A Feminist Perspective on the School-to-Labor Pipeline

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Abstract

Today, women across race and class categories graduate high school and college at higher rates than men (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). According to Marxist reproduction theories, schools maintain social hierarchies by academically rewarding the elite. Yet, despite educational gains, women remain materially and symbolically unequal, proving to be exceptions to reproduction frameworks (Fraser, 2009). This paper examines females' anomalous success through a feminist poststructuralist lens (Weedon, 1987). It critiques Marxist and feminist approaches to educational inequality for narrowly defining academic achievement and missing the effects of gender reproduction in schools. It presents an alternative understanding of academic success, one that incorporates gender performance, by examining how the discourse of "separate spheres" informs the dialectical relationship between schools and labor. By reviewing the theoretical, empirical, and historical accounts of schools and the labor market, the paper concludes that academically successful women perform and help reproduce a narrow version of White femininity.

Keywords: social reproduction, Marxism, post-structuralism, feminism, inequality

There are two major sources of unequal power relationships in society: the symbolic and the material (Fraser, 1997). The symbolic form of power describes how a group is perceived in society, whereas the material form of power is reflected by the extent of economic resources available to a group. Both symbolic and material forms of power are socially, historically, and culturally contingent, and reproduced by social institutions (Cho, 2012; Weedon, 1987). By all accounts, women in the United States remain both symbolically and materially unequal (Fraser, 1997). Women are more likely to be sexually and physically abused; feminine traits are socially devalued; women are underrepresented in politics and as business leaders; and a gendered wage gap favoring men persists (Blau, 2007; Blau & Khan 1997, 2006; England, Allison, & Wu, 2007; Fraser, 1997, 2009). In one area today, however, women across race, ethnic, and class categories outpace men: education (Noguera, Hurtado, & Fergus, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

The 2010 U.S. Census revealed that in 2009 women received 57% of all bachelor degrees. Disaggregated, this figure shows the female gains in education occurred even within racial and class categories. Yet the median earning of women with a bachelor's

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degree during this same period is significantly less than men with the same race and degree. White college educated women earn 61 cents of a White male dollar, Black college educated women earn 72 cents of a Black male dollar, and Hispanic college educated women earn 77 cents of a Hispanic male dollar (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Also, women are concentrated in lower-paying and symbolically devalued, gendered occupations such as nursing, childcare, and teaching (England et al., 2007; Fraser, 1997). These findings are particularly problematic for women of color who earn less than both their male counterparts and White females (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

To examine why women with high educational outcomes continue to remain socially disenfranchised, education researchers can select from two frameworks: Marxist reproduction theories and liberal feminism. The Marxist account positions schools as ensuring the continued subordination of oppressed groups (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Willis, 1977). This framework reveals the myriad of ways schools produce unequal social relations by disguising society as fair and open. Marxist educational research views schools as institutions that reproduce rather than minimize social inequality. "Academic performance"—high grades that lead to college matriculation—becomes the means to legitimate and ensure the reproduction of unequal social relationships. In essence, those individuals who do well in school are *allowed* to succeed because of their membership in the dominant group. According to the logic of this framework, women's academic success would make *women* the dominant group and *men* materially and symbolically subordinate. In the U.S., this clearly is not the case. An alternative framework for understanding women in education is liberal feminism. Scholars in this field describe the presence of patriarchy in schools—a structure of power that subordinates women in all social, economic, and cultural arenas—preventing female academic success (Arnot, 1994; Clarricoates, 1981; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). In this framework, women's academic success would signal an end to patriarchy in society. Therefore, neither of the two dominant frameworks in the education field can currently explain female academic achievement in a patriarchal society.

Poststructuralism, or the notion that power is diffuse and not concentrated in one structure, is an alternative framework to examine educational inequality (e.g. Bettie, 2003; Lather, 1991; Weiner, 1994). Yet this approach has its own limitations, such as a lack of political action or commitment to social justice (Cho, 2012; Lather, 1991; McLaren, 1998). Lather (1991) recommends scholars interested in addressing educational inequality should unite poststructuralism with other action-oriented theories such as feminism and Marxism. One of the difficulties in uniting feminism and poststructuralism is that the former intends to liberate an oppressed group whereas, in contrast, poststructuralism sees the very act of naming an oppressed group as perpetuating relations of domination, making liberation efforts difficult at best (Lather, 1991; Weedon, 1987). The contrary objectives of these theories make defining terms such as "woman," or narrowing down a particular line of inquiry, problematic. Lather (1991) recommends scholars embrace this paradox of how one's efforts to liberate simultaneously suppresses. She believes weeding through this paradox is the only route to a fuller understanding of how inequality persists in society. In the spirit of the paradoxical, this paper will examine how the category of "woman" is historically, socially, and culturally constructed within schools and the labor market. This constructivist approach to gender contends that

categories of men and women are produced through social and cultural relations of power in complex and contradictory ways (Butler, 1990, 1993; Lather, 1991; Weedon, 1987). In addition, gender shapes and is shaped by other structures like race and class (Bettie, 2003; McClintock, 1995; Weedon, 1987). By using the category of "woman" throughout the following discussion, this paper does contribute to the re-inscription and essentializing of who counts as a "woman." Yet it also hopes to reveal how the category of woman does not emerge from a "natural" biological landscape, but instead is created by cultural and social relations of power that affect the lives of individuals.

The major question posed here is: *If schools are designed to reproduce unequal social relationships, why are women academically successful in a patriarchal society?* To address this puzzling phenomenon, this paper will review and critique Marxist and feminist approaches to the school-to-labor pipeline. While Lather (1991) called for Marxist educational literature to integrate feminist and poststructuralist approaches, few actually have done so in the 23 years since her declaration. In reviewing this gap in the literature, the following discussion will illustrate why the educational field should not only incorporate feminist and poststructuralist theories, as Lather suggests, but also a *feminist poststructuralist* understanding of academic achievement. It will reveal how a Marxist approach to educational inequality is problematic for investigating women, gender production, and sexism reproduction in schools. Further, certain feminist framings of women as forever educationally disadvantaged also make it difficult to understand a female academic achievement. To demonstrate this point, the dialectical relationship between schools and the labor market will be examined using a feminist poststructuralist approach. This approach will historically contextualize how the discourse of "separate spheres" operates within both schools and labor, and mitigates the educational gains of women. By reviewing the theoretical, empirical, and historical accounts of schools and the labor market, the paper will conclude that academically successful women are those who are the most gender compliant. Finally, much of the literature reviewed is from the 1980s and 1990s. At the very least, this paper argues that the educational literature will benefit from new research on gender in schools.

