

Socioeconomic Incentives to Teach in New York and North Carolina: Toward a More Complex Model of Teacher Labor Markets, 1800-1850

Kim Tolley and Nancy Beadie

Before sunrise one spring morning in 1815, twenty-four-year-old Susan Davis Nye left her family's farm in Amenia, New York. "After a most affecting parting from my beloved brothers, sisters and friends, I kissed my little sleeping babes and before the sun shone upon my dear native hills, bade them farewell, perhaps forever!" Thus begins the first entry in her journal dated April 22nd, the day she undertook the initial leg of a long voyage south to teach in North Carolina.¹

What impelled young northern women like Susan Nye to travel south to teach? A close reading of her extended diary leads to the conclusion that she did not leave home in search of adventure, new friends, or romance but to earn a better living as a teacher. Little is known of the young women who went south to teach before 1860.² What were the opportunities for

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¹Diary of Susan Nye Hutchison, 22 April 1815, Southern Historical Collection [hereafter SHC], Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Kim Tolley and Margaret A. Nash, "Leaving Home to Teach: The Diary of Susan Nye Hutchison, 1815-1840," in Nancy Beadie and Kim Tolley, eds., *Chartered Schools: Two Hundred Years of Independent Academies in the United States, 1717-1925* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 161-185.

female teachers in the South in the early nineteenth century? How did they compare with those in the North? What was the structure of teacher labor markets in the two regions? How did the labor market look from the perspective of teachers themselves? This paper presents evidence that provokes and addresses these questions.

Much good work has recently been done on the socioeconomic history of teaching in the United States, particularly in relation to the “feminization” of the profession that occurred over the course of the nineteenth century. In their recent study, Joel Perlmann and Robert A. Margo used national samples from manuscript census schedules for 1860 and 1880 to establish regional variations in teacher employment practices. To explain these variations they also investigated sources from earlier periods for New England, where the feminization of teaching apparently first appeared. Similarly, using census schedules for 1880 and 1900 for the city of Providence, Rhode Island, Victoria-María MacDonald documented the longevity of female teaching careers in an urban setting and the existence of informal career ladders for women migrating from rural to urban settings and within an urban system. Also focusing on New England, Jo Anne Preston has explored the gendering and regendering of teaching from the colonial period through the early twentieth century, including an analysis of differential pay scales in the later period.³

One of the most interesting aspects of the gender transition in teaching is its distinctly regional character. Perlmann and Margo concluded that by the time of the American Civil War “far higher proportions of women teachers [worked] in the Northeast compared with the South.”⁴ For the most part, however, existing analyses of the history of teaching are rooted in New England and/or the late nineteenth century. There has been little examination of antebellum teaching in the South. Moreover, historians have focused on employment for teachers in common schools, though we now know that academies, charity schools, and venture schools were important

³Christie Anne Farnham noted that these earlier generations of northern teachers “have not even left the legacy of a stereotype.” See Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle: Higher Education and Student Socialization in the Antebellum South* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 97ff. For discussion of the northern migration to the South during this period, see Fletcher Green, *The Role of the Yankee in the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1972).

⁴Joel Perlmann and Robert A. Margo, *Women's Work? American Schoolteachers 1650-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); See Victoria-María MacDonald, “The Paradox of Bureaucratization: New Views on Progressive Era Teachers and the Development of a Woman's Profession,” *History of Education Quarterly* 39 (Winter 1999): 427-53; Jo Anne Preston, “He lives as a master”: Seventeenth Century Masculinity, Gendered Teaching, and Careers of New England Schoolmasters,” *History of Education Quarterly* 43 (Fall 2003): 350-371; Preston, “Single or Double Salary Scales? Institutionalized Gender Discrimination in Teachers' Pay: 1900-1950,” Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, 2004, San Diego.

⁵Perlmann and Margo, *Women's Work?*, 2.

sectors of schooling and teaching in the antebellum era, especially outside New England.

To a great extent, this emphasis in the literature is due to the nature of available primary sources. State and federal governments began systematic collection of statistical data on schools and teachers near the middle of the nineteenth century. As a result, historians have good access to preexisting databases for this later period. In contrast, the only documents that remain to illuminate conditions in antebellum schools—pamphlets, regional school reports, private correspondence, newspaper advertisements, individual school records, and trustees' minutes—are scattered in small local archives. This article brings together evidence from disparate local sources in both North Carolina and New York to explore the structure of teacher labor markets during the years from 1800 to 1850. Among the sources examined are hundreds of newspaper advertisements for venture schools and academies in North Carolina and detailed school and teacher employment records for one rural New York town. Considered in conjunction with scattered comparative material from other primary and secondary sources for those states, this evidence leads us to challenge several key assumptions and suggest a few new lines of inquiry about regional variations in teacher employment, socioeconomic incentives for teachers, and the gender transformation of teaching in the early nineteenth century.

Specifically, this study presents evidence to suggest that during the period from 1800 to 1850 the gender shift in teaching was well underway in entrepreneurial schools in North Carolina. In fact, from 1820 to 1840, the rate of women entering academy and venture schoolrooms in North Carolina may have been higher than the rate of women taking up teaching in some areas of the Northeast. Similarly, it appears that in rural New York, the expansion of female teaching preceded, and occurred largely independent of, the tax-based system of support for common schools. In short, evidence from both places suggests that feminization occurred first through the market. Moreover, a comparison of wages and working conditions for common school and academy teachers in one town suggests that opportunities for financial rewards and advancement outside the common school system may have been an important incentive for women to enter teaching. In the South as well, salaried positions in charity schools and academies offered significant advantages over those in northern common schools. These findings lead us to pose new questions about the significance of state intervention in schooling for female teachers and the structure of labor markets from teachers' perspectives.

We have chosen both a northern and southern state as subjects of study, not only to compare and contrast women's entry into teaching in both regions but also to analyze some of the factors that motivated women to travel from the North to the South to teach. Comparing New York and North Carolina allows us to investigate women's access to teaching in very

different contexts. In this paper we argue that, in addition to the ideological and cultural factors historians have documented, socioeconomic incentives influenced young women to take up teaching in both the North and the South. The term *socioeconomic* incentives, in this context, refers to a combination of social and economic factors that motivate action.⁵

The article is organized into three main parts. In the first section we look at women's entry into teaching during the early decades of the nineteenth century in both northern and southern contexts. This analysis leads us to challenge two long-standing theories about feminization and to pose questions about the incentives for women to enter teaching during this period. In the second section we investigate those incentives by looking at the salaries paid to female teachers in comparison to wages available to women in other forms of paid work. We also look at opportunities for career advancement for female teachers within and across different types of schools. In the third section we hypothesize a model of teacher-labor markets and opportunity structures for women in the early antebellum era by looking at salary trends over time, highlighting comparisons between male and female teachers, and exploring differences between the opportunities available in northern and southern schools and economies. This analysis leads us to pose new questions about the interaction of teacher labor markets, the state, and schools. It also illuminates some of the reasons that may have impelled northern women like Susan Nye to travel south to teach in the early nineteenth century.

THE ENTRY OF WOMEN INTO TEACHING FROM 1800 TO 1850

Over the past several decades, scholars have advanced a number of theories to explain the process that has been referred to as the "feminization of teaching." Those factors believed to have motivated women to enter schoolrooms during these decades include a shortage of marriageable men, an increased demand for schooling as more towns established common schools, a low supply of men willing to teach, cultural assumptions about woman's sphere that provided ideological support for women teachers, or an evangelical commitment to missionary work.⁶ Considering the question from the perspective of men's potential annual earnings, some scholars have

⁵Our definition of socioeconomic incentives derives from utility theory, which attempts to analyze the inter-related economic incentives and social norms that give rise to purposeful behavior. For a collection of classic research papers in utility theory, see David E. Bell, Howard Raiffa, and Amos Tversky (eds.), *Decision Making: Descriptive, Normative, and Prescriptive Interactions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); R. L. Keeney and Howard Raiffa, *Decisions with Multiple Objectives: Preferences and Value Tradeoffs* (New York: John Wiley Press, 1976).

⁶See John L. Rury, "Who Became Teachers and Why: The Social Characteristics of Teachers in American History," in Donald Warren, ed., *American Teachers: Histories of a*

claimed that men left teaching in the United States and Canada as the nature of schooling became more systematized. In particular, as the school year lengthened, men accustomed to teaching the short “traditional” school term during the winter months and pursuing other lines of work during the summer left the profession as teaching evolved into “full time” work incompatible with other forms of employment.⁷

Although many researchers have focused on the post-Civil War era when discussing the gender shift in teaching, documentary sources indicate that in some areas of the Northeast women began to teach in common schools and academies decades earlier. Massachusetts and New York school reports provide the earliest statewide data on the gender of teachers in common schools and academies. In both states, the proportion of women among teachers in common schools appears to have been expanding well before 1850. By 1829, women comprised 53 percent of teachers in Massachusetts’s common schools when data for winter and summer sessions are combined, a figure that grew to 68 percent by 1847.⁸ Similarly, in New York, women represented 62 percent of teachers in such schools by 1842 and 69 percent by mid century.⁹ Nor was women’s entry into teaching restricted to the elementary levels. By 1857, women represented 50 percent of all the teachers in New York academies.¹⁰

To learn more about the teaching population in the early nineteenth century and in regions other than the Northeast, it is necessary to look at other kinds of sources. Common schools did not exist in North Carolina

Profession at Work (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1989), 9-48; Geraldine Jonçich Clifford, “Man/Woman/Teacher: Gender, Family and Career in American Educational History,” in *ibid.*, 293-343; Michael W. Apple, “Teaching and ‘Women’s Work’” A Comparative Historical and Ideological Analysis,” *Teachers College Record* 86 (Spring 1985): 457-473; Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1976), 97-98; Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), ch. 2; Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1983), ch. 6; Madeline Grumet, *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988); Alison Prentice and Marjorie Theobald, “The Historiography of Women Teachers: A Retrospect,” in Prentice and Theobald, eds. *Women Who Taught: Perspectives on the History of Women and Teaching* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 3-33.

⁷See Michael Apple, *Teachers and Texts: A Political Economy of Class and Gender Relations in Education* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986). Patrick Harrigan made this argument in regard to Canada. See Harrigan, “The Development of a Corps of Public School Teachers in Canada, 1870-1980,” *History of Education Quarterly* 32 (Spring 1992): 510.

⁸The source for the percentages in 1837 and 1847 is *Eleventh Annual Report of the Board of Education* (Boston, 1848), 24. The source for the percentage in 1829 is Perlmann & Margo, *Women’s Work?*, 28.

⁹See “Table 1.2: Feminization of Teaching, 1829-60, Massachusetts and New York,” in Perlmann & Margo, *Women’s Work?*, 28.

