

curricular requirements were altered or even abandoned while alternatives were explored (*Education Week* staff, 2020). For some educators, teaching during COVID-19 has meant a new level of freedom to teach what and how they want, along with new pressures, criticism, and fear (Turner, Adame, & Nadworny, 2020). We have both seen many iterations of this phenomenon with our own children and with our friends' children.

The scrambling act educators and policy makers are engaged in is set to the backdrop of a populace largely unprepared to unpack the intricacies and nuances of COVID-19. Teachers are charged with keeping their students "on track" academically while also playing a pivotal role, as teachers always have – *either by action or inaction* – in helping their students understand the world around them. To support this important and challenging work, we consider here: How should social studies educators teach about and during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

### **Revisiting Recommendations in the Face of a New Educational Landscape**

While we certainly would not claim to have definitive answers to the question posed above, we believe it's important that as a field we start seeking answers. In this space, we want to examine what scholars have written for *Social Studies Journal* in recent years that might offer related direction to teachers as they respond to the opportunities and challenges of the present. The assertions we highlight here represent just a fraction of the guidance that social studies educators will need as they navigate a new educational terrain – in terms of both lived

experience and content to be explored. Nevertheless, the claims we call attention to in this piece are critically important to the task that lies before social studies educators.

A review of Wayne Journell's article on fake news in the Spring 2017 edition of *SSJ*, reminds us that students will come to any study of COVID-19, having interacted with the issue "at their dinner tables, with friends, and on social media, all of which can serve as ideological echo chambers that reinforce and legitimize alternative facts" (p. 7). How then might students be invited to evaluate the barrage of information about this pandemic presented daily? How might they be encouraged to form reasoned opinions and decisions about their personal actions and those that should be taken at local, state and national levels? Step one, according to Journell, is for social studies educators to simply address the topic rather than avoid it. He argued that "being willing to step back from one's emotions and personal beliefs and evaluate claims based on available evidence is an unnatural act that only improves with practice" (p.8). This will be a particularly challenging endeavor in discussions related to COVID-19, because each and every student and educator has been impacted personally but in unique and disparate ways. While sensitivity to the lived experiences of all involved must be maintained, wholesale avoidance of the topic will not help students become discerning consumers of related information.

Journell encouraged social studies educators to create opportunities for their students to evaluate news sources through the active inquiry of fact-checking. Educators must model the skills of



“searching for and evaluating evidence that supports or refutes claims made by politicians or other partisan sources that students might encounter outside of school” (p.8). The goal of such work is to move students from being consumers of news to evaluators of it. Journell further asserted that educators can help students avoid fraudulent or extremely biased news sources by teaching them about “directional motivation,” the desire to seek and justify conclusions that align with preconceived versions of truth. Given the emotionally charged and increasingly partisan nature of so much of public discourse around COVID-19, it is critically important to heighten students’ awareness of the temptation to view sources that align with our worldviews positively and accept them uncritically. Journell’s (2017) recommendations invite us to teach during and about the pandemic in a manner that strengthens students’ skills in evaluating the sources they encounter daily.

Students who have some prowess in assessing information sources are better equipped to engage in productive discussion around civic issues. Marc Brasof’s piece on teaching in politically divisive times, written for the Spring 2018 of *SSJ*, challenges educators to treat civil discourse as one of their chief curricular aims. He argued that “educators have agency in helping to counter the deterioration of consensus building and civic engagement associated with a politically divisive climate” (p. 33). COVID-19 has inspired many civic questions and dilemmas (e.g. What authority should local, state, and federal government agencies have to dictate the actions of citizens to promote public health?), which have produced highly

polarized responses from political leaders and citizens alike. Like Journell (2017), Brasof (2018) encouraged educators to discuss questions of this kind with students, but with a focus on the difficult work of consensus building, a critical component of any functional and productive representative democracy.

To this end, Brasof advised teachers to invite rather than avoid discussion of morality and values, capitalizing on students’ sensitivity to injustice and concern with fairness. He argued that students should closely examine their own and others’ values as they relate to civic issues. For example, exploration of the myriad ways to define freedom is a crucial starting point for understanding what facts are used to support a perspective on a public health policy. Exploring different values can promote students’ moral development, their capacity for empathy, and ultimately their ability to at least partially resolve difficult civic dilemmas through more widely accepted political ideas. Brasof’s recommendations encourage social studies educators to foster student deliberation focused on fundamental values related to our most pressing social issues.

While Journell (2017) and Brasof (2018) are focused primarily on secondary students, we – perhaps particularly those of us with young children at home right now – know that even our youngest learners have questions, ideas, misconceptions, frustrations, and opinions about COVID-19 and its effects on everyday life. Our own children have asked: Why can some kids in the neighborhood play together outside, but I can’t? Why do some people wear masks but others don’t? How come my friend is going to summer camp, but I can’t? Why

did Auntie lose her job? When can we see Nana and Papa? Why can't we go to the pool? Why don't some kids ever come to our Zoom classes? Why is he (classmate) always freezing (online)? Some of these questions capture key dilemmas that individuals and families are facing in this moment. Some of these questions point to inequities that result from COVID-19. They all represent an opportunity to build understanding of, and empathy for, differing perspectives and wide ranging experiences.

It can be difficult to explain complex and "grown up" issues to young children, but social studies education does not – and cannot – wait until adolescence. Several scholars have written in *SSJ* in recent years about how young children have engaged in deep and complex thinking about complicated social issues. In Fall 2017, for example, Mark Kissling wrote about teaching the paradoxical concepts of American patriotism to young children by unveiling traditionally omitted verses from the song *This Land is Your Land*. Life with COVID-19 is also full of paradoxes and invokes issues surrounding patriotism and freedom. Kissling's work lends credence to the assertion that children are capable of having discussions about emotionally and politically charged topics.

In the Fall 2018 issue of *SSJ*, Anne-Lise Halvorsen, Maribel Santiago, Eliana Castro, and Alyssa Whitford addressed how young children might be taught to process issues of inequity or injustice; their advice has important applications for confronting some of the issues presented by COVID-19 with elementary aged students. The article offers examples of how elementary school teachers and teacher candidates have confronted

complex public issues with children, and it provides a framework that can be applied broadly to teaching about public issues where there is evidence of injustice. Those who say children are too young to engage with issues of injustice related to COVID-19 might consider the logic asserted by the Halvorsen et al. They argued that if children are old enough to participate in lockdown drills at their schools, they are old enough to explore how people are organizing to challenge injustices around guns. Similarly, since our children are being told to wear face masks in public, participate in drive-by weddings and graduation parties, and stand six feet away from their friends, they are old enough to engage with the issues of injustice resulting from COVID-19.

Halvorsen and her colleagues do not advocate that children be taught how to *deliberate about or debate* issues of injustice, but rather to *understand and build empathy* around issues of injustice. They assert, "promoting the common good often involves noticing and confronting injustices" (p. 6). In other words, we must teach children how to "read the world" (Freire, 1970) before they can act meaningfully in that world. The questions that our own children have posed illustrate how they are already "reading the world"; it is up to us as social studies teachers (and parents) to help them do so. Halvorsen et al. present an eight-step framework for teachers seeking to engage students in injustices from which we will draw a few recommendations. The framework begins with listening thoughtfully to students, taking them seriously, and hearing how they are making connections to their own lives. Should a teacher choose to pursue discussion on COVID-19 with their

students, the authors suggest narrowing the focus to be specific and developmentally appropriate. Teachers should check in with parents to let them know what topics are being addressed and invite them to share their experiences. Some parents will disagree on issues such as playing on shared playground equipment, for example. Particularly challenging would be an effort to discuss socioeconomic inequity, related to students' varying access to high-speed internet and learning supplies, while teaching online under those precise unjust circumstances. Yet, social studies teachers do this all the time (e.g., teaching children about appreciating racial differences while living in a racist world; teaching children about fairness and justice while living with a flawed criminal justice system; teaching children about the concept of family while some children are living in foster or group homes).

Halvorsen et al. suggest conducting thoughtful research from balanced, fair, high-quality sources including personal accounts and media stories. Here, teachers can lean on research such as that presented above by Wayne Journell and Marc Brasof about how to carefully source information. Halvorsen and her team also assert that this research should extend into history, creating historical context for injustices studied in the present. We have seen many connections and references made to the Spanish Flu, for example, which should be done thoughtfully and without false equivalencies. At the end of their framework, Halvorsen, Santiago, Castro, and Whitford suggest that the class decide if and how to take action on the injustice they have uncovered. As a class, will they write a letter to their representative? Raise funds? Create a

public service announcement? Participate in a reflection activity? The application of all or part of this framework could help teachers of young children begin to broach teaching about and during COVID-19.

## Conclusion

We are all currently experiencing unprecedented personal and professional circumstances. As the anecdotes at the opening of this piece highlight, many of us are navigating the competing and equally pressing responsibilities of caregiving and our professional work as educators. The sheer cognitive (and metacognitive) load of decision making required by the novel situations faced during this pandemic can make our task feel Herculean at times. Yet, social studies educators are tasked with helping our students make sense of and act wisely in their present world. Our field is arguably the most poised to confront the task of how and what to teach right now. We are the experts on place, civic responsibility, historical connections to the present, economics, and human interactions – among other social studies concepts – which undergird the COVID-19 reality. Rather than becoming overwhelmed or afraid of the daunting and unknown (short-term and long-term) future ahead of us, we encourage our social studies colleagues to feel confident in their preparation. The research and practice we have been engaged in for decades has readied us for this.

We are already teaching *during* COVID-19, and some of us are even teaching *about* COVID-19. Scholars have begun researching and writing about teaching during this pandemic. As they do so, they will be looking, as always, to prior literature to identify where to begin.

Reexamining the advice and guidance of those who have recently written for *SSJ* offers a starting point for classroom practice and for crafting new scholarship. The recommendations cited above provide valuable direction to social studies practitioners who desire to teach during and about the COVID-19 Pandemic in a manner that advances students' capacity to promote the common good in a pluralist democratic society (NCSS, 2013).

We hope this piece gives social studies teachers and teacher educators a moment of pause, reflection, and focus – so desperately needed and so difficult to find – in this time of enormous responsibility and challenge. As we share our expertise for the classroom, let's also remember to share our personal stories and to listen to the stories of our colleagues. Our shared humanity as a community of teachers and scholars is as important now as it has ever been before.

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## USING INQUIRY QUESTIONS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES UNIT DESIGN

Scott Alan Metzger, Penn State University

“Inquiry” is increasingly appearing in curriculum documents, materials, and state standards since the publication of the National Council for the Social Studies’ *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework* (2013). For a field with a reputation of being too occupied with memorization of disconnected facts (“names and dates”), inquiry offers the social studies a more cogent purpose. However, what inquiry means in practice is complex and can vary greatly (Grant, 2018). What exactly counts as inquiry, and how can teachers actually implement it in classrooms given their practical constraints? This article will explore what effective inquiry questions look and how they can be used to frame lessons across a unit of instruction and then offer concrete ideas to support unit planning.

Saye (2017) noted that inquiry has been much more commonly advocated than realized in classrooms, which more often are characterized by transmission of knowledge from teacher to student. The goal of transmission is convergent thinking—for students to converge on a single understanding held in common (a correct answer). Transmission-based practice emphasizes content recall and tends to minimize divergent thinking, in which students diverge into different viable conclusions, generalizations, or interpretations.

Inquiry-based practice emphasizes divergent thinking. This approach can be seen operationalized in the *C3 Framework* across a four-dimensional “arc” of 1) planning questions; 2) using disciplinary concepts and tools; 3) evaluating sources and evidence; and 4) communicating conclusions and taking action. The first dimension—planning questions that frame what is being studied—is foundational to inquiry-based instruction.