Power and Politics: How Schools Shape an Unequal Society

This section reviews two strands of critical education theories: social reproduction and cultural reproduction. It highlights how these approaches frame schools as producers and reproducers of unequal social relations. It also draws on feminism to demonstrate that these theories alone cannot explain the construction and persistence of U.S. gender inequality.

Social Reproduction and the Maintenance of Capitalism

A key question for critical theories of education is: *how do unequal social relations persist generationally?* These scholars use a Marxist-based understanding of society, or one that sees capitalism as the dominant structure of inequality. Social reproduction theory examines how schools ensure that the exploitive relationship between the capitalist class and the working class is reproduced (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; McLaren, 1998; Willis 1981). Marx and Engels (1971) lay out the two key components for the maintenance of capitalism. First, the capitalist or ruling class needs to legitimate its

position of control over society. Second, this social hierarchy must appear natural and earned, rather than arbitrary and forced. All critical scholars of education examine these two components (McLaren, 1998). They differ in terms of how this process unfolds, who is directly or indirectly involved, and whether education or capitalism drives the reproduction process. Critical education scholars all agree that in order for the reproduction of society, children of the dominant group must be favored and advantaged within education. It is this last point that this paper hopes not to contradict, but complicate, by adding the process of gender production and reproduction to the discussion of critical approaches to education.

According to Althusser (1971), one of the first scholars to articulate schools' role in the reproduction of capitalism, the education system produces and maintains capitalist relations of domination by shaping students into capitalist subjects. People become subjects of capitalism in two ways. First, schools produce individuals with differentiated skills so that certain people become workers while others become managers. Second, schools teach students the "rules" of civic behavior such as when to show up to school (and later to work) on time. Schools also teach the ideology of capitalism or that individual effort leads to success in school and later in work. While all students learn the civic rules and ideology of capitalism, the social differentiation process in schools is not equal and instead depends on where the student is socially positioned. Working class children are differentiated from bourgeoisie children within the school environment, leading to a reproduction of working class and bourgeoisie subjects. For Althusser, one's subject position in society is defined by the class membership; he does not consider how race or gender forces also construct subjects.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) present an American-centric account of how the schools further the accumulation of wealth for the capitalist class. Their "correspondence theory" explains why liberal reform movements to expand educational opportunity failed. Bowles and Gintis argue schools were historically structured to legitimate and maintain economic inequality by producing an "amenable and fragmented" labor force (p. 125). Schools create an amenable workforce by distributing the ideology of "meritocracy" or the notion that society is run by the hardest working. Meritocracy trains people to see education as the "great equalizer" when in reality, middle class students inherently have an advantage in these settings. Schools also create a fragmented labor force through different curricula and competitive reward structures. Students who do well in schools are trained to become the producers of new technologies of capitalism that help the system expand, whereas students who do poorly in school are exploited by the technologies of capitalism. Despite the rhetoric of equality in schools, Bowles and Gintis conclude that schools do not serve to create a more egalitarian society but rather to legitimate existing social relations of inequality. This is the key premise for much of the later empirical work in critical educational studies, or the notion that those who succeed in schools are members of the elite or ruling group (e.g. Lareau, 2003; Oakes, 2005). In contrast to Althusser, Bowles and Gintis mention race and gender but as products of capitalism. They conclude that solving the unequal distribution of capitalism in the U.S. will also eradicate sexism and racism.

Various critical education scholars critique Althusser (1971) and Bowles and Gintis' (1976) formulation of the reproduction process (e.g., Apple, 2004; Lakomski, 1984;

McLaren, 1998; Willis, 1981). First, both accounts view the structure of capitalism as something imposed upon working class subjects. In this vision of society, individuals have little or no role in the process of producing structures, resulting in no agency, or no possibility of resistance. Second, neither formulation can explain the exceptions to the model or the large number of working class students who succeed in education or society. Finally, while Althusser, Bowles, and Gintis make a few references to in-school practices such as the curriculum or student-teacher relationships, the school itself remains a product of capitalism. There is little effort made theoretically or empirically to understand the actual practices and mechanisms within schools. As Apple (2004) explains, their work positions schools as a "black box" which a working class student enters, something unknown happens to them, and they exit as a working class adult.

The next section will review cultural reproduction theorists who shine a light into the black box and try to understand what happens within the school itself to produce and reproduce unequal social relations. These critiques are fruitful starting points to examine the current conundrum of female academic success within a patriarchal society because they open up ways to view schools as autonomous sites of cultural production connected to but also free from capitalism, the concepts of individual agency and resistance, and how other forms of inequality beyond capitalism are legitimated and reproduced within schools. But, these theories continue to elevate capitalism as *the* unequal social structure in society. Thus, to have a fuller understanding of social production and reproduction, critical scholars must still incorporate a feminist analysis.

Shining a Light into the "Black Box": Cultural Production and Reproduction

Cultural reproduction scholars use Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony to explore the specific mechanisms and nuances to social reproduction (Apple, 2004; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Willis, 1977). They critique correspondence theory for providing a simplistic account of reproduction, but none rejects the central premise of social reproduction or that elite children are favored in schools to maintain and reproduce capitalism.

In Marx and Engels' (1970) formulation of capitalism, class relations are imposed upon, and done to, the working class. Gramsci (1971), in contrast, examines how social, political, and economic institutions are able, through a coordinated effort, to maintain control without overt means of domination. His theory of hegemony explains how institutions win the consent of the public to maintain the status quo of society (Leonardo, 2010). Schools train and disseminate the "commonsense" of society which, in the U.S., is individualism (Apple, 2004; McLaren, 1998). Practices within schools such as tests, grades, separating children by ability, and positioning the teacher as the sole distributor of knowledge instruct youth to believe that individual effort leads to social mobility (Gramsci, 1971). These tactics disguise how success and achievement is actually a collective effort. The result is that a factory worker's child views his parents' class position or his own failure in school as "earned" by a *lack* of effort. Inequality is, therefore, not forced upon the working class but instead built with their collaboration. Thus, Gramsci's (1971) work highlights how the state-sanctioned schools reproduce the class structure through students' consent, or lack of resistance, to their subordinate social position. Gramsci's explanation of how power functions through coordinated and covert

means allowed others to investigate the role of the oppressed group in creating and maintaining the existence of capitalism (Foucault, 1975; Weedon, 1987; Willis, 1977). Previous approaches only examined the role of those in "power," or teachers, politicians, and capitalists in maintaining social control. Yet Gramsci's explanation of power and politics still formulates that schools confer academic success to those who rule society.