¹⁰See David Murray, *Historical and Statistical Record of the University of the State of New York* (Albany, N.Y.: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1885), 504. For a recent overview of the academy movement, see Kim Tolley and Nancy Beadie, “A School for Every Purpose: An Introduction to the History of Academies in the United States,” in *Chartered Schools*, 3-16.

A Female Teacher wanted.

THE situation of Female Teacher in the Academy at Raleigh is at present vacant. A Lady well qualified to teach the Ornamental Branches of Female Education, such as Painting, Drawing, Embroidery and plain & fancy Work, and who has besides a competent knowledge of Arithmetic, English Grammar, Geography, &c. and whose manners are calculated to inspire respect from the Young Ladies who may be placed under her care, may meet with a comfortable and permanent situation on making immediate application to Joseph Gales, President of the Board of Trustees, at Raleigh, N. C.

November 24, 1814.

☞ The next Session of the Academy will commence on the 1st of January.

Figure 1. Raleigh Academy Advertisement, 1814. Source, *Raleigh Register*, November 24, 1814. Courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

until 1840 when the legislature first provided funding for such institutions.¹¹ Before then, formal schooling occurred through an education marketplace in entrepreneurial venture schools and academies. A *venture school* is defined here as an unincorporated institution operated on an entrepreneurial basis and supported entirely by tuition. An *academy*, by contrast, was a legally incorporated institution governed by a board of trustees and often partially subsidized by endowment income or other nontuition funding. Generally, both venture schools and academies in North Carolina served students between the ages of seven or eight and twenty-five. North Carolina newspaper sources provide scattered information about the positions available in antebellum schools, the instructors who filled them, members of the boards of trustees, tuition rates, school sessions, commencement exercises, the subjects offered for study, and other important details. For example, Susan Nye filled the position advertised by Raleigh Academy in 1814, as shown in Figure 1. Although this particular advertisement tells us nothing about

¹¹*First Annual Report of the General Superintendent of Common Schools of the State of North Carolina* (Raleigh: W. W. Holden, 1854), North Carolina Collection [hereafter NCC], Wilson Library, U.N.C. Chapel Hill; Charles L. Coon, *The Beginnings of Public Education in North Carolina: A Documentary History, 1790-1840*, vol. I (Raleigh: Edwards & Boulton, 1908), NCC.

RALEIGH ACADEMY.

THE Exercises of this Institution commenced, as usual, on Monday last, under the superintendance of the Rev. Wm. M'Pheeters, assisted by well qualified Teachers.

The Literary Department of the Female Academy is placed under the care of the Rev. J. Crudup, Jun. and the Painting, Drawing and Ornamental Needle Work will be taught by Miss NYZ, from New York—a Lady in all respects well qualified, and who will have charge of the manners and deportment of the young Ladies.

The Preparatory School will be conducted according to Mr. Lancaster's improved mode of teaching Elementary Knowledge, lately introduced into this Country, the Trustees having had Mr. John Evans, of this City, thoroughly qualified for instructing Youth after this manner, and are now engaged in enlarging their School Room, and in fitting it up for this purpose. As soon as the Work is finished (which will be in a few weeks) this mode of teaching will commence. In the mean time, the Children will be taught in the ordinary way.

The price of Teaching in the Preparatory School is reduced to \$ 10 per annum, or \$ 5 per session, which, when it is considered that no Books will be wanted, will be cheaper than any other School.

As soon as the Lancasterian mode of teaching is in operation, the Trustees propose taking a number of poor Children to educate free of expence. Application for admission of Scholars of this description must be made to Judge Potter, Wm. Shaw, or J. Gales, who are appointed to attend to this business.

WM. HILL, Sec'y.

January 5, 1815. 98

Figure 2. Raleigh Academy Advertisement, 1815. Source, *Raleigh Register*, January 5, 1815. Courtesy, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

her salary, it does reveal the subjects she was initially hired to teach, along with the name of the president of the board of trustees and the starting date of the academy session.

By compiling a database of teachers mentioned in North Carolina newspaper sources and other documents, it is possible to analyze the changing proportions of men and women by decade. For example, six weeks after advertising for a female teacher, the Raleigh Academy published an announcement that identified the names and gender of the academy superintendent, three teachers, and four members of the board of trustees, including the

secretary. (See Figure 2).¹² Many newspaper sources also reveal information about teachers from northern states. In the one shown above, Susan Nye is introduced to readers as “Miss Nye, from New York.” Five years later, the academy placed an advertisement that mentioned the three teachers then working in the female department: “Miss Nye (whose talents as a Teacher are probably unrivalled,) Mr. Barlow, a Graduate of one of the Northern Colleges, from Connecticut, and Miss Yancey.”¹³

In the sample of 486 teachers analyzed for this study,¹⁴ the proportion of women among teachers in North Carolina schools and academies appears to have increased steadily from 1800 to 1840 at a greater rate than that of men. (See Table 1 on next page.) The largest increase occurred from 1810 to 1820 when the numbers of women mentioned in newspapers almost quadrupled while the numbers of men increased 67 percent. By 1830, the number of men had doubled while the number of women had grown 530 percent. The fourth decade witnessed a decided shift in the gender composition of this sample. From 1830 to 1840, the number of women continued to grow, whereas the number of men fell 27 percent, reaching a level lower than that of two decades before.

Forty-four of the teachers in this study can be specifically identified as northerners, a figure that represents 9 percent of the total sample.¹⁵ Just as in the larger sample, from 1810 to 1820, the number of females from the North increased dramatically, and the period from 1830 to 1840 witnessed a decided drop in the numbers of northern men, their numbers falling more than 90 percent. In contrast, the numbers of northern women mentioned

¹²The school’s music teacher, Mr. Goneke, does not appear in this announcement but is identified in a later report on the academy’s semi-annual examination. See “Raleigh Academy: Report of the Examination,” *Raleigh Register*, November 17, 1815, NCC.

¹³“Raleigh Academy,” *Raleigh Register*, December 22, 1820, NCC.

¹⁴This sample of North Carolina teachers represents all the teachers mentioned by name in the following sources: Charles L. Coon, *North Carolina Schools and Academies 1790–1840: A Documentary History* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1915); Mary Ellen Gadski, *The History of the New Bern Academy* (New Bern: Tryon Palace Commission, 1986), 166–168; Susan Nye Hutchison Diary, SHC; Ernest Haywood Papers, files 143–144, box 3, SHC; Mordecai Family Papers, files 1–11, box 1, file 113, box 8, file 15, box 2, SHC; John Steele Papers, files 67–69, box 4, SHC; The sample also includes teachers mentioned in newspaper advertisements appearing in the *Raleigh Register*, 1800–1840, NCC. Kim Tolley obtained the names of teachers appearing in the *Register* by sampling issues at regular monthly intervals (where possible) over a forty-year period; all of the teachers in this latter sample also appear in the body of Charles L. Coon’s documentary history (although not all appear in Coon’s index). She used a volume of Coon’s history in Cubberley Library, Sanford University, but as of January 2005, this volume was available online at: <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/coon/menu.html>.

¹⁵Many newspaper advertisements named the teacher’s place of origin, particularly when a teacher was a new arrival to the school. Nevertheless, these numbers must be interpreted with caution, because it is not possible to know with absolute certainty that a teacher whose origin is not specified came from New England or North Carolina. In her analysis of newspaper sources, Kim Tolley presumed a teacher to be southern if he or she was not specifically identified as “northern.”

Table 1
Number and Percent of Teachers Appearing in
North Carolina Newspapers and other Documentary Sources,
by Gender and Region of Origin, 1800-1840 (n = 486)

Decades	Total Male	Northern Male	Southern Male	Total Female	Northern Female	Southern Female
1800-1810 (n = 79)	69 (87%)	5 (7%)	64 (93%)	10 (13%)	1 (10%)	9 (90%)
1811-1820 (n = 153)	115 (75%)	9 (8%)	106 (92%)	38 (25%)	6 (16%)	32 (84%)
1821-1830 (n = 188)	139 (74%)	13 (9%)	126 (91%)	49 (26%)	7 (14%)	42 (86%)
1831-1840 (n = 165)	102 (62%)	1 (>1%)	101 (99%)	63 (38%)	12 (19%)	51 (81%)

Sample derived from all of the teachers mentioned in the following sources: Monthly interval sampling of the *Raleigh Register*, 1800-1840, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Charles L. Coon, *North Carolina Schools and Academies 1790-1840: A Documentary History* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1915); Mary Ellen Gadski, *The History of the New Bern Academy* (New Bern: Tryon Palace Commission, 1986), 166-168; Susan Nye Hutchison Diary, Southern Historical Collection (SHC), University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Ernest Haywood Papers, files 143-144, box 3, SHC; Mordecai Family Papers, files 1-11, box 1, file 113, box 8, file 15, box 2, SHC; John Steele Papers, files 67-69, box 4, SHC. Note: Some teachers may be represented more than once if they taught across a span of two or more decades. Because they also taught at these institutions, school principals/heads are included in this sample.

in North Carolina newspaper advertisements and other sources increased during the same period, as shown in Table 1 above.

Sometime around 1830, both northern and southern men began to leave teaching in North Carolina. Not only did the migration of northern men to the South dwindle, but also the numbers of southern men mentioned in documentary sources fell to levels below those of the period two decades earlier. From 1800 to 1840, the total number of male teachers rose only 48 percent, whereas the total number of female teachers increased more than fivefold. Some of this growth can be explained as a large increase in the numbers of northern women coming south to teach, but even when the northern women are removed from the sample, it is clear that the number of women teaching in North Carolina increased during the same period that the numbers of men fell, and that this trend began during the years from 1830 to 1840.

The same development can be seen in other kinds of documentary sources: the records of individual institutions. For a number of imaginable reasons, the proportions of men and women appearing in contemporary newspapers may not accurately represent the proportions of the teachers in schools. It is possible that only the wealthier teachers paid for advertisements.

It is also conceivable that women may have taken out more advertisements than men, particularly if they were trying to establish themselves in a male-dominated profession. Examining the extant records of individual institutions, where it is possible to identify all the teachers over an extended period of years, provides one means of checking the findings from newspapers against other sources. An analysis of the teachers in three schools in New Bern, Raleigh, and Warrenton reveals similar results.

