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**“TAKING THE STAIRS” TO BREAK THE CEILING:  
UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS’ CONCEPTIONS OF THE  
INTERSECTIONS OF HISTORICAL AGENCY, GENDER EQUITY, AND  
ACTION**

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“TAKING THE STAIRS” TO BREAK THE CEILING: UNDERSTANDING  
STUDENTS’ CONCEPTIONS OF THE INTERSECTIONS OF HISTORICAL  
AGENCY, GENDER EQUITY, AND ACTION

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DISSERTATION

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the  
College of Education  
at the University of Kentucky

By

Lauren Marie Colley

Lexington, Kentucky

Co-Directors: Dr. Kathy Swan, Professor of Social Studies Education

and Dr. Linda S. Levstik, Professor of Social Studies Education

Lexington, Kentucky

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## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

### “TAKING THE STAIRS” TO BREAK THE CEILING: UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS’ CONCEPTIONS OF THE INTERSECTIONS OF HISTORICAL AGENCY, GENDER EQUITY, AND ACTION

The present quasi-naturalistic study used socio-cultural theory (Wertsch, 1998), picture theory (Mitchell, 1994) and the use of historical agency as a second-order concept (Lee & Ashby, 2000; Seixas & Morton, 2013) as a way of examining the historical thinking of high school seniors as they investigated second-wave feminism. Existing literature reflects the ways in which students understand historical agency (Barton, 1997; Winter, 2001; Peck, Poyntz, & Seixas, 2011), but has yet to examine its use as a conceptual tool to dissect controversial issues in history, such as feminism. The main research question was: in what ways do high school seniors employ historical agency as an analytical lens in examining second wave feminism? Supporting research questions included: (1) In what ways do high school seniors make sense of historical agency as a tool for taking informed action? (2) How do high school seniors use historical context to evaluate individual, collective or institutional choices and their consequences? (3) How do high school seniors define gender and feminism in the context of examining the struggle for women’s political, social and/or economic equality? Data included students’ responses to a questionnaire, notes and audio-recording transcripts from a historical thinking exercise that used historic photographs, and audio-recordings and transcripts of semi-structured interviews. Results indicated that participants understand the complexities surrounding historical agency including an actor’s choice and their challenges. Participants were also able to use historical agency as a conceptual tool to investigate gender, controversial issues, and change over time. Still, participants struggled with historical context and causation and relied heavily upon a narrative of progress. Further consideration of students’ use of historical agency might offer new insight into supporting a more inclusive history curriculum that highlights historical agency and women’s history in more authentic ways.

**KEYWORDS:** Historical Agency, Historical Thinking, Secondary Social Studies, Secondary Students, Gender

Lauren Marie Colley  
Student's Signature

April 20, 2015  
Date

“TAKING THE STAIRS” TO BREAK THE CEILING: UNDERSTANDING  
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April 20, 2015

## DEDICATION

For my loving husband, Jerry, whose love and support has made this entire journey possible. Your unwavering faith in me and your dedication to our family continues to amaze me. To my Grandmothers, Aunts, Mom and Sister, who all have shown me that being female is nothing less than an extraordinary gift of strength and wisdom. And for my beautiful, funny, and determined girls, Sophia and Audrey, my heart is overflowing with love for you. May you continue to let nothing stop you from following your dreams.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction to the Study

*“I owe my freedoms and opportunities to the pioneering generation of women ahead of me....thanks to their progress, a different kind of conversation is now possible. It is time for women in leadership positions to recognize that although we are still blazing trails and breaking ceilings, many of us are also reinforcing a falsehood: that ‘having it all’, is more than anything, a function of personal determination.” Anne-Marie Slaughter, 2012*

### Introduction

In 2012, Anne-Marie Slaughter published the most widely read Atlantic article to date *Why Women Still Can't Have It All*. The article sought to debunk the idea that gender equality had been reached in the United States solely because of the ability of a few women to close the leadership and professional gaps in our country. Slaughter (2012) argued that instead of continuing the work of those who began the fight against overt sexism in the 1960s and 1970s, women have instead instilled falsehoods that women can rise to the top, if they just work hard enough, have the right husband, or sequence it right. Contrary to men, Slaughter argued that women have to overcome significant structural and cultural constraints and yet “millions of women feel that *they* are to blame if they cannot manage to rise up the ladder as fast as men and also have a family and an active home life (and be thin and beautiful to boot)” (2012, para 5).

Slaughter’s article came at a time when gender equality re-emerged as a topic for national discussion. Disagreements over how to resolve unequal work life balance between genders (Coontz, 2013) have occurred amidst the eruption over the recent Supreme Court decision to allow family-owned corporations to deny payment for



insurance coverage for contraception under the Affordable Care Act (Liptak, 2014). These disagreements have occurred alongside even more recent hateful rhetoric around NFL domestic violence victim Janay Palmer, when *Fox and Friends'* Brian Kilmeade suggested she should have “taken the stairs” (Legum, 2014). Discussions over modern feminism were also brought to light after actress Emma Watson received what turned out to be fictitious threats after she delivered a speech to the United Nations calling upon men and women to fight together for gender equality (CBCnews, 2014). As Watson (2014) pointed out, “feminism has become an unpopular word” (para. 9) and “fighting for women’s rights has too often become synonymous with man-hating” (para. 3).

Even if feminism has become unpopular in modern day vernacular, feminist theory has grown in the academic fields of sociology, literature, linguistics, anthropology, and psychology and history (Lerner, 2004). Scholarship in women’s history in particular has developed since its earlier focus on women’s suffrage. More recent scholarship in women’s history has shifted from focusing on the social, political, and organizational history of women and towards focusing on problems of representation, identity, and culture (Lerner, 2004). Furthermore, there has been a shift in historic periodization with more scholars of U.S. women’s history focusing heavily on the 20<sup>th</sup> century than previous time periods (Lerner, 2004).

Social studies education, however, has not been as fast to incorporate scholarship related to gender equity. Studies have shown that young people appreciate studying women’s history and that it can make history more interesting or relevant (Levstik & Groth, 2002; Ten Dam & Rijkschroeff, 1996; Ten Dam & Tekkens, 1997; Tetrault, 1986). And yet, women and gender related topics are underrepresented across social

studies curriculum standards, textbooks, and classroom instruction (Hahn, Bernard-Powers, Crocco, & Woyshner, 2007; Winslow, 2013). According to Crocco (1997), the absence of women and women's history from traditional textbooks suggests the degree to which women's stories are seen as peripheral to the traditional story of political and economic history. Moreover, Woyshner (2002) pointed out that most of the available curriculum and articles directed at teaching women's history focus on the women's suffrage movement.

There are disconnects between the modern day debate over gender equity, the flood of scholarship on feminist theory and women's history, and the lack of impact of these events on the current social studies curriculum. These disconnects produce a space in which the inclusion of gender equity topics and curriculum in the social studies becomes a vehicle to not only learn about women and women's history in more authentic ways, but also to use such curriculum to connect students with the broader discussion around the structural and cultural barriers of gender equity. These discussions become important when placed in the context of current gender equity discourse and the civic and social justice goals of social studies.

One way that students could experience discourse around gender equity, structural barriers to equity, choices, and consequences, is through the use of historical thinking concepts such as historical agency. Attention to historical agency grew out of the new social history of the late 1960s and 1970s. Scholars analyzed the historical agency of those marginalized by race, class, or gender and rewrote the mainstream narrative of history to account for historical actors who were operating within the constraints of their social and historical positions (e.g., Genovese, 1974). According to Hareven (1996), the

new social history “introduced the study of everyday life into the tapestry of history” (p. 320). Furthermore, Hareven (1996) argued that the new social history “reinterpreted the role of human agency...linked human development to institutions and structures and to the larger processes of change” (p. 320).

Although historians have focused on historical agency, den Heyer (2012) pointed out that there is a lack of educational research that examines the complexities and dimensions of agency, in particular its connection to historical understanding and social change. Still, agency has been an important piece of students’ historical understanding. Seixas (1993) argued that without the concept of historical agency “students cannot see themselves as operating in the same realm as the historical figures whom they are studying, and thus cannot make meaning out of history” (p. 303). More recent research suggests that most students conceptualize historical agency in terms of individuals and nations, and without the intricate understanding of the complexities of the social and cultural constraints involved in their decision-making (Barton, 1997; 2010; Peck, Poyntz, & Seixas, 2011).

Moreover, historical agency can be used as a conceptual tool to help students of history make sense of the relationships of historical narratives and provide an opportunity to move them towards more powerful understandings of historical significance (Seixas & Morton, 2013). Using second-wave feminism as a lens for examining historical agency is useful because of the significance of the individual, collective, and institutional forms of agency that are actively debated within the field of history and beyond. Furthermore, research has shown that students have pre-conceived notions and misconceptions about feminism and the agency available to people at different points in time (Levstik & Groth,

2002). Schmeichel (2015) argued that using women or gender equity issues in the classroom opens up the space to discuss the “structures and processes that have systematically marginalized women” (p. 10). Issues of feminism and gender equity become topics in a classroom to employ historical agency as a historical thinking tool, but also serve as the backdrop for future contexts that students will confront and within which they will need to consider their own ability to take informed action. Historical agency also serves well in this regard because it allows for analysis of the structures and challenges placed upon historical actors. Understanding how students analyze agency in regard to historical “others”—in this case, second wave feminists, their supporters, opponents and other historical actors from the period—might assist educators in helping students use historical agency to motivate historical interest, discussions over gender, and civic engagement.

History education researchers have begun to argue for the centrality of studying historical agency as a way to improve students’ democratic action, participation and decision-making in the present (Barton, 2010, 2011; den Heyer, 2003; Peck et al., 2011). However, Barton and Levstik (2011) argued that little to no research exists that investigates students understanding of historical agency as it relates to the consideration of their own agency in the present. Missing from these discussions, in particular, are both the ways in which historical agency can be broken down into smaller more manageable pieces and the ways in which historical agency, as a conceptual tool, intersects with issues of race, gender and class. In fact, most of the studies on students’ conceptions of historical agency focus on white male perspectives (Barton, 1997; 2010; Lee & Ashby, 2000; Peck et al., 2011).

## **Purpose of the Study**

The present quasi-naturalistic study provides a snapshot of how participating high school seniors employ historical agency as an analytical lens, the ways in which they make sense of the historical agency of actors in the past, and the ways in which they define gender and feminism in the context of second wave feminism. The main assumption in this study was that using historical agency as a conceptual tool to study history could benefit students' democratic participation, decision-making and taking informed action in the present (Barton, 2010, 2011; den Heyer, 2003; Peck et al., 2011). Two further assumptions for this study were that examining second-wave feminism provides a lens for combating misconceptions about feminism and gender equity (Levstik & Groth, 2002; Schmeichel, 2015) and that students were capable of doing complex historical thinking regardless of their age and level (Barton, 1997; Levstik & Barton, 1996; 2011).

## **Research Questions**

The main research question for the present study was: In what ways do high school seniors employ historical agency as an analytical lens in examining second wave feminism? Supporting questions included:

- (1) In what ways do high school seniors make sense of historical agency as a tool for taking informed action?
- (2) How do high school seniors use historical context to evaluate individual, collective or institutional choices and their consequences?
- (3) How do high school seniors define gender and feminism in the context of examining the struggle for women's political, social and/or economic equality?

## Significance of the Study

Although the scholarship of historians in the 1960s and 1970s brought historical agency to the forefront, and shifted focus to history “from below”, most historians still did not assign causation to individual agents and tended to arrange causes under broad structural classifications such as economic, political, social or cultural (Pomper, 1996). More recently, Johnson (2003) criticized the trend of historians “giving the slaves back their agency,” (p. 114) and argued that historians need to ask themselves tough questions about the context and consequence of individual and collective agency as well as the interchangeability of terms such as *agency*, *humanity*, and *resistance*. Such questions need to be asked by researchers in social studies education as well.

Previous research (den Heyer, 2003; Seixas, 1993) has highlighted the necessity for using historical agency as a concept and thinking tool in K-12 classrooms, and other research (Barton, 2010; Lee, Dickenson, & Ashby, 1997; Peck et.al, 2011) has highlighted the ways in which students in other countries use and understand historical agency. Still, little to no research examines U.S. secondary students’ understanding of historical agency and an even larger gap in research exists in attempts to connect historical agency to issues of race, gender or class. The present study was unique in its focus on understanding the ways in which U.S. secondary students’ employ historical agency; in its focus on using second-wave feminism as a lens for historical agency; and in its goal of trying to formalize the connections between studying historical actors in the past and students’ intentions to take informed action in the future. Rich qualitative data from this quasi-naturalistic study adds to the limited understandings of how students

employ historical agency and how its use intersects with issues of gender equity and democratic participation.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

Much of the research on the goals and purposes of history reflect a divide between those that see history as an integral piece of social studies curriculum because of its ability to instill factual knowledge and patriotism (Bradley Commission on History in Schools, 1988; Gandal & Finn, 1995; Ravitch & Finn, 1987), and those that note the importance of history as a basis for citizen education (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Dewey 1916; Griffin, 1942/1992; Levstik, 1996; NEA 1893). The Bradley Commission on History in Schools (1988) sought to promote the extensive study of history based on the belief that historical knowledge fostered citizenship and nation building, but was based on assumptions inherent in American exceptionalism. Much of “The Bradley Report” was based on the call for an emphasis on the subject matter of history over a social studies curriculum, especially in the primary grades (Ravitch & Finn, 1987). Furthermore, Gandall & Finn (1995) noted that historical factual knowledge helps prepare students for lives as citizens, but only in that it helps with the knowledge of the past needed to act in a democracy.

Some researchers have argued that history should be studied because of its ability to connect students with present civic issues and to help prepare students for a participatory democracy. As early as 1893, The Committee of Ten composed an National Educational Association (NEA) report that suggested that students should study subjects such as history and other social sciences for a minimum of eight years (NEA, 1893, p. 162). The report also explained “the result which is popularly supposed to be gained from history, and which most teachers aim to reach, is the acquirement of a body



of useful facts. In our judgment this is in itself the most difficult and the least important outcome of historical study” (NEA, 1893, p. 168). The report continued, “through history a child should be taught to exercise those qualities of common-sense comparison, and plain, everyday judgment which he needs for the conduct of his own life” (NEA, 1893, p. 169). Beyond studying history as part of the “ready-made studies” (p. 245), Dewey (1916) suggested that history represented an opportunity for students to connect with present day issues and towards a “unifying and social direction in education” (p. 247). . Griffin (1942/1992) argued that it was impossible to teach history “for its own sake” (p. 14) and that history could help students build reflective thought which could prepare them for taking action in a participatory democracy. Barton & Levstik (2004) expanded on this argument explaining that students should learn history through inquiries that focus on the skills necessary for participation in a democracy (e.g. cooperation, discussion, etc). Furthermore, Levstik (1996) explained that there is a distinct difference between a cultural transmission model which aims to transmit knowledge and a national narrative and a cultural transformation model where “students would *do* history- pose questions, collect and analyze sources, struggle with issues of significance, and, ultimately, build their own historical interpretations” (p. 394). The present study situates itself within these arguments for the civic purposes of studying history by attempting to bridge the gaps between students understandings’ of historical agency, issues of gender equity, and taking informed action.

In this chapter, I review the relevant literature and how it relates to the present study. I begin by discussing the research on students’ understandings of history and historical concepts. I then describe the particular research on students’ understandings of

historical agency and women's history. From there, I narrow the scope to operationalizing the use of *historical agency* for the present study based on criteria from the literature. I then illustrate the need for the present study. Finally, I discuss the theoretical and conceptual framework for the present study, describing each theory and concept and how it contributes to this study.

### **Students' Understandings of History**

There are two broad categories in which to place students' understandings of history, namely: students understanding and use of the historical method (i.e. using sources as evidence and building historical arguments or explanations), and students understanding and use of historical concepts (i.e. causation, change and continuity, agency). For the purposes of this chapter, each category is discussed separately. Because of the study's focus on using evidence from second-wave feminism and topics of gender equity, a section on students' understandings of women's history is also included.

#### **Use of Historical Method**

According to VanSledright (2004), source work is a "complex undertaking" that involves four interconnected cognitive acts; identification, attribution, perspective judgment, and reliability assessment. Research has shown that students have varying degrees of success with these acts, but that students are able to use sources to make inferences (Brophy & Vandsledright, 1997; Fasulo, Gircerdet, & Pontcorvo, 1998; Shemilt, 1980) and to develop sophisticated accounts of the past using evidence (Ashby, 2004; Kohlmeier, 2005a; Lee, Dickinson, Ashby, 1998; 2001; Monte-Sano, 2006). However, students sometimes lack "historian-esque" skills in evaluating sources (Afflerbach & Vansledright, 2001; Wineburg, 1991). Nonetheless, the literature reflects

the ability for sources to provide levels of high engagement for students (Barton, 1994; Brush & Saye, 2000), and for sources to help build historical thinking skills (VanSledright, 2004).

One way that students are successful in evaluating sources is by using them to make inferences. Shemilt (1980) found that almost half of the students in the *History 13-16* project were able to advance reasons as to why evidence should be used (p. 37). In addition, Brophy & VanSledright (1997) found that fifth grade students were able to use sources to make inferences, often in the form of stories or narratives, and argued that even fifth graders are able to construct meaningful historical understandings. Furthermore, Fasulo et al. (1998) analyzed how primary students in Italy analyzed photographs of the Vikings. Fasulo et al. (1998) found that students make inferences, but also overgeneralizations, as “children go beyond the description of the habits and capabilities of the population they are requested to talk about, and make attributions about the Vikings’ varying degrees of intelligence and civilization” (p. 152).