A new line of critical theories of education flowed from Gramsci's (1971) view of power, referred to as cultural production and/or cultural reproduction. These scholars reveal a "complex nexus" of political and social relationships that first produce capitalist relations and then reproduce domination (Apple, 2004, p. 4). Willis (1977), a key contributor to the field, re-imagines the place of schools in this process by illuminating the agency and resistance of working class "lads" in a British school. He uncovers a counter-school culture produced by the lads in resistance to what they see as a feminized and capitalist school culture. But the lads' culture fails to disrupt the class structure and instead leads to a deeper entrenchment of capitalism.

Willis's (1977) ethnography reveals several findings relevant to this paper. First, rather than being duped into a capitalist order, the lads are aware of an oppressive school culture and actively resist the system designed to punish the working class students. Second, Willis sees the relationship among individuals, schools, and capitalism as dialectic. As McLaren (1998) explains, a dialectic approach explores how "[t]he individual, a social actor, both creates and is created by the social universe of which he/she is a part. Neither the individual nor society is given priority in analysis; the two are inextricably interwoven, so that reference to one must, by implication, mean reference to the other*"* (p. 171). Rather than capitalism being something done to the working class, Willis explores how the lads shape and are shaped by capitalism. Third, Willis reveals several in-school processes such as the lads' relationships with other students including women and minorities; discipline practices by teachers and administrators; peer group culture; and curriculum selection. Finally, Willis presents a new view of academic success in the reproduction process. While the lads are reproduced as working class because of their counter-school culture, the "ear'oles" are working class males who do well in school. These "exceptions" to the reproduction process are successful because they adhere to the standards, rules, and processes of the school. Willis does not focus on these exceptions, but the ear'oles demonstrate that oppressed individuals can succeed if they follow the school's orders.

Other cultural reproduction scholars use the dialectic in their investigations of schools (Apple, 1983; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; DiMaggio, 1982; Lareau, 2003; Oakes, 2005). Collectively, researchers in this area identify several processes that schools employ separate from yet still connected with capitalism and members of dominant groups. For instance, Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) theory of "cultural reproduction" explains an ephemeral type of "cultural capital" that is related to and can be "cashed in" for economic capital. The elites of society are able to arbitrarily assign value and meaning to various behaviors, dispositions, lifestyles, and knowledges, all of which are validated by the school. Because schools offer state-sanctioned credentials that can be used to secure higher-paying jobs, in favoring the elite's cultural capital, the education system acts as an institution to legitimate and maintain an unequal class relationship.

Lareau (2003) investigates the parenting practices of families from various class backgrounds. She notes that schools support the parenting practices of middle class families leading to a cultural mis-match for poor and working class families in educational contexts. This mis-match results in worse academic performance for poor and working class children. Apple (2004) examines how curricula are presented as "neutral" when, in reality, they are designed for a political purpose: social control and the maintenance of capitalism. School curricula favor "technical" knowledge or that which maintains capitalist production such as science, math, and engineering. This knowledge is disproportionately made available to middle and upper class students, ensuring their technical superiority over working class students.

These empirical studies demonstrate that schools are structured to reward and reinforce the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the middle and upper classes. But this structure is not simply handed down from the capitalist class. Rather, schools have unique cultures that shape and are shaped by capitalism. Individuals from various class backgrounds interact within these social environments, producing unique experiences and cultures that both resist and reaffirm the capitalist structure. These contributions are central to explaining the complex and dynamic role of schools in ensuring an unequal society. Despite theoretical advances by cultural reproduction, two central premises remain: First, the power dynamic reproduced in schools is class relations. Second, those who succeed in school do so because of their social position. The next section will review feminist work that challenges the first premise of the reproduction scholars. In doing so, it will become clear that feminists do not contest the second premise. This is a core reason why research specifically addressing the reproduction of gender and sexism has waned in recent years.

A Feminist Critique

Reclaiming Reproduction for Women

Grumet (1988) points to the irony in how critical scholars of education, most of whom are male, exclude women from their vision of "reproduction," which in any other social context is synonymous with female. Her call to insert mothering, women, and gender back in to the process of social and cultural reproduction was echoed by many feminists during the 1980s. Part of this gender silence can be attributed to Marxism, which posited that the gender division of labor amounted to something likened to "slavery," outside the normal processes of a functioning economy and, therefore not worthy of study (Marx & Engels, 1971, p. 52). Under Marxism, class relations are something done to and experienced by men. Women are class-less subjects, only experiencing domination in the home (Acker, 1988; McLaren, 1998; McRobbie, 2000). Since social and cultural reproduction theories rely on Marxist understandings of class and capitalism, these theories also privilege a male subject and ignore gender (Arnot, 1994; Clarricoates, 1981; Ehrenreich, 1989). For instance, Bowles and Gintis (1976) assume a male subject and assume that members of the same class will have the same experience in school and/or in labor. This theory, therefore, cannot account for the fact that women were historically subjected to different curricula that prepared them for non-labor in the home (Arnot, 1994).