Established as a coeducational academy in 1766, New Bern became the second school in the nation to receive a colonial charter following the incorporation of Philadelphia's Franklin Academy in 1753. Unlike the majority of other antebellum schools that flourished for a few years and then disappeared, New Bern Academy remained in almost continuous operation from 1766 to 1882, in the sense that some form of schooling operated in the academy buildings throughout this period. Raleigh Academy, granted a charter in 1801 by the state legislature, survived for nearly three decades as a coeducational institution. Jacob Mordecai's entrepreneurial female school in Warrenton opened in 1809 and thrived for ten years, until the Mordecai family cashed out and left the state to take up farming in the West. All three schools enrolled over a hundred students each at some point in their history, and documentary sources provide information about the gender of the teachers working in these institutions at specific dates, as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2
Number and Percent of Male and Female Teachers in
Three Antebellum North Carolina Schools

Years	New Bern Academy		Raleigh Academy		Mordecai's School	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
1776	1 (100%)	0	—	—	—	—
1804	1 (100%)	0	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	—	—
1809	1 (100%)	0	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	1 (100%)	0
1815	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	4 (67%)	2 (33%)	1 (33%)	2 (67%)
1827	<i>Insufficient Data</i>		2 (33%)	4 (67%)	—	—
1837	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	—	—	—	—
1844	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	—	—	—	—
1861	2 (40%)	3 (60%)	—	—	—	—
1871	1 (33%)	2 (67%)	—	—	—	—
1882	2 (25%)	6 (75%)	—	—	—	—

Sources: Data compiled from advertisements in the *Raleigh Register*, 1800-1830, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Charles L. Coon, *North Carolina Schools and Academies 1790-1840: A Documentary History* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1915); Mary Ellen Gadski, *The History of the New Bern Academy* (New Bern: Tryon Palace Commission, 1986), 166-168; Susan Nye Hutchison Diary, Southern Historical Collection (SHC), University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Mordecai Family Papers, SHC.

Reflecting the results obtained by analyzing newspaper advertisements and other documents, the records of these three schools indicate that the number and proportion of women among North Carolina teachers rose during the antebellum period. What is particularly interesting, however, is the discrepancy in the gender of the teachers mentioned in different kinds of documents. All the female teachers in the academies at New Bern and Raleigh appear in contemporary newspaper advertisements; however, advertisements for Mordecai's school at Warrenton do not mention teachers apart from Jacob Mordecai. Examining the family's personal letters reveals that at least two of Jacob's daughters, Rachel and Ellen, taught in the school as his assistants in the female department.¹⁶ Researchers have noted that antebellum census reports are problematic for the South.¹⁷ This is particularly true for women. For example, Susan Nye's diary indicates that she taught for nearly thirty-five years in New York, North Carolina, and Georgia. Nevertheless, once she left her parents' farm to earn an independent living, her name never appeared in federal manuscript census records. Given that some documentary sources may not have mentioned single women or women who worked as teaching assistants under more prominent men in coeducational institutions, it is possible that the percentage of female teachers during the antebellum period may actually have been somewhat higher than reported above in Table 2.

The documents analyzed in this study suggest that while the relative proportion of men and women among schoolteachers was never static, it shifted more dramatically during specific decades. First, the greatest percentage increase among female teachers in North Carolina schools occurred from 1810 to 1820. This decade also witnessed the first wave of northern women migrating to the state to teach. Second, the numbers of northern women mentioned in documentary sources rose again from 1831 to 1840, far outpacing the increase in southern women and thus constituting a second wave of northern migration. Third, during this decade, the migration of northern men into the South ground nearly to a halt, and the overall number of men in schools and academies in the South fell for the first time.

To some extent, the increase in the proportion of female teachers can be explained as the result of an increase in schools serving females. The historian Charles L. Coon identified 121 institutions bearing the designation "academy" or "seminary" operating in North Carolina between 1800 and 1840. Of these, an increasing number served female students, either in single-sex or coeducational institutions. By the fourth decade, at least half

¹⁶Mordecai Family Papers, SHC. According to Christie Anne Farnham, a third daughter, Caroline, also assumed teaching duties. See Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle*, 45.

¹⁷For example, see Albert Fishlow, "The American Common School Revival: Fact or Fancy?" in Henry Rosovsky, ed., *Industrialization in Two Systems: Essays in Honor of Alexander Gerschenkron* (New York: John Wiley, 1966), 67.

of such institutions enrolled females.¹⁸ At the highest levels of schooling available by mid century, women's enrollment appears to have outstripped that of men. According to the first report of the state's superintendent for education, published in 1854, the enrollment of students at male colleges in that year was "perhaps between 500 and 600" whereas the "number at Female Colleges, (including Salem School and St. Mary's,) [was] not less than 1,000."¹⁹ However, the expansion of schooling for females does not entirely explain the increase in female teachers because many of the earliest female and coeducational schools operated with predominantly male faculty, as illustrated by the examples in Table 2.

Once we recognize that the entry of women into teaching began well before 1830 in both the North and the South, two long-standing theories about the feminization of teaching are called into question. The first is the idea that traditional social norms proscribed women from becoming teachers in the early nineteenth century, and that these social norms were not overcome in the South until after the Civil War. The second is the theory that teaching became feminized with the bureaucratization of schooling and the extension of the school year. According to this view, teaching became less attractive to men who taught only several months a year to supplement their income from other sources.

Social Norms

Scholars sometimes assume that in the early nineteenth century, traditional social norms proscribed women's participation in paid work, including teaching, and that these norms had to be overcome in order for the feminization of teaching to occur. At the same time, a large body of scholarship demonstrates that women's participation in productive and paid labor extended well back into the colonial period and that the ideological belief that daughters should be self-supporting can be traced at least back to the Revolutionary Era.²⁰ In a recent survey of female advice literature published during the early national period, Margaret A. Nash found that

¹⁸The figure of 121 schools is based on institutions appearing in the contents pages of Charles L. Coon, ed., *North Carolina Schools and Academies: A Documentary History*. Tolley's monthly interval sampling of the Raleigh Register, 1800–1840, NCC, did not reveal additional institutions of this sort. She analyzed this sample decade by decade. The proportion of schools known to have enrolled females was 50 percent in the fourth decade, but since it was not possible to determine the gender of the students from many newspaper sources, this figure may actually have been higher.

¹⁹*First Annual Report of the General Superintendent of Common Schools of the State of North Carolina* (Raleigh: W. W. Holden, 1854), NCC, 31.

²⁰See especially, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001) and idem., *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York: Vintage, 1991).

“advocates of female education touted the practical benefits” of self-reliance and “self-sufficiency.” According to Nash, “The model republican woman was self-reliant.” For example, writing in 1798, Judith Sargent Murray argued that women should be taught to “depend on their own efforts” rather than rely on a husband to support them.²¹

The view that young women should contribute toward the support of their families was widespread in New England in the 1830s, as evidenced in the stories written by mill women in the *Lowell Offering*.²² Nevertheless, historian Thomas Dublin’s study of those workers’ letters led him to conclude that daughters did not necessarily send their wages home, nor did all parents expect that they would. A young woman’s economic independence was “useful” to the family simply because the departure of young women from the farm relieved the parents of the expense of supporting them. When Lucy Larcom left millwork for teaching, she wrote, “It had been impressed upon me that I must make myself useful in the world, and certainly one could be useful who could ‘keep school’ as Aunt Hannah did.”²³

Much of the scholarship on women’s work in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has focused on New England, but evidence suggests that expectations regarding women’s capacity for paid labor and self-support were more widespread than is often assumed. The presence of southern women in North Carolina academies during the antebellum period suggests that in the South, as well as the North, women violated no social norms when they established venture schools or began to teach in chartered academies. North Carolina’s New Bern Academy educated girls in a female department when it opened in 1766, a development that caused no controversy in the community. When Raleigh Academy was established in the state capital in 1801, the school opened with a female department run by a woman.²⁴

Positive social attitudes toward female teachers appear to have facilitated the entry of women into schoolrooms in both regions of the country from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Although the overall proportion of women in teaching was smaller in the South than in the North, this study did not find any documentary evidence to support the argument that North Carolina residents opposed the efforts of females to teach in female schools or in the female departments of coeducational institutions.

²¹Margaret A. Nash, “A Triumph of Reason”: Female Education in Academies in the New Republic,” in *Chartered Schools*, 64–88. The quotes are on pages 68 and 71, respectively.

²²Thomas Dublin, *Transforming Women’s Work: New England Lives in the Industrial Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

²³Lucy Larcom, quoted in Elisabeth Anthony Dexter, *Career Women of America, 1776–1840* (Clifton, N.J.: Augustus M. Kelley, 1972), 1.

²⁴See Coon, ed., *North Carolina Schools and Academies*, 390.

The Bureaucratization of Schooling and Extension of the School Year

Several historians have identified the bureaucratization of schooling and the extension of the school year as factors that induced men to leave teaching. According to this argument, men, who traditionally had supplemented winter teaching with other occupations, left teaching as the state instituted policies that required longer school years, compliance with state certification procedures, and subordination to a hierarchy of school officials.²⁵ At first glance, this argument is compelling when considered from the perspective of common school teachers in the Northeast. In Massachusetts and New York, the timing of increased female participation in teaching roughly corresponded to the timing of state intervention in common schooling and the lengthening of the school year, suggesting that the very fact of state involvement may have created the conditions that fostered feminization. A close look at employment practices at the local level, however, challenges this idea that state intervention initiated the process of feminization.

In the town of Lima, New York, longer school years and the expansion of female teaching developed simultaneously, but largely outside the structure of tax-supported schooling. Located in the agriculturally rich region of western New York known as the Genesee Valley, Lima had been settled by New Englanders in the post-Revolutionary era and remained rural throughout the nineteenth century.²⁶ As in Massachusetts, town and district schools in rural New York typically hired male teachers for winter schools and female teachers for summer schools. In Lima this practice was in place from the very beginning of the state-administered system of tax support for common schooling in 1815. It was not until 1830, however, that Lima's school district leaders allotted any portion of its tax funds to support summer schools. Even after the introduction of some tax-based subsidies for summer school in 1830, more than three-quarters of summer school costs continued to be financed by tuition.²⁷

²⁵For the origins of the theory about the bureaucratization of schooling and the lengthening of the school year, see Myra H. Strober and David Tyack, "Why do Women Teach and Men Manage? A Report on Research on Schools," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5:3 (Spring 1980): 494-503; Strober and Audri Gordon Lanford, "The Feminization of Teaching: Cross-Sectional Analysis, 1850-1880," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 11:2 (Spring 1986): 212-35. Also, see the summary of these and related arguments in Perlmann & Margo, *Women's Work?*, 20-21; 27-28; 35-39; 101-106.

²⁶Lima's population numbered 1764 in 1830. *Fifth Census of the United States, Bureau of the Census, Department of the Interior*, Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office. For further information on early settlement, community organization and schooling in Lima, see Nancy Beadie, "Defining the Public: Congregation, Commerce and Social Economy in the Formation of the Educational System, 1790-1840," (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse University, 1989).