However, even if students’ inferences might be less developed than those of historians, students are still able to develop sophisticated accounts of the past. British researchers working under Project CHATA (Concepts of History and Teaching Approaches) funded by the Economic and Social Research Council paid particular attention to students’ understanding of historical concepts between the ages of 7-14. They found that students were able to build claims from evidence and develop progressing explanations of both causes and actions (Ashby, 2004; Lee, Dickinson, & Ashby, 1998; 2001). Furthermore, Kohlmeier (2005a) found that ninth-grade students were able to successfully compare sources for historical significance and use those comparisons in

explanations of individual accounts from the Chinese Revolution. Similarly, recent research has shown that students are also able to use sources successfully as evidence in their historical writing through both conventional argumentation and historical reasoning (Monte-Sano, 2006).

Still, there is much that these same young students miss when working with evidence. Afflerbach & VanSledright (2001) found that middle school students struggled reading embedded texts in textbooks, including primary sources. Afflerbach & VanSledright (2001) argued that although these sources represented opportunities to build deep historical thinking, students' struggle with language and with distilling emotions embedded in sources meant that considerable coaching or modeling from teachers was necessary when having students use sources. Moreover, Wineburg (1991) argued that high school students' ability to work with primary sources was not as complex as historians not because of differences in their content background knowledge, but because of students' lack of abilities in corroboration between sources, the historical act of "sourcing", and attributing validity to sources.

However, even with these short-comings, there is documented power in using sources in the classroom. Research suggests that using sources provides opportunities for high-engagement of students (Barton, 1994; Brush & Saye, 2000). Furthermore, VanSledright (2004) argued that all students need experience with evaluating sources because of the work's ability to develop historical thinking. VanSledright (2004) claimed that this level of historical thinking was needed in history classrooms because:

Historical thinking is a very close relative to active, thoughtful, critical participation in text- and image- rich democratic cultures. Consider what good

historical thinkers can do. They are careful, critical readers and consumers of the mountains of evidentiary source data that exists in archives and that pours at us each day via the media. Good historical thinkers are tolerant of differing perspectives because these perspectives help them make sense of the past... In short, they are informed, educated, thoughtful, critical readers, who appreciate investigative enterprises, know good arguments when they hear them, and who engage their world with a host of strategies for understanding it. As I have written elsewhere, Thomas Jefferson could hardly have wanted better citizens than these thinkers (p. 232-233).

Students' successful use of sources provides opportunities to build upon their previous content knowledge and implement a range of skills and concepts useful in historical thinking.

### **Use of Historical Concepts**

Much of the research on students' use of historical concepts grew out of the studies from Great Britain that were influenced by Jean Piaget's theories of developmental stages (e.g. Ashby & Lee, 1987; Shemilt, 1980). Shemilt (1980) outlined central concepts of history as being causation, motivated action, necessity, change, continuity, and historical methodology (evidence and empathy). More recently, Seixas & Morton (2013) argued for the big six historical concepts as being historical significance, cause and consequence, continuity and change, and historical perspective. Many of these concepts overlap into another concept historical agency, namely cause and consequence, continuity and change, and historical perspective (and/or empathy). This section will examine the research surrounding students' understanding of these concepts by focusing

on causation, change and continuity, empathy, and historical agency (or actions of people in the past).

**Causation.** Shemilt (1980) contended that students' missteps in dealing with causation were because of their errors in denoting "cause" as being something inevitable, as "something with the power to [*make*] *something else happen*" (p.30). Rantala (2012) argued that Finnish students struggled with causation because they were not adept at dealing with historical empathy and thus were not able to fully decipher the actions of the people in the past. Students' understanding of causation also seems to be dependent upon the historical event in question and their assignment of personalistic causes to the events (Carretero, López-Manjón, & Jacott, 1997). Furthermore, Lee and Shemilt (2009) argued that students' understanding of historical explanation was based on a six level model of progression. In this progression, students move from understanding causation based on common sense, to explanations of over determination, to a small number of students who causally explain history in terms of contexts and conditions (Lee & Shemilt, 2009). Blow, Lee, and Shemilt (2012) also argued that one reason students continue to struggle with causation is due to their difficulty with chronological conventions, temporal concepts, and the concepts of sequence and concurrence.

**Change and continuity.** Students often have difficulty seeing change as anything other than "the things that seem to be happening" and that continuity occurs because of history being merely a laundry list of events (Shemilt, 1980, p. 35). However, Fertig (2008) found that to counter history's portrayal as an immutable sequence of events, the use of biographies can help elementary and middle school students recognize that individuals and groups have the power to make history, they have in essence,

historical agency. Other researchers have shown that students are actually quite adept at sequencing chronological order and showing how things change over time, particularly with the use of material history (Barton, 2002; Barton & Levstik, 1996; Harnett, 1993). Furthermore, Dickinson & Lee (1984) found that students were able to see how values and beliefs change over time and were able to draw analogies between events in the past and events now, which can help students provide context for their historical examination (p. 139-140).

**Empathy.** Lee and Shemilt (2011) explained that historical empathy has been difficult for educators and researchers alike. For some “empathy was taken to signify the need for affective engagement with predecessors, for sympathy and identification with the striving and suffering (Lee & Shemilt, 2011, p. 40). Too often however, this replaced the need to use empathy to “understand and explain how people in the past thought and reasoned, how their feelings and values differed from those of contemporaries” (Lee & Shemilt, 2011, p. 40). Lee & Shemilt (2011) used a progression model for measuring students’ ability to reach historical empathy and found that students move beyond stereotypes to explaining history by means of historical empathy. Furthermore, Barton and Levstik (2004) explained historical empathy in two ways, empathy as perspective recognition and empathy as care. They argued that even elementary children are adept at reaching historical empathy through perspective recognition and find it to be a powerful tool for making sense of the past. Barton & Levstik (2004) continued to explain that young students also respond strongly to injustices of the past and use empathy to care about the past and the present.

**Historical agency.** There are pieces of historical agency that students’ understand

and pieces that they miss when examining why people in the past took the actions they did. Because students see history as part of the larger narrative of linear progress, they often struggle identifying the actions of historical actors and explaining the causes of events (Barton 1996; Shemilt, 1980). Furthermore, when students do assign causation, they often attribute actions in the past to the intentions of “great individuals” or “nations” and fail to see the actions of groups or institutions (Barton, 1997; Winter, 2001; 2010; Brophy & VanSledright, 1997; Peck et al., 2011). Because of these oversimplifications, students often fail to account for societal forces and struggle seeing the affordances and constraints of actors’ choices (Barton, 1997; 2010; Peck, et. al, 2011). These “great individuals” also need further examination. Wills (2005) contended that too often, school history perpetuates collective memory and that for classrooms to deal properly with the actions of individuals in the past, they must begin to critically examine traditions of “remembering”, which typically silenced the voices and experiences of women and minorities.

### **Students’ Understanding of Women’s History**

The typical white male narrative has dominated the study of history and it is not surprising then, that it has influenced students’ understanding of women’s history. Founier & Wineburg (1997) found that when students were asked to draw pictures of pilgrims, settlers, or hippies, both boys and girls overwhelming drew pictures of male figures. Furthermore, women and gender-related topics are often underrepresented in social studies curriculum standards, textbooks, and instruction (Hahn, et al., 2007; Winslow, 2013). However, studies have shown that integrating topics of women’s history into instruction can be beneficial in opening up discussion about controversial issues and



combating gender stereotypes (Crocco & Cramer, 2005; Levstik & Groth, 2002; Monaghan, 2014). Students' understandings of women's history could also be increased by opening up the spaces in which history curriculum discusses women to include broader political histories and social histories (Kohlmeier, 2005b; Woysner, 2002). Furthermore, students have been successful at attributing multiple perspectives when studying women's history and have shown that "women" do not exist as a single category (Levstik & Groth, 2002).

Still much needs to be done. Crocco (1997) argued that far from gender balancing in the curriculum, what was needed was an integration of gender and women's history into the traditionally male dominated one. Furthermore, recent calls for "gender history" argue for the historical treatment of both men and women by understanding their gender and sexuality, and the influences of these attributes on a historical actor (Cott & Faust, 2005). Researchers have also called upon gender and women's history to be more than about just inclusion in the curriculum. Levstik (2001) acknowledged the gap in gender and women's coverage in the social studies, but also argued that to challenge the discipline, changes must not only be made in what is being taught, but in *how* it is being taught. Levstik (2001) pointed out several methods for creating a gender-equitable classroom, including focusing on the study of agency and the development of student agency. Schmeichel (2015) argued that what is needed to challenge the discipline is a critical feminist rationale for including, teaching, and researching gender equity. Schmeichel (2015) contended, "the purpose of promoting attention to women in curriculum is not simply to make sure women are included but to drag gender issues, experiences, and beliefs into our broader social studies conversations about life in the

present and the past” (p. 14).

### Summary

Students’ understandings of history are complex. While they succeed in some aspects of doing history, they fall short in others. What is important to note is that students’ abilities follow a range and that even young students can “do history” successfully (Levstik & Barton, 2011). Table 2.1 below summarizes students’ understandings of history across both using the historical method and using historical concepts.

Table 2.1 Summary of Students’ Understandings of History

Using sources for inferences and building accounts of the past	Students are able to successfully use sources to make inferences in a historical study (Brophy & VanSledright, 1997; Shemilt, 1980) and students are able to build sophisticated accounts of the past using evidence from sources (Lee, Dickinson, & Ashby, 1998; 2005; Monte-Sano, 2006).
Difficulties with using evidence	However, students struggle reading sources (Afflerbach & VanSledright, 2001) and often lack the same critical thinking abilities that historians use (Wineburg, 1991).
Causation	Students struggle with assigning causation to events is dependent upon the type of historical event, their personal association with the event, and the lack of understanding that history is not inevitable (Carretero et al., 1997; Rantala, 2012; Shemilt, 1980). Students also struggle assigning causation because of their difficulty with chronology and sequence (Blow, Lee, & Shemilt, 2012).
Change and Continuity	Students often see history as a story of inevitable events (Shemilt, 1980). However, they are able to associate chronology and change over time (Barton, 2002; Barton & Levstik, 1996; Harnett, 1993) and see how beliefs change over time (Dickinson & Lee, 1984).
Empathy	Students generally are successful in reaching historical empathy in order to make sense of the past (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Lee & Shemilt, 2011) and they can also use empathy in order to care about the injustices of the past and the present (Barton & Levstik, 2004).

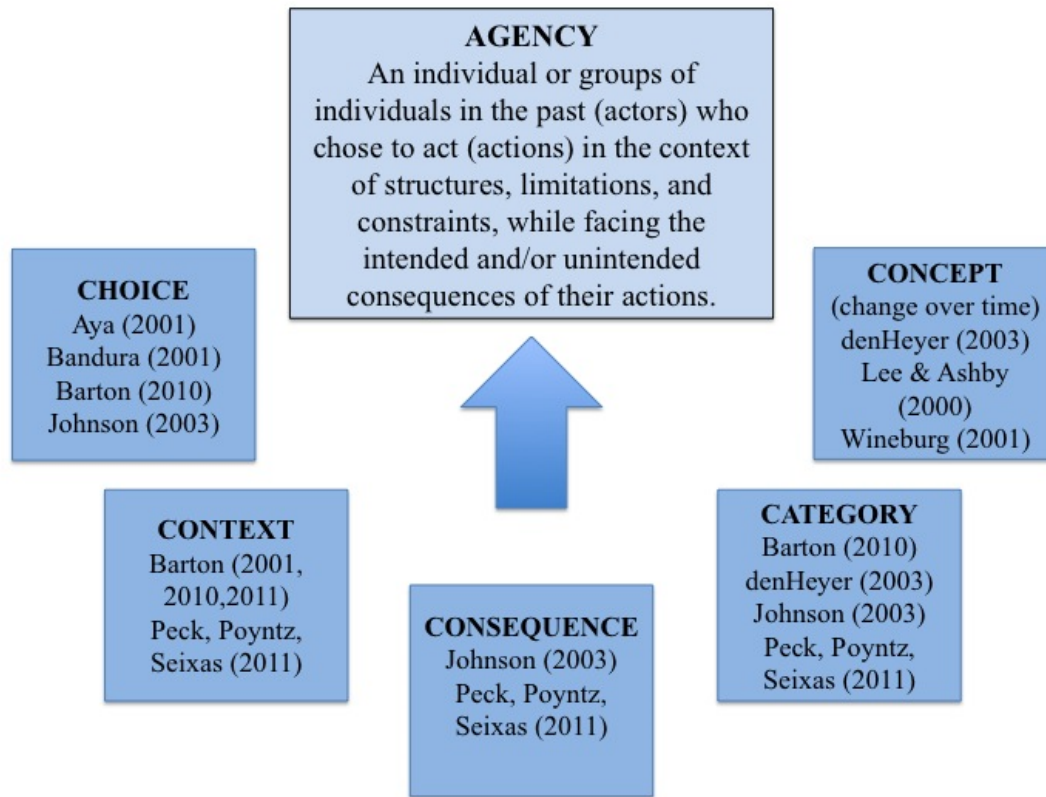
Table 2.1 Summary of Students' Understandings of History (continued)

Historical Agency	Students struggle in seeing individuals choices and actions in history (Barton 1996; Shemilt, 1980) and when they do attempt to see historical agency, they miss the actions of groups and institutions and rely upon the motivations of “great individuals” or nations (Barton, 1997; 2001; 2010; Brophy & VanSledright, 1997; Peck et al., 2011). Students often fail to dig deep enough to understand the affordances and constraints of the choices that historical actors faced (Barton, 1997; 2010; Peck, et al., 2011).
Women's History	Students are still dependent upon seeing history as male (Fournier & Wineburg, 1997). However, integrating women's history into curriculum can help combat gender stereotypes and open up discussion for controversial issues (Crocco & Cramer, 2005; Levstik & Groth, 2002). Women's history still needs to be more fully integrated into the history curriculum particularly around political and social history (Crocco, 1997; Kohlmeier, 2005b; Woyshner, 2002). Going beyond integration, women's history and issues of gender equity require a challenge to the discipline that analyzes difference and focuses on engaging students in meaningful discussions around gender (Levstik, 2001; Schmeichel, 2015).

### Why Historical Agency?

Researchers have argued that studying historical agency helps students make meaning of the past, helps to move students towards understandings of historical significance and helps students to see the past as connected to human volition instead of a set of pre-determined events (Seixas, 1993; Seixas & Morton, 2013; Whelan, 2001). This study used an operationalized definition of *historical agency*. When referring to *historical agency*, this study refers to an individual or groups of individuals in the past (actors) who chose to act (actions) in the context of structures, limitations, and constraints, while facing the intended and/or unintended consequences of their actions. This definition was formed through the consideration of various research and theory that informed what this study calls the 5 C's of agency, namely: choice, context, consequence, category, and concept (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2. The 5 C's of Historical Agency



Each of the 5 C's represents not only how other researchers have used the term in previous research, but also attempts to capture the body of research on the ways K-12 students either understand historical agency, or what they miss when attempting to understand this concept.

### Choice

One of the most missed aspects of agency by students of history, choice refers to the intentionality of historical actions and the tension of the contexts of these choices. Bandura (2001) described agency as the ability to make things happen by one's actions and explained that the "core features of agency enable people to play a part in their self-development, adaptation, and self-renewal with changing times" (p. 2). These core features, namely; intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness, all

influence how human agents are able to act within their lives and involve a level of conscious and informed action. Furthermore, using rational-choice theory, Aya (2001) argued that agency is the middle-man between the historical structures and the events and that choice helps to explain the reasoning behind historic social events and changes such as a revolution. Historian Walter Johnson (2003) also discussed the importance of choice when explaining the difference between the causes and consequences of historical agency (p.117). However, Barton (2010) noted that students often overlook the concept of choice when defining agency, which therefore “removes choice from the stage of social action” and makes it difficult for them to understand the tension between choice and circumstance that is “at the core of historical understanding and democratic participation” (p. 34-35).

### **Context**

The context of agency refers to the societal structures, conditions, limitations, and constraints on both the actors and the actions and often reflects the larger historical context of the time. Barton (2010; 2011) pointed out that previous research suggests that students in the U.S. think of history in terms of actions from individuals while ignoring the societal and historical contexts of those same actions. Barton (2010) continued, “students’ sense of historical agency, then, often reflects a view of “great men” (or at least willful individuals) as the primary forces in history” (p.12). However in a study with students in Northern Ireland, Barton (Winter 2001) found that students there were capable of using various cultural tools to understand the societal contexts of historical change, instead of relying upon theories of individually driven change or of change equaling progress. Still, the need for fully understanding the historical context of agency

is important as the actors and their actions are set in the context of larger “structures, mentalities, conditions, and constraints beyond the actors themselves” (Peck et al., 2011, p. 255).

### **Consequence**

Connected to the intentionality of choice, consequences of agency can be both intended and unintended and can also be the products of historical context. Peck et al. (2011) defined agency as involving actors, their actions, and “the consequences of their actions, intended or unintended” (p. 255). In a study on students’ constructed narratives of Canadian history, Peck et al. (2011) found that Canadian students made a strong connection between the vision and intentionality of one historical actor (Macdonald) and his intended consequence, the creation of Canada. However, the other individual agents that were named lacked the same explicit notion of intentionality and consequence that students awarded to Macdonald. Furthermore, Johnson (2003) argued that while historians see agency in the various acts of individuals, there are differences in the causes and consequences of those actions (p. 117). Since K-12 students miss isolating individuals’ choices, it is not shocking that the effects of those choices, the consequences are also overlooked.