Feminists interested in gender and patriarchy within schools conducted a variety of empirical studies in the 1980s and 1990s to understand the reproduction of women's inequality. The combined efforts in this area showed that patriarchy is produced and reproduced in both schools and labor through the structure, curriculum choices, and teacher-student interactions within the education system (Arnot, 1994; Clarricoates, 1981; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Thorne, 1993). Scholarship on gender inequality in education revealed the following findings that closely paralleled the work of class-reproduction theorists. First, the U.S. school system was historically constructed through separate (and unequal) gender curriculums that placed women in feminized educational and career tracks (Powers, 1992; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Second, several studies revealed that student-teacher interaction differed based on gender, resulting in worse academic performance for women. Teachers spent more time with boys and tended to focus on growth, encouraging them to make changes. In contrast girls received less time from teachers. The feedback girls did receive from teachers emphasized a lack of ability, leaving them with few options to improve (Clarricoates, 1981; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Third, women are largely left out of curriculums and when they were included, they were in male-support roles (Apple, 1983; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Weiner, 1994). Finally, scholars examined the structures of schools in which administrators are mostly men with authority over a mostly female labor pool of teachers (Apple, 1983; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Shakeshaft & Perry, 1995). This also means men are more likely to make curriculum decisions within schools (Apple, 1983; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). These scholars explain how male authority over both curriculum and female teachers trains students to see women in a subordinate role (Apple, 1983; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Shakeshaft & Perry, 1995). Collectively, these researchers advocated for an understanding of gender as something actively produced and reproduced within all social institutions including schools and labor. This critique was necessary for critical scholars of education to explain the role of patriarchy in reproducing unequal outcomes for women.

Yet, in the late 1990s, literature on women in education slowed. While much of the field now focuses on improving the educational conditions for Latino and African American males (e.g., Hurtado, Haney, & Hurtado, 2011; Noguera et al., 2011; Noguera & Wing, 2006), a new body of research positions men and masculinity as victims of a feminized and woman-controlled education system (King & Gurian, 2006; Sax, 2005; Whitmire, 2010). Past feminist research is limited in two ways, which may explain the dearth of recent research on gender and education. First, it essentialized one type of gendered experience in patriarchal schooling. The experiences of some White, middle class educated women became a stand-in for the "woman's" condition in society. These scholars did not consider how patriarchy interacts with race, class, and other oppressive social structures, creating a multiplicity of experience (hooks, 1984; Collins, 1990; Glenn, 1992). Second, much of the early literature produced by feminists occurred when overt practices of sexism existed (Arnot, 1983; Clarricoates, 1981; Sadker & Frazier, 1973). This research framed an essentialized woman as a victim of a patriarchal society. Today, many of these overt barriers are gone and women have surpassed men in terms of high school, college and advanced degrees earned (Rosin, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). These frameworks cannot explain the success of women in education, because

they were designed to explain a "victim and victors" view of society. It is therefore difficult to speak about patriarchal oppression in a landscape where women are doing better than men.

If scholars continue to explore how schools legitimate and reproduce unequal social structures, then a new approach is needed to understand gender and education. Women's success offers too large an exception to the model to be ignored. These previous theories are insufficient to explain how women can be simultaneously advantaged and oppressed in an educational environment. A framework is necessary that reveals how gender still operates in schools, creating negative effects for men and women alike, and leading to the overall psychic and material subordination of feminized skills, attitudes, and behaviors in the workplace and society at large. Therefore the remainder of the paper will offer a way to understand the contradiction of female academic success in a patriarchal society and how we can conceive of women in schools as experiencing both liberation and domination.

A New Approach: Feminist Poststructuralism

Weedon's (1987) feminist poststructuralism offers a way to examine women in education that does not essentialize gender, minimizes the presence of and race structures in schools, and can account for the contradictions of student success in an oppressive system. This section will define Weedon's framework – called the discourse of "separate spheres," offering one way to examine the gendered dialectical relationship between schools and labor.

Weedon (1987) views gender as a social construct produced and reproduced through discourse. These constructions are legitimated by social institutions and informed by multiple structures, such as race and class. She rejects Marx's notion that power comes only from the means of production and instead views power as diffuse, or emanating from multiple social locations, individuals, institutions and structures. Weedon also presents a different view of subject formation. Whereas Althusser (1971) views subjectivity in the singular, Weedon sees multiple and *contradictory* subjectivities emerging for oppressed groups. Subjectivity for Weedon is "in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak," (p. 33). Her view of subjectivity as multiple, precarious, and contradictory, means no one event establishes a class, gender, and/or race relationship. Instead, unequal relationships are constantly reworked and renegotiated as individuals interact with one another, institutions, and structures. Weedon uses Gramsci's (1971) proposition that individuals are involved in reproducing their own means of oppression but adds a poststructuralist twist. She explains that scholars must look to the ways individuals are simultaneously oppressed and liberated. Thus, her framework departs from other approaches used in critical theories of education that view schools as singularly oppressive institutions. Of upmost importance to Weedon and, in line this paper's position, is the individual as an active agent with the potential to enact institutional and structural change.

While critical education scholars view capitalism shaping the dialectic between labor and schools (McLaren, 1998; Willis, 1977 ,1981), poststructuralists see relationships between social institutions as fluid, facilitated by discourses, and leading to the reproduction of multiple systems of oppression. Discourses are publically available

"meanings" that give rise to a particular subject, institution, and social structure (Weedon, 1987, p. 25). These meanings are not true *or* false versions of reality, as presented by theories of ideology; rather, they are competing accounts of the world, all of which are true *and* false (Foucault, 1980). A discourse becomes dominant in a particular historical, cultural, or institutional context because it is the closest version to what a nexus of power structures, such as political institutions and universities, view as "the truth" (Foucault, 1980). As a result, discourses are materially grounded and impact one's access to political, economic, and social resources (Foucault, 1980; Weedon, 1987).

A dominant discourse taken up here is the presence of "natural" or biologically oppositional differences between men and women (Butler, 1993; Connell, 1987). This dominant discourse emerges from a combination of scientific literature, public politics, employment, and educational practices (Butler, 1990; Connell, 1987; Weedon, 1987). The dominant discourse of "natural" gender differences denies the historical and cultural processes of gender as a social construction and rejects any possible subjectivities or meanings that approach gender fluidly (Weedon, 1987). "Natural" gender differences are reflected and reproduced in research, public policies, family organizations, cultural practices, and material outcomes (Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1980). In education, scholars receive funding for projects examining males' "natural" proclivity towards the math and females' "natural" proclivity towards reading and writing (Eliot, 2009; Fausto-Sterling, 1992). This dominant discourse undoubtedly shapes the subjectivities of females who are inundated with messaging that they should not pursue math or science, as these are "male dominated" fields, and could be a cause for the continued lack of women in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields (Mason, Goulden, & Frasch, 2009; Miyake et al., 2011; Ridgeway, 2009). The discourse of "separate spheres" is one of many discourses that support the notion of "natural" differences between men and women. Like all discourses, "separate spheres" are historically constructed and present within multiple institutions including, but not limited to, labor and education (Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1980; Weedon, 1987). The next section will examine how the discourse of "separate spheres" facilitates the dialectical relationship between school and labor to reveal the limits to a Marxist-based understanding of the U.S. education system.