²⁷*Record Book, Lima School District # 4, 1814-1854, Town Book, 1797-1818, and Town Book, 1818-1840*, Lima Historical Society [hereafter LHS], Tenny Burton Museum, Lima, New York.

Despite, or perhaps because of, this lack of tax support for summer schooling, the length of the summer term expanded over the course of the 1820s, from three to four to five to six months a year. Meanwhile the length of the winter term remained unchanged, stabilizing at four months. The extent of female teaching and the total length of the school year expanded, in other words, but without any direct influence from the state. Rather, the feminization of teaching and the expansion of the school year in Lima developed first as part of a market or tuition-based approach to schooling, which a tax-based state system gradually absorbed.²⁸

To some extent, this interpretation complements the conclusions of Perlmann and Margo. They also reject the theory that the feminization of teaching occurred in response to the bureaucratization of schooling and lengthening of the school year. Instead, they adopt the “simpler” but related theory that feminization developed in response to school boards’ desire to hire cheaper labor.²⁹ In their analysis, feminization developed first in New England because a distinctive, two-tier system of female-taught summer schools and male-taught winter schools had existed there since the colonial era, making it easier for women to make the transition to year-round teaching, and because the gap between male and female wages was much greater there than elsewhere. To the extent that the data from Lima suggest that market forces drove feminization, they are consistent with certain aspects of Perlmann and Margo’s conclusions.³⁰

In constructing their account, however, Perlmann and Margo focused almost exclusively on common school teaching, thereby missing evidence of feminization in the South, such as that presented here for North Carolina. North Carolina schools, like New York academies, typically hired both male and female teachers for *annual* terms. As shown above in Table 1, the numbers of female teachers increased and the proportion of male teachers declined in an educational environment characterized by a lack of state-supported common schools and a norm of year-round teaching in academies and venture schools. Contrary to Perlmann and Margo’s assumptions, then, our evidence suggests that feminization also occurred in the absence of a two-tier system of female summer schools and male winter schools and in the absence of a dramatic gap between male and female wages.

Moreover, Perlmann and Margo analyzed the influence of labor markets and the issue of feminization almost entirely from the district viewpoint. In their analysis, the question is when the male-female wage differential became great enough to make it financially worthwhile for

²⁸Nancy Beadie, “In the Pay of the Public: Changing Ideas about Gender and Political Economy in 19th Century New York,” Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, 2004.

²⁹Perlmann and Margo, *Women’s Work?*, 102.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 35-39; 99.

districts to eschew the sanctions against hiring female teachers. This focus ignores those sectors of schooling in which the initiative for organizing schools and establishing rates lay largely with teachers themselves, i.e., venture or market-based schooling. When viewed from the perspective of teachers, rather than districts, feminization may have been driven as much by incentives for women to enter teaching as by incentives for districts to hire them. What is more, this perspective suggests the possibility that women effectively created a market for their services that later gave them the leverage to negotiate a place in state-based systems. This possibility leads us to look more closely at the structures of opportunity for female teachers from the perspectives of women themselves and to consider opportunities outside, as well as inside, tax-based systems of common schooling.

ECONOMIC INCENTIVES FOR WOMEN TO ENTER TEACHING, 1800-1850

In recent decades, a significant body of scholarship by labor historians and scholars interested in women's history has revealed much about the transition of women workers from the home and local community to small manufacturing centers and large factories in the early nineteenth century.³¹ However, what is still largely missing from the secondary literature is serious consideration of women's work as teachers during the early antebellum period. Most published discussions of antebellum teaching salaries have characterized teachers' wages as comparable to those paid to domestic servants.³²

How did the wages paid to New England common school teachers compare with the wages a woman could earn by doing other kinds of work? According to Alice Kessler-Harris, a Philadelphia seamstress in 1821 made about \$1.05 per week, out of which she paid for thread, heat, light, room, and board. A shoe binder in the 1820s could earn from 72 cents to \$2.00 per week and a hatmaker might earn from \$1.50 to \$1.75 per week. Like

³¹Scholars like Alice Kessler-Harris and Thomas Dublin have portrayed women's family work and paid work as an interrelated whole. Dublin has also moved beyond traditional manufacturing contexts to consider women's work in teaching in three New Hampshire towns during the years from 1860 to 1880. See Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); Dublin, *Transforming Women's Work*. For a study of a later period, see Leslie W. Tentler, *Wage-Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

³²For example, David Tyack reported that the incomes of teachers in 1841 were "below the wages paid to artisans ... and often below the earnings of scrubwomen and day laborers." See Tyack, *Turning Points in American Educational History* (Waltham, MA: Blaisdell, 1967), 414. Alice Kessler-Harris placed the wages of teachers in New England district schools in the 1830s and 1840s as comparable to those paid to domestic servants. See Harris, *Out to Work*, 55. Most recently, Perlmann and Margo state, "True: the wages offered to women teachers may not have been much higher than those of female domestics." See *Women's Work?*, 32.

Table 3
Adjusted Wage Rates of Female Summer School Teachers
School District #4, Lima, New York, 1820-1833

Year	Index	Monthly wage	Adjusted wage	Board	Wage plus board	Adjusted total
1820	141	\$5.95	\$4.22	\$3.19	\$9.13	\$6.47
1825	119	4.00	3.36	3.19	7.19	6.04
1830	111	5.00	4.50	3.19	8.19	7.37
1833	101	4.00	3.96	4.25	8.25	8.16

Sources: Data compiled from *Record Book, Lima School District #4, 1814-1854*, Lima Historical Society, Tenny Burton Museum, Lima, New York. The index used to convert wages to constant value terms is the Composite Consumer Price Index from John J. McCusker, *How Much is That in Real Money? A Historical Price Index for Use as a Deflator of Money Values in the Economy of the United States* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1992).

seamstresses, both shoe binders and hatmakers had to pay board out of their earnings, unless they worked at home.³³ In Lima, New York, female common school teachers earned wages that fluctuated between \$4 and \$6 per month in the 1820s and early 1830s, with board as an additional benefit (see Table 3).³⁴

Adding the value of board to the wages of these female teachers brings the value of their earnings to \$7 to \$9 per month, or \$1.69 to \$1.93 per week, earnings that are 10-13 percent higher than the earnings of hatmakers, 60-85 percent higher than that of seamstresses, and more than double that of some shoe binders. This suggests that for women, common school teaching could be attractive as compared with other forms of wage work. Female common school teachers in rural towns like Lima could earn such wages for a maximum of five to six months a year, however, while shoe binders and seamstresses (though perhaps not hatmakers) presumably could work longer. Whether such alternative employments existed for any particular female, of course, depended on the location and her geographic mobility. For women in rural areas outside the major textile manufacturing regions of New England and the Upper Hudson River Valley, school teaching may well have been one of the few available options for wage work.

Although nothing comparable to the New England common school existed in early national North Carolina, documentary evidence indicates

³³Harris, *Out to Work*, 37.

³⁴Data compiled from *Record Book, Lima School District #4, 1814-1854*, LHS. The index used to convert wages to constant value terms is the Composite Consumer Price Index from John J. McCusker, *How Much is That in Real Money? A Historical Price Index for Use as a Deflator of Money Values in the Economy of the United States* (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1992).

Table 4
The weekly earnings of selected women's occupations in
Massachusetts and New Hampshire, 1822-1837

Sector	Weekly wages
Weavers, Richmond, New Hampshire (1822-1829)	\$0.42
Palm-leaf hatmakers, Fitzwilliam, New Hampshire (1830)	\$0.34
Paper mill workers, South Hadley, Mass. (1832)	\$2.65
Textile workers, Chicopee, Mass. (1832)	\$2.75
Lowell, Mass. female textile operatives (1836)	\$3.25
Lowell, Mass. female common school teachers (1837)	\$3.50

Sources: Data compiled from Thomas Dublin, *Farm to Factory: Women's Letters, 1830-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 11-12; Dublin, *Women at Work* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 161; Dublin, *Transforming Women's Work: New England Lives in the Industrial Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 41, 59; *Abstract of the Massachusetts School Returns for 1837* (Boston: Dutton & Wentworth, 1838), 50. Note: the value of the board provided to paper mill workers has been calculated and added to their reported weekly wages for the sake of comparison to shoebinders and hatmakers, who had to pay room and board out of their earnings. Board at Chicopee was valued at about one-third of women's earnings; this rate was applied to the wages of paper-mill workers.

that in Raleigh, at least, a teacher could earn a comparatively high salary teaching the rudiments to poor children. Although schooling in North Carolina was generally entrepreneurial and market-driven, many communities and religious groups organized and subsidized various forms of charitable schooling. In 1822, the Raleigh Female Benevolent Society paid women to teach reading, writing, arithmetic, and "all kinds of plain work" to roughly twenty-six female students during the week and to provide instruction to a larger group of students on Sunday. It is possible that the teacher also received free room and board, because the Society offered board when it advertised to fill an opening in the position five years later.³⁵ The Society paid its teacher an annual salary of \$200 in 1822. When converted to monthly terms, this represents a wage of \$16.66 per month, more than double the monthly wage of common school teachers in rural western New York. To understand how this might compare to other kinds of wage work, it is instructive to examine Thomas Dublin's data of the overall earnings of palm-leaf hatmakers in Fitzwilliam, New Hampshire (Table 4). According to Dublin, young women making hats "rarely worked at it full time." In analyzing the overall wages from hatmaking, he found that eight Fitzwilliam

³⁵ "Report of the Managers and Treasurer, read at the Annual Meeting, July 29th, 1822," in Revised Constitution and By-Laws of the Raleigh Female Benevolent Society, Adopted July 23rd, 1823 (Raleigh: J. Gales & Son, 1828). <http://socsouth.unc.edu/nc/benevolent/benevolent.html>. 11 April 2003; *Raleigh Register*, 8 June 1827, in Coon, ed. *Beginnings of Public Education in North Carolina*, 209-210.

families earned an average total amount of \$220 each over an 18-year period. Comparing the hatmaking earnings to the wages of mill workers, Dublin concluded, "It probably would have taken a teenage daughter four or five years of mill employment to have saved this much money to contribute toward her family's expenses."³⁶ From this perspective, the \$200 annual salary offered in Raleigh appears very attractive. Moreover, the position in Raleigh offered annual, rather than seasonal, employment.

During the 1830s, Massachusetts began to collect systematic data on its common school teachers, allowing some comparison of teachers' weekly earnings with that of other workers. For the sake of comparison, Table 4 incorporates wage data from both primary and secondary sources. This data shows that female common school teachers earned substantially more per month than weavers, hatmakers, paper mill workers, and some textile workers and slightly more than Lowell textile operatives, though it is not entirely clear how comparable the terms and length of employment were.