### **Category**

There are ranges in the types of historical agency from individual, to collective, to institutional. Being able to decipher between these forms of agency is necessary to understanding broader historical concepts. Previous research has shown that students tend to understand agency in terms of the great individual or in collectives such as nations (Barton, 2010; Peck et al., 2011). The complexities between the types of agency

are also difficult for historians to sort out. Johnson (2003) called upon historians to sort out the complex inter-relationship between what historians have named individual acts of ‘implicit threats’ versus collective acts of ‘explicit threats’. Johnson argued that there is agency in both of the actions of “breaking a tool and being Nat Turner” and yet there are differences in their causes and consequences (p.117). Furthermore, den Heyer (2003) remarked that future research needs to highlight the range of interpretations and ways that people participate and act (individually, collectively, or institutionally).

### **Concept**

At the heart of historical agency is its use as a historical tool. As a way of looking at the past to decipher the choices actors make, the consequences of those actions and the context of the limitations facing those actors. Often called *second-order concepts*, these tools help students make sense of historical narratives (examining change over time or causation) as well as historical significance (Lee & Ashby, 2000). Furthermore, these are concepts that historians also use to help decipher human action (Wineburg, 2001, p.67). Beyond making sense of the past however, agency as a second-order concept enhances students’ capacities to serve as agents in the present (den Heyer, 2003, p. 411).

Taking all of the 5 C’s into consideration creates a complex and dynamic interpretation of historical agency. The study contributes to the literature on historical agency by providing further contributions for how students understand the 5 C’s of agency and the ways in which the 5 C’s intersect with students understandings of gender and feminism as well as taking informed action.

### **Few Studies with U.S. Secondary Students**

Most of the research around students’ conceptions of historical agency is

international. Early British studies note that students miss the intentionality of history (Shemilt, 1980; Thompson, 1984). More specifically, Barton (2010) found that students in New Zealand had sophisticated ideas about historical agency that went beyond the ideas of “great individuals” and yet, they often still missed a historical actor’s choice. Studies have also examined the extent to which Canadian students understand and use historical agency, finding that Canadian students are able to use concepts such as agency and empathy in ways that allowed them to see history as something beyond change by accident (Seixas, 1993). Canadian students, much like their counterparts in New Zealand however, often still missed the aspect of a historical actor’s choice and often at times qualified nations as individuals (Peck et al., 2011). Furthermore, some of the research that has studied the use of historical agency in the United States has either focused on teachers’ perceptions of historical agency (den Heyer, 2012) or has focused on elementary students (Barton, 1997). The socio-cultural contexts of these studies becomes increasingly important because if “our interest in the past is to contextualize the present, then the *significance* of historical events (or people, or dates) is ultimately tied to their relationship to the present. What makes any particular event significant is the richness and complexity of its connections to other events and processes, and ultimately to ourselves” (Seixas, 1996, p. 768).

### **Need for More Studies on Historical Agency**

The research on students’ use of historical agency is growing, but yet it remains sparse. Many of the existing studies have only begun to break apart the fragments of students’ understandings of historical agency and there is a lack of studies that focus on the dimensions of agency (den Heyer, 2012). Within these dimensions there has been a



complete lack of research on the understanding of historical agency and its relationship to gender. Furthermore, despite calls for studying historical agency as a way to improve students' participation and democratic action (Barton, 2010, 2011; den Heyer, 2003; Peck et al., 2011) little to no research exists on students' understandings of historical agency and how it relates to their own agency in the present (Levstik & Barton, 2011). It is clear that students understand historical agency, but questions remain over their understandings of the specific dimensions of agency, as well as its interplay within the larger goals of social studies including gender equity and preparing students for civic life.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

The theoretical and conceptual framework for the present study has several dimensions. Although most have been informed by socio-cultural theory (Wertsch, 1998), each theory or concept contributes to the study in independent ways. As I discuss these theories and concepts I move from the broadest, socio-cultural theory and to the more specific, the concepts and goals of history education.

#### **Socio-Cultural Theory**

For the present study, socio-cultural theory focused particularly on *mediated action* and *cultural tools* provides a set of assumptions about historical cognition (Wertsch, 1998). From this perspective, *mediated action* refers to how the activity of individual agents is mediated or influenced by the cultural, institutional, and historical contexts within which an action occurs (p. 24). In other words, the multiple contexts within which historical agents act is *afforded and constrained* by cultural tools differentially available to members of a particular culture. This is just as true for students: the nature of historical thinking as an intellectual tool has at least as much to do

with what learners are able to do with history, as it has with the historical facts they retain (Barton & Levstik, 2004). Therefore, when examining perceptions of historical agency it was important to consider the cultural tools students recognize, use, ignore or actively dismiss. Accessing the prior knowledge of the students, as well as understanding their level of civic participation, and the backgrounds of the students in this study was key to understanding how they relate to the content and concepts used in the study.

### **Socio-Cognitive Theory**

An *agentic* perspective of socio-cognitive theory serves as a second framework informing this study (Bandura, 2001). Contrary to behaviorists that believed that behaviors were controlled by environmental stimuli, an agentic perspective of socio-cognitive theory argues that individuals are “agents of their experiences rather than simply undergoers of their experiences” (Bandura, 2001, p. 4). Bandura (2001) described agency as the ability to make things happen by one’s actions and explained that the “core features of agency enable people to play a part in their self-development, adaptation, and self-renewal with changing times” (p.2). These core features, namely; intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness, all influence how human agents are able to act within their lives. Bandura (2001) continued to argue that human agency does not stop at the individual, but also extends to the proxy and collective (p. 13). These descriptions of human agency were helpful in teasing out the complexities of historical agency as well as the influences over human agency in the present. Furthermore, an agentic perspective of socio-cognitive theory implies that the human mind is “generative, creative, proactive, and reflective, not just reactive” (Bandura, 2001, p. 4). Seeing the human mind as proactive and reflective was beneficial when examining the ways in

which students' employ historical agency as a conceptual tool.

### **Concepts and Goals of History Education**

Thirdly, the present study was also framed by a larger discussion around historical thinking and historical understanding. Previous researchers examined the extent to which students are able to engage in the same types of historical reasoning as historians (Carretero, Jacott, Limon, Manjon, & Leon, 1994; Wineburg, 1991; 2001). However, other researchers such as Levstik and Barton (1996) pointed out that not all historians use the same practices and that their use of historical reasoning is extremely diverse. Levstik and Barton (1996) explained that their research in historical understanding was built around trying to unpack the kinds of historical understanding that children had as well as to examine the social contexts that mediated that understanding. The present study stems from this research on children's historical understandings by trying to capture the ways in which high school seniors employ historical agency as an analytical tool – and how they understand the dimensions of historical agency as well as the ways in which they build connections from the historical thinking exercise to either issues of gender or taking informed civic action.

Fourthly, attention to historical agency as a *second-order concept* in historical thinking informed this study (Lee & Ashby, 2000). Second-order concepts are historical concepts that help students and historians evaluate claims and make sense of history (e.g. evidence, accounts, causation, change). These are different than substantive concepts or first-order concepts that focus more on knowledge acquisition (e.g. revolution, ideology) (Lee & Ashby, 2000). Historical agency can be used as a conceptual tool to help students of history make sense of the relationships of historical narratives and provides an

opportunity to move them towards more powerful understandings of historical significance (Seixas & Morton, 2013). Feminism served well in this regard because it is a form of individual, collective, and institutional agency whose significance is actively debated within the historical profession, but also in the broader culture. This means that students may bring a set of experiences, conceptions, and misconceptions about feminism and the agency available to people at a particular moment in time (Levstik & Groth, 2002). Further, high school seniors, themselves, employ historical agency as a historical thinking tool in classroom contexts as well as in deciding on taking informed action outside of class. Understanding how students analyze agency in regard to historical “others”—in this case, second wave feminists, their supporters, opponents and other historical actors from the period—might assist educators in helping students use historical agency to motivate historical interest and civic engagement.

Fifthly, picture theory, particularly the notion of the pictorial turn, informed the study. Picture theory argued that understanding images means questioning the agency and power of how images work (Mitchell, 1994). Through such questioning, the pictorial turn becomes a “rediscovery of the picture as a complex interplay between visibility, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies, and figurality” (Mitchell, 1994, p. 16). As students consider the agency of the historical actors (second-wave feminists) through the photographs in the study, it was important for myself as a researcher to pay attention to the discourse surrounding the visuals, institutions, and bodies embedded in the photographs. In addition to its use in analysis, use of the pictorial turn allows students to complicate the study of history and to think historically by questioning the significance of the image (Barton & Levstik, 1998; Coventry, Felton, Jaffee, O’Leary, and Weis, 2006).

Social studies researchers have focused on teachers' integration of photographs and images in order to spark curiosity and develop empathy (McCormick & Hubbard, 2011), and to help students develop content knowledge while examining contemporary public culture (Lindquist, 2012). Researchers have also found that elementary students examining photographs are adept at discussing general concepts of time and chronology, but need more support in connecting this to historical context (Barton, September 2001; Foster, Hoge, & Rosch, 1999). Older students, however, are often able to provide more historical context and thus able to make more plausible inferences about the lives of people in historic photographs (Foster et al., 1999). Furthermore, Callahan (2014) argued that analyzing historic photographs could help students build both critical thinking skills and civic competence. The present study contributes to the understandings of students' use of the pictorial turn through historical investigation as it examines the ways in which they understand and employ historical agency as a conceptual tool for examining historic photographs from the second-wave feminist movement.

Lastly, the civic goals of social studies and of history education informed the present study. Griffin (1942/1992) argued that it was impossible to teach history "for its own sake" (p. 14) and that teachers must use the teaching of history as a way to use reflective thought to instill a problematic atmosphere where students can express beliefs as a precursor to participatory democracy. Barton & Levstik (2004) expanded on this argument explaining that students should learn history through student-centered inquiries that focus on the skills necessary to contribute to a pluralistic democracy. Furthermore, they also expressed that teachers could use this goal of citizenship as an instructional purpose that stretches beyond the coverage of historical content (p. 260). The present

study sees the goal of history education as ultimately part of the broader goals of preparing students to be active in a participatory democracy. Historical agency in particular becomes a conceptual tool then not only to dissect historical events, but also to help students understand their own agency. Whelen (2001) argued that studying historical agency was fundamental because without it teachers can “leave students with the profoundly mistaken impression that the past was determined apart from human volition and agency. Such an impression...[is] clearly antithetical to the citizenship goals that social studies seeks to instill” (p. 52-53).

Additionally, more recently the C3 Framework (NCSS, 2013) called for K-12 students, rooted in an inquiry experience, to have practice taking informed action. The C3 Framework provides specific indicators that establish the particular nature of taking informed action and what it looks like within a K-12 school context. Levinson & Levine (2013) explained, “students need similar guided experiential opportunities to take informed action throughout their K-12 schooling in order to learn how to engage productively in civic life” (p. 339). This compelling argument for taking informed action situates this study in an attempt to create space and spark these “guided experiential opportunities” and to be able to connect a piece of disciplinary inquiry (i.e. historical agency) to them.

### **Summary**

My theoretical and conceptual framework can be seen as a concept web with each theory and concept contributing to the larger purpose of the study. Socio-cultural and socio-cognitive theory helps to embed the importance of not only historical agency, but also student agency in the goals of understanding student’s historical thinking and its

applicability to students' civic action. The concepts and goals of history education help to frame my study by elaborating on students' ability to *do history* through the use of analyzing historical agency through photographs of the second-wave feminist movement, and with the larger pedagogical purpose of studying history to prepare students for our participatory democracy. These frameworks have contributed significantly to the formation of my research questions, but also directed the data collection and analysis throughout the study.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Methodology**

The present qualitative study used a quasi-naturalistic inquiry design to examine high school seniors' use and understanding of historical agency. The goal of the study was to better understand and define the ways in which students use historical agency to examine second wave feminism, understand the historical agency of actors in the past, and to consider the implications for using historical agency as a tool to foster discussions about gender equity and taking action in the present. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained that naturalistic inquiry occurs in a reasonably “natural” setting—a place where the examined activity would normally or commonly take place or a set of activities from which the activity might be expected to emerge. In this case, for instance, high school seniors engaged in activities common to historical thinking that are similar to those taking place within a U.S. history classroom in an American high school. Naturalist inquiry also involves a human instrument because of the inquiry's preference towards normal human activities such as reading, listening, looking, and speaking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 199). In this study, students were asked to examine photographs from second-wave feminism while they worked in pairs to discuss and think out loud while analyzing these images, therefore making the human instrument necessary.

A naturalistic inquiry, then, requires purposive sampling. Participants must be engaged in a setting where the activities under examination generally occur or there must be the possibility of creating a reasonable approximation of such a setting—a quasi-naturalistic design. Naturalistic inquiries also rely on inductive data analysis in order to “uncover embedded information and make it explicit” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 203). The present study was therefore situated within a quasi-naturalistic paradigm. I created a



context within which students engage in a historical task that was consistent with research-based “best-practice” recommendations for learning and teaching history (Fasulo, Girardet & Pontecorvo, 1998; Levstik & Barton, 2011). The task allowed me to observe how or if participants use agency as a conceptual lens in examining historical people, ideas, and events. I then used inductive analysis strategies such as coding and categorizing to help establish broader themes.

The main research question for the present study was: In what ways do high school seniors employ historical agency as an analytical lens in examining second wave feminism? Supporting questions included: (1) In what ways do high school seniors make sense of historical agency as a tool for taking informed action? (2) How do high school seniors use historical context to evaluate individual, collective or institutional choices and their consequences? (3) How do high school seniors define gender and feminism in the context of examining the struggle for women’s political, social and/or economic equality?

### **Rationale**

There has been a long-standing feud over the purpose of history education. Wineburg (2001) argued that history education is valuable because of its unique disciplinary nature and that it holds the potential to humanize us by allowing us to understand the events of the past. Other researchers would agree that the purpose of history education lies in its ability to promote civic participation, but would disagree over how to achieve these goals (cf Barton & Levstik, 2004; Gandal & Finn, 1995). Barton & Levstik (2004) suggested that complex historical understanding comes through meaningful and relevant inquiries that allow students to “examine evidence, consider multiple viewpoints, and develop conclusions that are defended and negotiated with

others” (p. 260). They added that these inquiries prepare students for the humanistic goals of democracy because they prepare them to make reasoned judgments on their own in ways that stretch beyond disciplinary skills.

The recent College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards (NCSS, 2013) attempted to bridge the gap between the disciplinary habits of mind and the civic purposes of social studies education. Based on the concept of an inquiry arc, the developers of the C3 Framework argued, “developing historical knowledge in connection with historical investigations not only helps students remember the content better because it has meaning, but also allows students to become better thinkers” (p. 45). Furthermore, Swan, Lee, & Grant (2014) explained that using the C3 in the classroom means incorporating five instructional shifts that use questions, content, and skills together to allow students to work individually and collaboratively to investigate inquiries and take informed action.

Within such an inquiry, investigators, whether student or professional historian, use multiple concepts and critical thinking tools. Many of these, including chronology, change over time, historical significance, and perspective recognition have been the subject of investigation by history education researchers over the past four decades (Barton, 1997; Barton & Levstik, 1996; Seixas, 1994; 1997). Agency remains one of the least researched of these concepts. Seixas (1993) argued for the necessity of using historical agency as a tool to allow students to see themselves in the same realm as historical actors, which, he argued, helps them make meaning out of history. Other researchers have found that K-12 students’ perceptions of historical agency tend to revolve around the power of individuals and nations, without a more nuanced

understanding of the complexities of the social and cultural constraints involved in their decision-making (Barton, 1997; 2001; Peck et al., 2011). Furthermore, researchers have thus called for the centrality of studying historical agency as a way to improve students' democratic action, participation, and decision-making in the present (Barton, 2010, 2011; den Heyer, 2003; Peck et al., 2011).

This study sought to explore the ways in which high school seniors understood and used historical agency when examining second wave feminism and the implications for discussions on gender equity and taking informed action. Second wave feminism, in particular, was useful for this study because of its connection to modern day gender equity issues such as equal pay, women's reproductive rights, gender discrimination in the workplace (e.g. lack of women CEOs, lack of paid maternity benefits, etc), and discrimination based on sexual orientation in the public sphere (e.g. state religious freedom laws). Furthermore, previous research has argued that social studies education needs to live up to its goals of valuing social justice and diversity by opening up to the idea of gender being "a significant dimension of human experience" (Bernard-Powers, 1996). Woyshner (2002) argued that educators must help students to open up definitions of what it means to be politically involved to include the ways that women "sought to make political and social change through the means available to them at the time" (p.11). Although Woyshner argued for the expansion of curriculum that would focus on the women's club movement, she pointed out that most teaching of women's history on the K-12 level tends to revolve around the suffrage movement, while overlooking the variety of other ways women have organized.