"Separate Spheres" Discourse

America's present education and employment institutions cannot be separated from their respective and connected histories (Apple, 2004). Rather, school's structure, shape, and curriculums, reflect "sets of principles and values that come from somewhere, that represent particular views of normality and deviance, of good and bad, and of what 'good people act like" (Apple, 2004, p. 63). Discourses emerge from historically, socially, and cultural contexts, and shape unequal institutions such as education and labor (Corson, 1995; Foucault, 1980). Discourses of gender difference, which circulate in schools and work settings, disguise inequality by making the structural, material, and symbolic seem "natural" (Butler, 1990, 1993, 2001; Weedon, 1987). This section will historically contextualize the present American educational system for women and discuss one discourse, "separate spheres," that shapes women and their experience in schools and society. This discourse illustrates the dialectical relationship between schools and the

economy. In essence, the persistent stagnation of women's wages cannot be seen as a distinct feature separate from women's academic gains.

After the American Revolution, the founding fathers struggled to make sense of women's role in the newly formed Republic (Kerber, 1980). Statehood and political participation defined in the initial constitution sidelined many groups: property-less men, African Americans, and women (King, 2010; Moss, 2009). Yet civic participation required citizens, namely White, property-owning men, to be educated. In an era predating public education, this duty fell to mothers who were expected to cultivate and instill moral virtue in their sons (Baker, 1984; Kerber, 1980; Nash, 1997). This concept gave new cultural meaning to the "home" as a woman's domain with the added responsibility of training men for life "outside" (Kerber, 1985). Even women supported this cultural model, which became known as "Republican Motherhood" (Kerber, 1985). Part of the appeal is it positioned women (and by extension the home) as morally superior to men who become corrupted by the social influences of the economy and politics (Baker, 1984). The expansion of public education in the 19th century did not end the home/public divide (Kerber, 1980; Nash, 1997). Instead, schools became an extension of the home and a place for women teachers (Apple, 1983; Grumet, 1988). Even suffragettes and early White feminists embraced republic motherhood by championing the slogan "a woman belonged in the home" (Baker, 1984, p. 620). Therefore, while the founding fathers may have set some of the conditions for the separation between private and public spaces, the maintenance of the discourse of "natural" male and female roles can also be attributed to White women.

It is within this context that Alexis de Tocqueville coined the metaphor "separate spheres" (Kerber, 1997). He was curious to understand how a "free" and democratic society like America could convince women they should be excluded from political participation. De Tocqueville noticed that when women married, "the inexorable opinion of the public carefully circumscribes [her] within the narrow circle of the domestic interests and duties and forbids her to step beyond it" (as cited in Kerber, 1997, p. 160). As Kerber (1997) explains, de Tocqueville provided "the physical image (the circle) and the interpretation of it (that it was a limiting boundary on choice) that would continue to characterize the metaphor" (p. 160) for centuries to come. Yet other scholars reveal how "separate spheres" is only possible based on the relations between colonial nations (McClintock, 1994) and the labor of women of color (Collins, 1986; Glenn, 1992). The lifestyle of "separate spheres" necessitated an income great enough so as the family could afford to have a non-working mother (Baca Zinn, 1991). The idealized "home" sphere, therefore, was inhabited mostly by White middle and upper class Americans (Baca Zinn, 1991; Glenn, 1992). In addition, many of the tasks in the home were not even done by these elite women, who instead relied first on the labor of slaves, and later working class, immigrant, and/or women of color workers (Baca Zinn, 1991; Collins, 1986; Glenn, 1992). White women relying on even further disenfranchised women to support the separate spheres lifestyle only further solidified the notion of "female work" or that certain occupations such as domestic workers, clothing factories and department store clerks should be filled by females (Power, 1992; Stanley, 1996). Thus, the discourse "separate spheres" is actively maintained by women and inherently connected to other structural forces of domination such as race and class.

The early 20th century saw industrialization, the expansion of a service-sector, and the advent of a gender differentiated vocational educational system (Powers, 1992; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Stanley, 1996). As female attendance in schools rose, reformers tailored the curriculum to match what they perceived as "women's work" through domestic science courses (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). The rise of the service sector led to additional opportunities for women as office work expanded (Powers, 1992). These jobs and vocational programs explicitly incorporated the "separate spheres" discourse by only including women and by instructing particular gendered skills and behaviors. For instance, vocational education trained low and middle class women to become the "office girl" with typing, recitation, and literacy programs in schools, whereas men of the same social class were trained for physical labor in factories (Powers, 1992). As the educational and labor systems expanded, female inclusion remained predicated on the notion of separate curriculums and jobs that relegated women to different and subordinate positions.

The legacy of the structure of "separate spheres" lives on in today's deindustrialized economy. Certain industries such as teaching, nursing, and childcare, and jobs such as administrative assistants, office managers, and human resource professionals are dominated by women (Blau & Khan, 2006; England et al., 2007; Gibleman, 2003). There are a variety of reasons for this gendered labor separation such as the lack of legal protection of enforcement of sex discrimination in the workforce (Gibelman, 2003; Goldin & Rouse, 2000), the "double shift" or that women continue to do the majority of work in the home despite their ascendancy into the labor sphere (Gilbert, 2008; Hersch & Straton 1997; Kimmel 2010; Reskin 1991), or the persistence of the "glass ceiling" (Miller 2009; Roscigno, Garcia, & Bobbitt-Zeher, 2007). One of the more popular explanations offered by feminists is the continued devaluation of women and, by extension, their labor in society (Baca Zinn, 1991; Berk, 1985; Clarricoates, 1981; England et al., 1994; England et al., 2007; West & Zimmerman, 1991). The social construction of gender positions women as more equipped to perform certain tasks and jobs like childcare (Lorber & Farrell, 1991). The paradox that emerges results because these skills are "natural" they are devalued and seen as lacking training, technical know-how, or expertise (Acker, 1991; England et al., 2007; Riach & Rich, 1995). Davies (1983) explains there is nothing inherently "low skilled" about childcare. Instead, patriarchy relegates females to passive positions as domestic caregivers and, in turn, limits females' material opportunities. The devaluation of certain jobs and skills associated with women reinforces the separation between the public and private spheres. The burden of maintaining idealized "separate spheres" continues to fall on women of color who are even more likely to be concentrated in lower paying, feminized jobs, and less likely to be stay-at-home mothers (Roscigno et al., 2007; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Cultural reproduction theorists show that historic and contemporary practices in the labor market cannot be separated from practices in the education system (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Willis, 1977). Yet they do not address how gender construction permeates the history and structure of schools. This next section will demonstrate how the "separate spheres" discourse within schools produces and reproduces gendered bodies to later fill gendered occupations.