“Every approach I reviewed features students constructing evidence-based arguments that respond to a central question,” Grant (2018, p. 422) reported in a recent review of teaching practices. While he noted there are differences between approaches in which constructing arguments is the endpoint and approaches in which students apply what they learn to a new activity, what they share in common is framing their inquiry around intellectually compelling questions that prompt divergent thinking and higher-order learning outcomes of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

It is important to recognize that not all questions are inquiry questions. Typical classroom questions tend to be call-out recall (“Who can tell me...?”) and convergent (yielding a fixed correct answer). These aren’t inherently bad. After all, giving students a chance to review key facts is useful, and students should learn certain collective understandings, such as definitions. While they have an educational role, questions that directly yield one basic descriptive answer do not frame or guide inquiry.

### Evolution of Inquiry Questions

How can teachers develop and use questions for inquiry with students? Nearly two decades ago, Edward Caron (2005) provided an example: “What leads to the fall of a great empire?” He demonstrated how to use it as a “central question” for an “issues-based” history unit in which the lessons build cumulative understanding to be able to debate possible answers. A forerunner of inquiry approaches, issues-centered curriculum put challenging questions or problems at the center of the learning experience, such as historical or contemporary social issues open to disagreement over provisional, reasoned

responses (Evans & Saxe, 1996). Caron's (2005) question is an example for organizing unit design around an issue in history open to evidence-based investigation and multifaceted possible responses—in other words, inquiry.

Using a central question to frame the planning of a unit of instruction is relevant for inquiry-based practice today. It resonates with recent scholarship on history education, including teaching history with big ideas (Grant & Gradwell, 2010), investigative approaches into interpretations of the past (VanSledright, 2010), and historical literacy based in analyzing sources (Nokes, 2012). Of course, it is important to stress that unit design framed around inquiry questions is not unique to history. It is my contention that units in all social studies subjects are intellectually stronger when framed by a central question.

Inquiry-type questioning has gone by different names over the years. "Higher-order thinking" grew to prominence after Benjamin Bloom's (1956) taxonomy, which moved from basic comprehension and application to analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Caron (2005) built on Onosko and Swenson's (1996) unit planning based on a contestable "central issue" question and sub-issues and sub-questions that need to be analyzed. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) elevated "essential questions" to a widely used concept. In the social studies, essential questions address big ideas, contested concepts, and dilemmas in a subject; have more than one reasonable, nuanced response; and provide opportunities to connect past and present through perennial concerns (Lattimer, 2008; Virgin, 2014).

Building on this evolution, the C3 Framework has advanced "compelling questions" for inquiry. Grant (2013) explained two defining qualities of a compelling question: 1) *intellectual substance* (it reflects an enduring issue, concern, or debate in social studies, often drawing from multiple academic disciplines), and 2) *student-friendly* (it reflects something students can care about

and is presented in a way that reward students' intellectual efforts). In other words, compelling questions revolve around issues that are *important in academic fields* and that *students can meaningfully engage with and will recognize as important*.

### **Compelling Questions as Central Questions**

What makes a compelling question effective for framing inquiry in a social studies unit? Caron (2005) identified six criteria for designing good central questions that remain useful for inquiry-based social studies unit design. Below I revisit Caron's criteria and offer my thoughts for implementing them in classrooms today.

**Does the question represent an important historical or contemporary issue?** A compelling unit central question must relate to a major theme that invites broader connections across the unit's topics. Every unit has a topical scope usually indicated in its title. In the case of history units, the scope chiefly will be historical, commonly a periodized era in the past. Examples include "Ancient Roman Civilization, 750 BC-500 CE," "Renaissance and Reformation, c. 1300-1600," "Expansion of the U.S. Republic, 1800-1850" or "The Second World War and Postwar World, 1931-1949." In the case of other subjects, the scope chiefly will be contemporary and thematic, usually major concepts, principles, or knowledge domains in the field. Examples for geography include "Climate Zones and Systems" (concepts), "How Human and Cultural Geography View the World" (principles), or "Physical Geography and Cultures of Sub-Saharan Africa" (knowledge domains).

It is possible, even desirable, to blur this distinction. History units also can be about thematic issues across different eras—"Globalization from Ancient Trade Routes to the 21st-Century Economy" or "Development of Democracy: Ancient Greece to the Present" are intriguing examples (that also connect history to economics, geography, and civics).

However, the reality is that many schoolteachers (perhaps due to district, administrator, or parent expectations) frequently plan instruction around coverage of content topics or time periods. My point here is that not only explicitly thematic/issue-centered units but also topical coverage units benefit from connections to broader importance.

Drawing connections between the historical past and implications in the present is a powerful way to formulate an important issue. Historical events had consequences and ongoing repercussions, and our world today developed the way that it did because of them. In other words, people and societies are historical products. We tend to see importance in events and forces that led to developments we care about, that shaped the context we live in now; we disagree whether they were positive or negative based on our own values.

Perennial concerns such as conflicts, revolutions, environmental disasters, changes caused by new ideas/technologies, and struggles against injustice can be a basis for comparisons or evaluations across time and contexts. However, it is important not to inadvertently indulge students in *presentism*—the psychological tendency to “view the past through the lens of present” (Wineburg, 2001, p. 19). Presentism may be easy and comforting but isn’t informative, as it presumes our values and conditions today are natural rather than the product of historical contingency. Connections drawn between the past and present need to take on perspectives from the historical context and not just devolve into uncritical reactions that reflexively impose present-day perspectives on the past.

If your unit is more about a specific issue or era, you can base the central question in a major concept, consequence, or generalization that emerges from that context. If your unit is more thematic, you can base the central question in broader thinking across contexts. Consider the six history unit titles offered as examples above and how these compelling

questions below represent an important issue for each:

- How might factors in the decline of the ancient Roman Empire explain challenges faced by other powerful civilizations?
- To what extent was the Renaissance responsible for the Reformation and the rise of Western societies in the following centuries?
- Did the expansion of the U.S. republic in the early 1800s on balance result more in the growth of democratic opportunity or in the spread of racial exploitation?
- Are there plausible outcomes of World II other than inevitable Axis defeat leading to a U.S.-Soviet cold war?
- To what extent are global integration and interdependence trends across world history?
- How are modern electoral systems both more and less democratic than ancient republics?

**Is the question debatable?** Caron (2005) wrote that a central question “should be one about which reasonable people can disagree” (p. 53). The practice of debating controversial issues in social studies classroom is venerable but fraught with difficulties (Goldberg & Savenije, 2018; Ho, McAvoy, Hess, & Gibbs, 2017). However, debating cultural disagreements may seem even more perilous to teachers in the current political climate of intense partisanship, in which any disagreement is frequently disputed with moral outrage rather dialogue. It is hard to blame teachers for being wary.

The concern is not new. Caron writing in 2005 warned teachers against debatable questions that could make students feel “awkward about having to defend an untenable or morally shameful position” (p. 53). His example was asking whether slavery was consistent with democratic principles. He further advised teachers to avoid questions that invite baseless speculation about



controversial historical events. For example, asking whether the U.S. will ever fight another civil war would likely lead students to superficial evaluations, but asking “whether the Civil War was fought over states’ rights or slavery” would be better (p. 54). With historical slavery mobilized by present-day social justice causes, even this question could spark outrage over perceived racism. Structured academic debates are great when the tone stays civil and participants feel free to disagree, but this isn’t always the case.

I suggest that good central questions are multifaceted and lead to nuanced responses that generate thoughtful discussion. It isn’t always necessary or desirable to “take sides” in a debate, formal or informal. Instead the teacher can guide students to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in each other’s claims through analytical discussion. Contentious questions for debate can be turned into multifaceted, nuanced questions for analytical discussion usually through slightly different wording that changes the orientation from polarizing to contemplative. “Was the Civil War really fought over states’ rights or slavery” is polarizing because it is oriented around defending a side—one of which lost the war and was then linked with racial segregation. Alternative wording can accomplish similar educational goals through nuanced, analytical discussion of distanced perspectives:

- Why might some states in which only a small portion of the white population owned slaves have seceded from the Union, while some border states with slavery did not?
- To what extent did the Civil War end the conditions of slavery, considering the economic and social situation of African Americans after Reconstruction?

**Does the question represent a reasonable amount of content?** Caron (2005) argued that a successful central question “must be framed around a limited amount of

content, which enables students to explore the question fully” (p. 54). In other words, it is not possible for a compelling question to explicitly touch on every relevant content topic. This can cause some teachers to feel nervous about omitting content. This tension between breadth of coverage and depth of learning is inherent and perennial in the social studies. I find either/or responses to be unhelpful. With little breadth of coverage, it is difficult to build a wide view of a subject; with little depth, the view will be superficial or even trivial. Students need a healthy balance of broad coverage and deep learning.

I suggest that an effective central question touches on a reasonable range of significant content from across the unit’s scope. It is necessary to be selective when designing a central question, but you should do more than drill into just one particular aspect—that would yield a compelling question better suited for framing inquiry in the specific lesson in which that aspect is studied closely. The central question for the unit should invite deep thinking on aspects or issues that recur or build over multiple lessons. Each lesson in the unit will contribute some amount to students’ growing understanding, and the strongest, cumulative understanding will emerge by the end of the unit. Every unit is likely to contain some information crucial to a broad understanding of the subject that might have only a supporting or tangential role to the central question. A unit’s central question frames inquiry for the overall big ideas—it is not a summary of every topic and subtopic covered.

**Will the question hold the sustained interest of the students you are teaching?**

“Because middle and high school students love to argue, the use of central questions is a potentially exciting proposition for teachers comfortable with designing debate-oriented activities,” offered Caron (2005, p. 54). There’s the rub—not every teacher is comfortable in the current political climate, and not every student is eager or willing to argue profitably. Contrariness, quibbling, and moralizing are

rarely academically valuable. While a debate with stakes students care about can sustain interest, it comes with social baggage too.

I suggest that student interest—by which I mean focused attention and intellectual engagement—can be sustained by compelling questions with clear significance or relevance. While this certainly could include the students' own lives, it always should have significance to how the world they live in has come to be or relevance to problems they see as important now or for the future of their world. Students won't like having their time wasted in activities the importance of which even the teacher seems hazy about. Don't be surprised if a verbose question that supposedly invites original thinking, but really wants just one right answer, elicits anguished complaints of "why didn't you just tell us instead of having us spend so much time guessing?"

In other words, compelling questions with clear significance or relevance are more likely to sustain interest across a unit. Caron's (2005) strategies for cultivating interest in a central question are worth considering:

- Share the question with students at the beginning of the unit to give them a sense of the unit's purpose and shape to come. Invite students to offer initial reactions, perhaps through a survey or brainstorm discussion. When students offer incorrect or problematic reactions, keeping track of these and giving students a chance to correct themselves in later discussions can be a powerful learning experience.
- Help students see connections between daily lessons in the unit and the central question. A convenient way to do this is to reserve the last few minutes of daily lessons to ask students to discuss or write how what they learned today contributes to answering the central question.
- Help students see connections between units. Most courses are sequenced in a particular order for a reason that is not automatically

apparent to students. Point back to what they learned in prior units that parallels, relates to, or compares to aspects of this unit.

**Is the question appropriate given the materials available?** Caron (2005) noted that designing units around a central issue can "place the onus on teachers to seek out supplementary resources" (p. 55). There is no point in asking students a central question they will not have sufficient information to answer. The solution typically advocated is to have students do research and examine primary sources (especially for history) or other data. While extensive student-led research can be powerful, not every teacher has class time or institutional resources for it.

There are concerns about setting students loose to do research online. Back in 2005 Caron warned that Internet use needs to be vetted by the teacher as not all online materials students might find are educationally suitable. Even when students avoid questionable websites, they still are likely to be drawn to the expedience of Wikipedia—which as an open, free-content online encyclopedia public project should be used carefully and critically in education (Kissling, 2011). Setting students loose on primary documents has problems too. As Barton (2005) pointed out, historical primary sources aren't automatically educative or fun—they are often dense, confusing, and require considerable prior knowledge to analyze. They aren't even automatically authentic, as narrative texts popular in education are often less valuable than duller, non-narrative texts (e.g., tax records, bills of sale, census rolls) historians frequently use.