Because economic historians have studied labor income by industrial sectors in the 1840s, we can use previously published data to compare the income of common school teachers in New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut with the income of workers in agriculture, manufacturing, and all other industrial sectors. Making such a comparison involves converting all wages to constant value terms, as shown in Table 5.

Together, these various wage comparisons for the period of the 1820s through the 1840s suggest that common school teaching offered wages exceeding those offered for other forms of work available to women, with the possible exception of manufacturing in the mid 1840s.³⁷ Variations in the terms of employment (whether or not board is included), across rural and urban locations, and in the number of months of employment available for different kinds of work make comparisons difficult. Nonetheless, the economic incentives for women to enter these forms of teaching appear to have been real.

Common school teaching was not the only form of teaching available to women in the early antebellum era, however. In both the North and the South, academies and venture schools offered teaching opportunities beyond the common school. Academy teaching presented several advantages over

³⁶Dublin, *Transforming Women's Work*. The quotes are from pages 59 and 69, respectively.

³⁷A significant proportion of women who worked outside the home in the antebellum period worked as domestic servants, but there exists no systematic data on the wages paid to domestic servants prior to the 1850s. Domestic service remained an important form of wage work for immigrant and African American in the latter half of the nineteenth century, but the long hours, sometimes difficult working conditions, and relatively lower social status of the occupation led to a decrease in the number of women willing to devote themselves to this form of work by the century's end. See Faye E. Dudden, *Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1983).

Table 5
Average Monthly Wages of Female Common School Teachers in Three Northeastern States, and Labor Income of Female Workers in Agriculture, Manufacturing, and All Other, Reduced to Constant Value Terms and Expressed in 1845 Dollars

Sector	Monthly Income per Worker, in 1845 Terms	Value of Wages with Board Factored In
Agriculture	\$ 5.25	—
Manufacturing	\$10.00	—
All Other	\$ 7.95	—
Connecticut Common School Teachers, 1846	\$ 6.83	\$ 9.67
New York Common School Teachers, 1845	\$ 7.00	\$ 9.92
Massachusetts Common School Teachers, 1847	\$12.50	\$12.50

Sources: *Eleventh Annual Report of the Board of Education* (Boston, Massachusetts, 1848), 26; *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools of Connecticut* (Hartford: Case, Tiffany, and Burnham, 1846), 8; *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools of the State of New York* (Albany, Carroll and Cook, 1845), 13; "Labor Income Per Worker, by Industrial Sectors, 1840," Lance E. Davis, Richard A. Easterlin, William N. Parker et. al., *American Economic Growth: An Economist's History of the United States* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 26. Note: The labor income for agriculture, manufacturing, and "all other" is defined as gross income less gross property income. This figure has not been adjusted to allow for the costs or value of board. The table uses a female to male wage ratio of .45 to approximate female wages for agriculture, manufacturing, and "all other."

common school teaching and at least one advantage over operating a venture school. First, academies offered annual salaries and employment. In both New York and North Carolina, a typical academy schedule consisted of two, five-month sessions or four quarters. For adult women like Susan Nye, who could no longer rely on parental support in the off-season, an academy position provided a more viable means of self- and family support than teaching common school, which did not offer year-round employment.

Second, chartered academies generally offered more security than venture schools. An academy was a corporate institution that held title to some property and operated under the authority of a board of trustees. Both property and corporate governance provided some cushion against the vagaries of the market. Although academies, like venture schools, depended heavily on tuition for income and salaries, their corporate property and status gave them a degree of financial and legal security that an individual venture schoolteacher would not enjoy. Moreover, the social prominence

Table 6
Local Structures of Opportunity:
Common School and Academy Teachers
Lima, New York, 1833

Sex	Common School		Academy				
	Monthly wage	Monthly wage plus board	Annual salary without board				
	Summer	Total per month/board	Assist. Primary Dept.	Music	Female Dept. Head		School Princ./ Head
Female	\$4	\$8.25	\$100- \$150	\$200	\$200		
	Winter	Total per month/board			English Dept. Head	Lang. Teacher	
Male	\$15	\$19.25			\$300	\$375	\$500
Female/ Male Ratio	.27	.43			.67		

Sources: Data compiled from *Record Book, Lima School District # 4, 1814-1854*, Lima Historical Society, Tenny Burton Museum, Lima, New York and from *Account Book #178, Journal of the Doings of the Legal Board of Trustees of the Genesee Wesleyan Seminary, 1830-1854*, Genesee Wesleyan Seminary Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Byrd Library, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York.

and networks of academy trustees gave them greater leverage in recruiting students, collecting student fees, and raising capital. In New York after 1816 and in North Carolina after 1840, chartered academies also received some subsidies from state-endowed funds, providing further financial security. Trustee governance did entail some loss of autonomy on the part of the teacher and may also have involved some loss of earning potential when the market was profitable. Nonetheless, academies offered what may have been considered a reasonable trade-off for adult teachers seeking a stable income.³⁸

³⁸On the history of academies, see Nancy Beadie and Kim Tolley, eds. *Chartered Schools*. On state-endowed common school and literature funds see Fletcher Harper Swift, *A History of Public Permanent Common School Funds in the United States, 1795-1905* (NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1911). On the history of such funds in New York see Nancy Beadie, "Market-Based Policies of School Funding: Lessons from the History of the New York Academy System," *Educational Policy* 13:2 (May 1999): 296-317; George Frederick Miller, *The Academy System of the State of New York* (Albany: J. B. Lyon Co., 1922). On the numbers of academies chartered in New York and North Carolina, see Miller, *Academy System of the State of New York*, 75; Coon, *Beginnings of Public Education in North Carolina* and Gadski, *The History of the New Bern Academy*, 70.

Third, academies paid more than common schools. The opening of Genesee Wesleyan Seminary, a coeducational academy in the town of Lima, New York, in 1832 provides a rare opportunity to compare directly the opportunities and rewards for common school and academy teachers in the same place and time, for both males and females.³⁹

As shown above in Table 6, Genesee Wesleyan Seminary paid higher salaries to its three female teachers than women earned in Lima's district schools. Eliza Rogers, the "Governess" or "Head" of the female department, received an annual salary of \$200, including room, board, and other services. She was also given permission to hire an assistant at \$100 per year, a salary that she managed to raise to \$150 after the first six months. A third woman taught music, earning up to \$200 a year directly from student fees.

When differences in the terms of employment are taken into account, the female head teacher earned four times the salary of a common school teacher. The trustees figured the value of board at the institution at \$75 per year and of all services together at \$100 per year. Another way of stating the head female teacher's salary, then, was \$100 a year plus room, board, and services. This board rate was twice as high as the usual rate paid by a common school teacher to board in a local private home. Nonetheless, the salary was more than double that of a female common school teacher, even presuming that the common school teacher could be employed teaching for ten or twelve months a year, which she could not.

The female assistant at the academy also earned more than the local common school teacher. At \$100 per year, her starting salary worked out to \$8.33 per month for twelve months or \$10 a month for ten months, figures closer to the \$8.25 per month earned by the local common school teacher. On an annual basis, however, the assistant teacher at the academy earned substantially more than the teacher at the local common school. Since female common school teachers typically worked just four to six months a year, they earned a maximum of \$33 to \$50, including board, from teaching or less than half the annual salary of the assistant teacher at the academy. After six months, moreover, the academy assistant at Genesee Wesleyan received a \$50 raise, thereby tripling the annual income of a common school teacher.

These differences between the salaries of common school teachers and academy assistants, and between assistants and female heads of academy departments, suggest a fourth advantage of academy teaching. It offered

³⁹Unfortunately, precise wage and board information for individual teachers exists for the academy only after 1832, while comparable information for the local district schools survives only for the period before 1834. Thus the data is directly comparable for only a single year, 1833. Still, this comparison for a single year provides the first example in the literature of the relative financial advantages of different kinds of teaching during the early antebellum period.

opportunities for career and social advancement. For New York men and women both, common school teaching in an ordinary rural school was at the bottom of the ladder with regard to salary and terms of employment. It was, nonetheless, a place where they could begin acquiring the experience, and perhaps the money, that could enable them to move up the social ladder. For women in particular, the opportunity to become an academy teacher, the head of a female academy department, or the principal of an all-female school, may well have provided an incentive for entering teaching in the first place, even at the relatively low wages paid by rural common schools. Few, if any, other lines of work offered women the possibility of higher positions and salary improvement over time.

The case of Genesee Wesleyan Seminary provides some insight into how this career ladder worked. It also raises some interesting questions about the structure and dynamics of teacher labor markets in the antebellum era. Teacher salaries at the academy appear to have been subject to negotiation. In January 1832, for example, as the school prepared to open for its first year of operation, the trustees determined a roster of salaries for the five teachers they wanted to hire later that year:

For principal	\$700
For teacher in math &c	500
For teacher of languages	500
For teacher in English Dpt.	400
For female teacher, including board, room, washing, lights and fuel	200

These dollar amounts proved to be only working figures, however, subject to both the influence of market forces and the process of negotiation. In the end only the female teacher received the salary specified; the male teachers, by contrast, all received salaries 25-30 percent lower than those specified. The male principal received a salary of \$500, rather than \$700; the language teacher gained \$375 instead of \$500; and the male teacher of the English Department received \$300 rather than \$400.⁴⁰ Of course, even these substantial cuts did not close the gap between male and female salaries. Nonetheless, they reflected a degree of negotiating leverage on the part of the female teacher. Six months after the trustees had declared their original salary policy, just before the opening of the fall term, a motion to raise the salary of the male teacher in the English department from \$300 to \$350 failed. Meanwhile, at the very same meeting (and as already mentioned

⁴⁰Data compiled from *Account Book #178, Journal of the Doings of the Legal Board of Trustees of the Genesee Wesleyan Seminary, 1830-1854*, Genesee Wesleyan Seminary Collection [hereafter GWSC], Archives and Special Collections, Byrd Library, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York. The index used to convert wages to constant value terms is the Composite Consumer Price Index from McCusker, *How Much is That in Real Money?*, 49-60.

above), the female teacher succeeded in raising the salary of her female assistant from \$100 to \$150.⁴¹

This instance of negotiation suggests that in some ways the market for female academy teachers may have been better than it was for males. Even though female academy teachers earned less than male teachers, they seem to have exercised greater leverage over the conditions of their employment. At this institution, the gap between male and female salaries narrowed further over time. This narrowing resulted from a combination of relative stability at the top of the salary scale and improvements at the bottom. Between 1833 and 1845, the salaries of all faculty positions increased in both absolute and relative terms, but none increased more than that for the head of the “female department.”⁴² By 1845, her salary had increased 75 percent; in contrast, the salary of the male principal increased only 20 percent. Three years later, the gap between male and female salaries narrowed for those at the bottom of the salary scale. The most dramatic increase occurred in the salary of the assistant teacher in the female department. In 1848, the board of trustees gave a \$75 raise both to her and the male teacher of the English department. The male teacher, who was also given the added responsibility for a state-subsidized teacher education department, saw his salary increase 19 percent, to \$475. He had also gained a male assistant at a salary of \$315. However, the \$75 raise had a far greater impact on the salary of the assistant teacher in the female department, whose salary increased 50 percent, to \$225 per year.⁴³

What explains the apparent leverage of female teachers in negotiating their conditions of employment and the apparent enhancement of their status over time, at least at this institution? Several factors may have contributed simultaneously to the relative stability of the salaries of male teachers at the top of the salary schedule and the improvement of salaries for male and female teachers below the highest tier. Among these factors are the relative age and experience of teachers at these different levels, the relative student demand and financial return on enrollments in various departments, and the broader labor market for teachers.