Gender Production and Reproduction in Schools

Since schools have a dialectical relationship with the labor force (McLaren, 1998; Willis, 1977) the discourse of "separate spheres" in employment also impacts and shapes schools. "Separate spheres" influences schools in a variety of ways: the make-up of the teaching profession; classroom management; playground interactions and supervision; curriculums; peer groups and interactions; and grading. But key to how cultural reproduction theorists understand the dialectical relationship between schools and labor is how individuals interact with certain institutions and structures to produce a particular type of culture (Willis, 1977, 1981). While these theorists do not take up the production of patriarchy, the same mechanism applies. Patriarchy, and the corresponding constructions and relations of gender, are made and remade through particular practices in the schools (Bettie, 2003; Weedon, 1987). Gender differences must be first produced or "done" before relations of domination are legitimated and reproduced. This notion of "doing gender" assumes that male and female differences are accomplished through a process rather than something biologically determined or fixed (West & Zimmerman, 1987). This process is enacted in a social environment and influenced by interactions with other individuals, discourses, and social institutions (Butler, 1990; Weedon, 1987). While feminist education researchers (reviewed in this section) do highlight how patriarchy operates within schools, few take this view of gender as a process. Instead, some of these authors assume women are a stagnant and cohesive category unilaterally oppressed by patriarchy (e.g., Arnot, 1994; Clarriocates, 1981; Sadker & Sadker, 1994) Likewise, cultural reproduction scholars who trace the production of certain cultures in schools and the dialectical relationship with the labor sphere do not examine gender construction. This section uses feminist poststructuralism to review existing literature on gender and education to argue that the "separate spheres" discourse informs the particular type of gender that is produced and reproduced in schools. It will reveal how gender production continues to limit the material and symbolic opportunities for women.

Teaching profession. Today's teaching profession in the U.S. is 76% female, and 81% White (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). This is no historical accident. Instead, capitalism and patriarchy "proletarianized" the teaching profession, turning teaching from a professionalized occupation to a working-class, or lower paid and lower valued, occupation (Apple, 1983). According to Apple, (1983) women are more likely than men to face lower wage labor: "In every occupational category, *women* are more apt to be proletarianized than men… a position may be more or less proletarianized depending on its relationship to the sexual division of labor" (p. 54). The devaluation of teaching can also be attributed to how the profession is socially viewed as similar to "raising" children, a task commonly delegated to women (Acker, 1991; Grumet, 1988). In addition, despite the fact that women make up three quarters of the teaching force in public schools, they are only 40% of principals nationwide (Bitterman, Goldring, Gray, & Broughman, 2013). The over-representation of males in school leadership positions means women are less likely to be involved in curriculum decisions (Apple, 1983; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). The male-female hierarchy also trains students to see women in a subordinate role and teaching as a feminine occupation (Apple, 1983; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Shakeshaft & Perry, 1995). For female students, this hierarchy could be a mitigating factor for their academic success. Young female students continue to see their

future selves, in spite of college degrees and professional training, in low wage jobs (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Even with unprecedented numbers of women going to college, their early experiences in schools with a feminized and proletarianized teaching force might lead to young women to have lower employment expectations. Therefore, gendered practices within the education system and the employment sector cannot be separated from one another.

The over-representation of women in teaching also means female teachers are the primary gender socializers in education (Grumet, 1988). As the next few sections will reveal, White, middle-class men are largely left out of the imposition of inequality, leaving White women the main reproducers of their own means of domination.

Curricula. The history of U.S. public education demonstrates how school curricula were constructed to create male and female subjects and position these subjects for different occupations (Apple, 1983; Powers, 1992; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Separate educational tracks for women emerged during the progressive era and were presented by liberal reformers as a "cure all" for many social problems including immigration, the economy, race relations, infant mortality, disease, and agriculture (Powers, 1992). A "feminized" curriculum was instilled in U.S. schools during the early 20th century to prepare women for domestic service, homemaking, or feminized occupations such as clerical work. But this curriculum was based on an idealized version of women, as presented in the "separate spheres" discourse, who would work only until marriage, when they became caregivers and homemakers (Powers, 1992). Thus, the version of femininity endorsed and enforced within schools was a discourse of "separate spheres" achievable by only a select few upper or middle class women.

The amendment to the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title IX, made separate gender tracks of education illegal, but it did not prevent the many covert ways schools produced gendered educational experiences. For instance, the absence of women in history in curricula can have a lasting impact on how students come to perceive gender. In surveying students across the country (Sadker and Sadker, 1994), few could identify more than four or five historical women, reinforcing the perception that women are not part of the public sphere. Even with progressive actions in the later 1980s and early 1990s to address this absence of women, Weiner (1994) notes the inclusion of women was additive rather than feminist. No curricula discussed the research on "the endemic nature of racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination. In fact, documentation was either totally dismissive of, or apathetic to, equality issues" (Weiner, 1994, p. 115). The silence surrounding inequality within institutions positions discrimination as an individual action, disguising the active social construction of gender in schools.