Where can students get information to engage with a compelling question if they don't research it? The teacher can give students a range of appropriate, concisely organized information to use—data tables, images, select primary sources, reading excerpts, and trustworthy webpages. For example, if "Was the Axis defeat in World War

II inevitable?" is the unit's central question, the students could analyze a provided table of forces mobilized, casualties suffered, and war expenditures of each combatant nation. While the burden is on the teacher to find or prepare informational materials in advance, there are returns: 1) more class time can be spent on analyzing instead of searching; 2) provided information can be intentionally focused and more useful than whatever students may happen to find; 3) unreliable sources can be avoided; and 4) the teacher will know the documents students could use and what prior knowledge is required to understand them.

While teacher-provided information efficiently presents students with data and evidence to analyze and apply, the drawback is that the amount of informational sources will be less than student-led research (as more researchers will always turn up more sources, of high and low quality). A teacher providing informational resources must be careful about biasing analysis and conclusions through the limited sources chosen. Narrow, partial, or heavily one-sided data/evidence will predispose a particular interpretation and undermine the whole point of the inquiry.

**Is the question appropriately challenging for the students you are teaching?** Caron (2005) advised that a "good central question is necessarily appropriate for all age groups, although the teacher can adapt the question so that it is more suitable, particularly for younger students" (p. 55). It is the teacher's job to phrase the question in a way that students can understand and process. When adapting the question for younger students, use shorter wording that is easier to read and comprehend, but take care not to simplify the question away from analysis and evaluation (often how/why) to only description (usually what/who/where).

For all students, but especially younger ones, an appropriately challenging question is clear on 1) exactly what the student is being asked to respond to; 2) how a meaningful response would be expressed; and 3) why the response is more than just opinion.

I suggest that free wording (such as "Do you feel that...?" or "What do you think/believe...") invites personal opinion rather than evidence-supported argument. Always watch out for vague language that muddies exactly what is being referred to (such as repeating "it," "this," or "that" a lot). As mentioned earlier, appropriately challenging questions don't ask for impossible speculation. Ambiguous questions about what "could," "would," or "might" have happened or will happen that require expert technical knowledge or imagining what people actually thought/felt in the past are not appropriate.

Ideally, inquiry questions are open to different and original responses. The most efficient way to do this is to craft them in a way that invites divergent thinking and multiple responses. This works best when the question is still open to uncertainty or the scholarly field has not reached consensus. Students, then, are acting like historians (or geographers, political scientists, economists, etc.) by examining evidence to create and support new explanations or interpretations. Phrasing the question in a way that goes beyond yes/no binary answers is a helpful first step. Wording such as "to what extent," "what other possible explanation," or "how might different factors" allows for alternate informed responses (in contrast to binary wording such as "why or why not" or "do you agree or disagree"). Wording oriented toward divergent responses sets the stage for advancing different possible explanations and evaluating their plausibility based on evidence.

However, I suggest that it can also be desirable to have students engage with an inquiry question about which the scholarly field already has reached a conclusion or consensus. There is value in students reasoning their own way to confirmed understandings or consensus of a scholarly field. Even if the viable answers are already known by professionals, they likely aren't yet known by the students, who will develop a

deeper understanding and intellectual commitment to what they learn in the process. In other words, while the goal may be for students all to “converge” on a particular understanding, they still engage in divergent thinking over different explanations and evidence in reaching the desired conclusion.

### **Using Compelling Questions to Frame Inquiry across a Unit**

With this understanding of what compelling questions for inquiry are and how to design them as a central question for a unit, we can now put the pieces together to frame inquiry across a unit. Below I lay out an approach that can be done by any teacher in any kind of classroom regardless of resources. At the end there is a unit-planning template that educators are welcome to copy and use.

**Conceptualize the Unit.** The first step is always to conceptualize the unit’s scope of content and its “big idea” or thematic focus. Many teachers have a common course syllabus, required textbook, or district pacing guide that may determine the content scope. Usually it is left to the teacher to decide which “big ideas” or themes related to that content will be the unit’s focus. In the case of history education (which I have used for my above examples), long-established major themes/concepts in the field—such as “continuity and change” (how phenomena persist or evolve over time) or “context” (how places and cultures in time have particular characteristics that make them identifiably unique but also comparable to other similar places or cultures across time)—are ready-made for formulating a unit’s focus. Further guidance can be found by consulting subject-and-grade academic standards. Many of these documents contain mandated perspectives or conclusions, or at least provide some as possible examples. I recommend giving your unit a title that concisely indicates its scope and focus and then noting which standards area(s) your unit’s lessons will address.

Also crucial to conceptualizing a unit is determining which perspectives (viewpoints, experiences, ideological outlooks, or interpretations) will frame the inquiry. A unit “framed” in just one way won’t sustain inquiry. Inquiry involves *alternate framing* of issues—multiple viewpoints, causal factors, or possible options. This also is known (particularly in history) as *multiperspectivity*, which teachers can find challenging to implement (Wansink, Akkerman, Zuiker, & Wubbels, 2018). It requires tolerating uncertainty and accepting that there might be more than one defensible way of interpreting an event or issue depending on a person’s values or identities. How the teacher conceptualizes the unit—which alternate frames or multiple perspectives will be included—will influence the unit’s inquiry questions and outcomes. It is often effective to indicate the unit’s framing in the title. For example:

- “Global Exchange, European Discovery, and Native Responses in the Age of Exploration, 1450-1750” indicates alternate framing on what was exchanged between the Americas and Europe, Africa, and Asia; on why Europeans felt they discovered a “New” World; and on different ways indigenous peoples reacted to Europeans.
- “Modern Global Capitalism: Economic Innovation, Growth, Inequality, and the Challenge of Regulation” indicates alternate framing on how global capitalism over recent decades has accelerated economic innovation and worldwide GDP growth but also wealth inequality within developed societies and on whether it is necessary or even possible to regulate transnational business.

### **Design the Unit’s Inquiry Question.**

The next step is to enact this conceptualization and framing in a compelling question about the unit’s central issue to serve as the unit’s

overall prompt for inquiry and give cohesive purpose to the unit's individual lessons. Students should acquire better understanding of this central question as they proceed through each lesson. Must the unit's inquiry be limited to one central question? Not necessarily. There may be times it is effective to divide the issue across two central questions. However, I caution against doing this too frequently or across too many questions, as the big picture can become confused or diluted.

**Identify the Unit's Inquiry Goal.** It is not enough for teachers to pose inquiry questions. They also must have a clear learning goal for each question. Unlike basic questions which usually have just one "right" answer, inquiry learning goals are more complex and can include multiple factual learning outcomes applied in support of viable, reasoned conclusions (such as explanation, generalizations, or interpretations). Just because inquiry encourages students to consider or create different responses does not mean anything goes. Responses are only as strong as the evidence and reasoning supporting them. A teacher needs to know in advance what kinds of viable conclusions students could reach (with teacher guidance if not on their own). Inquiry goals can be thought of as robust, multifaceted "enduring understanding" statements in response to the inquiry question. In other words, they model for students what desirable and defensible conclusions, explanations, or answers should look like.

**Plan the Unit's Sequence of Lessons and Inquiry.** Once you have conceptualized the unit and framed its overarching inquiry and learning goal, you can plan the unit's sequence of lessons. (This is different from and preliminary to writing daily lesson plans, though having the unit's lesson sequence planned in advance will make writing daily plans much more efficient.) Each lesson should contribute a portion of content toward addressing the unit's central question and learning goal. Arrange the sequence of lessons

in the order students need to build cumulative understanding over the available days. You may wish to plan a title that frames the topical content and inquiry for each lesson too.

Most lessons should have a compelling question framing the inquiry into that lesson's portion of the unit content. I recommend thinking of it as a sub-question emerging from the unit's central inquiry question that is relevant to the lesson's main topic. Even a task-oriented lesson (say, working on a historical map) still can have a framing question (e.g., "What are the most significant locations to this period and why?"). Likewise, plan each lesson's inquiry goal – the enduring understanding or conclusions that students should learn in response to the lesson's framing question. Using as an example the "Global Exchange, European Discovery, and Native Responses in the Age of Exploration, 1450-1750" unit with "Did European exploration mark the beginning of modern globalization?" as the central question:

- A lesson on the voyages of Columbus might pose the framing question, "Why is Columbus important if he thought he found India, Vikings visited North American 500 years earlier, and Native Americans had lived in the Americas for thousands of years?"
- The inquiry goal should include that Native Americans did not leave the Americas to explore and that brief Viking settlement became a legend. Columbus is important because he returned and his discoveries spread across Europe, leading to more voyages of exploration and conquest.

**Designate Supporting Topics, Activities, and Assessments for Each Lesson.** After planning the unit's sequence of lessons, identify the supporting content topics and concepts students will need to learn. Decide which lesson each one should be studied in, and you can place them in the order in which they will be examined in that lesson. Likewise,

you can lay out the activities and assessments that will support the inquiry in each lesson. This also is an opportunity to estimate how much class time you wish to allocate to each topic/concept and activity/assessment.

Most lessons should have a supporting inquiry question in addition to the framing question. I suggest thinking of a supporting question as a compelling question related to an aspect or implication of the lesson's framing question or to a key content outcome. The supporting question enables students to gain depth of knowledge on a specific important topic, concept, or issue. A supporting question can be in an activity (such as class discussion) or an assessment (such as in-class writing). Returning to our example above, the lesson on Columbus might pose the supporting question, "Why didn't Native American cultures defeat Columbus and other early European explorers?" The learning goal would be for students to consider the impact of pandemic disease, differences in military technology, and the desire to ally with Europeans against enemy Native peoples.

**Create Unit Closure.** Before ending the unit, it is important to return to its central question. If you did not share the question with students early in the unit, it is essential to reveal it across the sequence of lessons and devote explicit attention to it at the end. This is commonly done in the unit's last instructional lesson and may be done through an activity (such as a summative discussion or class debate) or an assessment (such as an evidence-supported essay or other writing project). No matter what you choose, the purpose is to have students make connections between what they learned from their inquiry in the different lessons and apply this to developing effective responses to the unit's central question that engage with the ideas in your inquiry goal.

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### Social Studies Unit Design Template

<b>Unit Title</b>	
<b>Standard Areas</b>	

<b>Unit Inquiry Question</b>	<b>Unit Inquiry Goal</b>

<b>Lesson 1</b>	
<u>Framing Question:</u>	<u>Inquiry Goal:</u>
<u>Content Topics</u> (Time Allotted):	<u>Activities/ Assessments</u> (Time Allotted):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>



Lesson	
<u>Framing Question:</u>	<u>Inquiry Goal:</u>
<u>Content Topics</u> (Time Allotted): • • • • • • •	<u>Activities/ Assessments</u> (Time Allotted): • • • • • • •

Lesson	
<u>Framing Question:</u>	<u>Inquiry Goal:</u>
<u>Content Topics</u> (Time Allotted): • • • • • • •	<u>Activities/ Assessments</u> (Time Allotted): • • • • • • •

## “PUSHING PAST THE MARGINS” WITH MICRO-CONTENT ANALYSIS: A TOOL TO IDENTIFY GENDER-BIAS IN TEXTBOOKS

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Does it include women? Does it include women of color? How often? In what historical roles? These are just some of the gender-based questions that can run through our minds as social studies teachers when we review a potential textbook for use in our classroom. As educators and social justice advocates, we understand the importance of examining curriculum materials for gender and other intersectional biases (e.g., race) as these can increase students' susceptibility to stereotype threat. Stereotype threat occurs when an individual conforms to a common negative stereotype about their (gender or racial) group by “self-characterizing” that stereotype (Steele & Aronson, 1995, p. 797, 808). In a classroom environment, for example, a female student might exhibit more “observer” qualities, such as sitting quietly, while her male counterparts actively participate in a class discussion because our historically patriarchal society views the “being seen but not heard” behavior as a “desirable” feminine characteristic.