Furthermore, other researchers have argued that curriculum standards are silent about women and gender-related topics and that such topics as the movements for birth control, the Equal Rights Amendment, and Title IX are not mentioned at all (Hahn et al., 2007). When looking for primary source sets to use in a classroom, it becomes increasingly clear that not much has changed. Many of the top resources for gathering primary sources in the classroom not only proportionally leave women out, but if women are the focus it is mainly through the suffrage movement (e.g. Library of Congress). Researchers have also called for substantial attention to be devoted to “gender in [the] curriculum in order to present an accurate view of gendered human experience in history and contemporary society” (Hahn et al., 2007, p. 350). Therefore, by using second wave feminism, I intended to fill this gap by providing a curriculum exercise that not only builds historical thinking, but also opens up high school seniors’ experiences with gender history in ways that stretch beyond the suffrage movement.

Lastly, previous research has not investigated students’ understanding of historical agency as it relates to the consideration of their own agency (Levstik & Barton, 2011) and there is also a lack of research that examines the complexities and dimensions of agency and its connection to historical understanding and social change (den Heyer, 2012). In an effort to address this gap in historical agency research, the present study focused on the issues of complexity within students’ understanding of history agency in regards to second wave feminism and the conceptual use of agency as a tool for creating discussions around gender equity and taking action.

I examined how participating high school seniors employed historical agency as an analytical lens, the ways in which they make sense of historical agency, the ways in

which they use historical context and other cultural tools when examining historical agency, and the ways in which they define gender and feminism while examining second wave feminism. The study was unique in its focus on teasing out the complexities of historical agency with U.S. high school students and in its focus on understanding how students might connect historical agency and issues of gender and taking informed action. Thorough qualitative data provided insight into the participating students' habits of mind and helps to contribute to the knowledge of how students process historical concepts.

### **A Note on the Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

The present study used a variety of theories and concepts to inform its methodology. In the following section a brief overview of the framework is provided, but for a more detailed overview of these theories and concepts, refer to Chapter 2. The present study used socio-cultural theory (Wertsch, 1998) to frame the nature of historical agency and to view the participants as individual agents. Socio-cognitive theory was used to acknowledge the participants' thinking in the context of their own experiences under which they control.

Several facets of historical thinking and understanding also framed the methodology in this study. Not all historians use the same practices and their historical reasoning is often diverse (Levstik & Barton, 1996) so likewise, it was important to recognize the range of reasoning that participants' used in the study as it related not only to agency, but also to the issues of gender and civic action. Furthermore, the use of historical agency in particular rests in the use of *second-order* concepts as a way to help students make sense of history (Lee & Ashby, 2000; Seixas & Morton, 2013). Feminism in particular was useful for this study because it is a form of individual, collective and

institutional agency. Students also bring a set of ideas and misconceptions around feminism, gender and agency (Levstik & Groth, 2002) that need further investigated.

Picture theory and the use of the pictorial turn (Mitchell, 1994) also informed this study and allowed for the questioning of the power and agency in the image and in the intention of the image. As participants analyzed the historic photographs, they took notice of not only the photograph itself, but also the visual nature of the photograph, the bodies in the photograph, and how these connected with larger issues. It was important to capture this discourse and use it in the analysis of their understanding of historical agency, gender and civic action.

Lastly, the civic goals of social studies and history education informed the present study. Researchers have noted the importance of learning history as a way to focus on the skills and knowledge necessary for students to contribute to a pluralistic democracy (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Griffin, 1942/1992). In particular, Whelen (2001) noted that studying historical agency is fundamental because it helps students see history as something involving human volition and agency an impression that is inseparable from the civic goals of social studies. The civic goals of social studies and history informed the present study by attempting to capture the ways in which students form or discuss these connections through their analysis of historical agency.

### **Research Design**

Naturalistic inquiries are heavily dependent upon taking place in a “natural” setting because the phenomena being studied “take their meaning as much from their contexts as they do from themselves” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 189). Such an inquiry involves the human instrument using methods such as interviews, observations, document

analysis, and unobtrusive clues as well as purposive sampling and inductive analysis of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 187). The present study used a quasi-naturalistic inquiry design with guidance from phenomenological principles such as seeking to reveal the meanings of human experience and not pursuing predictions of causal relationships (Moustakas, 1994).

### **Selection of Site and Participants**

I selected Diana Prince High School (pseudonym) as my research site for several reasons. First, Diana Prince High School is a rural school within easy commuting distance from a mid-size metropolitan area. Rural schools in Kentucky have received considerable attention in the War on Poverty in the early 1960s, during the KERA era in the 1990s, and again more recently in a New York Times article lamenting the lack of progress in the area relative to poverty, education, and job opportunities (Lowry, 2014). Diana Prince High School provided an interesting intersection of rural poverty, urban proximity and persistent social challenges. Although 90% of the school is white, forty-seven percent of Diana Prince's students qualify for free and reduced lunch and the school's graduation rate is below the state's average at 71%. Of those who graduate only 42% continue on to being full-time college students and 14% continue on towards part-time college. Much like other more rural counties, Diana Prince struggles with a majority white population who find it both difficult to graduate and to transition into continuing education. Interestingly however, Diana Prince continues to meet its proficiency goals and annual measurable objective goals (Kentucky Department of Education, 2014).

Because of my previous experience, I also had connections and access—an important consideration in a time when schools are hard-pressed to meet numerous

learning and accountability goals and may not have the time or patience to allow strangers to work in their classrooms. In August of 2014, my proposal to work with the students at Diana Prince High School was approved by both the administration and the larger school district.

I requested access with high school seniors because of their unique place in their education. Seniors have already completed a year of studying U.S. history in which they should have been exposed to the second wave feminist movement. Moreover, seniors are beginning to look forward to college, career, and civic life. Many could be voting for the first time or could be considering voting in the following year. Gathering participants who have been exposed to the historical content being presented in this study and those that are beginning to start their lives as participants in a democracy was imperative to the present study.

Participants were gathered through senior English classes at Diana Prince. English was the only required course for seniors and therefore gave me an opportunity to gather the most diverse sample by working through this course. I presented my research study to each of the senior English classes at Diana Prince in order to collect volunteers. Volunteers were then able to participate once consent and assent forms were secured for each student. There were a total of twenty volunteers at the beginning of the study, however, three participants dropped after completing the student questionnaire.

After all consent and assent forms were collected, each participant was then given 15 minutes during their English class to complete a student questionnaire. The questionnaire was structured around the basic tenants of completing survey research, including collecting demographics and soliciting individuals' self-reports on attitudes and



behaviors (Nardi, 2006, p. 71). Since most of the questions were open-ended, questions were edited to make sure that they are not leading or loading (Nardi, 2006, p. 78-79).

Following this protocol, demographic questions were placed at the end of the questionnaire (Nardi, 2006, p. 84). Each question or set of questions covered an aspect of this research and connected back to the research questions as well as to the literature (Table 3.1). For full student questionnaire, see Appendix A.

Table 3.1 Question Matrix

Question(s)	Related Literature	Purpose
1-7	Recently, researchers have called for the centrality of studying historical agency as a way to improve students' democratic action, participation and decision-making in the present (Barton, 2010, 2011; den Heyer, 2003; Peck et al., 2011). However, little to no research attempts to understand the intersections between historical agency and social change (den Heyer, 2003; 2012).	By having high school seniors answer these questions, I attempted to gage their current level of civic involvement. I used these answers my analysis of their connections between historical agency and taking informed action.
8	Barton and Levstik (2004) argued that having students expand their views of humanity and understand alternative ways of thinking and acting through the study of history is critical to participatory democracy.	By examining how high school seniors view history education, I captured their attitudes towards the goals of history education, particularly around the goal of civic engagement.
9	Peck et al. (2011) defined historical agency as involving "actors who have intentions, their actions, and the consequences of their actions, intended or unintended" (p.255). However, there is not a clear accepted definition. Johnson (2003) argued that too often historians' use of agency is interchanged with concepts of humanity and resistance and needs to be untangled.	By examining the definitions or descriptions provided by high school seniors, I as able to see how their definitions apply to their completion of the visual exercise phase.

Table 3.1 Question Matrix (continued)

10	<p>In a study of gender and sexuality in a middle school classroom, Levstik &amp; Groth (2002), found that students “expressed confusion over the term ‘feminist’” (p. 247). They also found the term was a “problematic and often uncomfortable label” for students (p.248).</p>	<p>By examining how high school seniors define the term, I was able to see how their attitudes and definitions apply to what they know about the feminist movement and also how it applies to their analysis of agency.</p>
11-15	<p>The design of these questions was modeled after part B of a questionnaire in the work of Seixas (1997). Seixas (1997) argued that without a “sound notion of historical significance, students confront history as an alienated body of facts that appear to have little to do with their own lives” (p.27). Furthermore, according to Crocco (1997), the absence of women and women’s history from traditional textbooks suggests the degree to which women’s stories are seen as peripheral to the traditional story of political and economic history. Woyshner (2002) pointed out that most of the available curriculum and articles directed at teaching women’s history focuses on the women’s suffrage movement. To focus on second wave feminism would be to follow the call of Woyshner that curriculum must be more inclusive of the definition of politics to elaborate how women “acted within the means available to them to organize associations, make change locally, and push for legislation on a number of issues” (p. 11).</p>	<p>By examining how students decipher individuals, groups and events in second wave feminism, I was able to explain how they defined historical significance through their examples and what they see are the implications for studying this particular time period of women’s history might be.</p>
16-22	<p>Researchers have noted the importance of challenging the dominant historical narrative that privileges white men by restoring the agency of marginalized groups so that students are able to see their own lives and experiences reflected in the historical narrative (e.g., Almarza, 2001; Epstein, 1998; Tupper, 2005).</p>	<p>Although these questions represent mostly demographic information, it was important to note because their background is important to each student’s understanding of history and historical agency.</p>

Completed questionnaires were used to identify each participant’s perceptions of civic engagement, their level of prior knowledge, and their demographic information. After the completion of the questionnaire, I used purposive sampling procedures (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 200; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) to allow me to group participants into pairs for the historical thinking exercise and the interview. Because there were seventeen total participants, there was one group of three. Participants were placed into partners based on their availability. However, best attempts were made at grouping participants together so there was a mixture of both cross-gendered and same-gendered pairs. Table 3.2 shows a participant summary.

Table 3.2 Participant Summary By Partner Group

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>US History Course Taken</b>
Ariana	F	Hispanic	General US
Jenna	F	White	General US
Ben	M	White	General US
Russ	M	White	General US
Lindsey	F	White	General US
Matt	M	White	General US
Ellen	F	Mixed	General US
Sam	M	White	AP US
Austin	M	White	General US

Table 3.2 Participant Summary by Partner Group (continued)

Alex	F	Hispanic	General US
Jessica	F	White/Ukrainian	AP US
Timmy	M	White	AP US
Usher	M	White	AP US
Nikki	F	White	AP US
Talia	F	White	AP US
Madison	F	White	AP US
Skylar	F	White	AP US

### Procedures

The present study used qualitative methods for gathering data because qualitative methods allow access to phenomena within natural contexts, allowing researchers to more fully represent the views and perspectives of participants than can generally be achieved through more quantitative data collection (Yin, 2011). For the present study, data was collected in two phases (1) a historical thinking exercise (observing phenomena within a quasi-naturalistic context) and (2) an open-ended interview (representing participants views and perspectives).

**Phase One.** In the initial historical thinking exercise, I engaged students in an activity that sought to move focus beyond basic content information (facts, people, dates), and required thinking about and using *second-order concepts* (Lee & Ashby, 2000). These second-order concepts (evidence, change, and agency) help students of history make sense of the relationships in historical narratives. Using second-order concepts such as historical agency, can also help move students towards more powerful

understandings of historical significance because it forces them to examine historical evidence for events or developments that have resulted in change (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 24).

The historical thinking exercise revolved around having high school seniors actively engage with historical sources, in particular historical photographs from second wave feminism. Having participants engaged in this historical thinking exercise meant that they were placed within a historical investigation. VanSledright and James (2002) pointed out that “developing historical thinking and understanding requires opportunities for learners to work with various forms of evidence, deal with issues of interpretation, [and] address questions about the relative significance of events and the nature of historical agency” (p. 268). As participants worked with the various photographs through a series of guided questions, they engaged as learners in historical thinking and were able to form their own interpretations of the past while addressing questions about significance and historical agency.

In particular, photographs from second wave feminism were used as the historical sources that high school seniors analyzed. Photographs (as opposed to other visual images) were chosen because as Bolton, Pole & Mitzen (2001) argued, photographs offer “an opportunity to gain not just more but different insights into social phenomena, which research methods relying on oral, aural, or written data cannot provide” (p. 503). Furthermore, Barton and Levstik (1996) argued that visual images elicit a broader range of stimuli as opposed to exclusively language-based measures. Levstik & Barton (2011) also argued that a photograph “freezes what would otherwise have been a fleeting moment, giving it weight and meaning it might not otherwise have had” (p. 23).

Similarly, Barton (September 2001) noted that using photographs allowed students to engage in authentic inquiries that with proper scaffolds can move even elementary students to higher levels of analysis. Furthermore, current literacy standards argued for the integration and evaluation of content presented in diverse formats and media (NGA & CCSSO, 2010, p. 60). Using photo-elicitation methods where photographs are incorporated into a research interview allowed participants to be prompted by various stimuli other than just the interview questions themselves (Rose, 2007).

*Structure of historical thinking exercise.* The historical thinking exercise was structured around an operationalized definition of *historical agency*. When using the term historical agency, this study referred to: an individual or groups of individuals in the past (actors) who chose to act (actions) in the context of structures, limitations, and constraints, while facing the intended and/or unintended consequences of their actions. This definition was formed through the consideration of various research and theory that informed what this study calls the 5 C's of agency, namely: choice, context, consequence, category, and concept. Each of the 5 C's represents not only how other researchers have used the term in previous research, but also attempts to capture the body of research on the ways K-12 students either understand historical agency, or what they miss when attempting to understand this concept. Please see Figure 2.2 on the 5 C's and the research discussion on the formation of the 5 C's in Chapter 2.

In order to elicit the historical thinking about each of the 5 C's of agency, this study used six photographs from second wave feminism that represented a diversity of actions (e.g. picketing, marching, silent protest, etc) (Appendix B). Table 3.3 highlights each photograph's connection to topics from the basic student questionnaire and category

of agency represented. From an initial set of twelve photographs, I narrowed down to the six images represented in Table 3.3 because of their ability to stimulate strong discussion around agency, taking informed action, and gender during a pilot study (Colley, 2014). Table 3.4, Photographs in Depth, highlights each photograph by its identifying name in the study, a brief explanation as to why the photograph was chosen (based on pilot), a brief image description, and the caption that was available for participants. Each photograph and caption can also be found in Appendix B.

Table 3.3 Photograph Matrix

Photograph	Connection to Topic in Feminism	Category of Agency Represented
Miss America	Protest of 1968 Miss America Pageant	Individual
Abortion	Roe. V. Wade	Collective
Anti- ERA	Equal Rights Amendment	Collective
Hoboken	Title IX	Collective, Institutional
Cindy Sherman	Equal Rights Amendment, Equal Employment Commission	Individual
LA Times	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, NOW	Individual, Collective

Table 3.4 Photographs in Depth

<b>Photograph Name Identifier</b>	<b>Why Chosen</b>	<b>Image Description</b>	<b>Caption Available</b>
<b>Miss America Photograph</b>	During pilot, this image provoked discussion over gender, the identity of feminists, and of rebellious actions.	A woman is throwing her bra away in protest at the 1968 Miss America Pageant.	<i>An unidentified woman drops a bra into the trash at 1968 Miss America Pageant.</i> [photograph].
<b>Abortion</b>	During pilot, this image provoked discussion about the males in the photograph and about a woman's right to choose	Two men marching, holding a sign, which says "Abortion a woman's choice."	<i>International Women's Day march down State Street, Chicago. 1974.</i> [photograph].
<b>Anti-ERA</b>	During pilot, this image stirred up conversation over whether the ERA had passed and about why these particular people would have opposed the ERA.	Various men and women protesting against the ERA holding signs signaling various reasons of opposition including, females in the draft.	<i>Demonstrators Opposed to the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment) in Front of the White House, February 4, 1977.</i> [photograph].
<b>Hoboken</b>	This image was added after the pilot to represent a younger population, as well as to highlight actions beyond protests and marches.	Young girls of mixed races are sitting on a sign that says "downtown boys club" while holding baseball gloves.	<i>Little League tryouts in Hoboken, NJ, April 1974.</i> [photograph]. Two years after NOW (National Organization of Women) won lawsuit (NOW v Little League Baseball Inc) forcing the team to permit girls to try out.
<b>Cindy Sherman</b>	This image was added after the pilot to represent a woman doing a typical action to signal the various forms of agency.	Cindy Sherman is reaching for a book on a tall shelf, while looking over her shoulder.	<i>Untitled film still #13 (self portrait). 1978.</i> Sherman, Cindy. (photographer).
<b>LA Times</b>	During pilot, this image sparked conversation over her image and about whether or not she was a true feminist.	A woman holds a picket sign showing the jobs of interest listed for men and for women.	<i>NOW (National Organization of Women) members picket Los Angeles Times, 1969,</i> [photograph].



Using the purposeful partner groups already formed (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) (see Table 3.2), I then began the historical thinking exercise. Following the Library of Congress' (n.d.) observe, reflect and question model, participants were asked to spend 8-10 minutes silently observing the photographs at their tables (for prompt see Appendix C). Then, students worked in pairs to answer seven questions for each photograph and then partake in a sequencing exercise (for prompt see Appendix D). Each of the seven questions and the sequencing exercise corresponded to one of the 5 C's of agency and also to a history indicator from the C3 Framework (Table 3.5). The C3 Framework was a useful as a standards document in this study because the state in which this study took place was undergoing a standards revision process based on the indicators of the C3 Framework.