Other instances of gender production in schools come out of the "hidden curriculum"- required skills, behaviors, and knowledge that are not actively taught yet expected of students (Anyon, 1983; Jackson, 1968; Kliebard, 1995). According to Arnot's (1994) theory of "gender codes," students absorb and internalize multiple gender messages within schools, which become externalized through gender-conforming behavior. Teachers reward gender-conforming behavior that results in a seemingly "natural" difference between boys and girls. Arnot (2002) clarifies that these gender messages are also classed and raced; the dominant gender code portrays an idealized White, bourgeoisie femininity. Lopez's (2003) study of second generation Caribbean

youth in New York City examined race and gender effects in schooling that led to female minorities outperforming their male counterparts. Minority women faced the stereotype of promiscuity whereas minority males faced the stereotype of criminal behavior. The women in her study actively resisted their stereotype, downplaying their sexuality through dress and behavior. In contrast, many of the men succumbed to the stereotype, seemingly resigned to their position. Women in her study learned how to dress as "young ladies" to achieve school success. This meant discarding any clothing marking them as promiscuous or tomboys. Dress and behavior for the women in her study led to positive relationships with the teachers and translated into higher grades. Morris (2005) found that schools use dress and behavior as part of the hidden curriculum in schools. The school in his study implemented a dress code to prepare children for upward mobility. He noted that men of color from low-income areas are more likely to resist the dress code, develop confrontational attitudes toward teachers, and receive harsher punishments. In contrast, women, particularly White and Asian American women, often made small adjustments to the dress code and were still seen as compliant. These women were least likely to be punished for dress code violations and, as Morris notes, were the best academic students. "In this way, schools produce students who not only learn specific subject matter but also learn to embody raced, classed, and gendered realities" (p. 28). The hidden curriculum rewards students for complying with social norms of gender difference. While women in Morris' study were the top students, the effects of gender production have a long-lasting impact on college and employment tracks.

Finally, one overt connection between gendered practices in schools and those in labor is the continued lack of women in certain subjects and later career tracks. Recent research shows an absence of women in STEM disciplines, particularly in higher and advanced education. Some scholars think women perceive these fields as masculine, and self-select out of these educational and employment tracks (Mason et al., 2009; Miyake et al., 2011; Ridgeway, 2009). Science "culture" in higher education and the employment sector emphasizes authority, memorization, individual performance, and competition, all markers of masculine construction (Weiner, 1994). Women choose to exclude themselves from the field when they do not identify with this culture. While these are individual *choices* for women, their decision is still influenced by structural realities and limitations. In addition, as more women choose to pursue non-masculine fields, the construction of STEM fields and occupations as inherently masculine is reinforced.

Classroom and playground management. Much of the research on gender and education examines classroom practices. Studies reveal that teachers' organization of the classroom, the selection of activities, discipline policies, and style of interaction with students shape the production and reproduction of gender. A feminist poststructuralist approach also reveals that the reproduction of gender in the classroom is connected to the reproduction of other structures of inequality such as race and class.

One of the fundamental ways gender is produced and reproduced in schools is through segregation. Segregation requires positioning gender as a binary rather than a fluid process or spectrum. This is the primary form of ensuring men and women remain two separate and unequal groups (Butler, 1990; Weedon, 1987). Thorne's (1993) study of gender production in the home in comparison to the school environment revealed that families are more apt to socialize children in gender-neutral ways. Upon entering school,

various tactics of gender segregation train children to view the categories of "boy and girl" as separate and distinct. Teachers frequently use phrases such as "boys and girls," assign gender segregated seating arrangements, or ask children to line up in boy/girl order (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Thorne, 1993). These seemingly subtle actions perpetuate a dichotomous view of gender and can impact classroom activities and curriculum. Researchers document how teachers tailor lessons that will "hold boys' attention" or encourage silent reading for girls because they are better at sitting still (Clarricoates, 1981). These gendered activities have no backing in research and instead produce boys and girls as separate, reproducing the gender structure (Eliot, 2013).

Even during informal moments in schools, on the playground or during lunch breaks, gender production and reproduction persists. Gender segregated play can be both voluntary, through children selecting to play with other children of the same gender (Thorne, 1993), and actively enforced by teachers (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Sadker and Sadker's (1994) longitudinal study of various schools in the Washington D.C. area revealed that teachers actively intervene in mixed-gender play and encourage same-gender games, and also point out that *lack* of intervention by teachers can be just as harmful as intervention.

> Teachers seldom intervene to divide space and equipment more evenly, and seldom attempt to connect the segregated worlds—not even when they are asked directly by the girls. "The boys won't let us play," a third grader said, tugging at the arm of the teacher on recess duty. "They have an all-boys club and they won't let any girls play." "Don't you worry, honey," the teacher said, patting the little girl's hair. "When you get bigger, those boys will pay you all the attention you want. Don't you bother about them now." (p. 60)

The above interaction represents another assumption that gender-separation is needed. The assumption underlying sex-separation is that when girls and boys do come together it is for sexual purposes (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Thorne, 1993).

In these not-so-subtle instances, teachers shape peer groups to resemble same-gender friendships (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). But differences amongst same-gender peer groups also contribute to the production of gender and reproduction of unequal social structures. Bettie (2003) followed working class White and Chicana seniors in a California high school. Her respondents resented the "preps" or the White middle class girls who were academically successful, participated in extra-curricular activities, were favored by the teachers, and "performed a school-sanctioned version of femininity" (p. 4). In response to the preps, her subjects created multiple raced, classed, and gendered identities that in many ways opposed a White, middle class femininity. Her Chicana subjects performed hyper-sexualized versions of femininity, dressing provocatively or spending time on make-up and clothing. Her study revealed at least six different peer groups and versions of femininity in the school environment. Despite this diverse array of behavior presented by women, the school continued to favor the "prep" peer group. Bettie notes that while the racialized and classed gender performance of her participants were viewed as deviant by the school, they ought to be viewed as "badges of dignity" for the injustices suffered at the hands of teachers and other female peer groups for not meeting an unachievable standard of White, middle class femininity (p. 94).

The classroom and playground activities that support White, middle class femininity reveal that even when the overt separate spheres curriculum is removed, the production of seemingly "natural" gender differences persists. Those who can perform the White, middle class version of femininity are more likely to succeed in schools. But, as feminist poststructuralism explains, rewarding women for gender conformity in schools cannot be separated from the structures of other institutions. The production of certain versions of gender, which are rewarded by schools, also supports unequal employment and social relations. As the final section will show, while women are rewarded for gender conformity, they also receive other messages from teachers that they are separate from, and lesser than, their male peers.