This message is also reinforced in social studies textbooks when the majority (or all) of the content glorifies the actions of male historical agents. In these textbooks, when and if women are mentioned, they are often “pushed” into the margins in contributionist boxes on textbook pages instead of embedded in the main body text (Arlow & Froschel, 1976; Sadker & Sadker, 1995; Trecker, 1971; Weinbaum, 1979). This format reinforces the message of women as unimportant

observers of history rather than as active historical agents in their own right.

Ideally, teachers would have enough time to review textbooks via traditional research methodologies to determine the full extent of gender biases present. In a traditional content analysis, for instance, a researcher gathers frequency data from the content of a particular media source (e.g., a textbook) and examines the data to determine if any communicative patterns exist (Berelson & Lazarsfeld, 1948). One example of this is examining the number of times women (and/or women of color) are mentioned in a textbook in comparison to the number of times men (and/or men of color) are mentioned to help determine if gender-biased messages are being communicated to students. Unfortunately, performing a content analysis on even one textbook is an extremely laborious task that K-12 educators simply do not have time to implement because of their numerous daily professional demands.

As a former secondary social studies teacher and two pre-service social studies teachers, we have constructed a solution for how educators can determine if their textbook contains gender-imbalanced content without performing a traditional content analysis, and we present that solution in this article. Specifically, we will first review what the traditional content analysis methodology is. Then we present and define Micro-content Analysis (MCA). MCA is our proposed solution for social studies educators, in lieu of a traditional content

analysis, for quickly identifying whether or not the textbook they currently use (or plan to adopt) houses potentially gender-biased content. We introduce our MCA Guide and Toolkit and demonstrate how we implemented these on a 21st century, nationally available world history textbook currently utilized in a Midwest high school. In our example, MCA findings revealed grossly unequal gender representations, so we conclude by demonstrating how to use the final component of the MCA Toolkit to locate resources on female historical agents. This final step will help educators present more gender-inclusive social studies content to their students, thereby rectifying the potential gender-biased messages (and inaccurate historical perspectives) presented by the textbook.

### **What is a Content Analysis?**

Originally, content analysis was a methodology used in the early twentieth century by which a researcher gathered frequency data by reviewing the content of a particular media source such as newspapers (Berelson & Lazarsfeld, 1948). This means that a traditional content analysis was quantitative. According to Neuendorf (2010, 2017), a content analysis should include (1) objectivity; (2) an *a priori* component (or rules for coding data); (3) reliability; (4) validity; (5) generalizability; (6) replicability; and (7) hypothesis testing.

The frequency calculations of a traditional content analysis, however, can compliment the findings of a qualitative research study by providing a thorough data review, thereby strengthening the qualitative interpretations and inferences (Holsti, 1969). This “qual-quant” analysis

combination became popular in the latter part of the twentieth century, especially for media research focusing on the study of gender and sex roles which Neuendorf (2010) referred to as “qualitative content analysis” (p. 276). She noted that the common characteristics of a qualitative content analysis include: (1) having human coders review the data for communicative patterns (in lieu of computer-based techniques) and, like a traditional content analysis, (2) using a strong theoretical framework, a detailed coding process, and a codebook to preserve the rigor of the analysis.

### **Content Analyses Findings of Gender Bias in Secondary Social Studies Textbooks**

Feminist researchers used the content analysis methodology extensively on United States’ social studies textbooks during and after the 1970’s Women’s Movement to sift out gender inequalities based on the female-male binary (Arlow & Froschl, 1976; Clark, Allard, & Mahoney, 2004; Clark, Ayton, Frechette, & Keller, 2005; Commenyras & Alvermann, 1996; Lerner, Nagai, & Rothman, 1991; Sadker & Sadker, 1994, 1995; Schocker & Woyshner, 2013; Southworth, Kempen, & Zielinski, 2019; Tetreault, 1986; Trecker, 1971; Weinbaum, 1979; Woyshner & Schocker, 2015). Three themes about gender arose from these content analysis studies of social studies textbooks: (1) the contributionist theory marginalized women; (2) textbooks portrayed women as subordinate to men; and (3) author researchers offered few or no suggestions on how to remedy the problem of unbalanced gender representation in the textbooks.

**“Boxed” women.** Overall, women’s historical contributions – when noted in a textbook – were largely contained within contributionist boxes rather than integrated into the main body text. The contributionist approach was implemented by social studies textbook publishers during the Women’s Movement to deflect political and social pressures for gender inclusion. It occurs when textbook publishers insert boxes containing text or images of women on the margins of textbook pages – but not in the main body text – to create the illusion of equal gender representation (Arlow & Froschl, 1976; Trecker, 1971; Weinbaum, 1979). This practice focuses on the *quantity* of females in social studies textbooks rather than on the *quality* or *significance* of their actions (Woyshner, 2006). Many textbook publishers employed the contributionist theory (Baldwin & Baldwin, 1992; Commeyras & Alvermann, 1996; Sadker & Sadker, 1995) and some of the texts continued to describe women’s status as not quite that of a “full-fledged adult” (Kirby & Julian, 1981, p. 206). This strengthens the notion of women’s agency as supplemental rather than as central to historical change and dismisses women’s cultural significance as a group (Sadker, Sadker, & Long, 1989; Sadker & Zittleman, 2007).

**Ever subordinate in U.S. texts...when noted.** In her foundational content analysis of gender representation in textbooks, Trecker (1971) produced overwhelming evidence of men portrayed as the primary decision-makers and family providers. In contrast, textbooks portrayed (white) women as members of society who held a small margin of participation in “professional” areas and/or as passive wives whose domestic

tasks were secondary to men’s political and economic roles. Trecker inferred that the stereotypical images of (white) female passivity in comparison to (all) males’ actions throughout Western history resulted from traditional patriarchal constructs. Textbooks mentioned prominent white women in terms of being transitional agents rather than as part of the natural progression of historic change, and textbooks further communicated any positive reactions concerning women via broad, sweeping statements regarding white, middle class, and/or affluent wives’ lifestyles.

Women of color were *absent* altogether in the textbooks (Trecker, 1971). Trecker further reported that “black history follows the white history pattern and minimizes or omits the achievements of the black woman” (p. 251). Arlow and Froschl noted that “[T]he minority woman is almost completely absent from history textbooks” (p. xii). They further stated that *if* textbooks mention women of *any* color, the descriptions focus heavily on their appearance rather than on the women’s contributions or actions.

Content analysis studies from the late twentieth and early twenty-first century confirmed the continued existence of these traditional perspectives of women as a whole or the absence (or rare findings) of women of color in social studies textbooks. Commeyras and Alvermann (1996) found that United States’ textbooks largely acknowledged women only in patriarchal-based topics such as reproductive accomplishments, social class standing, and/or cultural entitlements. In this manner, females as a whole appeared in textbooks in largely domestic and/or subordinate roles (Jackson, 2011; Sadker & Sadker, 1995). In

her study, Woyshner (2006) further noted the clear lack of women's visibility in textbook imagery and states that students may see only one or two pictures of women in textbooks yet they are supposed to cobble together an understanding of women's overall impact and contributions in history based on this meager representation.

Two recent studies examining women's agency in textbook imagery produced findings that were worse for women of color than for white women. The first study reviewed a sample of African American history textbooks used in the United States. Schocker and Woyshner (2013) found that African American women were represented in only 14 percent of the textbooks' imagery; despite the fact that white women's agency in imagery ranged from about 34 to 44 percent (compared to white men's agency) in two mainstream textbooks. Woyshner and Schocker (2015) dubbed this the "white women as a default category" (p. 456) because most of the imagery that was inserted displayed white middle class females as contributors in traditionally male spheres of history (e.g., entering the workforce during World War II, voting and women's suffrage). Additionally, Woyshner and Schocker noted that textbooks sometimes relegated African American women to the "sidebars" (p. 454-5) of textbook pages, hinting that the publishers still used contributionist theory as an avenue for conveniently inserting females into textbooks without fully integrating them into the main body text. It is important to note, however, that the study by Woyshner and Schocker was the only study to have found that, when included, African American women were portrayed

equally in terms of roles and socio-economic class in textbook imagery. They found roughly the same number of upper socio-economic class African American women images as images of lower socio-economic class African American women. Of course, the highest number in either of these categories was 39 images in the *African American History* textbook and 10 images in the *America: Pathways* textbook; a stark reminder of the clear marginalization of women of color overall.

Three late twentieth and early twenty-first century textbook studies also addressed women's agency as a whole. Clark, Allard, & Mahoney (2004) focused on determining whether women's inclusion in United States history textbooks had increased or decreased between the 1960s, 1980s, and 1990s editions of each text. Their findings indicated significant statistical increases in percentage comparisons of women's visibility in textual lines discussing women and in textbook pages devoted to women from the 1960s to the 1990s. While these findings deviated greatly compared to studies from earlier decades (Arlow & Froschl, 1976; R. Lerner et al., 1991; Trecker, 1971; Weinbaum, 1979), none of the increases brought female agency to an equitable balance with that of male agency in the textbooks. In a similar content analysis study published one year later, Clark, Ayton, Frechette, and Keller (2005) examined whether or not women's inclusion had increased or decreased between 1960s, 1980s, and 1990s editions of world history textbooks. Again, the percentages of women's agency had increased over the decades in the texts but not enough for equitable inclusion; women still remained extremely marginalized in the texts when compared

to men. Southworth, Kempen, and Zielinski (2019) replicated portions of the study by Clark et al. (2005) on 2000 and 2010 editions of the same world history textbooks and found that women's visibility had actually decreased in the modern editions when compared to the 1960-1990s editions. Rather than advancing closer to gender-balanced textbook content in the twenty-first century, the Southworth et al. study indicates a more severe form of women's marginalization in social studies textbooks may be on the rise.

**Ever subordinate in global texts...when noted.** The pattern of "subordinate women" also pervades in textbooks on a global scale. International twentieth and twenty-first century studies, for example, revealed comparable findings regarding the marginalization of women and their historical significance in analyses of South African (Gudhlanga, Chirimuuta, & Bhukuvhani, 2012) and modern Zimbabwean history textbooks (Schoeman, 2009). Despite some improvement over gender disparity found in pre-1990s textbooks, both studies reported the persistent employment of the contributionist theory and the depiction of females in traditional roles, communicating cultural approval of passivity and subordination as characteristics expected of women (Gudhlanga et al., 2012; Schoeman, 2009). Gender bias and traditional gender stereotypes were also found in contemporary textbooks used in Pakistan, despite an extensive amount of government support and initiatives employed to try to gender-balance curriculum and textbook content during the two year span of 2007 to 2009 (Ullah & Haque, 2015). On average, Ullah and

Haque found that textbooks published post-2009 still portrayed males approximately 50 percent more than females and continued to reinforce females in traditionally submissive, passive roles while males were portrayed as active and dominant.

Blumberg (2008), who analyzed textbook and educational testing data from countries and regions all over the world including the United States, noted that Gender Bias in Textbooks (GBIT) is worldwide and can play a role in diminishing girls' achievements. As Sadker and Sadker (1995) stated, the purposeful exclusion, or near exclusion, of half of the world's population in historical content allows cycles of ignorance and apathy to continue to go unchallenged. In reference once again to United States' history textbooks, when only one out of every five textbooks includes a women-centered theme (Marino, 2011), the constant exposure to inaccurate and gender-fragmented historic content prevents students from questioning gender-based exclusion from textbooks or acquiring realistic worldview perspectives. Which leads to the question of what solutions have authors suggested for resolving this dilemma?

**Remedies for unbalanced gender content in textbooks.** While the content analysis studies brought forth a plethora of gender-biased insights in social studies textbooks, there was a scarcity of information on how educators could identify and navigate the gender-biased textbook content quickly and effectively. One study actually spoke against the additional inclusion of more women, claiming that feminism has already caused textbook content to over-emphasize the importance of minor females, thereby

reducing students' abilities to recognize major male historical figures and events (Lerner, et al., 1991). Gudhlanga et al. (2012) offered a list of recommendations (e.g., work harder at eliminating hidden curriculum), however, this list appeared after the conclusion and provided no further discussion on the recommendations or how they might be employed, making it appear as more of an after-thought than part of the actual article. A fourth study specifically called on their country's national government to rectify the plight of gender-biased textbook content (Ullah & Haque, 2016).