Table 3.5 Historical Thinking Exercise Question Matrix

Aspect of Agency	Historical Thinking Exercise Questions	Connection to C3 Framework
Choice	1) Who is in the photograph? 2) What do you think they are doing 3) Describe what you think are possible reasons for their actions.	D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.
Context	4) What is the date and location (if given) of the photograph? 5) Describe anything else that you think might be going on at this time or at this location that you think could be affecting the individuals.	D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.

Table 3.5 Historical Thinking Exercise Question Matrix (continued)

Consequence	6) What do you think the effects of these individuals or groups' actions were? 7) Do you think they faced challenges or limitations to their actions? Describe or list these challenges or limitations. If you don't think they faced any, describe why not. 8) If you were in this photo, what actions would you have taken?	D2.His.5.9-12. Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's perspectives.
Category	Using the post-its, describe how influential you see these actions in creating social change. Number the images from 1-6 with 1 being the one you think was <i>the most influential</i> and 6 being the one you think was the <i>least influential</i> .	D2.His.3.9.12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.
Concept	Follow-Up Question: Based on your investigation of these photographs, do you think feminism <i>really</i> created change? Why or why not?	Causation: D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past. Change over time: D2.His.2.9-12. Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.

After participants answered all eight questions for each photograph, they ranked the images based on how influential they thought the action or the actor was in creating social change. Throughout the entirety of this exercise, participants worked with their partners to answer the questions and sort the images through discussion. Partner discussion was useful because it encourages students to talk historically, “negotiate meaning, try out ideas, keep or discard them—jointly making sense of history” (Levstik & Barton, 2011, p. 24). Each historical thinking exercise was audio recorded, but

descriptive and reflective Cornell style notes during the observation of these discussions were also taken (Creswell, 2009, p. 181-182). For the conclusion of the historical thinking exercise, participants wrote individual responses to the question “Based on your investigation of these photographs, do you think feminism *really* created change? Why or why not? ?”

**Phase Two: Structure of Open Ended Interview.** In order to gain more information about the perspectives of the participants, open-ended interviews were used. Roughly one week after the historical thinking exercise, participants were interviewed within their same pairs. Interviewing in pairs was helpful because qualitative interviews mirror conversations and thus can take place between the researcher and groups of people (Yin, 2011, p. 134). Furthermore, using open-ended questions allowed participants to use their own words to discuss topics and were used to make-sense of their own cognitive processes (Yin, 2011). The present study used a combination of grand-tour questions, along with conversing probe type questions to gain more specific aspects of the “grand tour” (Yin, 2011, p. 137). Appendix E represents the interview protocol that was used. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed at a later date.

### **Methods of Data Analysis**

Because the present study was grounded in naturalistic inquiry, data analysis was an inductive and iterative process using categorizing and coding (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 203). In particular, the study used a five-phase cycle of analysis: (1) compiling; (2) disassembling; (3) reassembling; (4) interpreting; and (5) concluding (Yin, 2011, p. 177). Throughout the process, I made constant comparisons, looking for negative instances, and rival thinking (Yin, 2011, p. 197). As the data analysis unfolded, data was

categorized into codes and then placed into broader and more substantive thematic categories upon which to draw claims. Data was constantly re-read, coded, and categorized throughout the analysis process.

By using individual questionnaires, the historical thinking exercise, and the partner interviews, the goal was to provide a robust account of the ways in which these high school seniors made sense of historical agency, used historical agency as an analytical tool, and the implications in using agency to address gender and taking informed action. By gathering data in multiple ways, it was the intention of the present study to be able to find emerging themes that can be triangulated through analysis. Using multi-method strategies and triangulation helped to enhance design validity in this study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 330). Other methods to enhance design validity in this study included using participant language and verbatim accounts, mechanically recorded data, and also the active search for negative or discrepant data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Taken together, these methods helped to extend the validity of this naturalistic inquiry.

**Ethical issues.** The present study adhered to all of the policies and procedures established by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects. The study presented no obvious risks to the participants involved, however steps were taken to ensure that participants were not be harmed. Both parental assent and student consent forms were required before participants began the study. All forms were kept in a locked file in the researcher's office. Furthermore, participants were instructed that their participation was voluntary, that they would in no way receive any compensation or preferential treatment for volunteering and that they were able to stop

the study at any time. Furthermore, all audio recordings, transcripts, and completed historical thinking exercises were kept in a locked file in the researcher's office. Participants and the school were identified only through pseudonyms in the reporting of this study and all identifiable information was removed from any other data.

### **Limitations**

The lack of control groups, randomization, or control of variables represents the limitations and possible validity threats of any qualitative research study. However, the present study took steps to insure research design validity such as using multiple methods of data collection, using rich data of detailed and verbatim transcripts and actively searching for discrepant data. Furthermore, another limitation of the study was that the findings are not generalizable to the entire population. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) pointed out that generalizations are not the goal of naturalistic inquiry, but rather a working hypothesis could be developed from a naturalistic inquiry that could then indicate some level of transferability to other contexts (p. 122-124). The present study was conducted with a subset of high school seniors in one particular school and is thus not generalizable to all students. Still, since there is a lack of research on how students understand and use concepts such as historical agency, the study provided an opportunity to gather rich data on the ways in which high school students understand the complexities of agency therefore providing fodder for more studies of different students and across different topics in history.

### **Conclusion**

This naturalistic inquiry focused on the ways in which students employ historical agency as a conceptual tool to analyze the second wave feminist movement, the ways in

which they make sense of and dissect historical agency, and examined how participants connected agency with gender and taking informed action. A theoretical framework that focused on aspects of socio-cultural theory, socio-cognitive theory, historical understanding concepts, feminism, the civic purposes of history and visual thinking strategies informed this study. Data included student questionnaires, observations and recordings of the historical thinking exercise, and in-depth partner interviews and notes. I used ongoing data analysis that allowed me to constantly compare data to find emerging patterns, codes and broader themes upon which to draw my claims. My goal was for my conclusions to inform future research in historical agency, agency's use as a conceptual tool, and its implications in discussing taking informed action and women's history, with the greater goal of informing curriculum design, teacher practice, and student's democratic participation in the future.

## Chapter 4

### Findings

This qualitative study used a quasi-naturalistic inquiry design to examine high school seniors' understanding of the facets of historical agency and their use of historical agency as a conceptual tool to examine second wave feminism. As explained in Chapter 2, *historical agency* refers to an individual or groups of individuals in the past (actors) who chose to act (actions) in the context of structures, limitations, and constraints, while facing the intended and/or unintended consequences of their actions. This definition brings together elements of definitions presented in existing research and theory in history education research.

The goal of the present study was to better understand and define the ways in which secondary students understand and use historical agency to examine second wave feminism and to consider the implications for using historical agency as a tool to foster discussion around issues of gender equity and taking informed civic action. The main research question was: in what ways do high school seniors employ historical agency as an analytical lens in examining second wave feminism? Supporting research questions included: (1) In what ways do high school seniors make sense of historical agency as a tool for taking informed action? (2) How do high school seniors use historical context to evaluate individual, collective or institutional choices and their consequences? (3) How do high school seniors define gender and feminism in the context of examining the struggle for women's political, social and/or economic equality?

Because of the study's grounding in naturalistic inquiry, I used an inductive and iterative process of data analysis using categorizing and coding, while making constant

comparisons and looking for negative instances and rival thinking. In this chapter, I present the results of my data analysis. The findings are grouped into five claims incorporating data from across participant questionnaires and transcriptions from the historical exercise and the semi-structured interviews. The first three claims address how participants employed historical agency as an analytical lens in order to identify and dissect the historical agency present in the photographs of second wave feminism. The last two claims address how participants used historical agency as a conceptual tool to evaluate the broader social goals of second wave feminism, including gender equity and civic action.

1. Participants ranked historical significance by examining what was gained or accomplished by the historical actors or their actions.
2. Participants corroborated between photographs while analyzing both the historical context of the historical actors, but also the context clues available in the photograph. However, participants struggled with historical content.
3. Participants clearly identified both the intentionality of historical actors, as well as the constraints of their actions by evaluating the choices of actors, and the consequences and challenges that accompanied those choices.
4. Participants discussed definitions of femininity, masculinity, and feminism, but were influenced by gender stereotypes and tended to overgeneralize ideas and concepts during their discussion.
5. Participants formed direct connections between second wave feminism, controversial issues, and today's world, but they highlighted the perceived progress made and were hesitant to agree to take informed action in the future.



## The Weight of Historical Significance

Participants differed as to which events, people or photographs they viewed as historically significant, but they were consistent in weighing significance based on the idea of the effects of the event, person, or photographs. Participants viewed an event or person as being historically significant when it meant that something was accomplished, gained, or was seen as successful. They viewed things as not historically significant if they struggled to see the direct impact of the event, person, or photograph or if they saw the event, person, or photograph as being in opposition to larger goals (e.g. equal rights, women’s rights).

Participants were asked to rank the historical significance of the events or people they had heard of before on their student questionnaires before they began the historical thinking exercise. The number of participants who viewed each event or person as historically significant as well as their reasoning is highlighted in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Events or people identified as the most historically significant on student questionnaire

Event/Person/Act	Number of students who thought it was the <i>most</i> historically significant (n=17)*	Reasons why it was historically significant
<b>Title IX</b>	1	They are the results of women and men working towards equality
<b><i>The Feminine Mystique</i></b>	1	Because they won women’s rights
<b>1968 Protest on Miss America Pageant</b>	1	They were opportunities to get the opinions of these women out in the open and call attention to something that they believed to be a problem.

Table 4.1 Events or people identified as the most historically significant on student questionnaire (continued)

<b>Equal Employment Opportunity Commission</b>	1	They were opportunities to get the opinions of these women out in the open and call attention to something that they believed to be a problem.
<b>Planned Parenthood Federation of America</b>	2	It's the only thing I knew about. Gave women authority with their bodies, they could choose to have a child or not to have a child
<b>Roe v. Wade</b>	2	Gave women authority with their bodies, they could choose to have a child or not to have a child
<b>Margaret Sanger</b>	2	They were at the start when big change really started happening Formed the birth control clinics and stood up for women's rights All had similar goals of wanting women to be seen as equal
<b>National Council of Negro Women</b>	2	Because women were treated bad anyways, black women were treated worse. All had similar goals of wanting women to be seen as equal
<b>Equal Pay Act</b>	2	Generally important and not situational To level the field of pay in the same job
<b>National Organization for Women (NOW)</b>	4	Generally important and not situational They were people that supported and things that helped further improve the feminist movement They are the main reasons women were striking, they wanted equal rights All had similar goals of wanting women to be seen as equal

Table 4.1 Events or people identified as the most historically significant on student questionnaire (continued)

<b>1970 Women’s Strike for Equality</b>	5	<p>They help women get equally [sic] rights as men</p> <p>Because they won women’s rights</p> <p>They are the results of women and men working towards equality</p> <p>They were opportunities to get the opinions of these women out in the open and call attention to something that they believed to be a problem.</p> <p>They were at the start when big change really started happening</p>
<b>Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)</b>	6	<p>They help women get equally [sic] rights as men</p> <p>Because they won women’s rights</p> <p>Generally important and not situational</p> <p>They are the results of women and men working towards equality</p> <p>They are the main reasons women were striking, they wanted equal rights</p> <p>I feel like they’ve accomplished, moved towards women to be herself and happy.</p>

\*Note: Some participants chose more than one event while others left this question blank.

Participants focused on whether or not they thought these events or people succeeded in the goals of equal rights or women’s rights using the language of “winning” or “accomplishing”. They tended to focus on collective or institutional efforts in their rankings only providing one individual’s name (Margaret Sanger) as being historically significant. What is interesting to note about the participants’ rankings is that they

ranked the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) as being the most historically significant even though, the amendment eventually failed and did not therefore *change* equal rights as these students suggest. This appears to be a problem of content deficiency however and does not take away from the fact that their reasoning was based on what they *thought* was accomplished. As Table 4.1 shows, participants described the ERA as being significant because it helped achieve “equally [sic] rights” or because the amendment “won women’s rights”, even though historically the amendment failed to pass.

### The Most Influential Photographs

As participants continued with the historical thinking exercise, they continued to reason and weigh historical significance using ideas about the effectiveness of a historical actor or their action. At the end of the historical thinking exercise, they were asked to rank order the photographs from 1-6 with one being the most influential in creating social change and 6 being the least influential in creating social change. The rankings of each photograph are presented in Table 4.2. For a summary of each photograph see Table 3.3, 3.4 in Chapter 3 or to view photographs see Appendix B.

Table 4.2 Ranking of photographs as being the most influential in creating social change (1) to the least influential in creating social change (6)

Participants									
Photo	Jessica & Alex	Madison & Skylar	Russ & Lindsey	Sam & Austin	Talia & Nikki	Timmy & Usher	Ariana, Ben, & Jenna	Matt & Ellen	Median
<b>LA Times</b>	2	2	4	4	1	2	5	1	2
<b>Miss America</b>	1	1	3	2	5	3	2	3	2.5
<b>Abortion</b>	4	3	1	3	2	1	3	2	2.5

Table 4.2 Ranking of photographs as being the most influential in creating social change (1) to the least influential in creating social change (6) (continued)

<b>Hoboken</b>	3	4	5	1	3	6	4	5	4
<b>Cindy Sherman</b>	6	5	2	5	4	5	6	6	5
<b>Anti-ERA</b>	5	6	6	6	6	4	1	4	5.5

The top three photographs (L.A. Times, Miss America, & Abortion) were seen as creating the most social change because of their ability to meet goals, establish rights, prove a point, and/or that they had long-term effects or symbolized progress. Madison explained why they chose the Miss America photograph as being the most influential in creating social change; “that just pretty much embodies the whole movement of not following the restrictions that society puts on you and always acting, wanting to become different, and *change* the way things have always been (emphasis added).” Being able to symbolize the movement and being able to prove a point to other people was also the reasoning that Jessica and Alex gave for picking the Miss America photograph as the most influential. Jessica explained:

I feel like that one has the most to say because she has a total different outlook of what an average woman would look like back then. So I say, she has the most in trying to prove a point to other people.

Matt and Ellen discussed the weight of the LA Times photograph over the abortion photograph based on the importance of the outcome and goals of these actions:

Matt: Yeah I think abortion is like-

Ellen: It’s important, but-

Matt: It's important, but I feel like-

Ellen: ... not as important as jobs.

Matt: yeah, because women should be able to, be the bread winner, whatever you call it. Make the money, make the bacon.

It was clear that these participants were ranking based on their interpretations of the intended consequences of these actions or actors in the photographs. They then used these ideas to rank significance by examining the extent to which goals were met and progress was made. When questioned about this reasoning, Talia and Nikki responded:

Talia: I kind of want to say that one [LA Times] that would be number one.

Nikki: Yeah, because this [abortion] is still an issue, and this [LA Times] isn't as much of an issue. There are still some people who believe it is, but women can be lawyers, surgeons, you know.

Talia: There's not a huge part of the population that looks at a female lawyer and goes "oh she's going to be alone for the rest of her life because there's not going to be any men that want to be with her." Maybe they do, I don't know...

Interviewer: So because that's not an issue anymore, it's more influential?

Talia: Well, it's not as much of an issue, it's the least amount of issue.

Nikki: I feel like that issue...there's been the *most change* for that issue for women (emphasis added).

Talia: yeah

Usher and Timmy ranked the abortion photograph as being the most influential based on similar reasoning as Usher discussed, "I really think that this [abortion] was the most influential, because you know what they're pushing for and you know that they ended up

getting it.” Participants focused in on the intended goals of these actions and actors and ranked the photographs based on whether or not those goals had been successful.

Although this mirrors what other research has found it is interesting to see that their reasoning is focused on their interpretations of the intentions of either the actors or the photograph.

### **The Least Historically Significant**

Participants continued to use the similar reasoning and judge the effectiveness of the actors of actions when ranking the events, people or photographs as being the least significant. On their student questionnaires, they viewed the events or people as being the least significant if they “didn’t really help “or if they “didn’t have anything to do with women’s rights.” Table 4.3 displays the rankings from their questionnaires and the reasoning for these events or people being the least historically significant.

Table 4.3 Events or people identified as the least historically significant on student questionnaire

Event/Person/Act	Number of students who thought it was the <i>least</i> historically significant (n=17)*	Reasons why it wasn’t historically significant
<b>Pregnancy Discrimination Act</b>	1	It has nothing to do with women’s rights
<b>Equal Pay Act</b>	1	People don’t have the same skills; some people deserve to be paid more.
<b><i>The Feminine Mystique</i></b>	1	It’s not widely hailed as a great step- I’ve only heard about it because of AP US history.
<b>“No Fault” Divorce Laws</b>	2	It’s a given  This can be for either gender

Table 4.3 Events or people identified as the least historically significant on student questionnaire (continued)

<b>Planned Parenthood Federation of America</b>	2	It didn't really help women's rights  Doesn't sound like they could do much for women's rights if they were concerned with planned parenthood.
<b>National Council of Negro Women</b>	2	Only focuses on this group of women rather than all women.  It's only helping one group of women.
<b>Roe v. Wade</b>	3	It has nothing to do with women's rights  They don't sound like they had much to do with equal rights for women  Even though the baby is in the woman's body the man (father) should still have a say in what happens to the baby. It wasn't like men were forcing women to get abortions or anything, so even though they were fighting for their rights, it didn't have much to do with feminism.