Teacher-student interaction. Sadker and Sadker's (1994) study found that teacher interaction with male and female students differed. Teachers often commented on a girl's appearance rather than skill: "Is that a new dress?", "you look pretty," or "that's a great outfit" (p. 56). But female students also showed off clothing, jewelry, and acted in gender conforming ways to elicit attention from the teacher. After nearly 30 years observing classroom interactions, Sadker and Sadker conclude that short, seemingly trivial moments shore up structural constructions of gender. While structure limits interaction, actors still choose how to participate in these gendered scenarios (Weedon, 1987).

One of the primary gender differences in teacher-student interaction is discipline. A large body of research uncovers how school discipline practices disproportionately impact males of color. These practices lead to lower academic performance and chances for college matriculation, and higher drop-out rates (Gregory & Weinstein 2008; Noguera, 2004; Noguera et al., 2011). Such findings map well onto social and cultural reproduction theories, demonstrating that the U.S. is dominated by a White capitalist society. But less is known about why women, and particularly women of color, are less likely to be disciplined than their male counterparts (Noguera et al., 2011). Morris's (2005) study of how school dress codes are racialized, classed, and sexed, noted that women on the whole received far fewer sanctions from school officials. But important race and class differences remained; Black women were more likely than White and Asian women to receive verbal warnings from teachers. Morris recorded instances of teachers telling Black females to "act like young ladies" and to mirror the behavior of their White peers. But when Morris asked these same teachers if "unladylike" behavior contributed to Black female students' disadvantage educationally, they responded "no." Teachers often referred to their Black female students as a "sharp bunch" that contributed and turned in their work (p. 35). Despite the seeming favorable bias for women of all races in this study, Morris explains that punishing non-gender conforming behavior still undermines one's general academic confidence and performance. Furthermore, teachers viewed White and Asian women as model students not because of pronounced cognitive ability but, rather, more likely compliance with school rules. In essence, the women who followed gender expectations received an academic boost. By training women to adhere to a narrow set of gendered behaviors, schools also reinforce gendered divisions and practices in the labor sphere.

Grading. The majority of the above studies reveal that behaviors, attitudes, and dispositions- all non-cognitive factors- lead to higher grades. This same finding is echoed by Marxist reproduction theorists (Bourdieu & Passerson, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976;

Willis, 1977). Yet another component to Marxist reproduction is that reward of non-cognitive factors also legitimates the power of the ruling group. Thus, the question remains, why are women rewarded for non-cognitive factors if the U.S. continues to be a patriarchal society?

One explanation is that women's success in school is markedly different from academic achievement noted by the Marxist scholars. For instance, teachers explain the achievement of girls differently from that of boys: an ability to sit still, focus, or pay attention, while boys' achievement is framed as an innate ability or higher skill (Arnot, 1994; Clarriocates, 1981; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). These findings do not address how race and class influence these descriptions. But other scholars note that teachers conceptualize the White, feminine norm of academic success differently from White, male academic success. In Bettie's (2003) study, the school "preps" were favored by teachers for their attitude and disposition, not cognitive ability. Lopez (2003) described a similar phenomenon: women of color could succeed in schools if they could portray a "good" feminine behavior. Morris (2005) believes women who performed a White, feminine gender ideal did well in school because they were less threatening to the school environment. By contrast, the success of White men in more socially valued and lucrative STEM fields is framed as cognitive ability and work ethic (Apple, 2004). Women are rewarded for performing a narrow version of femininity, one that encourages docility, subordination, and prepares them for a certain gendered labor force. So long as unequal gender relations structure schools and the economy, the production and reproduction of gendered selves will ensure the subordination of women, regardless of women's academic achievements.

Conclusion and Future Research: Re-evaluating "Academic Success"

This paper demonstrates the limits of critical theories of education and feminism in describing the current predicament of women's academic success. The initial work by Marxist reproduction scholars described how social and state institutions reproduce the class structure. Their research clarified how schools serve as arms of the state to reinforce inequality by academically rewarding middle and upper class students (Althusser, 1971; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Willis, 1977). Taken to their logical conclusion, those theories view successful students as members of the dominant group. That version of academic success does not explain the recent trend of female academic achievement. Work by feminists revealed how the social system of patriarchy has a vested interest in using institutions, such as schools, to reproduce female subordination. Much of the early literature produced by feminists was conducted when overt gender barriers in education still existed (Arnot, 1983; Clarricoates, 1981; Sadker & Frazier, 1973). Today, many of these are gone, and women have surpassed men in traditional measures of academic achievement. Social analysis based solely on degree attainment and educational achievement makes it difficult to see the continued effects of patriarchy.

To understand why women achieve educationally in a patriarchal society, this paper employed a feminist poststructural analysis (Weedon, 1987) to argue that a definition of academic success must include a discussion of the outcomes, or how students are rewarded for reproducing structures that maintain and reinforce a lower symbolic and material social status. Feminist poststructuralism demonstrates how power operates

within schools to restrict these possible outcomes for women. Further, drawing from a Gramscian analysis, it explains how individuals participate in their own oppression. This is particularly important for a study of gender because schools reinforce a "natural" difference across the genders. Students and teachers interact within the structure of schools to construct their own gender positions. Naturalizing gender-differences disguises how gender is socially constructed, and legitimates separate and unequal spheres in the labor market, granting "male" jobs a maintenance of higher pay, more authority and higher status than "female jobs." Labor differentiation is maintained through the discourse of "separate spheres," reinforced by powerful mechanisms in the school system.

The "separate spheres" discourse is but one way to analyze patriarchy and capitalism as interlocking oppressive structures (Arnot, 1994; Claricoates, 1981; Fraser, 1997). The interaction of capitalism and patriarchy lead to a particular type of gender construction that is rewarded by the school system, and reduces the return on educational investment for women (Bettie, 2003). This paper used feminist poststructuralism to open up questions about the relationship between labor and education rather than to provide a single answer. The main issue remains: *why would schools in a patriarchal society support the academic achievement of women?* The work by liberal feminists and critical Marxist researchers in education cannot explain the current conundrum of female academic success. As a result, studies examining the role of production and reproduction remain few. This paper encourages researchers to examine an expanded notion of academic success, one that incorporates how individual participation or resistance to means of domination, in order to explore the complex and variable experiences of women in the current U.S. educational system.

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