From the studies that did address potential solutions to gender-balancing textbook content, two common themes arose: (1) changing current patriarchal society norms to reflect equitable social balance and (2) asking teachers and schools to modify their instructional style when discussing textbook content to compensate for gender inequities in textbooks.

***Changing current patriarchal society norms.*** Some authors advocate for challenging and changing the existing social norms as a natural avenue for reconfiguring textbook content to reflect more gender-balanced historical accounts (Tetreault, 1986). Ideally, re-examining societal norms can help re-conceptualize the meaning of (gender-balanced) knowledge, thereby eliminating male-female stereotypes. Trecker (1971) initiated the call for inclusion of more women's history in textbooks, specifically in regards to how everyday citizens lived, rather than a continuous emphasis on white male leaders. Trecker stated that an overall social attitude adjustment is needed, one that rejects sexism and instead embraces the contributions of both

sexes in an equitable and respectful manner. Weinbaum (1979) and Tetreault (1986) agreed with the need to change existing patriarchal norms in order to remedy the gender-biased content in social studies textbooks. The question, of course, is how to initiate and maintain such changes.

Weinbaum (1979) proposed that the overall format of textbook content (in terms of historical topics) needs to be questioned (e.g., How do the major turning points in history differ for men and women?). In doing so, we need to balance the focus on "private" (female) and "public" (male) topics to challenge the existing social status quo. To spur this challenge, Southworth et al. (2019) advised educators to push for national and state social studies test revisions that focus on more gender-balanced content as a high stakes' incentive for textbook publishers. Southworth et al. further described how Advanced Placement (AP) Art History educators and community artists united and successfully pushed for racial and gender curriculum reforms, suggesting that such a model might also work for social studies test content reform.

***Modifying instructional style when discussing textbook content.*** Some authors advocate for teachers and their respective institutions to become the instruments of change themselves rather than wait on textbook companies to publish more gender-balanced histories. Several studies have recommended a critical literacy approach to help educators alter their teaching style. Commenyras and Alvermann (1996), urged teachers to focus on the process of reading the subtext of the book's content from a feminist historian's perspective. In this vein, teachers become resistant readers since



they are purposefully looking at how (if) textbook content diminishes women. Commenyras and Alvermann advocated for teachers to model resistant reading to their students and provided an example of how this might unfold in the classroom. Schoeman (2009), Woyshner (2006), and Schocker and Woyshner (2013) expressed similar suggestions about teachers becoming trained in media literacy models. Schoeman (2009) encouraged teachers to first examine their textbooks and then invite their students to join in on this learning process. In this particular model, teachers become more adept at dissecting textbooks and identifying gender bias by critically examining the text, audience, and production components of the text.

Woyshner (2006) suggested that teachers should engage their students in critical analysis discussions of how textbook imagery portrays women and girls via close-looking, juxtapositions, and switching places. Woyshner drew from her own experiences using these approaches and provided examples of how teachers can employ the approaches with students. Woyshner noted, however, that such activities serve as avenues “to raise students’ awareness of women in history” (p. 362), but the approaches themselves are not the solution to achieving gender equality in textbooks. Schocker and Woyshner (2013) supported teachers’ use of Mattson’s five tactical heuristics in the classroom. This interpretative-based media literacy approach requires teachers and students to incorporate the tools of: sourcing, inside-the-frame/outside-the-frame, intertextuality, framing historical questions, and using visual codes and

conventions when examining textbook imagery.

On a different note, Baldwin and Baldwin (1992) and Woyshner and Schocker (2015) stated it is up to the schools and higher education institutions to address gender-biased textbook content as a way of supporting educators’ new instructional approaches. Baldwin and Baldwin (1992), for example, proposed that schools, whenever possible, should present only non-sexist textbooks to students and that teachers should be instructing students on how to recognize and counteract biased content. Baldwin and Baldwin noted that teachers must first receive training on this process, preferably during their preparation program as pre-service teachers. Unfortunately, the authors offered no additional information on how to enact this process nor a list of resources on learning how to recognize gender-biased content. Woyshner and Schocker (2015) strongly encouraged school districts to adopt a Black history curriculum requirement and called on curriculum developers to help plug the gender and racial content gaps in educational materials. Unfortunately, they offered no suggestions on how such processes might unfold.

Finally, Arlow and Froschl (1976) called on educators to provide students with supplementary historic resources such as “diaries, letters, journals, and newspapers” (p. xvii). They stated that these resources will counteract the male-centric content of textbooks and help ensure that students gain a more accurate and holistic perspective of history. Again, however, the article does not include additional guidance on how to move forward in obtaining such resources.

## **Our Proposed Tool: Micro-content Analysis (MCA)**

Social studies teachers need a viable, research-based tool to determine quickly and effectively if textbooks are representing female and male historical agents equally. This tool could also assist teachers during their textbook adoption process and purchasing opportunities. We believe that our Micro-content Analysis Guide and Toolkit will serve these purposes for K-12 educators.

A micro-content analysis (MCA) retains three specific components of a traditional content analysis yet the analysis process itself is brief because it requires only a minimal amount of content to be coded (e.g., two to four textbook chapters). MCA gathers frequency data from a particular media source, specifically a textbook (Berelson & Lazarsfeld, 1948). The analysis is implemented by human coders (e.g., teachers) using a specific coding process and codebook (Neuendorf, 2010) designed for sifting out gender stereotypes. It includes at least four elements of the scientific method: objectivity, generalizability, replicability, and hypothesis testing (Neuendorf, 2010). These three main components help provide a research-based structure and implementation process for the MCA.

Additionally, we specifically designed MCA for K-12 educators by ensuring brevity of the coding and analysis process. One of the authors completed a qualitative content analysis of nine textbooks as part of her graduate research and the process took approximately one to two months per textbook. In contrast, the MCA process takes approximately six to eight hours.

This brevity provides quick, informative results because the teacher is analyzing a small sample of the textbook (e.g., two to four chapters). Additionally, the main function of the MCA is to serve as an informative tool, not as an alternative method to traditional content analysis for scholarship purposes.

## **How To Use MCA to Estimate the Degree of Gender-bias in Textbooks**

In this section, we detail recommended preparation steps for conducting a Micro-content Analysis (MCA). We then describe each step of the MCA process (see Appendix A “Micro-content Analysis Guide” for abbreviated procedure) and illustrate how we implemented those steps in our own MCA when we examined two chapters of a high school social studies textbook. In our descriptions, we include how we used the Female and Male Chart Templates for data collection (Appendix B), the Post-analysis Questions (Appendix C) to determine if our textbook was potentially gender-biased, and the Online Resources Chart (Appendix D) to find female historical agent resources to help balance out the biased textbook chapters we analyzed. We also include approximately how long it took us to complete each step to assist teachers who may be implementing their own MCA for the first time.

**Prep Work.** To prepare for a MCA, we recommend K-12 teachers complete a “pilot” coding test, especially if this is the first time a teacher is opting to perform a MCA, and if they intend to implement their MCA in groups (i.e., two or more teachers coding and reviewing the same textbook chapters). A pilot coding test is similar to an abbreviated MCA in that two

or more teachers select one textbook chapter to code independently and then compare notes to see if their coded data matches. We encourage teachers to print out the Micro-content Analysis Guide (Appendix A) and Micro-content Analysis Toolkit Chart Templates and Post-analysis Questions (Appendices B-C) to use as visual references to assist in the pilot process. This preliminary process follows traditional content analysis study protocol in that it strengthens coder training (Neuendorf, 2011, 2017) prior to implementing the actual MCA. We completed an independent pilot coding test prior to conducting a MCA on our chosen textbook in our study as well. In our pilot, we followed MCA Guide Step 1 by selecting a textbook chapter from our designated classroom text. We deviated slightly from the original Step 1 by opting to code just one chapter (rather than two to four) and we recommend this deviation only for the pilot test. We then created two data collection charts for the selected chapter. Two authors of this study served as data coders for the pilot and both of these authors each created two charts: one chart for “female historical agents” and one chart for “male historical agents” (Step 2). Both charts had columns designated for collecting the names of historical agents mentioned in the chapter, the page number the agent was located on, the total number of textual lines (sentences) the agent was given on that page, the total number of images (pictures) of the agent that were found on that page, and a column to list text descriptors (titles) about the agent found on that page (e.g., author, leader, wife of) (Appendix B). The two pilot coders then independently coded the textbook chapter by going through the chapter page by

page and reviewing all of the titles, headers, sentences, pictures, images, and questions and marking all pertinent male and female data in their charts (Step 3). While we encourage having two or more teachers participate in an MCA, we recognize this might not be possible in every situation. Thus, if a teacher is performing a MCA on their own, they may opt to re-code the chapters again in new (separate) charts and then compare all of their completed charts as a means of double-checking their data.

It took each coder approximately 45 minutes to code the pilot chapter and it took the coders approximately fifteen minutes to go through their charts together and compare their data. Each coder invested approximately one hour of time during Step 3. We did not need to repeat the process for another chapter (Step 4) since we examined only one chapter during the pilot test.

After we compared our charted data, we spent approximately ten minutes discussing our answers to the three Post-analysis Questions (Appendix C) which brought us to the conclusion that the chapter contained gender-biased content in favor of males both quantitatively (i.e., men were mentioned more than twice as much as women) and qualitatively (i.e., men were described as religious leaders while women were described as wives). This particular chapter also contained many images of men but none of women, further evidencing the potential that the textbook contained gender-biased content (Step 6). This concluded our pilot test. The pilot does not require teachers to advance to Step 7, which advises to either discontinue use of the textbook (if possible) or find reputable information about female historical agents in reference

to the analyzed chapter's topics so that the teachers can incorporate this information into their classroom instruction (Appendix D). Our pilot ensured that our coding variables had appropriate foundational, concrete, and easy-to-use coding descriptions (Appendix A).

Additionally, we completed a Cohen's kappa statistic to ensure an inter-coder agreement of 85% or more. Neuendorf (2011, 2017) strongly recommends a Cohen's kappa statistic as part of a traditional content analysis and we choose to complete one to increase the reliability of our study for publishing purposes. Completing this statistic is not necessary for K-12 teachers.

**Micro-content Analysis Guide, Steps #1-4.** The Micro-content Analysis (MCA) Guide (Appendix A) provides the overall framework of the entire MCA process. To begin, teachers should select two, three, or four chapters in their designated textbook (Step 1) and *each participating teacher* should prepare *their own* Female & Male Chart Templates for Data Collection (Appendix B) (Step 2). As in the pilot process, teachers should create one chart for "female historical agents" and one chart for "male historical agents" for each chapter (e.g., if teachers selected two chapters for the MCA process, each teacher would have four charts). All charts should include columns for: names of historical agents mentioned in the chapter; page number the agent was located on; total number of textual lines (sentences) the agent was given on that page; total number of images (pictures) of the agent that were found on that page; and text descriptors (titles) about the agent found on that page (e.g., author, leader, wife of) (Appendix B). We recommend setting up the charts in Excel, Google Sheets, or

similar programs as teachers can then use simple formulas to calculate the numerical data from the "total text lines" and "pic/image" columns.

Next, participating teachers should carefully and thoroughly read each page of each chapter *independently* and pay close attention to reviewing all of the titles, headers, sentences, pictures, images, and questions. While reading, teachers should chart which female and male agents are mentioned on each page, the number of times each agent is mentioned, what types of descriptive words are associated with each agent, and if there are any images of the agents. Teachers should record all data in their own appropriate chapter chart (Step 3) and then repeat this data collection process for all remaining selected chapters (Step 4).

In our MCA implementation, we selected two chapters (chapter 25 "Imperialism" and chapter 31 "Cold War") from a secondary world history textbook used in a public Midwestern school district and designated two author coders. Each coder created four charts (two "Female" charts and two "Male" charts) for data collection purposes (Appendix B). The coders then carefully reviewed the content on each page of every chapter independently during the coding process. When a historical agent was named, the coder relied on pronouns (e.g., she, he) to code any additional sentences ("lines") thereafter. The coders identified and recorded all named females and males on their independent charts (Appendix B). Tables 1 and 2 are examples of how we used the Female and Male Chart Templates (Appendix B) to house the collected data.