\*Note: Some participants chose more than one event while others left this question blank.

Although most researchers and content experts might be shocked by some of their responses, the reasoning that these events or people either did not help or that they were not concerned with women's rights, supports the claim that participants were making judgments of significance based on what they thought was accomplished or was successful. The fact that there were significant content deficits can also be seen by the number of participants who left these questions blank on their questionnaires, as only 11 out of the 17 participants completed this section.

**The least influential photographs.** The photographs seen as being the least influential in creating social change (Hoboken, Cindy Sherman, and Anti-ERA; see Table 4.2) were judged by their lack of direct impact on women's rights, the image being in



opposition to women's rights, or by the inability of the participants to fully understand the photograph.

Some participants ranked the photographs lower if it didn't seem like they had a true direct impact on the second wave feminist movement. Jenna explains that the Hoboken image "was lower because it wasn't really protested. It was just a photo" while Alex thought that the Cindy Sherman photograph "should be six because all she's doing is getting a book." Although Madison and Skylar also placed the Cindy Sherman image at the bottom, they saw other ways that it could have been ranked higher:

Skylar: its just a subtle picture of a self-portrait of this photographer who is slightly reaching for a book and is sort of afraid to because she's afraid of what she thinks other people will think of her.

Madison: I think it would have probably been a little closer to the top if there were other women with her.

Skylar: Yeah, maybe if there were also men in the picture.

Madison: just the fact that it was just her, it kind of portrayed just a self...

Skylar: just a self-portrait. Yeah.

Madison: yeah, like a self-interest *for her* to become better. (emphasis added)

Madison suggests that the Cindy Sherman image was less influential because it didn't influence the larger society of men and women, that it was an action completed for her own self-interest, not for the broader goal of women's rights.

The Anti-ERA image was placed as being the least influential by four of the eight partner groups and it was clear that this was because they either did not understand the photograph or perfectly understood the image as being in opposition to women's rights.

Madison and Skylar ranked it last because “it was opposing the movement of women having equal rights.” Talia and Nikki also ranked this image last and understood that it was in opposition of women’s rights, but argued that it was non-influential because as Talia explained, “they’re protesting something that went ahead and passed anyway.” This confusion around what this photograph really was trying to convey continued as Russ and Lindsay ranked it last because “they were all protesting something different” or as Sam explained “it’s just not one cause, its like Chex mix...and I can understand Chex mix, but I can’t understand this.” Alex and Jessica also agreed:

Alex: the women in front of the White House should be [ranked number] five...*I didn’t know exactly what they were talking about* (emphasis added)

Jessica: There’s just so many things going on.

Alex: Signs,

Jessica: yeah, the maternity ward, then drafting, [and] some other things.

The one group that actually ranked the Anti-ERA sign as being in the most influential did so because of the interpreted context of the photograph for as Jenna described, “I think that’s a one. It is in front of the White House.” Participants overwhelming focused on whether or not the actors or the photographs would have impacts on the larger women’s rights movement and/or whether or not they had anything to do with women’s rights when placing these events, people and photographs towards the bottom of their rankings. It should be noted here although, that their photograph rankings are completely opposite of their questionnaire rankings, particularly when looking at the issues of the Equal Rights Amendment and Abortion (Roe v. Wade). Whether or not these discrepancies represent a change in their thinking or a gain in

content knowledge is not clear, but it does appear that they were at least using the contextual clues within the photographs to help justify their reasoning.

### **Summary**

Participants ranked events, people, or photographs as being historically significant by what was accomplished, gained, or successful. They also used the same content logic to rank events, people, or photographs as not being historically significant. Although content gaps were clear, participants' judgment of historical significance reflected the research base. Still, their photograph rankings often conflicted with their rankings of events or people on their student questionnaires, and such difference could be attributed to their ability to use the context and photograph itself, to better inform their decision making process. Participants were successfully using the cultural tools available to them as they examined significance and as they worked to better understand the historical agency of actors in the past.

### **Context Matters**

Participants used many of the cultural tools available to them in order to be able to analyze the photographs in the historical thinking exercise. They formed connections with the historical context of the time period and the captions to be able to decipher the historical agency represented in the images. They also used the contextual clues within the photographs to examine the agency in the past. By "contextual clues" I am referring to the outward appearance and facial expressions of the actors, the background of each photograph, inferences about who or what was not pictured, and other clues from the captions (e.g. location). Participants also worked back and forth between images, corroborating their knowledge, but often struggled with using correct historical content or

forming “right” connections between what they were analyzing and other historical events. Overall however, they saw the value of the historical thinking exercise as being an “eye-opening” experience and were able to see how the exercise helped to explain change over time. As Ariana described, “they are powerful messages. They [the photographs] make you actually see what people went through back then, and how life is now and how we got to this place, because of how it was back then.”

### **Using Historical Context**

Participants used the photographs and what they previously knew about U.S. history in order to analyze the intentions and actions of the historical actors within these photographs. Although they did not always discuss content correctly, they were able form connections between second wave feminism and broader themes of discrimination and equality.

Most participants found striking similarities between the issues of segregation and slavery and the gender discrimination that these photographs were representing. Jenna explains the similarities, “It was a big thing in 1974, in the 1900s. Slavery and women’s rights, once you hit the slavery part, it just went downhill for every woman. Everyone wanted their rights. Everyone wanted to be equal.” Although some historians draw similar conclusions between the civil rights movement and second wave feminism, participants mentioned the larger issues of slavery, segregation, or early suffrage movements, failing to refer to the civil rights movement. Sam recalled:

considering that time period [the 1970s] they probably got to remember earlier, they used to have slaves. Once the abolish that, it was about time for the feminist

group to gain their rights, so they're probably bringing them both together saying if we can abolish slavery, we can get rights for women.

Whether or not these participants were trying to show similar connections between rights movements is unclear, but they are attempting to bridge the connections between discrimination by race and discrimination by gender.

Participants also overgeneralized the 1960s and the 1970s as a time period plagued by wide-spread discrimination. Jenna discussed that “the time period is 1978 and so back then you [women] were only allowed to know your alphabet and a few mathematics.” During their discussion of the Cindy Sherman photograph, Jessica and Alex similarly about the level of education that women could have achieved in the 1970s:

Alex: maybe it wasn't offered for her to read?

Jessica: It's probably around that time period where women still weren't accepted into education. That's probably still that time period where there were only men that could get an education.

Interviewer: so, that's why she's sneaking the book?

Alex: Yeah, maybe its what she's reading that wouldn't be socially acceptable

Jessica: Yeah.

Other participants discussed how women would have “been treated unfairly in jobs, since it's the 1969s” and how “it's the 1970s, so that's like...it was still a realm of a lot of sexism”. This ‘realm of sexism’ created a time period that represented a context for the unfair and discriminatory practices facing women. However participants also explained that the 1970s were a time for “women's rights and all that stuff” or that “I bet you like

rights we're coming out for people...like a revolution". Although not precise, the participants explained that the 1960s and the 1970s embodied a climate of sexism that therefore perpetuated the events and actions they were viewing in these photographs.

Talia was the outlier participant and was able to form more precise connections with historical content. When discussing the LA Times photograph, Talia explained:

It's 1969. This might be an event leading up to the Equal Rights Act, maybe. It's 1969, I also know it's the summer of love, but I don't think that is very relevant to this. What could be a possible effect is them leading up to the Equal Rights Act. Again, not completely perfect as it seems as though Talia really means the Equal Rights Amendment and not the Equal Rights Act, but she is able to correctly form a solid connection between the date and something else she knew about the time period. Talia was also the only participant who made concrete historical connections with the abortion photograph. Talia discussed:

they're [the men in the photo] probably doing this because they feel like abortion is a woman's choice, its something to do with their bodies and they understand that...Then it's Chicago in 1974, I wonder if it has anything to do with *Roe v. Wade*?...if it was before *Roe v. Wade* it may have swung the general social acceptance towards the possibility of abortion. If it was after, it probably still did, but it had less of an effect on that lawsuit.

Although Talia was the only participant to discuss *Roe v. Wade* in regards to the abortion photograph, all participants attempted to use broader themes from the historical context to influence how they explained the actors and actions in each photograph.

## Using Contextual Clues

Participants also used contextual clues from the photograph or the captions to aid in their interpretation of the historical actors' actions. They examined contextual clues such as the emotions and ages of the men and women in the photographs, what they were wearing, the clues from the captions, and the backgrounds of the photographs in order to provide answers to the prompts. For example, they noted and examined the appearances of the men and women in the photographs and used these interpretations to explain what was happening in the image. Participants said if the men and women were "happy" or if they were "old people- no offense". When analyzing the Anti-ERA photograph, almost every group commented about how the historical actors were much older than the previous groups. Madison described what this meant, as "the women are doing what their husbands want because that's what they've always done. The women in this photo seem to be older, so maybe they're used to this and they don't want to go against what's normal." Matt and Ellen also discussed how the women in this particular photograph were "still a little conservative looking" because "you can see some calves, is that an ankle?...yeah they're older as well, they don't have any goodies to show off as much anymore." Participants used these contextual clues of age and appearance to form connections with the actors' purpose and actions within the photographs.

Participants also used the captions underneath of the photographs to be able to better understand what was being captured (See Table 3.4 or Appendix B). In particular, the caption underneath of the Hoboken New Jersey image helped participants decipher the significance of the photograph. The caption read, "*Little League tryouts in Hoboken, NJ, April 1974.* [photograph]. Two years after NOW (National Organization of Women)

won lawsuit (NOW v Little League Baseball Inc) forcing the team to permit girls to try out.” As Austin explained “the national organization of women are pressing for more things probably because it says that they won a lawsuit forcing the team to make girls tryout” or as Usher described “reading the second line on the paper, it’s saying that really the picture is the girls have got to join the league, because the National Organization of Women won the lawsuit, forcing the team to permit girls to try out.” The captions were not only taken in isolation and were sometimes used along with the other clues in the photograph to aid in participants’ analysis.

When discussing the Hoboken photograph, Madison and Skylar used the caption and the contextual clues (e.g. background information) in the photograph in their analysis:

Skylar: I’m guessing they’re excited because they like little league. From the caption, they’ve just won a lawsuit to be able to tryout for little league.

Madison: yeah

Skylar: they’re probably really excited, one, that they were able to win. Two, now that they are able to play....

Madison: I think its ironic, how things on this picture, the bench that they’re sitting on, its actually titled “Downtown Boys Club”, and now girls are a part of that also.

Other participants used the caption and their understanding of Chicago when interpreting the abortion photograph, as Austin described, “it looks like they’re marching at a busy street, that gets their cause well-known with the civilians.” Participants used what was



available to them within the image or the caption to help form their interpretation of the actions of the actors within the photographs.

### **Corroboration and the Struggle with Content**

Throughout the exercise, one consistent historical thinking skill that participants used effectively was corroboration. In this study, I refer to corroboration by meaning the ability of participants to examine other sources (in addition the one they are analyzing) to identify other pieces of evidence that support or contradict the evidence in the their initial source. Participants went back and forth between the photographs, building their knowledge and understanding of the photographs and second wave feminism as a whole. Russ explained “I noticed that the date is 1974, which was the last picture we did. I feel these are all connecting to a certain time period of when a lot of protests for women’s rights were going on.” This tool of using all of the photographs together to explain the second wave feminist movement was as Ariana described:

I just think it was not one picture, it took all of these together tied into one thing and it just helped you learn it overall, like perspectives of how people were treated, and how things happened in result of other things and how we got to where we are now.

Other participants used the photographs to take “all of these together”, and formed connections between and across various photographs. During their discussion on the LA Times photograph Ben makes these leaps:

Ben: Lawyer, junior executive, engineering, just anything that they’re [women] wanting to do and but you can’t because its that time in age.

Ariana: It would be the same thing with sports. Some females weren't allowed to do certain sports that men could do.

Ben: Yeah, that's like that picture over there [Hoboken].

Others used the content knowledge that they gained from previous photographs when examining a new photograph. Madison and Skylar also used what they learned from the Hoboken image and the LA Times image and applied it to their understanding of the Cindy Sherman photograph.

Madison: Just based on the years, we know that the little league girls are able to play, we know that they're [women] starting to become accepted, but I don't know-

Skylar: maybe they're still afraid to-

Madison: Yeah I don't know why she would be looking anxious or cautious even though they are allowed to be doing these kinds of things.... She's not even looking at the title. She just has her hand on one.

Skylar: like "oh!"

Madison: "I'm not *really* getting this book" (emphasis added)

Interviewer: What do you think the book is about?

Skylar: You can barely see any of the-

Madison: Probably something like some career or topic that men are predominant in according the other picture with the protesting woman [LA Times]

Skylar: Like engineering

Madison: A lawyer, something like that.

Participants used the dates, the content, and the topics of the other photographs to learn more about second wave feminism as a whole as well as to support their understanding of the actors and actions in each individual photograph. However, their struggle with historical content was consistent throughout the study.

Besides their overgeneralizations of the time period in question, participants struggled with chronology. Sam explained “the camera wasn’t all that good back in 1978 so she [Cindy Sherman] probably had to hold her arm up there for a long while to get the right picture.” As shown previously in the historical context section, other participants placed the second wave feminist movement somewhere in the ballpark of slavery, segregation, and the suffrage movement. Skylar explicated, “the reason for their actions is the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment is probably going on. Women are wanting to get rights” or as Sam described the woman in the Miss America photograph, “I think she’s... I think it was suffragettes, wanting to break out of the traditional woman status.” All participants experienced some level of struggle with the content, regardless of whether or not the individual had taken A.P. History or General U.S. History. Still, throughout the historical thinking exercise, participants were able to make some small gains in content acquisition. Before they completed the exercise, participants were asked on their student questionnaires to check from an established list of people, events or acts, which ones they had heard of before. Table 4.4 shows these original content counts from all of the participants’ student questionnaires.

Table 4.4 Content counts from student questionnaires.

Event/Person/Act	Number of students who checked they had heard of topic before (n=17)
<b>Mary McLeod Bethune</b>	1
<i>Eisenstadt v. Baird</i>	1
<b>Gloria Steinem</b>	1
<b>Betty Friedan</b>	1
<i>Griswold v. Connecticut</i>	1
<b>Title IX</b>	1
<b>Margaret Sanger</b>	3
<b>Pregnancy Discrimination Act</b>	4
<i>The Feminine Mystique</i>	4
<b>1968 Protest on Miss America Pageant</b>	4
<i>Roe v. Wade</i>	5
<b>“No Fault” Divorce Laws</b>	5
<b>National Council of Negro Women</b>	6
<b>Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)</b>	7
<b>Equal Pay Act</b>	8
<b>Equal Employment Opportunity Commission</b>	8
<b>1970 Women’s Strike for Equality</b>	8
<b>Planned Parenthood Federation of America</b>	9
<b>National Organization for Women (NOW)</b>	9

After examining the photographs in the study through the historical thinking exercise, participants voiced that they could check additional events or people afterwards, because they had heard of them now or were able to better understand them after the exercise. Table 4.5 highlights the content counts on the additional events, people or acts checked after the photograph exercise.

Table 4.5 Content counts from the interviews after the photograph exercise

Event/Person/Act	Number of students who said they would check topic after the exercise, either as new knowledge or as understanding it better (n=17)
<b>Feminine Mystique</b>	1
<i>Griswold v. Connecticut</i>	1
<b>National Council of Negro Women</b>	1
<b>Planned Parenthood Federation of America</b>	1

Table 4.5 Content counts from the interviews after the photograph exercise (continued)

<b>Equal Employment Opportunity Commission</b>	2
<i>Roe v. Wade</i>	2
<b>1970 Women Strike for Equality</b>	3
<b>Equal Pay Act</b>	6
<b>Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)</b>	7
<b>National Organization of Women (NOW)</b>	7
<b>Pregnancy Discrimination Act</b>	7
<b>1968 Protest on Miss America Pageant</b>	8

It appears from these counts that some content knowledge was gained throughout the historical thinking exercise. Even though these appear to be minor gains, since the intent of the study was not to capture or to increase content knowledge, it is important to note. It appears that participants were able to make more solid inferences to the events, people, and acts on the list after participating in the historical thinking exercise. For example, when asked if there was anything that they didn't check before that they would check now, Matt and Ellen explained:

Matt: The National Organization of Women, because, I guess now, seeing that photo [LA Times] would be, they're for equal job rights, at least in some part... They could be for more, but that's all I know about them right now.

Ellen: yeah the ERA

Matt: yeah, the Equal Rights Amendment

Ellen: Yeah that one.

Matt: Yeah, I got like a basic knowledge of that one... more than I did, I'll say that.

Ellen: Yeah

Matt: Looking back on it, the Equal Pay Act would just be equal pay for men and women, I'm just assuming... maybe Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is for women as well. I'm just taking, *well able to take more educated guesses*.  
(emphasis added)

It is important to note that some of their “educated guesses” appear to be no more than guesses. Seven participants claimed they either better understood or would now check The Pregnancy Discrimination Act, but this might be an overly confident assertion. Russ explained that he would check The Pregnancy Discrimination Act because “when they were talking about abortion and stuff like that, I feel like that goes with the whole pregnancy thing” and Austin picked the act as well because “in one of the pictures it showed abortion or whatever, they were trying to stand up for- it was all right for women to do that [abortion] so that couldn't be discriminated on.” Whether or not all of the participants who checked the Pregnancy Discrimination Act were jumping to these same conclusions is unclear, however, it appears that even the content gains they suggest, might be based on false presumptions or understandings.