Annual reports sent by Genesee Wesleyan to the State Regents of New York show that far from matching the stereotype of youth and

⁴¹“Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Genesee Wesleyan Seminary, August 13, 1833,” *Account Book #178, Journal of the Doings of the Legal Board of Trustees of the Genesee Wesleyan Seminary, 1830-1854*, GWSC.

⁴²Ibid. Salaries for the male teachers of languages, sciences, and English increased by 25-33 percent (from \$300 to \$400 for the English teacher, and from \$375 to \$500 per year for the teacher of languages). Meanwhile, the salary for the female “preceptress” or head of the female department increased by 67 percent (from \$200 to \$334.50 per year). At the same time, the institution also hired an additional female to teach drawing at a salary of \$300 a year, a figure 75 percent of that for male teacher of the English department.

⁴³Ibid.

inexperience typically ascribed to common school teachers, female academy teachers could be women of substantial education and experience. In 1845, for example, the twenty-seven-year-old female preceptress, Miss Abigail Rogers, had taught for nine years. This experience exceeded that of the male principal for that year, George Loomis, who, though two years older, had only six-and-a-half years of teaching experience. Not only the experience but also the education levels of female teachers could be comparable to those of their male counterparts. In 1848, the head of the female department at Genesee Wesleyan was a woman named Maria Hibbard who, at the age of thirty, claimed fourteen years of teaching experience and an education equivalent to "1/2 a college course." This profile was virtually the same as that of the thirty-nine-year-old male head of the English department, George Sears, who claimed two years of college and fifteen years of teaching experience. Perhaps owing to these similarities, Hibbard managed to earn seventy-four percent of Sears' salary.⁴⁴

As this example indicates, the gender gap in wages narrowed as female teachers climbed the career ladder, though within limits defined by their sex. Among common school teachers, the female/male wage ratio consistently hovered around .43 through the 1820s and 1830s, virtually the same ratio that Perlmann and Margo found for female and male laborers in antebellum New York state.⁴⁵ In contrast, among academy teachers of equivalent status, the female/male wage ratio was much higher, standing at .67 in 1833. This figure narrowed over time and according to the level of the position, ranging between .71 (for assistants) and .84 (for heads of departments) in the late 1840s.⁴⁶ These relatively high female to male wage ratios in turn raise some interesting questions about teacher labor markets in the antebellum era. They suggest that at certain levels, women exercised market leverage. In some sectors and places, in other words, the demand for female teachers approached or exceeded supply. What factors shaped this supply and demand?

The first thing to understand about the position of female teachers in academies is that they were regarded as necessary for most coeducational schools. Filling the position of "preceptress" or head of the female department with a respectable and effective female teacher was essential to the financial health and viability of an institution. Without such a person, an academy could not effectively attract female students, especially older female students, and without such students, academies lost an important source of income.

⁴⁴Analysis based on *Annual Reports of Genesee Wesleyan Seminary to the New York Board of Regents for 1845, Account Book #178, Journal*, GWSC.

⁴⁵Perlmann and Margo, *Women's Work?*, 55 and 59. Perlmann and Margo cite a female/male wage ratio for the Mid-Atlantic region in 1832 of .42, and for New York State specifically in 1860 of .41.

⁴⁶Data compiled from *Account Book #178, Journal of the Doings of the Legal Board of Trustees of the Genesee Wesleyan Seminary, 1830-1854*, GWSC.

As Nancy Beadie has established elsewhere, the capacity to attract female students was an important source of financial success among academies in New York.⁴⁷ This importance increased during the antebellum era as the number of female academy students in upper-level subjects came to equal and then exceed that of males in the late 1840s statewide. The enrollment of females not only increased the size of an institution's pool of potential students, but it could also have a financial impact out of proportion to simple numbers. Girls and young women were by far the largest clientele for subjects such as music and drawing that academies offered for extra fees. These fees could be substantial, as much as two to four times those charged for regular academic subjects. In addition, there is some evidence that women were more likely to persist through a full academy course. However, the importance of female teachers was not limited to their influence on female students. In addition, female teachers superintended the primary departments of many coeducational schools that offered basic English instruction to younger children of both sexes. Throughout the antebellum era, one-third to one-half or more of all students attending any particular academy enrolled in these common school subjects.⁴⁸ In all these ways, then, female teachers became essential to the operation and finances of academies like Genesee Wesleyan.

TOWARD A MORE COMPLEX MODEL OF ANTEBELLUM TEACHER LABOR MARKETS: SOURCES OF VARIATION

The case of Lima, New York and Genesee Wesleyan Seminary provides a starting point for hypothesizing a model of teacher labor markets and opportunity structures in the antebellum era. To some extent, the salary pattern at Genesee Wesleyan reflected broader trends among state-subsidized academies in New York. In a separate study of state-level academy data, Nancy Beadie found that the salary range for academy teachers narrowed over time and across the state. Between 1840 and 1850, for example, the lowest average teacher salary paid by any institution rose, while the highest average salary paid by any institution declined. During the same time period similar trends occurred in tuition pricing, a convergence that suggests a competitive market had emerged among academies.⁴⁹

⁴⁷Nancy Beadie, "Female Students and Denominational Affiliation: Sources of Success Among Nineteenth Century Academies," *American Journal of Education* 107: 2 (February 1999): 75-115.

⁴⁸Ibid. and idem, "Analyzing the Impact of Female Student Markets on the History of Higher Learning in the United States," Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the History of Education Society, New Haven, CT, 2001; also *Annual Reports of the Regents of the University of the State of New York* (Albany: The State of New York, 1835-1880), passim.

⁴⁹Beadie, "Market-Based Policies."

Overall, this convergence had the effect of lowering average teacher salaries for the system. When viewed in relation to the particular example of Genesee Wesleyan, however, a gendered interpretation of this decline in salaries appears. As teacher labor markets developed, the salaries of male teachers at the top of the hierarchy may have declined at the same time as the salaries of female teachers at the bottom of the hierarchy rose. If so, such a trend could contribute substantially to understanding the feminization of teaching. It could help explain why men, who experienced a decline in opportunity, left the profession even as women, who experienced an improvement in opportunity, entered teaching in greater numbers.

Sources from North Carolina illustrate how the pressures of economic depression and competition among schools could open up opportunities for increased female participation in teaching. During times of recession, schools lowered the price of tuition in order to stay in business. From 1814 to 1821, the period that witnessed the largest increase in the proportion of women in North Carolina schools, the United States experienced a period of recession.⁵⁰ Two years, 1820 and 1821, proved particularly difficult for educators in North Carolina. The financial Panic of 1819 delivered a harsh blow to the southern economy. In 1820, the Raleigh Private Academy slashed its tuition to match that of a local competitor. In 1821, the Warrenton Female Academy reduced its terms by 20 percent. In the same year, Shocco Female Academy announced that it would maintain its relatively low rate of board and tuition, stating, "While times continue as they are, the price of Board and Tuition will be one hundred dollars per annum ... payable in advance."⁵¹ During the 1830s, when the number and proportion of male teachers fell in North Carolina, newspaper articles and advertisements indicate that some schools took steps to reduce their costs.⁵² The Panic of 1837 ushered in the deepest and most prolonged depression in the antebellum period. In that year, the Episcopal School in Raleigh slashed its tuition "to meet the changes of times and the expectations of the Public."⁵³ In an environment of periodic economic recession and increased competition among venture schools, the opportunities for women to teach increased. A woman entrepreneur running her own school could undercut the prices

⁵⁰The decades from 1800 to 1845 witnessed several cycles of economic expansion and contraction in the United States. Periods of economic contraction include the years from 1814 to 1821, from 1827 to 1833, and from 1837 to 1843. See McCusker, *How Much is That in Real Money?* 107–6.

⁵¹See newspaper advertisements in Coon, *North Carolina Schools and Academies*, 557–58, 616, and 605–06, respectively. The quote from Warrenton's Female Academy is on p. 606. Shady Grove Academy used the same language in its 1822 advertisement, on pp. 628–629.

⁵²*Ibid.*, See advertisements placed by Hillsborough Female Seminary, p. 305, Wake Forest Pleasant Grove Academy, p. 559, Louisburg Female Academy, p. 103, and the North Carolina Literary, Scientific, and Military Institution, p. 629.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 548. In 1837, Mount Pleasant Academy stated that it offered "as reasonable terms as the high prices of the times will possibly justify", p. 317.

charged by her male competitors and gain market share by attracting more students. Similarly, a board of trustees in a chartered coeducational school could lower costs by replacing a male assistant with a woman. Such replacements occurred first in subjects that had long been associated with female education, including music, French, geography, and English grammar. By 1840, increasing numbers of women also taught the sciences, higher mathematics, and eventually Latin.⁵⁴

Schools in the North similarly experienced the effects of economic depression. These effects are apparent in the simultaneous convergence in tuition and salaries in the system-wide data for New York State.⁵⁵ In the decade after the Panic of 1837, New York Regents academies lowered their tuition in order to attract students, and they reduced teacher salaries in order to cut costs. Added to the pressures of economic recession were those of increased competition among schools. Between 1838 and 1848, the number of Regents academies more than doubled statewide. Unlike entrepreneurial schools, Regents academies received some annual operating funds from the state, of which the total amount increased in 1838. However, the increased number of Regents institutions and of students attending them meant that the share of per-pupil state funding earned by most individual institutions declined in the 1840s.⁵⁶ Of course, for schools operating in North Carolina and elsewhere without any form of state support, the percentage of revenue derived from tuition would have been higher. During periods of economic recession, the easiest way for a school to cut costs involved either freezing or cutting salaries.