**Table 1: Named Female Agents in “Cold War” (Chapter 31) from Coder 1**

Name (Females)	Page #	Total Text Lines	Pic/ Image	Text Descriptors
Nien Cheng	643	3	0	author
Totals		3	0	

After we completed the coding process, we collaboratively reviewed our data to ensure that we had appropriately noted all named historical agents in each chapter in the charts. In our study, it took each coder approximately three hours to complete the MCA Guide Steps 1-4 on both chapters.

**Micro-content Analysis Guide, Steps #5-7.** Upon completing the data coding and collection and collaborative review (if applicable) processes on all selected chapters, teachers may then advance on to MCA Guide Step 5 which is to review their collected data and consider how each gender is represented quantitatively and qualitatively (see Appendix C: Post-analysis Questions). Specifically, teachers are answering the questions of whether or not both genders are being represented in each textbook chapter and, if so, are the genders represented on relatively equal numerical and descriptive ways? Using the charted data to answer these questions will guide teachers in determining if their textbook contains gender-biased content (Step 6). If the MCA indicates that the textbook content strongly favors males, we encourage educators to consider boycotting or rejecting the use of that social studies textbook in their classroom, especially if it is a textbook being

considered for adoption in the educator’s school district. If neither of these options are possible, teachers may consult the Online Resources about Female Historical Agents Chart (Appendix D) to find appropriate web-based resources to incorporate into their classroom instruction as a means of providing a more holistic and gender-balanced historical perspective for students (Step 7).

In our MCA implementation, we spent thirty minutes reviewing our collected chapter data and considering how the coded textbook chapters quantitatively and qualitatively represented each gender (Step 5). Our results indicated an alarmingly high amount of gender disparity (Step 6). Only *one* named female historical agent existed *in each chapter* compared to 18 named male historical agents in chapter 31 and 37 named males in chapter 25. Overall, the average female to male ratio of the two chapters was 1:27. This reinforces the topics of Imperialism and the Cold War as important male political (public) spheres and regulates women to the private (e.g., seen-but-not-heard) sphere (Noddings, 2001). Women, however, were *not* observers of history during these times and events. They played pivotal and highly influential roles as historical change agents.

**Table 2: Named Male Agents in “Cold War” (Chapter 31) from Coder 1**

Name (Males)	Page #	Total Text Lines	Pic/ Image	Text Descriptors
Richard Nixon	633, 635, 644, 649	13	1	US Vice President, US President, President, former Vice President
Nikita Khrushchev	633, 634, 640	17	3	Soviet Premier, new leader of Soviet Union
Dwight Eisenhower	634, 646	3	1	President
Harry S. Truman	637, 646	4	0	President
Dean Acheson	637	29	2	US undersecretary of state
George C. Marshall	637	3	0	General
George Keenan	637	1	0	well known US diplomat
Mao Zedong	642-643	1	0	Communist, ruled china
Fredric Chopin	643	1	0	European composer
Kennedy	647	6	0	President
Ho Chi Minh	648	1	0	leader of Communist Party
Johnson	648	2	-	President
<b>Totals</b>		<b>102</b>	<b>8</b>	

Based on these results, we considered our options in reference to MCA Guide Step 7. Local teachers were using the textbook we analyzed in their classrooms, so we could not boycott or reject the text at that time. We therefore

used the Toolkit's Online Resources about Female Historical Agents Chart (Appendix D) as our starting point to collect information on influential women who lived during the timeframes discussed in each of our analyzed chapters. After approximately ninety minutes of researching, we compiled our findings to help balance the aforementioned content deficiencies in the Imperialism and the Cold War chapters of the textbook into a Google Document (Table 3). We found resources and information about women who were instrumental in political arenas such as home/self-rule (Annie Besant, Kasturba Gandhi) and political leadership (Margaret Thatcher), and military leadership (Queen Mother Nana Yaa Asantewa). There were also women who led other women (Nwanyeruwa, Elena Lagadinova) and women journalists and spies (Flora Shaw, Ethel Greenglass Rosenberg, Melita Norwood). We all "shared" the Google Document, and we recommend a similar format to social studies departments and/or teacher cohorts who complete Step 7. In the classroom, we would *consistently* incorporate the acquired female historical agents' information into all typical (or pre-determined) social studies classroom activities (e.g., group discussions, jigsaws, dramatizations, comparative essays, debates, and web-quests) *in conjunction* with the male historical agent information supplied by the textbook. Presenting diversified historical agency in this manner provides students with a more holistic perspective of gendered contributions and helps us avoid the

**Table 3: Active Female Historical Agent Information to Integrate with Corresponding Textbook Chapters**

Imperialism (1800-1914)	
Female Agent	Description & Source Web Link
Annie Besant	Advocate for Indian self-rule <a href="http://www.ts-adyar.org/content/annie-besant-1847-1933">http://www.ts-adyar.org/content/annie-besant-1847-1933</a> <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/besant_annie.shtml">http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/besant_annie.shtml</a>
Flora Shaw	British journalist <a href="http://dangerouswomenproject.org/2016/09/17/lady-lugard/">http://dangerouswomenproject.org/2016/09/17/lady-lugard/</a>
Kasturba Gandhi	Human rights activist with her husband, Mohandas K. Gandhi. <a href="https://www.britannica.com/biography/Kasturba-Gandhi">https://www.britannica.com/biography/Kasturba-Gandhi</a>
Nwanyeruwa	Leader of Women's War in Nigeria in the early 20th C. <a href="http://queenmothersofafricaandtheirdaughters.blogspot.com/2016/02/daughters-of-africa-womens-war-1929.html">http://queenmothersofafricaandtheirdaughters.blogspot.com/2016/02/daughters-of-africa-womens-war-1929.html</a>
Queen Mother Nana Yaa Asantewa	Anti-colonialism military leader <a href="http://www.blackhistoryheroes.com/2010/05/queen-mother-nana-yaa-asantewaa.html">http://www.blackhistoryheroes.com/2010/05/queen-mother-nana-yaa-asantewaa.html</a>
Cold War (1945-1989)	
Female Agent	Description & Source Web Link
Elena Lagadinova	President of the Women's Committee during the first UN Women's Conference <a href="https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/bulgaria/2015-04-29/left-side-history">https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/bulgaria/2015-04-29/left-side-history</a>
Ethel Greenglass Rosenberg	Jewish American spy for the Russians <a href="https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/rosenberg-ethel">https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/rosenberg-ethel</a> <a href="https://www.biography.com/people/ethel-rosenberg-21168459">https://www.biography.com/people/ethel-rosenberg-21168459</a>

Margaret Thatcher	British Prime Minister <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/timelines/zqp7tyc">http://www.bbc.co.uk/timelines/zqp7tyc</a> <a href="http://www.history.com/topics/british-history/margaret-thatcher">http://www.history.com/topics/british-history/margaret-thatcher</a>
Melita Norwood	British government worker and USSR spy <a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/444269.stm">http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/444269.stm</a> <a href="http://spartacus-educational.com/Melita_Norwood.htm">http://spartacus-educational.com/Melita_Norwood.htm</a>

“add women and stir” pitfall (Noddings, 2001, p. 29) which can superficially inflate women’s contributions and/or “measure” women’s contributions based solely on male (“public sphere”) standards (p. 30).

## Conclusion

In an ideal teaching world, social studies educators would have ample time to review their classroom textbooks via a traditional content analysis, which would provide them with rich insights into whether or not the text contained gender-biased content. Educators would also have ample time to locate sources and revise their curriculum materials if their textbooks projected a “one-sided” perspective of history. Unfortunately, we know that too many professional commitments command educators’ attention on a daily basis and this ideal textbook review process is not possible. Yet this does not imply that social studies teachers are powerless in the textbook review process or in how we facilitate textbook use in our classrooms.

We believe that MCA and the MCA Toolkit will serve as an easy, practical-use method for K-12 social studies teachers to “push past the



margins” by quickly identifying textbooks with potentially gender-biased content and helping educators rectify the unrealistic “males-only” historical messages conveyed to students by such content. We also hope that social studies teachers do not limit their use of MCA to “just” identifying gender-biased content. MCA is versatile enough for teachers to employ it via a Critical Race Theory (CRT) or Queer Theory lens to sift out potential textbook marginalization of other minority groups and populations (e.g., African American, Latinx, Asian American, and LGBTQIA+). If, for instance, two secondary U.S. History teachers wished to use MCA to check for African American peoples’ agency in their current textbooks, the teachers could do so by making only slight modifications to the MCA process. One of those changes would be to title their data collection charts as “Named African American Agents” (in lieu of “Named Female Agents”) and “Named White Agents” (in lieu of “Named Male Agents”) (Appendix B). Teachers could also make these agent descriptor changes on copies of the Micro-content Analysis Guide (Steps 2-6) (Appendix A) and the Micro-content Analysis Toolkit: Post-analysis Questions (Appendix C) to ensure that appropriate data is being collected and reflected upon. After completing the MCA, the teachers would be able to use the revised Post-analysis Questions to determine if African American people appear marginalized (or not) in the analyzed textbook chapters. If marginalization seemed apparent, the teachers could take proactive measures and find appropriate resources on African American agents to incorporate into their classrooms (e.g., teaching 1950s Americana from the perspective of A

*Raisin in the Sun* playwright Lorraine Hansberry, who was also lesbian). They could also opt to include their students in the process of advancing the conversation around racially biased textbook content by discussing what CRT is with students and how it focuses on disrupting the race-racism-power relationship in American culture by recognizing that racism is a daily experience for people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The teachers could then have students perform their own “mini MCA” in pairs on a section of one chapter and conclude with a post-MCA research component that asks students to find pertinent and reputable information about African American agents for their assigned chapter section. In this version of MCA, the students are still receiving the same result of regular MCA: a more balanced, holistic perspective of the original textbook chapter content.

As educators and social justice advocates, we understand the importance of examining curriculum materials for gender and other intersectional biases (e.g., race) to reduce students’ susceptibility to gender stereotype threat (Schmader & Johns, 2003; Steele & Aronson, 1995). MCA and the MCA Toolkit provides teachers with enough valuable qualitative and quantitative data to critically consider their textbooks’ (potentially biased) content. Additionally, the brevity of the MCA Guide and Toolkit allows K-12 educators to complete the textbook review process in a time-efficient manner while still giving educators a viable means to “push past the margins” of the textbook and offer their students holistic – and hopefully empowering – learning experiences in social studies.

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## Appendix A Micro-content Analysis Guide

1. Select two to four chapters from the textbook currently being used in the classroom (or in consideration for classroom use).
2. Construct two data collection charts based on the “female” and “male” gender binary for each chapter (see Appendix B for chart templates). We recommend constructing the charts in Excel, Google Sheets, or a similar program so that the coder(s) can use simple formulas when calculating the “total text lines” and “pic/image” columns of the coded data.
3. Go through one chapter page by page and review all titles, headers, sentences, pictures, images, and questions that appear. Use the following codebook below to assist with charting the data.

Code	Code Definition	Coding Process (in reference to Appendix B)
1. Name	Indicates a specific (“named”) historical agent noted on the textbook page	Record any specific (“named”) historical agent
2. Page #	Identifies which specific textbook page(s) the “named” historical agent (from Code 1 above) was found on	Record exact textbook page the “named” historical agent (Code 1) was found on
3. Total Text Lines	Identifies the number of sentences (“lines”) the “named” historical agent is mentioned in the textbook page(s) (from Code 2 above)	Count the number of lines the “named” agent was mentioned on each textbook page. If the agent’s name was mentioned more than once in one sentence, count it as only one line. Use appropriate pronoun indicators (i.e., she, he) in proceeding lines to determine if the next line(s) discuss the same agent. For imagery, any text description found under the image should be counted as well in the same manner.