### **Summary**

Participants used their cultural tools to be able to evaluate the historical photographs in the study. They also successfully corroborated between photographs making note of how each photograph built upon the last in either similar or contrasting ways. Although participants struggled with using specific historical content correctly, they identified more events, people or acts after the exercise than before. Overall, participants also used the historical context of the time period and the contextual clues within the photographs while analyzing the historical agency of the past. By using the

contextual clues within the photographs, participants were able to identify and assess, not only the reasons for the actors' choices, but also the choices themselves.

### **The Intentionality of the Past**

Participants viewed the historical actors within the photographs as having a larger purpose than just protesting or marching. They focused on the intentions of the historical actors, signaling that they were comprehending a commonly missed aspect of historical agency: choice. Participants used the context clues (e.g. appearance, emotions, background etc.) from the photographs as well as their own emotional connection with the photographs to grasp this intentionality. Furthermore, they also viewed these historical actors' choices as operating within a context of social and structural challenges and limitations. In the end, these participants painted a complex picture of the intentional choices these particular men and women in the photographs might have taken.

### **Having Something To Prove**

Fifteen of the seventeen participants saw these men and women in the photographs as having something to prove. Most often, this "something" was a goal of equality, the fight for equal rights, or the fight against sexism and gender norms. Alex and Jessica explained the reasons for the actions in the anti-ERA photograph at first by saying the men and women were "pretty much just protesting and smiling in front of the White House", but then later she added "I guess they're just tired of men always having the power over them and they want to have the equal power [sic]." Jessica at first describes merely the actions, "protesting" and "smiling", but what she adds is a reflection of intentionality; the idea that these actors had intended consequences (equal power) in mind.

When examining the Miss America photograph, Jenna, Ariana, and Ben decided that the woman in the photograph was making a statement by throwing her bra in the trash:

Ariana: What do you think they are doing?

Jenna: burning her bra, well throwing it away at least

Ariana: *Trying to make a statement...* that girls shouldn't have to live up to the lifestyle.

Jenna: the expectations, expectations are a fraud...

Ariana: Describe what you think are possible reasons for their actions.

Ben: Being comfortable. *Proving a point.* (emphasis added)

Ariana: I like that

Interviewer: What point do you think she was trying to prove?

Ben: That there shouldn't be a double standard, anybody else can do the same things she can do.

Jenna: and she looks so confident about it.

Others used the same language for the actions of individuals. Jessica described the LA Times photograph by saying "I guess she's trying to *prove a point* of like, we're the same people, but why do females get the more difficult but less paying jobs while the men get the easier and better paying jobs?" (emphasis added) Austin and Sam described the same photograph and explained:

Sam: She's smiling...while holding that poster showing the jobs that typical women would choose and typical men would do. Kind of just saying we shouldn't



be, have just one group of jobs to do. We should be able to pick whatever we want.

Austin: I agree, it's showing the different jobs for male and to female.

Sam: No reasons, I guess, just to *prove a point*. (emphasis added)

Interviewer: what kind of point do you think they're trying to prove?

Sam: Even though I'm male, I could be a waitress, a sales clerk a typist whatever. If I'm a female, I could be a lawyer, engineer, I don't have to do these jobs because I'm a certain gender.

The concept of proving a point, carried on throughout each photograph's analysis. Matt viewed the woman in the Miss America photograph as "breaking the cookie cutter mold of what women were at the time" while Skylar saw the woman as "wanting to tell people that she doesn't have to go, she doesn't have to wear what other people think she should wear." Meanwhile, Talia viewed woman in the LA times photograph as protesting "because she wants to be able to get a job that she wants." When it came to the image of Cindy Sherman, none was more outspoken than Russ. He explained:

Okay, I'm just going to bring this one out. I feel like this is kind of symbolic saying that she doesn't need a man to fix all of her problems. She can get things on her own. She can do things on her own. She's independent. Let's say, the third shelf up, how if I was taller than her and how she's struggling to get it, but she's still able to get it. She doesn't need help. I just feel that's kind of symbolic.

When asked what he thought Cindy Sherman was doing, he responded again:

I feel like she's doing exactly what I said, *proving to people*, that 'hey I'm independent. I don't need you solve all my problems.' I'm not saying that her

problems are solved or that she doesn't want a man, I'm just saying that she doesn't necessarily need one to get along in life because back in the day, they [women] always depended on the man." (emphasis added).

Each time that these participants viewed these men and women in the photographs as trying to prove a form of equality, of gender equity, or of equal opportunity, they saw the historical actors as completing these actions with an intention in mind. The men and the women in the photographs were protesting because they wanted to *prove a point*.

### **The Emotion of Getting at Intention**

As previously stated, participants used the contextual clues within the photographs and the captions in order to analyze what the actions were or what was going on at the time. They also used the same contextual clues to uncover the intentions of why the men and women in the photographs were taking these actions. During the interview process, participants opened up about what they were thinking about while answering these questions during the exercise. Ariana explained:

they all looked *happy*. They're all I think, trying to *prove a point*. They're trying to show the government and people that everyone should have the same rights, no matter what the thing is, education, paying bills, or anything like that. They should all be treated equal, and they all seem like they are *proud* of what they are doing (emphasis added).

Ben added "they're all fearless people that just have to stand up for what they believe in."

Ariana and Ben discussed the emotions that they thought were embedded in the photograph (e.g. happy, proud) and explained what that meant (e.g. proving a point, being fearless). They weren't alone in using the emotional cues within the photographs

to help bring meaning to the actions in the photographs. Jessica explained that during this process she “was trying to picture myself in that person’s shoes, or like in that group to get the feeling of why they wanted to do that” while Alex said she looked at “the little things like facial expressions, words that were on their posters” to cue her responses. Matt also explained that he “was looking at the photo to see their emotions, to see what they’re doing, and how they looked like, their body language.” While they were noticing the emotions of the people in the past, they were achieving historical empathy in order to gain insight into *why* these people made these choices. When responding in the interview about what they were thinking about when answering the question about why the individuals were taking the actions they did, Skylar and Madison explained:

Skylar: About why they stood up? I was thinking about how *brave* they were to really, because I know some people are like ‘oh gosh, women, stop!’ they were just *trying to change something* that needed to be changed.

Madison: I was thinking about how *unselfish* they were, because this was a thing that went on for some years. The older women might not even get to see the right to vote, or the right to be equal, but they were fighting for their daughters and their granddaughters. Just the fact that they were willing to go through all this judgment for those who were coming in the future was pretty *inspiring* to me (emphasis added).

Skylar and Madison were thinking not only about the intentions of the men and women in the photographs, but also about the challenges they faced, the intended and unintended consequences of their actions, and about what that meant for future generations.

Others focused more on the other contextual clues available than just the emotion. Talia explained she thought about “personal liberties” and about “age group and economic status” and how that would play into their actions. Sam said was trying “to link stuff back to certain events that I could remember” and “just trying to look at the things in the picture just to try to get a gist of it to try to answer the question.” Regardless of what they were focusing on, participants clearly used what they saw within the photograph in order to evaluate historical actors’ intentions.

### **Social Challenges**

Participants were quick to notice the extent of social challenges these men and women might have faced in the historic photographs. They said that these men and women in the photographs would have faced discrimination, judgment, and name calling, for standing up for their rights and for standing against the traditional gender norms.

Thirteen participants identified one of the biggest challenges or limitations facing the individuals or groups actions as being discriminated against. When examining the LA Times photograph Sam explained, “the challenges they faced from doing something like this was discrimination from the people, that still didn’t believe what they were fighting for was right.” Meanwhile, Jenna commented that the woman in the Miss America photograph was “discriminated against, just because she didn’t want to wear a bra” and Ariana chimed in, “yeah discrimination and name-calling.”

Many of these participants also brought up the judgment that these men and women would have faced for taking the actions they did. Jessica thought that the men in the abortion photograph would have been “criticized by others” and Madison thought that the boy teammates who were not pictured in the Hoboken photograph would have “from

this moment on...always be negative towards the women.” Skylar explained that for the woman in the Miss America photo, “one of her challenges...[is] being judged probably” while Ellen discussed that “you had probably had people that disagreed.”

Participants also argued that these men and women would have faced harassment or actual name-calling. When examining the LA Times photo, Ellen explained that she thought “I’m sure they had guys that walked by and maybe said mean things” to which Matt added “yeah, harassed them a little bit.” Russ described the same photograph saying that there was probably “a lot of booing” and “probably a lot of rejection saying that they shouldn’t be doing this.” Sam thought that maybe the men and women in the anti-ERA photograph got “a lot of negative words being said to them or just having people in general bring them down.”

References to discrimination or name-calling suggest that participants identified social challenges to standing up for a cause such as women’s rights. However, reading between the lines, it seems as though actors faced these social challenges because of the very fact that they were challenging traditional gender norms. None of the photographs brought up discussion of this challenge, quite like the image of the woman throwing her bra in the trash at the 1968 Miss America Pageant. As Jenna pointed out with the woman in the Miss America photograph, “I mean she’s doing it at a pageant, so I’m thinking she’s just like, ‘Forget dressing up like a Barbie doll and wearing these nice fancy dresses, let’s go braless and have fun’.” Madison viewed the photograph in similar ways explaining “if we didn’t look at the actual physical limitation for a bra, just being, [sic] coming off, then it [the challenge] would probably just be society’s idea of the woman.” Meanwhile, Matt thought that she might “get looks” and that “people are going to want to

stop her and be like, ‘you’re indecent’ and ‘its inappropriate.’” When pushed on what was indecent, Matt explained “the population that was like, look, you need to be modest in public.” The ways in which these participants described the social challenges facing these historical actors clarifies that they thought there were risks involved with taking actions, particularly ones challenging gender norms. Still, their associations with traditional gender norms are overgeneralized (e.g. “society’s idea of the woman”) and reflect the use of their current understandings of gender and society.

### **Structural Challenges**

Participants also noted several structural challenges and limitations to the actions of the men and women in the photographs. Participants thought that these men and women faced the possibility of going to jail or facing cops, and that their actions would be met with challenges by laws, religion, or other structural barriers to gender equality.

Several participants explained that the men and women protesting the ERA amendment in front of the White House probably faced cops or jail time because of the context of the White House. Jenna explained that “some of them probably got thrown in jail... or some riots broke out” while Russ said, “it being in front of the White House, there’d be the police, things like that.” Austin also agreed and said, “they probably risked going to jail because it’s right in front of the White House and security is heavy there.” Others, however, pointed to laws, religions and other structural barriers as the main challenges these men and women faced.

When describing what the girls in the Hoboken photograph faced, Jenna explained:

I mean, the segregation laws, all that stuff, had just passed to be completely abolished or whatever. So it had to be hard to make the team as a girl, and it must have been hard to make the team as a black person. That had to be hard. So you had the *whole world against you* (emphasis added).

Meanwhile, Usher thought that the challenge in the abortion photograph was that “the law was already in place that it was the man’s choice; so that would be a big limitation.” Madison and Skylar argued that the biggest limitation in the abortion photograph as religion. They described:

Madison: the challenges faced would probably be all the traditionalists who are saying that abortion is just wrong.

Skylar: yeah

Madison: That it’s not supposed to happen, God didn’t want it this way.

Skylar: yeah, they’ll probably used religion and the Bible.

Even though these participants are noticing small structural challenges, they are still seeing barriers that go beyond name-calling and discrimination. When analyzing the LA Times photo, Matt explained that a challenge would be “getting job equality” and Ellen added “yeah, actually getting hired as the male jobs.” With regards to this same photograph, Madison said, “the challenge can be seen just from the fact that they didn’t have equal rights from the beginning” and Talia explained that “going up against a giant communication device, like the LA Times... would be really difficult.” These participants are noting that even though this woman might have been called names, or discriminated against, that there were larger and broader structural challenges that she was facing. These larger structural challenges were what was responsible for the lack of

gender equality in the first place, and would therefore be a large barrier to overcoming this inequity. Whatever the challenge, participants were clear that the actions of the past did not happen within a vacuum, that they were intentional actions made with intended consequences in mind, and that these actions, came with an onslaught of social and structural barriers to overcome.

### **Summary**

Using contextual clues from the photographs, participants identified the intentions of historical actors by arguing that actors were “proving a point.” Participants noticed the various social and structural challenges that accompanied these actors’ choices and were able to explain how these challenges would have been barriers to taking action. When examining challenging gender norms however, participants tended to overgeneralize and use their own modern interpretations of gender and society in their analysis. Their trouble with discussing gender stems from these larger issues of overgeneralization and viewing the past from the present.

### **The Trouble with Discussing Gender**

Participants defined and discussed their ideas of femininity, masculinity, and feminism throughout the study. They defined each of these concepts in ways that reflected the power structures and/or gender stereotypes surrounding these ideas. As participants noted the power structures or gender stereotypes at play, they were at times using these discussions to highlight what faced the historical actors, often agreeing with the historic attempts to break down these barriers. Participants however, often credited the lack of gender equity to overgeneralizations about generational difference and the sexism and racism of the past.



## **The Standards of Being “Like a Girl”**

Participants highlighted the various standards of femininity that the women in the photographs were challenging. They discussed the idea of being “like a girl” and the influence that it might have had on the challenges the historical actors faced. Participants also pointed out the various gender roles and gendered expectations that the historical actors were challenging, often highlighting where they would too have joined in the actor’s cause. When analyzing the Hoboken photograph, Madison and Skylar explained how being sporty meant challenging ideas of femininity:

Madison: I love this one. I thought it was really sweet. I don’t know, these girls- whenever you think of little boys playing baseball, but these little girls, they kind of were different. They didn’t want to go do, probably, ballet. They wanted to do something different.

Skylar: Sporty?

Madison: Yeah...and in this picture, from this moment on for them, a challenge would be the boy teammates would always be negative towards to the women.

Skylar: Yeah

Interviewer: Why do you think the boys would be negative?

Madison: Because the little boys would more than likely think they’re not equal to them, because they are girls. That’s what more than likely, their parents have taught them.

Skylar: Yeah, they probably wouldn’t think they’re good enough. Don’t you think? ‘You throw *like a girl!*’ ‘*I am a girl!*’ (emphasis added).

Skylar and Madison discuss a socially prevalent idea of being “like a girl” and how that would have been used against these young girls in the photographs. Alex and Jessica also used the same language with regards to the Hoboken image:

Alex: They probably didn’t get accepted immediately because ‘oh you’re just a girl’

Interviewer: What’s that mean to be just a girl?

Alex: Back then, it was just demeaning, a demeaning way [sic] of stating things. Now it’s like, ‘what are you supposed to mean with that?’

Jessica: I guess back then, ‘Oh you’re just a girl’, you won’t have time for baseball. Once you get older, you’ll have your family, you’ll have a house to take care of, garden and stuff like that. You won’t have time to do all these extracurricular activities. I guess it’s just like, it didn’t fit into that, into their category.

Jessica and Alex discuss the meaning of being “just a girl” in reference to “back then” and how the idea of being just a girl has changed over time. However, these ideas of being “like a girl” were not isolated in just the sports photograph, other participants explained the standards of femininity as being the measure of trying to be a “perfect woman”. Jenna explained that the woman in the Miss America photograph was challenging femininity because “look at her haircut, most women were taught to have long hair and act a certain way, and she’s acting rebellious.” Jessica examining the same image said that the woman was “just tired of being this *one certain perfect woman*. They want to be different. They want to be comfortable in what they’re wearing and what

they're doing instead of looking good and pretty, but pretty much torturing themselves.” (emphasis added). Talia further explained these standards of femininity:

I can imagine this [Miss America photograph] would be for, would be the idea of how women should look. It's like there's a certain standard of- you're supposed to have an hourglass shape, you have to be all thin and spindly and have a flat stomach and enormous butt or something.

Usher also thought that the context of the Miss America Pageant meant, “she's protesting against the standard that women are put upon at these pageants. The standard they have to be, the perfect woman.”

The obvious overtone in being the “perfect woman” is that the idea of being feminine means that women should have their physical appearance look a certain way in order to be attractive to men. A few participants even made these implied ideas of sexuality explicit. During their conversation about the Miss America photograph Jessica and Alex explained:

Jessica: well, she has really really [sic] short hair, kind of like a man's cut, so I'm guessing a lot of men maybe started looking at her as not a woman anymore because she doesn't have the long hair, the perfect clothing and everything. She's just wearing just a baggy shirt with short hair and glasses.

Alex: like she's not desirable.

Jessica: Yeah, I guess some women also would look down on her and be like ‘why are you trying to disgrace our people, our sex?’

Jessica and Alex discuss how the woman's image would have been threatening to both sexes and how this might contribute to the woman's desirability and acceptability.

Madison and Skylar also expressed what could have been implied about this particular woman's sexuality, they explained:

Madison: I think she also wanted to surprise people. Do something different for a change. From the pictures I've seen of this time period, I'm pretty sure a pixie cut is not the norm.

Skylar: Yeah, there's [sic] probably women who do cut their hair short, but I don't think men were as accepting. I still don't think they are. Whenever men see women and they have short hair, they're like 'oh you're a lesbian' or something like that. That doesn't really classify them as a lesbian. If you're a lesbian, then you're a lesbian.

Madison and Skylar later described that in the Cindy Sherman photograph she might be looking over her shoulder because "she's getting a book and there's guys around." When asked why it would matter if there were guys around Madison replied, "it's probably, still not looked at or accepted that women have equal education, equal jobs. The fact that she's trying to better herself with education would maybe threaten the guys." Madison's remarks gets at the fact that the participants viewed not accepting the standards of femininity as being a challenge either to traditional gender norms, to ideas of sexuality, or to the existing gender power structures.