Incidental salary information from other institutions in New York State illustrates the differential impact such trends may have had on male and female salaries. This information shows how an overall decline in teacher salaries and a convergence in wages and prices could obscure an improving, or at least a stable, salary market for women. At Sherburne Academy in 1842, for example, trustees guaranteed their male principal a salary of \$500 a year. For their female teacher, they specified a minimum salary of \$250.⁵⁷ Teachers averaged \$375 per year. Several years later, at an institution known as Falley Seminary, in Fulton, New York, trustees also decided to pay the

⁵⁴Kim Tolley documented the increase in women among music teachers during this period, in: "A Comfortable Living for Herself and Her Children": The Gender and Wages of North Carolina Music Teachers in a Free Market, 1800-1840." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Social Science History Association, Chicago, 2004. See also Tolley, *The Science Education of American Girls: A Historical Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2002), chs. 4 & 7.

⁵⁵Beadie, "Market-Based Policies," 296-317.

⁵⁶In 1838, Regents academies derived 82 percent of their revenue from tuition, and 84 percent of combined total revenues went to pay teacher salaries. See *ibid.*, 296-317.

⁵⁷Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Sherburne Academy, 13 September, 1842, Sherburne Academy Collection, New York State Historical Association [hereafter NYSHA], Cooperstown, New York. Sherburne Academy was located in Sherburne, NY.

Table 7
Wages for Academy Teachers as Advertised by Eleven Higher Schools in North Carolina Newspapers, 1808 to 1841

Year	Male Wage	Female Wage
1808	\$220.00	\$125.00
1819	\$500.00	\$285.00
1822*	\$1,361.00	\$776.00
1824	\$500.00-\$600.00	\$285.00-\$342.00
1826*	—	\$500
1829	\$300.00-\$400.00	\$171.00-\$228.00
1830*	\$800.00	\$456.00
1830	\$300.00-\$500.00	\$171.00-\$285.00
1837*	\$900.00	\$513.00
1839	—	\$500.00
1841	—	\$500.00

Source: The data is derived from newspaper advertisements included in Charles L. Coon, ed., *North Carolina Schools and Academies 1790-1840* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1915), 206, 222, 803, 807, 811-815, 818, 820. *These schools wanted a teacher who would also serve as the principal/head of the school.

female “preceptress” of their “female department” \$250 per year but to pay their male teacher just \$400 a year. The average teacher salary at Falley, then, was \$325, or \$50 less than at Sherburne, though the salary of the female teacher was the same.⁵⁸

Further comparative research into female teachers’ salaries in both urban and rural locations, and in both northern and southern regions, is clearly needed before the full range and variation of opportunities for teachers can be understood. Data from North Carolina is suggestive, however, of the possibilities for female teachers with the education, experience, executive

⁵⁸Box #4, Minutes of the Board of Trustees, June 21st, 1849, Falley Seminary (aka Fulton Academy), Fulton Academy Collection, Fulton Public Library, Fulton, New York. A number of factors must be taken into account in comparing the Sherburne and Falley cases with that of Genesee. For one thing, the figures for Sherburne and Falley represent salaries trustees decided to offer teachers; they do not reflect the negotiations that in Genesee’s case resulted in a further narrowing of the gap between male and female salaries. Also, although the salaries offered by Sherburne and Falley were substantially lower than those paid by Genesee Wesleyan Seminary in the 1840s, the sizes and structures of the institutions were significantly different. Genesee Wesleyan was Methodist-affiliated and as a consequence, it was more heavily capitalized and had a wider and more powerful network for student recruitment than many comparable institutions, a resource that soon made it substantially larger than most other academies. These factors in turn allowed Genesee Wesleyan to hire a larger faculty than other institutions and to achieve a greater degree of differentiation among faculty positions.

ability, social background, and mobility necessary to search out the most lucrative positions available in academies and venture schools. (See Table 7.) As early as the 1820s and 30s, some North Carolina institutions advertised salaries as high as \$500 for a female academy teacher or principal, figures that match those paid to male principals of coeducational academies in New York around the same time.

Whether the high salaries advertised for some positions in North Carolina reflect regional differences in wage markets for the South or the status of positions at the very top of the career ladder, cannot be concluded from the data we have. Documentary evidence suggests, however, that southern schools offered higher wages to female teachers than they could expect to receive in the North. In his 1847 report as superintendent of the Massachusetts Board of Education, Horace Mann indicated that southern schools were advertising high salaries in order to attract northern teachers.

“I regret exceedingly that I have not kept an account of the number of applications which I have received for the last ten years from the Southern and South-western states, for talented and highly qualified females, to take charge of select schools...at times, certainly, they have been as frequent as once a week, for a considerable period....The compensation offered varies from \$400 to \$600 a year—sometimes, also, including the journey to the place of employment. The average may be set down at \$500. Many of the most highly educated young women of New England yield to these inducements.”⁵⁹

Similarly, Perlmann and Margo concluded on the basis of scattered sources from 1860 that female teachers in the South typically earned as much as 85-100 percent of the wages paid to male teachers.⁶⁰

Despite such economic incentives, a larger proportion of teachers were female in the North than in the South. In 1829, women represented slightly more than 50 percent of the common school teachers in Massachusetts, whereas women comprised only 26 percent of schoolteachers in North Carolina the following year. Although the rate of feminization in North Carolina schools may have been higher from 1821 to 1840 than in Massachusetts, a period that allowed North Carolina women to catch up somewhat, overall differences in the proportion of women in the teaching population persisted for reasons having to do with developments prior to 1829. Conclusions about why this was the case must be tentative. Nonetheless, an existing body of secondary literature suggests a number of economic phenomena that may have contributed to regional differences in the supply and demand of female teachers during the Early National Period.

⁵⁹*Eleventh Annual Report of the Board of Education*, 28.

⁶⁰Perlmann and Margo, *Women's Work?*, 58.

Differences in Regional Economies

Although the economic and technological developments of the early nineteenth century bore directly on the profitability of women's work in the home, these developments affected the northern and southern regions of the United States in different ways. A number of scholars have noted that the women who entered New England schoolrooms during the early nineteenth century hailed largely from farm families. Three developments occurred during the decade from 1810 to 1820 that had a decided impact on the earning ability of women living on New England farms. First, the fledgling New England economy went from boom to bust during this period, ushering in a period of economic depression in the region, running roughly from 1815 to 1822.⁶¹ Second, technological improvements in textile manufacturing, coupled with intense competition from foreign markets, decimated the home-weaving industry, a traditional source of earnings for women. Third, a fifteen-year period of deflation in commodity prices originated in this decade, a phenomenon that put pressure on New England farm families to increase their earning power.⁶²

The early antebellum depression and deflationary period did not affect all regions of the United States equally. While the Northeast experienced an economic depression and years of prolonged deflation, the South witnessed a brief cotton boom during the years from 1815 to 1819, and although the Panic of 1819 dealt a blow to the southern economy, the region experienced a slow recovery because prices for rice and sugar cane remained relatively stable and cotton production expanded enormously in response to increasing demand.⁶³ This is not to say that the crisis in textile manufacturing did not affect women in the South. In fact, the records of the Raleigh Female Benevolent Society indicate that indigent southern women who relied on the loom and spinning wheel to make ends meet faced the same falling demand and lower prices as their northern sisters.⁶⁴ "The invention of certain articles of machinery used in the cotton factory has rendered those occupations of spinning and weaving ... a mere useless waste of time," claimed Elisha

⁶¹McCusker, *How Much is That in Real Money?*, 110.

⁶²See Lance E. Davis, Richard A. Easterlin, William N. Parker, eds., *American Economic Growth: An Economist's History of the United States* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 24–26; J. Leander Bishop, *A History of American Manufactures from 1608 to 1860* (Philadelphia: Edward Young & Co., 1864), 179; See "Table A-1" in McCusker, *How Much is That in Real Money?*, 53–55.

⁶³Mark M. Smith, ed., *The Old South* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), xv–xvi; 2–3. For discussion of the expansion of cotton production in the South, see Broadus Mitchell, *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1921).

⁶⁴See the treasurer's reports in *Revised Constitution and By-Laws of the Raleigh Female Benevolent Society, Adopted July 23rd, 1823. With the Reports of the Society, from Its Commencement* (Raleigh: J. Gales & Son, 1828). <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/benevolent/benevolent.html>. Retrieved 10 May 2003.

Mitchell, speaking before the North Carolina Institute of Education in 1834. "The labour of females in these employments is under existing circumstances worth next to nothing."⁶⁵

Despite evidence that poor southern women could no longer count on earning a living from home textile work, because the South had never heavily invested in textile manufacturing, the region largely avoided the broad social consequences of the late eighteenth-century boom and its consequent bust. As a result, southern women living on farms or plantations may not have felt the same pressure as their counterparts in the Northeast to provide supplementary income to their families or support themselves through teaching.

Regional Differences in Access and Entry to Teaching

In addition to regional economic trends, differences in levels of access to entry-level positions in the occupation may have contributed to variations in the supply of female teachers in the North and South. In contrast to occupations such as weaving or hatmaking, teaching required a long-term investment in education in order to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to teach, especially at the most lucrative levels. This requirement served as a powerful entry barrier to young men and women whose families could not afford to forgo their labor and send them to school. The widespread existence of district and town-based common schools in the North not only facilitated access to the first rungs of this career ladder but also fueled demand for teachers to fill common school positions as the population expanded. In contrast, teaching was far less accessible as a form of work for women from poor to middling families in the South. As we noted earlier, unlike New York, where some form of common schooling existed by 1820, North Carolina did not establish legislation in support of common schools until around 1840. Moreover, North Carolina was an exception among southern states in making such provisions in the antebellum era.

The absence of a town or district-based tradition of common school organization may have affected the supply of female teachers in the South in another way. In Perlmann and Margo's analysis, the roots of feminization of common school teaching in New England lay in the tradition of dame schools dating from the colonial era. A *dame* school offered rudimentary instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic to children from two and a half to seven years of age. Although many women conducted entrepreneurial dame schools, some towns in New England states provided public funds to support these institutions.

⁶⁵Elisha Mitchell, *A Lecture on the Subject of Common Schools, Delivered Before the North Carolina Institute of Education, at Chapel Hill, June 26, 1834* (Chapel Hill, NC: Isaac C. Partridge, 1834), 10-11. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/mitchelle/mitchelle/html>. Retrieved 12 April 2003.