4. Pic / Image	Indicates whether or not a picture or media image (e.g., artwork) depicting the “named” agent was evident (in relation to Codes 1 & 2 above)	Record the total count numerically if pictures and/or imagery is present. Record a “0” if none is present.
5. Text Descriptors	Indicates specific titles and/or verbs that were used to describe the agent (from Code 1) in the surrounding text and/or picture (or image)	Record the exact title(s) used in the text to describe the “named” agent. <i>Titles</i> can be occupationally based such as “author” or event-based such as “civil rights leader.” Titles can also be relationally based (e.g., “wife of” or “husband of”). Record <i>verb</i> descriptors exactly as they appear in the text. Examples include agents described as “passionate” or “discontented.”

4. Repeat Step 3 (above) for all of the chapters selected for the MCA.
5. After the data collection process for both chapters is complete, review the Post-analysis Questions (Appendix C) in consideration of your data.
6. Based on your data-informed answers to the Post-analysis Questions, decide if you believe the textbook may (or may not) have gender-biased content.
7. If the MCA indicates that the textbook is potentially gender-biased in favor of males - and you have no choice but to continue to use it in the classroom - consult the Online Resources about Female Historical Agents Chart (Appendix D) to find resources and information about female agents to incorporate into your instruction and related student activities.

**Appendix B**  
**Micro-content Analysis Toolkit: Female & Male Chart Templates for Data Collection**

<b>FEMALES</b>				
<b>Name</b>	<b>Page #</b>	<b>Total Text Lines</b>	<b>Pic /Image</b>	<b>Text Descriptors</b>

<b>MALES</b>				
<b>Name</b>	<b>Page #</b>	<b>Total Text Lines</b>	<b>Pic/Image</b>	<b>Text Descriptors</b>

## **Appendix C**

### **Micro-content Analysis Toolkit: Post-analysis Questions**

After collecting your data, consider the following:

1. Quantitatively, are both genders represented in the chapter? If so, are they represented equally or relatively equally?
2. Qualitatively, what roles or tasks are the female and male agents either described as performing (text) or portrayed doing (imagery)? (E.g., males and females in roles of power?)
3. Based on your answers to Questions 1 and 2 (above), was the overall inclusion of historical agents equitable?

**Appendix D**  
**Micro-content Analysis Toolkit: Online Resources about Female Historical Agents**

Agent &/or Source Title	Source Description / Web Link
EDSITEment! The best of the humanities on the web	Women's Empowerment in America & the World ( <a href="https://edsitement.neh.gov/search?keywords=Women%E2%80%99s+Empowerment+in+America+%26+the+World+">https://edsitement.neh.gov/search?keywords=Women%E2%80%99s+Empowerment+in+America+%26+the+World+</a> )
Educating Jane.com	Resources relating to women in history ( <a href="http://www.educatingjane.com/Women/womenLP.htm">http://www.educatingjane.com/Women/womenLP.htm</a> )
National Geographic Education	Type "women in (your content area)" or just "women" in the site's search box ( <a href="https://www.nationalgeographic.org/education/">https://www.nationalgeographic.org/education/</a> )
Scholastic: Teacher's Activity Guide	"Honor Roll of Notable Women" ( <a href="http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/women/notable.htm">http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/women/notable.htm</a> )
Smithsonian Institution	Type "women in (your content area)" in the site's search box ( <a href="http://www.si.edu/">http://www.si.edu/</a> ) Example: "women in history" or "women in economics"
Teaching Social Studies Passionately & Accurately	Professor's professional resources website, click on "Web Resources for K-12 Educators" tab ( <a href="https://sites.google.com/snc.edu/southworth">https://sites.google.com/snc.edu/southworth</a> )
Women in World History	<i>Gender in History: Global Perspectives</i> authored by Dr. Merry Wiesner-Hanks provides a plethora of astutely researched historical information pertaining to women's integral part in the creation of world history. Spans the construction of gender in many world cultures from the Paleolithic era to modern times. (Available online at <a href="#">Google Books</a> )
Women in World History Curriculum	"This unique site is full of information and resources to help you learn about women's history in a global context." ( <a href="http://www.womeninworldhistory.com/">www.womeninworldhistory.com/</a> )
Women in World History – Roy Rosenzweig Center for History & New Media	Website featuring primary sources, website reviews, forums, case studies, & modules ( <a href="http://chnm.gmu.edu/wwh/">http://chnm.gmu.edu/wwh/</a> )



## TIME'S UP: CONSIDERING GENDER AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES

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Politics and society continue to erect and sustain barriers designed to preserve the status quo within public schools. Policies such as standardized tests, teacher evaluation systems, and curriculum maps seek to restrict teachers' roles as curricular gatekeepers (Thornton, 1991/2005) by setting parameters for content. There are also philanthropists and entrepreneurs alike that continue spreading problematic ideas and short-sighted plans as a means of social control instead of capitalizing on the opportunities for providing equal educational opportunities for all students despite their race, gender, or socio-economic status. Tatum (2018) discusses the dominant and subordinate characteristics of our identity that Lorber (2018) points out are used as a means of fostering membership in various social groupings. Many different populations have faced oppression throughout the course of history and are still suffering such conditions today. Crocco (2018) points out that "the patriarchy is alive and well in American society -as is racism, homophobia, xenophobia, and other problems undermining the promise of democracy as a form of associated living" (p.13). This reality is evident in the polarized social and political landscape of the United States, which is the only world that students today have ever known (McAvoy, 2016).

Recent events such as the Women's March of 2017, the #MeToo movement, and the controversial appointment of Brett Kavanaugh to the United States Supreme

Court, provide evidence of an imperative need to teach students to critically study these issues. As social studies educators in particular, we assert that such meaningful learning will allow students to act as agents of positive and impactful change to combat social injustice and misunderstanding.

In the Spring 2018 issue of *Social Studies Journal*, Margaret Crocco's article "Teaching Gender and Social Studies in the #MeToo Era" unpacked the importance of a purposeful approach to considering gender in social studies. She points out that "the #MeToo moment in American society provides fresh opportunities for social educators to teach about the ongoing fight for women's rights toward equal opportunity for all" (Crocco, 2018, p. 13). As we move toward the 2020 election, social issues such as gender remain a central focus of the race, thereby providing a perfect opportunity for stronger integration into the curriculum.

In this article, we seek to use relevant literature to establish a case for more thoughtful incorporation of modern gender issues into social studies and to provide teaching ideas for classroom integration. We discuss three ways in which social studies teachers can approach gender issues in an effective and purposeful manner allowing for inclusion in the existing social studies curriculum.

First and foremost, teachers need to understand gender as a social construct in addition to their own attitudes towards gender issues. As we consider gender in

social studies, we must take into account intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1990), which refers to the intersection of multiple constructs of identity. It is beyond the scope of this article to delve into these intersections in-depth, but we highlight the intersection of gender and sexuality. Secondly, social studies teachers can discuss and foster positive attitudes through multicultural education. And third, through democratic education and in the wake of the 2017 Women's March, #MeToo movement, and continued issues surrounding equality, social studies teachers can use the curriculum to teach about what it truly means to be a citizen and the importance of a pluralistic society based on the values of all people.

Gender has forever been an issue woven into the fabric of American culture and the education system, but research and practice in social studies consistently fails to establish an equitable portrayal of women (Crocco, 2018; Schmeichel, 2015; Schmidt, 2012) as demonstrated by notable reviews in social studies research (Bohan, 2017; Crocco, 2008; Mayo, 2017). Schmeichel (2015) makes explicit that, aside from Schmidt (2012), there lacks an exploration of "how women are present in the curricula and, specifically, whether or not the limited examples...are opening up gender inequity as a topic to be discussed in critical ways" (p. LOL3). Historically, gender issues have been embedded into our culture, establishing an opportunity for a more critical and purposeful inclusion in social studies classrooms. Well-crafted lessons allow students the opportunity to consider real-world implications of gender as a social construct. Social studies educators should address issues that our students are faced with every day. Through the existing social

studies curriculum, teachers can make a conscious effort to explore heteronormative and cisgender narratives (List, 2018) and transform the acceptance of gender norms (Mayo, 2019), thereby promoting equity and disrupting the dominant narrative.

### **Gender as a Social Construct**

Through the social construction of gender (Lorber, 2018), roles have been defined within the United States and these gender roles that have been shaped over many years impact the daily lives of the children we teach. Lorber (2018) states:

most people find it hard to believe that gender is constantly created and re-created out of human interaction, out of social life, and is the texture and order of that social life. Yet gender, like culture, is a human production that depends on everyone constantly "doing gender." (p.354)

Gender stereotypes such as boys being rough, strong, and insensitive, while girls are passive, compassionate, and weak are constantly reinforced within the home and school setting. Murline (2001) has found that when boys get emotional, parents and other adults often encourage them to tone it down. Kimmel (2000) discusses "The Boy Code" that teaches boys that they are supposed to be in power and thus begin to act like it, serving as a driving force for society's "crises in masculinity" (Hesse & Zak, 2017) as represented in the #MeToo movement (Crocco, 2018). Adolescence is typically the time when boys and girls encounter their first experience with gender inequality, which may cause girls to suppress ambition while boys inflate it. Crocco (2001) explains that schools are places where sexual and gender identities

are developed and as students begin to experience organized life in the public realm, they learn what it means to be male and female.

Research suggests it is not through the formal curriculum that students receive these messages about gender normativity (Schmidt, 2012). Lorber (2018) argues that “social statuses are carefully constructed through prescribed processes of teaching, learning, emulation, and enforcement” (p.355). Therefore, gender as a social institution is a process of creating distinguishable social statuses for the assignment of rights and responsibilities. As educators, we need to break down the gender stereotypes and help children, at all levels of schooling, to understand gender stereotypes that can also lead to gender violence.

Social studies teachers must create learning environments that foster and model gender equality, and they should create lessons that will have students critically think about gender systems and issues. Before a teacher even begins to think about how to teach for social justice within their social studies classroom, they must reflect on their personal stance on social justice topics such as gender. We pose this question for educators: Do you feel that gender has a daily impact on the students in your class? No matter how you answered the question, it is crucial to critically consider why you feel the way you do about gender. Your personal view on gender shapes how you respond to your students as well as the rationale for, and types of, instructional practices you employ within your classroom.

Mardi Schmeichel (2015) documents three rationales provided in published social studies lesson plans that explicitly

teach about women. Fifty percent of the lessons examined cite a *technical focus*, or emphasis on skills. These lessons incorporate content that could be used as an entry point for larger discussions of gender systems, but instead the rationales “clearly separate gender inequity from the purpose” (p. 9). The second rationale, *offsetting the deficit of attention to women in the curriculum*, brings attention to the absence of women in the social studies curriculum. However, Schmeichel points out that they fall short of examining why women should be included in the curriculum “beyond reasons of parity” (p. 9). The third rationale, *working toward gender equity*, was present in only one of the lessons in the study. This rationale pointedly states the need to address gender equity through the social studies curriculum. It is worth noting that two lessons in the study provided no rationale, which is linked to Grant and Wieczorek’s (2000) argument that cases of inclusion and omission are “not produced in a vacuum, but connect to social, cultural and historical currents that can be traced and analyzed to see how they affect present practices” (p.924).

There are many reasons why teachers may not discuss gender issues in their classrooms. We suggest that teachers’ implicit and explicit biases represent a determining factor. Chapman and Hobbel (2010) discuss the need for teachers to be cognizant of their everyday teacher-behaviors that may be creating unequal educational opportunities. Educators must confront their own attitudes about the gender issues that exist. Crocco (2001) discusses evidence suggesting that teachers often tolerate sexist patterns in schools, including bullying of LGBTQ students. The AAUW (1993) adds that

sexual harassment incidents are often overlooked by teachers and administrators each year, resulting in a continued tolerance of violence against women and the LGBTQ community within American schools, which is why the need to recognize and evaluate what is transpiring remains crucial.