Scholars have noted the absence of so-called dame schools in the South. Perlmann and Margo speculated that their absence may have been due to a number of factors, including 1) more dispersed settlement patterns in the South; 2) a warmer climate; 3) a relative lack of centralized school organization; 4) lower numbers of women with the education necessary to teach; and, 5) a greater demand for the labor of southern women in agriculture because of the tasks required for southern crops.⁶⁶ Documentary sources examined for this study suggest another possible factor. It was very difficult to make a living teaching the so-called rudiments to very young children in a free-market context. In the absence of a tradition of town- or district-based common schools, female teachers in North Carolina had little economic incentive to organize schools for young children. North Carolina's entrepreneurial schools competed for students able to pay high rates of tuition. Schools charged the highest rates for the most specialized branches of instruction: music, the classics, the higher mathematics, and other subjects that comprised the "higher schooling" expected of an academy or seminary. In contrast, the tuition that institutions could charge for teaching the alphabet and simple arithmetic to children younger than eight was very low.⁶⁷ So low, in fact, that the only teachers to offer such instruction usually did so in preparatory classes of young children who studied alongside their more advanced peers. In this sort of arrangement, the provision of such preparatory classes ensured a pipeline of tuition-paying students capable of eventually assuming higher, more profitable levels of study.⁶⁸

CONCLUSION

When Susan Nye left her family's rural New York home in 1815 to teach in Raleigh, North Carolina, the supply of female teachers in the South was smaller than in the North. An economic recession had also just begun, with conditions in New York and New England more severely affected than those in southern states. In these circumstances, Nye apparently felt compelled to relieve her parents of a financial burden and support herself by teaching.

⁶⁶Perlmann and Margo, *Women's Work?*, 39-40.

⁶⁷Examples of sliding tuition scales in North Carolina academies and venture schools abound in Coon, ed., *North Carolina Schools and Academies*. For example, in 1820, Mr. J. H. Hassam's Private Academy in Raleigh charged \$8.00 for tuition in spelling, reading, and English Grammar. Students interested in studying the higher subjects along with the classics had to pay \$16.00. Schools like Hassam's academy enrolled students older than seven. The few schools instructing primary children charged less. For instance, Margaret Eastwood's infant school in Raleigh charged tuition of \$2.50 in 1827. See pp. 523-524 and 559, respectively.

⁶⁸For example, Raleigh Academy supported a preparatory department throughout most of its history. See Kim Tolley, "A Chartered School in a Free Market: The Case of Raleigh Academy, 1801-1828," *Teachers College Record* 107 (January 2005): 59-88.

As an adult woman, she reasonably determined that the best opportunity for full employment lay with teaching in academies or venture schools, rather than in common schools. Given the demand for female teachers in North Carolina, and the comparatively high salaries paid there, Nye decided to head south.

The relatively high value of female labor in the antebellum South is well known to economists and was apparently known to antebellum educators as well. This high southern female-to-male wage ratio is one of the factors identified by Perlmann and Margo to help explain lower levels of feminization of teaching in the South than in the North. From their perspective, high wage ratios meant that school trustees gained little or no advantage from hiring female teachers. In the absence of such an advantage, Perlmann and Margo suggest, southerners had little impetus to overcome social proscriptions against female teaching.

In contrast to Perlmann and Margo, we have argued that a gender shift in teaching did occur in the South and that it began much earlier than 1860. We have also argued that little or no evidence exists of social proscriptions against women's participation in teaching. In venture schools and academies, in the South as well as the North, women entered teaching at significant rates as early as the 1810s, with increasing frequency in the 1820s and 30s and with apparent approval from leading citizens. In fact, the documentary evidence presented here suggests that from 1800 to 1840 the rate of women entering entrepreneurial schoolrooms in North Carolina may have been as high as the rate of women taking up teaching in some northern areas. For example, contemporary board of education reports for Massachusetts indicate that the proportion of female teachers in common schools increased 28 percent from 1829 to 1847. In North Carolina, the proportion of female teachers in venture schools and academies increased 46 percent during a comparable period. These figures indicate that women in both regions were entering schoolrooms during the same period that men were leaving the occupation.

This study contributes to our understanding of the gendered transition in school teaching by documenting the socio-economic incentives for women to teach. This study establishes the existence of informal career ladders for antebellum female teachers and begins to outline the structure of teacher labor markets across different levels and types of schools, including venture schools, common schools, and academies. In addition, we identify possible sources of variation in the salaries and opportunities available to women at different institutions and in different regions.

Our findings suggest that the feminization of teaching looks quite different when viewed from the teacher's perspective than it does when viewed from that of male school trustees. Existing studies of nineteenth-century teacher labor markets treat schools and school districts as the locus

of decision making. From that viewpoint, the process of feminization turns on the question of when school trustees decided that the financial advantage of lower female wages made it worthwhile to hire female teachers. In this article, we examine socioeconomic incentives for women to enter teaching from the perspective of teachers themselves, considering female teacher wages and opportunities in relation to other wages and forms of work available to women at the time. From this angle we discovered not only that teacher wages compared favorably with other forms of paid work available to women but also that women entered teaching by organizing their own market-based venture schools, undercutting the schools of male competitors with lower tuition prices, and effectively creating their own teacher labor market. We also discover that opportunities for female career advancement and salary improvement existed, particularly in well-established academies in both the North and the South.

These findings contribute to the possibility of constructing a more complex model of teacher labor markets in the antebellum era. Most studies of teacher wages and feminization of teaching in the nineteenth century focus exclusively on common school teaching and analyze the entire issue of market and opportunity for female teachers as though it were limited to the wages offered at the bottom of the scale. It is no doubt true that well-paid female academy teachers represented a small portion of the female teaching force and, therefore, would not significantly change average wages and salary ratios for all female teachers as a group. Nevertheless, we would argue that academy teaching was significant for structuring female participation in the field. The *prospect* of relative financial independence and comparatively good salaries offered academy teachers might still have motivated women to prepare for and enter teaching, even if only a small proportion of such women actually held higher positions at any one time. Becoming the female principal of a female academy was the apex of the career ladder for female teachers and may have been as close to equity as a woman could achieve in any field or occupation in antebellum society.

These conclusions also complicate our understanding of the interaction of the state, markets, and access to education during the antebellum period. In the case of Lima, New York, women's employment as summer school teachers occurred from the very first year of implementation of the state's common school laws and may well have predated those laws. After 1815, the length of the school year and the role of female teachers expanded through the lengthening of summer school terms and thus of female teacher employment. This initial expansion was driven more directly by market forces than by the state, as summer schools and female school teachers continued to be supported entirely through tuition rather than tax funds until 1830 and continued to be supported mostly by tuition for some period thereafter. Historian Kathryn Kish Sklar has found similar patterns of

tuition-based support for summer schools and female teachers in local school records for towns in Massachusetts.⁶⁹

At the same time, the tradition of town or district-based schools in the North, however they were funded, may have promoted women's entry into teaching by providing access to the first rungs of the career ladder. One way in which northern common school systems may have facilitated this access was by making it cheaper for women to receive a basic education than it was under the more fully entrepreneurial system prevalent in the South. As North Carolina sources reveal, in order to be fully self-supporting, an adult female teacher needed to enroll older as well as younger students, to teach higher as well as lower branches, to charge more advanced students higher rates of tuition, and to be employed for most of the year. Northern common schools, by contrast, hired young women to teach young children basic subjects for four to six months a year at relatively low wages. This arrangement may have made it less expensive and thus more common for women to receive an education and to gain experience as teachers in the North. By the same token, however, it made it more difficult for women to earn a living as a teacher as an adult. To continue teaching over the long term, a woman had to leave common schools and find a position in an academy or a market able to sustain a successful venture school.

Given these conditions, the decision of a teacher like Susan Nye to migrate to the South clearly made sense. States like North Carolina offered strong socioeconomic incentives to a female teacher who needed to be self-supporting. Such decisions may also have been partially compelled, however, by the organization of common school systems in the North. In this regard it is worth noting that the year that Susan Nye migrated to North Carolina was the year that New York's first common school laws went into effect. Is it possible that Susan Nye and other northern teachers felt displaced by the new system? Did they see a tax-based system as undercutting their potential market as venture-school teachers, reducing their opportunity to cultivate a clientele of students from the common to the higher branches? Would female students in the North now be more likely to begin their educations in the summer schools and continue their educations in the subsidized winter schools under the tutelage of male teachers? The transition in North Carolina from entrepreneurial to state-supported schools raises similar questions. After 1840, the state funded the proposals of district school committees interested in establishing common schools, and the language in the first annual superintendent's report, published in 1854, suggests that the presumed

⁶⁹Kathryn Kish Sklar, "The Schooling of Girls and Changing Community Values in Massachusetts Towns, 1750-1820," *History of Education Quarterly* 33:4 (Winter 1993): 511-42.

sponsors of such schools would be men.⁷⁰ Were men more successful than women in obtaining funding to establish common schools?

These questions require further research. Answering them will require close-grained community studies of teaching, particularly during periods of transition from entrepreneurial to state-funded schooling. We also need a clearer picture of the teachers in dame schools, venture schools, charity schools, and academies in every geographic region of the country. More information about the gender shift in teaching during the antebellum period would give us a greater sense of the continuity between this earlier period and the late nineteenth century, an era where most scholars of feminization have focused their efforts. An investigation of the salaries paid teachers at institutions serving African-American and Native-American populations is also essential for establishing the range of opportunities available for female teachers, including both white women and women of color.⁷¹ Finally, although some scholars have claimed that the link between economic change and educational demand is far easier to suggest than it is to establish or explain, this study indicates that we need a greater understanding of the impacts of regional economies on schooling, and that far more work remains to be done in this area.

All these areas of research require that scholars make use of new sources of evidence. By focusing on systematic state- and federal-level data, historians have provided important information about gender and salary norms in certain sectors of education, periods of history, and regions of the country. Exclusive reliance on such data, however, overstates the significance of tax-subsidized common schools in the range of education and teaching opportunities in the country as a whole. It also obscures the interaction between different sectors of education and different regions of the country that shaped the structures of opportunity and career decisions of individual female teachers.

⁷⁰*First Annual Report of the General Superintendent of Common Schools of the State of North Carolina* (Raleigh: W. W. Holden, 1854), NCC. In describing how to establish a common school, the superintendent stated the following, referring to a man: "He has only to get the School Committee together and propose this bargain: that the Committee will give him part control of the Public School, and that he will, in return, promise to have a good school for ten months in the year, free to all. He then can add \$200 to the \$100 of public money, and with this he can get a good teacher." The quote is on p. 14.

⁷¹Until we have comparative data for a wider range of institutions, locations and years, we cannot really assess the relative value of a salary earned by someone like Fanny Jackson (Coppin), long-time principal of the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia. Although the school dated from 1840, salary information is readily available only for the post-bellum period. According to historian Linda Perkins, Fanny Jackson earned a salary of \$1200 in 1869, a figure that, when converted to constant dollars, amounts to \$732. See Perkins, *Fanny Jackson Coppin and the Institute for Colored Youth, 1865-1902* (New York: Garland, 1987).