Not only do teachers need to confront their own biases, they also have to take the initiative in their classrooms to discuss such topics. Many teachers feel gender issues are controversial and, therefore, avoid the subject matter and discussion all together (Hess, 2005). Furthermore, few teacher education programs in the social studies tackle gender (Crocco, 2001) or do so through “a male-dominated, binary manner” (Engebretson, 2017, p.113). Gender issues are very much part of our culture, and it is the social studies educator’s duty to break down these stereotypes in the best interests of their students. Something as simple as bringing the use of language to the attention of students can make them aware of gender inequalities. Pointing out that throughout history the word man was always used to describe both men and women. Such language usage seeks to deliberately exclude women, establishing men as the dominant sex.

Since some educators feel that these topics are controversial, they also fear the possible backlash from parents and administration, a concern that comes up regularly in teacher preparation. Others omit gender issues within the curriculum due to the discomfort associated with a lack of understanding. As a result, we often see educators taking an avoidance approach (Hess, 2005) to teaching about gender. By avoiding the development of a better understanding and including

gender in the classroom, it becomes part of the null curriculum (Eisner, 1985) further perpetuating the issues being discussed in the recent women's marches and movements.

### **Multicultural Education**

Multicultural education (Banks, 1991, 1999) provides a framework to responsibly include gender throughout the curriculum. Through multicultural education, social studies teachers, as well as other content area teachers, can effectively teach about social injustices and, hopefully, make social changes within the community, country, and possibly around the world. This can be achieved if teachers move beyond celebrating International Women’s Day or Black History month, in a vacuum and truly transform the curriculum by consistently exposing students to different perspectives within history, thereby giving students consistent social action opportunities. Ladson-Billings (1999) discusses the view of the formal school curriculum as a, “culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a white supremacist master script” (Ladson-Billings, p. 21). As social studies educators, we wholeheartedly agree and would also include the presence of gender imbalance in the curricula (Schmeichel, 2015; Schmidt, 2012; Schocker & Woyshner, 2013). In an effort to address this issue, teachers should find resources that fill in the culturally diverse gaps in the curriculum and textbooks.

Gender is certainly present in multicultural theory (Crocco, 2008). Banks (1999) posits that social studies educators should use whatever opportunity the contemporary climate of concern offers to

explore the relationships between misogyny, homophobia, and violence from the standpoint of critical, transformative multicultural education. Using multicultural education to address gender can give students “an accurate depiction of the development of U.S. society and culture” (Banks, 1991, p.459). For instance, Mayo (2017) asserts that sexuality is perpetually present in students’ lives in the school and beyond. The constant barrage of sexual imagery and sexuality present in curriculum, daily interactions, and events such as school dances communicate certain messages to students, intended or not. Often these messages are inextricably linked to gender norms as evidenced by Mayo’s (2017) findings that gay male teachers feel pressure to conform to norms of masculinity and male behavior.

Banks (1991) discusses two models that social studies teachers can use to teach about gender and sexuality. First, the transformation model refers to a change in the curriculum structure to ensure that students have the opportunity to examine and understand concepts, issues, and events from the perspective of various groups. It requires the infusion of perspectives and ideas that will expand students’ understanding. An example would be presenting a unit on the Civil War that includes the voices and perspectives of women, as well as enslaved and free Black people. Second, the social action model builds upon the transformation model by requiring students to make decisions and take action, which aligns with the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Inquiry Design Model step(s) of communicating findings and taking informed action (Grant, Lee, & Swan, 2015). Crocco (2001) stresses the

need to encourage students to understand themes, events, concepts, and issues from different perspectives in order to empower and promote them to take action. For example, students develop and implement strategies to confront racism, sexism, or any other forms of oppression in their schools and/or personal lives.

Banks (1991) states that multicultural education should be included in social studies curriculum because of the nation’s commitment to fostering a democratic society. In a democratic/pluralistic society, it is vital for diverse groups to feel part of the social structure. Chapman and Hobbell (2010) argue, “Multicultural education for social justice remains an espoused ideal for many critical educators who desire to see students understand and critique their communities and the greater society as a practice of democratic citizenship” (p. 237). Banks (1991) suggests a broad conceptualization of studies to provide guidelines for further research and to improve practice regarding the effects of curriculum on children’s sex role attitudes and gender associations. Gender and sex role attitudes and assumptions develop at a very young age and many factors within society reinforce gender and sex stereotyping. Additionally, children and adults automatically cluster unknown individuals by their gender, even when this categorization is not relevant to the situation and has no informational benefits (Bennett, Sani, Hopkins, Agostini, & Malucchi, 2000). Crocco (2001) believes educators should address these norms, along with the violence in our society, as part of the social studies curriculum through multicultural education. Further, Freire (1970) argues that as students are confronted with problems relating to

themselves in the world, “they will be challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge” (p.62). Teachers should make content and learning activities relevant for students and give them the opportunity to grow through open dialogue.

### **Democratic Education**

In a society of shifting gender roles and greater openness around issues of sexuality, the future of a healthy society may depend on a social studies curriculum that critically considers these issues (Crocco, 2001). Women, and other groups who have been excluded by a narrow definition of democracy, have repeatedly organized and demanded inclusion in the political process and redefined what it means to be an active member in civil society (Weiler, 1993). Students need to understand that, historically, men and women have not had equal rights and that there has been a constant struggle for women to achieve the equity that they deserve within our democracy. Students should also critically examine ways in which gender inequalities have existed for centuries and still permeate society today. Teachers must provide students with ample opportunity to ask questions, reflect on real-life situations, share ideas, and participate in open discussions.

*History Alive* (Hart, Bower, & Teachers' Curriculum Institute, 2011) provides an excellent lesson within the Era of Reform unit that illustrates gender inequalities in the past and the present. Students analyze the need for a women's reform movement during that era. Students then make comparisons that examine societal statistics from the past and the present and explore present day

gender inequalities, which could be investigated through a variety of current events.

One example of such a current event might be the fight of the United States Women's National Soccer Team (USWNT) for equal pay (ESPN, 2020). The USWNT has won multiple World Cup championships as well as Olympic Gold Medals, yet they earn far less than their Men's team counterparts. This issue led to a lawsuit for equal pay filed by the USWNT against the United States Soccer Federation. A contemporary event may serve as a point of departure for a wider investigation into social inequality.

Social studies can contribute to keeping democracy healthy by rewriting its history, re-examining its commitment to equity in the present, and reconsidering its future commitments (Crocco, 2000) – in short, by taking citizenship seriously. Chapman & Hobbel (2010) suggest that social studies teachers, must continue to push and challenge students' understandings of political contexts, myths, and beliefs in society. Ross (2017) argues for an approach to *dangerous citizenship* that disrupts the dominant narrative and, in this case, acknowledges the continuous contributions and sacrifices of women in society.

### **Theory into Practice**

**Teacher critical reflection.** The time has come for gender inequity to be a focus in social studies, which can be achieved through our own critical reflection and pedagogical decision making. Gender is a social construct that has been embedded within our culture for centuries and should be addressed within social studies classrooms since they have

daily impacts on the students. This can be achieved through social studies teachers examining their own biases and taking the initiative to incorporate gender issues within the existing curriculum. Practicing social studies teachers must “be provided with training and opportunities that will enable them to examine their feelings, attitudes, and values, and help to develop attitudes consistent with democratic society” (Banks, 1991, p.467). More opportunities for professional development that includes these elements would be welcome.

#### **Pedagogical decision making.**

Gender issues can also be examined within a social studies class through the teaching of multicultural and civics education. Banks (1991) discusses how social studies educators can contribute to the research on gender role attitudes by examining ways in which gender influence students’ behavior and attitudes, which can be done through the transformation or social action models. Crocco (2001) suggests addressing these topics through thoughtful, open-minded discussion as part of a broader agenda concerned with diversity and inclusion in citizenship education, an imperative for the social studies in the coming years. Policy makers should pay closer attention to the gender issues that our students face in schools and include the teaching of gender issues within the social studies curriculum if “our goal as teachers is to equip and inspire our students to see issues that affect them or others in their communities and the larger global community” (Chapman & Hobbel, 2010, p. 303). Below are some ideas for practical application.

*Comparing gender roles in historical cultural contexts.* Students can evaluate gender roles during different historical time periods and compare and contrast how they have changed throughout history. For example, List (2018) describes considering gender roles in Spartan culture or investigating how Indigenous Nations of the Americas treated gender non-conforming individuals prior to colonial and Christian influences” (p. 121). Another example might be the traditional roles of men and women during the Northern and Southern Dynasties of China. Students will likely be familiar with the Chinese legend, *The Ballad of Mulan*, as told by Walt Disney Studios. This story provides a point of entry to consider gender roles and culture in history as well as unpacking the messages present in the legend.

Prompts to begin an inquiry:

1. What is the role of gender in a particular historical or cultural context?
2. How do gender roles today compare with those in a different time and place?

*Student-authored textbook supplements.* U.S. history textbooks primarily fixate on experiences of dominant groups in society (Loewen, 2008; Sadlier, 2007), “heralding the histories of those who are wealthy, White, heterosexual, and male” (King & Simmons, 2018, p. 93). Students should be given the opportunity to examine the women and others that also made contributions to our country. While little can be done to change textbooks, there are opportunities for inquiry that would allow students to expand the textbook portrayal of history. Using chapter and section headings within

textbooks as a guide, students can research women during a given time period and develop narratives to augment their textbook. Prompts to begin an inquiry:

1. Whose experience is centered in the textbook?
2. Are women present in a textbook? Is their presence a central focus or are they additive?
3. How can we shift the focus to center women and other marginalized groups in the headings, captions, and content?

*Book talks.* Students can conduct a book talk focusing on literature that highlights strong female characters. Evaluating the attributes of strong female characters will give students a better understanding of how strong females have overcome obstacles. It also provides an opportunity to explore intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) in character identity.

Young Adult literature provides students with the chance to make connections to characters from a variety of backgrounds. *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas, for example, follows Starr as she navigates the duality of identity between her predominantly White, upper-class, private school and her home in a lower-class Black neighborhood. Following the trauma of the fatal police-shooting of her best friend, Starr must determine how to resist society's treatment of Black citizens. For further book suggestions, see Appendix A. Prompts to begin an inquiry:

1. Create an identity chart for the characters (Facing History and Ourselves, n.d.)
2. How do the characters/story disrupt or resist master narratives of gender in society?

3. Provide examples of character actions that demonstrate strength, leadership, courage, etc.

*Local history.* Students can use the historical inquiry process to get an in-depth look at the impactful women within their community. Historical inquiry requires students to research primary sources and examine other pieces of evidence to uncover important information. An example would be the online exhibit, *Taking the Lead: Women in the White Mountains*, from the Museum of the White Mountains documenting women who broke the mold of women as innkeepers in favor of leading expeditions in the White Mountains. Prompts to begin an inquiry:

1. How does "place" impact gender roles in our community?
2. What opportunities do women have to assume leadership positions in our community? Has it always been this way?
3. What are examples of women who refused to be limited by these stereotypes or gender norms? How did their actions have an impact?

## Conclusion

While not exhaustive, these suggestions provide practical examples of how teachers can include gender in their classrooms in a way that critically examines gender systems and issues in society. We cannot escape our biases and the implications for our pedagogical decisions. Inequities in school and society are ever-present. However, teachers and teacher-educators can confront this presence through critical reflection and their pedagogical decision making. Through this work, social studies teachers



can give agency to students to fight for equity and equality. Considerations in multicultural education and democratic citizenship education provide opportunities to reshape our practices to be more inclusive and critical of these social constructs. The time has come to better prepare our students to fight for a more just and equitable future.

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## Appendix A

### Young Adult Literature with Strong Female Characters

*Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson

*Luna* by Julie Anne Peters

*Ask the Passengers* by A.S King

*Being Jazz* by Jazz Jennings

*The Hunger Games* series by Suzanne Collins

*Divergent* series by Veronica Roth

*To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee

*Go Set a Watchman* by Harper Lee

*The Children of Blood and Bone (Legacy of Orisha series)* by Tomi Adeyemi

*A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle

*Harry Potter* by J.K. Rowling

*The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak

*Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire Sáenz