### **The Power of Being Male**

Participants consistently viewed men as superior to women or as having more power than women. As Jenna succinctly put, "most men thought that men were superior back then." It was clear that for these participants being male meant that you either viewed women as a weaker or lesser sex or at least that society viewed things in this way.

Jessica explained that the women in the anti-ERA photograph were “just tired of men always having the power over them and they want to have the equal power too.” As participants noted the males in the photographs it was interesting to see how they viewed the power of gender in these situations. When discussing the LA Times photograph Jessica and Alex explained how the women would have been the ones getting in trouble for their actions, not the men:

Alex: I wonder if they even paid attention to the men or if the men were just allowed to walk away.

Jessica: yeah

Alex: Yeah, like once the cop showed up.

Interviewer: if a cop showed up at that, what would happen?

Alex: All that the men would have to do is to take off the button, drop the sign and walk away. But it'd be weird to see a woman just walking from a protest, so they [the cops] would probably assume that she was protesting. [sic]

Clearly Alex thought that men held a power in society that would excuse them for their behavior (i.e. protesting) while women did not have this same power. Nikki also explained that males have a power in society that therefore helps to strengthen the arguments of women when men take similar actions. Nikki explained the abortion photograph, which shows two men protesting for a woman's right to choose:

I feel like since it's men, that it would probably have a greater effect, because it's like its not just women supporting their rights. It's men realizing that it's the right thing to do for them, too. It's probably a stronger argument....it's good that they're actually drawing attention to it [abortion], but they're drawing attention to

the wrong people....They're like, 'oh men believe it too, so...' its not like a horrible thing.

Nikki expresses that being a male protester was more powerful than being a female protester because it “would probably have a greater effect.” These participants were viewing these photographs while assuming that being male meant that they had more power than the females in question. Other participants voiced the extent to which the power of male is structurally engrained in the topics being discussed. Jessica viewed the LA Times photograph and explained

if I was a man and I was living in this time period and I saw women doing that [protesting], I'll probably just fire them from the jobs that they already got [sic], because from where they still had that authority over women, it would probably make them lose the jobs they already had because they were fighting to get better things.

Skylar saw similar structural barriers with regards to the same photograph as she expressed, “I don't think women should just have one option. If it were men, they would probably have multiple options.” The idea that men would have more career options was clear through Usher and Timmy's discussion as well. They explained:

Usher: if a guy wants to be an engineer, he would pretty much just show up and say I'm interested, think he could do it and he would get the job.

Timmy: yeah, he could be qualified and then just choose the men or women. [sic]

Usher: They wouldn't really care for women who were already educated on it, if they could go ahead and just train a guy to do it.

According to these participants men could just “do what they want” and that the men at this time period didn’t “care a whole lot about what women think”. Although these participants viewed being masculine as being powerful and more in control, they also were not able to separate their own gender stereotypes and overgeneralizations, about men not liking women or not caring what they thought, away from these definitions. It was clear that one of the biggest barriers that the women in the photographs faced was simple: men.

### **The Negativity of Being a Feminist**

Participants expressed conflicting definitions of being a feminist throughout the study, as they explained that being a feminist meant that you fought for women’s rights or equal rights, but also that there was a negativity associated with the word. Participants were first asked to define what they thought a feminist was on their student questionnaires before the historical thinking exercise. Table 4.6 highlights each participant’s written definition.

Table 4.6 Feminist Definitions From Student Questionnaires

<b>Name</b>	<b>Definition of A Feminist</b>
Ariana	when you are against women
Jenna	we believe in whether or not women should have rights
Ben	people wanting equality for women
Russ	a women who wants equal rights
Lindsay	they believe in rights of women
Sam	group of women who fought to be equal
Austin	advancement for women
Matt	(blank)
Ellen	you support women’s rights
Talia	someone who wants equality among the sexes, but can also include gender, sexuality, race, and economic status.
Madison	feminist is the term used to describe the feelings and opinions that women are equal to men on all levels
Usher	a group fighting for women’s equality

Table 4.6 Feminist Definitions From Student Questionnaires (continued)

Jessica	someone from the female sex demanding equal for her sex [sic]
Alex	means move to be equal or to feel empowered to be a woman
Nikki	a person who believes that women should be treated equally as in the same as men. I feel like there are a lot of different levels of feminism, for example, some feminists may just wish for equal job opportunities while some go as far as saying men shouldn't open doors for women because that is disrespecting them by treating them like they are incapable and fragile.
Timmy	a person advocating for more equal and social and economic equality for women
Skylar	someone who believes a woman should have equal rights as a man. They believe women have the power to be whatever they want to be.

Most participants defined a feminist as wanting equal rights or the same rights as men. However, during their interviews they were given the option to change their initial definition or to expand upon what they thought a feminist was after their completion of the historical thinking exercise. While most kept their definitions the same, a few participants did decide to change their definitions. Ariana for example wanted to change her definition from “when you are against women” and said “it has to do with when I think of feminist, I think of it as a negative word...Looking at the pictures now, it could be that, but it could also be a good thing, not just a bad thing.” Jessica also wanted to change her definition from “demanding equal for her sex [sic]” to “fighting for what should be hers [sic], instead of just being like, ‘this is how its going to happen’.” Lastly, Austin also said he would change his definition from “advancement for women” to “a group of standing up for [sic], especially women, standing up for what they believe is right.” Although each of these participants altered their definitions in minor ways, they altered them in nuanced ways that were reflective of the positive image of feminism and the actions of the women they saw during the historical thinking exercise.



Participants continued to struggle however, with the perceived negative associations with the term feminist. Ariana hesitated in her definition of feminist explaining “when I think of feminists, I don’t want to make it sound like I’m just for women, that I’m not for men so I’m taking one side, but it should just be equal.” Matt also agreed with this stigma surrounding feminists. Matt exclaimed:

I feel like that when you say that you’re a feminist the stigma is that ‘We don’t need men! Men are inferior! They’re below us!’ But I feel like it gets really just like, yeah, we should have equal rights just as men. We’re not any better and we’re not any worse. We’re just wanting to be equal. We’re all humans and deserve the same rights.

The most out-spoken supporter of women’s rights, Talia, admitted that when she “self-identifies as a feminist, it shows me how other people treat me differently. There is something to be said that I’m a little bit afraid to tell my family that I’m feminist.” This fear of standing up as feminist was something that Sam explained was “the burden of all the negative influences it [being a feminist] attracts” as men might “call you names and badmouth you and just horrible things.” This idea that being a feminist carries a weight of negative meaning was also outlined clearly by Skylar and Madison. They explained:

Madison: I think for some reason, the term ‘feminist’ or at least the way I’ve heard it, has a negative connotation nowadays, because its like, especially when guys say it, they’re like ‘oh, *she’s a feminist.*’ I think it’s like neo-something feminist, then they kind of seem annoyed by the fact that they’re trying to get equal. I mean, people of different races say the same thing, and they don’t call them like an ‘African-American-ist.’ It’s just wanting equality.

Skylar: It's true because guys do, they think that the women, think that women are better and that they hate men [sic]. That's not necessarily true, it's just that we want equal rights.

Participants explained that there was a negativity associated with being a feminist that equated to meaning that they were against men. The idea that being a feminist meant that you might be a "man-hater" is a very strong social stereotype according to these participants. Still, they argued that to be a feminist, you needed to do more than just say you supported women's rights, you had to *take actions* that reflected these goals.

A few participants expressed that saying you were a feminist did not matter unless the actions you took reflected the goals of feminism (e.g. equal rights for women). Alex brought up Emma Watson in her discussion of feminism saying that "she was *doing* a lot for women" but then Beyoncé "decides to say the same thing, but she's *just setting an image*" (emphasis added). Alex compared these two women to reflect one feminist who was seen as taking actions towards equal rights (Emma Watson) and one feminist (Beyoncé) who was seen as only saying the words. Alex's modern comparison was reflected in other participants' viewpoints of feminism. Madison explained that people call themselves feminists when "they want attention" or "they're following the crowd" or "they want to be an innovator and they want to start something new." Lindsey also said, "you shouldn't be allowed to call yourself a feminist if you're not actually getting up and *trying to do* what you say you believe (emphasis added)." Participants continued to express these same sentiments as they judged whether or not the historical actors in the photographs were feminists.

All seventeen participants viewed the woman in the Miss America photograph as a feminist because as Alex explained, “she stands against what most women would look like” or as Matt described she’s “breaking the norm with short hair and a lower cut shirt.” Others argued that the LA Times photograph represented feminists because they were fighting for “equal jobs” or “protesting for the feminist movement”. The photograph of Cindy Sherman had mixed results with some expressing that she was not a feminist because she “was trying to hide it instead of just being like ‘I have my rights’.” Other participants said that all of the active people in the photographs were feminists while only those in the background were not, because they were not participating in sort of action or cause. As Sam described, “that guy right there in the suit. He’s just kinda ignoring the action [sic].” Many participants also explained that the young girls in the Hoboken image were not feminists because “they are too young to be self-identified as feminists” while those that grasped the anti-ERA photograph thought that they were not feminists because as Matt said, “they’re opposing equal rights.” A few groups also identified the men in the abortion photograph as being feminists because “they were standing up for things like abortion” and “if they’re supporting it [abortion] as well. Then I would say they’re feminists.” Participants were able to view the historical actors as feminists, understand the intentions of being a feminist, and yet, also voiced their concern that calling oneself a feminist, would come at a price.

**Sexism as a result of generational difference.** One reason participants argued that such sexism existed, was because of the generational differences between those in the past, the younger population in the 1970s and definitely, the world today. Because the men and women in the anti-ERA photograph were older than the men and women in

the other photographs, participants clung to this idea of generational difference as being the reason they would have been against women's rights. Ellen explained "they're older women protesting equal rights for women. Just odd...well they're older, so maybe they are used to home, house cleaning." Matt added, "yeah, maybe a little bit more conservative... and old values." Usher also expressed that these men and women represented the viewpoint of the keeping the status quo, as he explained:

It is the demonstrators who oppose to the ERA, and it's the older women of the generation and the older men. I think they really grew up in a world where it was women stayed home and cooked and everything. I think they're trying to push for that to come back. I don't think they want women to be out there working the same jobs as men, doing the same things. I think they wanted to be the way it was when they grew up.

Madison expressed wanting to get these men and women in the photograph to rethink their viewpoints by asking them " 'when you were younger, if you were able to have endless opportunities like you're protesting against the women of the future to have, would you have done anything differently?' " Participants were once again overgeneralizing that all people in the past would have acted in similar ways, based on similar reasoning. Failing to account for the reasons provided on the posters within the photograph as to why these demonstrators were opposed to the Equal Rights Amendment, including draft registration for females, and males being allowed in labor and delivery rooms, participants instead relied upon overgeneralizations about older and more conservative viewpoints. Arguably, these reasons could be seen as more

conservative, but the participants in the study did not bring them up as reasons for being against the Equal Rights Amendment.

These participants also believed that these same events or discussions would look very different in today's context. Skylar admitted, "I just know that from my grandparents, they're not accepting of gay people and stuff like that because they grew up with believing it wasn't right, but with our generation now it's more- changing [sic]."

The time period or generation influences social acceptance as Matt explained:

those were not as open times as now. They were sort of going into it, but still not as open as we are now....now an abortion protest would be, a lot of people would be like, 'yeah! It's women's rights! Yeah!' But back then, it would be like, 'these are some crazy, lunatic, hippies' or something. Like, 'what? What are they doing?!'

Still, even though times might have changed, Lindsey reflected on if she "would experience it the same" because she "wants to be something in politics...and we still haven't had a female president." Participants viewed the sexism that the historical actors faced as being accounted for by overgeneralizations about generational difference, but they also saw hope for things being different in the future.

### **Summary**

Participants had difficulty in breaking away from their own gender stereotypes and overgeneralizations as they discussed ideas of femininity, masculinity, and feminism. Although participants noted the gendered expectations of both males and females, they struggled teasing out the variance between everyone in society and just the men and women in the photographs, often conflating the two. Feminism was also difficult for

participants, as they defined it through terms of equality, but identified the negativity surrounding the term. Participants also overgeneralized the reasons for the sexism of the past, by explaining through terms of generational difference and the conservative nature of generations in the past. As they analyzed the agency of actors in the past and intersected their understandings with definitions of gender and feminism, they then began discussing issues of equality and sexism, and their connection to modern day.

### **The Debate Continues**

Throughout the study participants discussed the topics of equality and sexism as well as other controversial issues. They used these discussions to form connections with the issues and topics predominant in today's world. Participants were also quick to highlight the changes that have been made since the 1970s in order to argue that progress has been made. Furthermore, although participants could see themselves taking some of the actions in the photographs, they were often hesitant to say they would join the men and women in the photographs and also hesitant to agree to taking more actions in the future.

### **Discussing Equality and Controversial Issues**

Participants were prompted to discuss what actions they would have taken if they were in the photographs. During these discussions, they typically voiced their concern over equality or equal rights, but also used the space to interject their own opinions on controversial issues such as abortion. Ariana explained how she “would have protested, because I think that everyone should be equal, everybody should be treated like everybody else.” Jenna also said she would love to throw her bra in the trash because “it's like, ‘I'm a woman, but I'm not, you're not superior to me. You're equal.’” When

asked about what they would do in the LA Times photograph, Skylar and Madison replied:

Skylar: I would definitely be holding a sign of protest

Madison: I'd be holding five signs.

Interviewer: Why would you guys be protesting?

Skylar: Because everyone should be able to have equal opportunity... everyone's human, so everyone should be able to experience things and have the right to experience things. For example, in this photograph, women shouldn't have to say that they want to ask to be a lawyer. They should just be able to be a lawyer.

Madison: I don't think being a man makes you better than being a female. I think everybody is born equal, no matter even if you're a different color or a different gender. It doesn't really matter.

Participants described their willingness to participate in these actions or protests because of the idea that the protest meant that they were standing up for equality or equal opportunities. They continued to apply similar reasons for standing up for equality to their responses about whether or not they would participate in the abortion photograph.

Although some participants did not see themselves as protesters due to their personal beliefs on abortion, they saw the issue as complex and were not willing to say that others could not express their beliefs. During their conversation about the abortion issue participants also discussed controversial issues including rape, religion, and sexual assault. Russ explained:

abortion is still debatable, even to today...there was a lot of rape and a lot of sexual assault and I feel like they [women in the past] just had to go through

with the baby no matter what because otherwise they'd be looked down upon...I think they're now starting to protest... that uh, it's her body, it's her choice.

Other participants agreed with Jenna who explained, "I'm not personally for abortion, but I don't think that it's my choice to tell people you can't do something when it's not harming anyone else." Alex explained her viewpoint as "I'm towards the woman's choice, but I'm not towards the abortion part either." Sam also voiced, "I don't agree with abortion, but at the same time that's my opinion, everybody else has a right to their own. I wouldn't stop them from having their opinion." Whether or not they were giving these responses because they viewed them as more socially desirable is unclear. Participants, however, seemed genuine in their responses, which mirrored their arguments on human equality and equal rights.

### **Forming the Connection To Modern Day**

Participants formed connections between the issues in the historic photographs and issues in today's world. They saw similarities between the struggle for women's equality in the past and modern day struggles with LGBT rights and race equality. They also focused on the ways in which sexism still exists, especially in other countries and also discussed how all of these connect with the power and role of social media in today's society.

Participants explained that the struggle for women's equality in the past reflected the similar struggle for gay rights and today's issues with sexuality. Alex argued that "now you could be celebrating that you're gay and people from the church will still have to stand behind the line and yell at you for being gay." Alex also brought up how these photographs reminded her of children today who are made fun of for breaking gender



norms by boys wearing pink leopard shoes and by parents who are in uproar over the sexualization of little girls' clothing. For some, the struggle with LGBT issues goes beyond basic acceptance of gay marriage, as Talia and Nikki explained:

Talia: I know I'm of the school of thought that everything is connected but the first thing that really comes to mind is gay marriage and sexuality in general. I know I have a parent who says 'I don't care if someone is gay, if some guy is gay, but I don't want him doing the lisp, doing the gay voice and he does the whole gay thing'- I'm not homophobic but-

Nikki: I don't want them to express their selves [sic] and be themselves.

Talia: It's like its viewed wrong, for either way. Men are allowed to wear pants, women are allowed to wear pants. Women are allowed to wear dresses, but if a guy goes out and wears a dress or a skirt, people automatically just shun him.

They think it's so weird and it's like, a piece of clothing! That kind of stuff makes no sense to me.

Alex, Nikki, and Talia expressed that there are issues that go beyond the right for gay marriage and stretch into issues of sexuality and the social acceptance of various sexualities, beyond just straight or gay.

These same participants were the only ones who saw a direct connection to issues of race as well. During a discussion of the LA Times photograph, Alex brought up an article she read in the Huffington Post where a man named Jose was struggling to find a job for months, but when he changed his name to Joe, the jobs started calling him.

Meanwhile, Talia expressed that as a country "we're really opposed to change" and how it's "what's happening in Ferguson. There's a bunch of people protesting and I know I

saw in the newspaper yesterday...that there was a die-in on campus... some people, they just don't want to admit that there's an issue", as Nikki added "yeah, its easier to keep it the same." Later when discussing the Miss America photograph, Talia also discussed a recent event when there was uproar over an Indian woman being crowned Miss America and how the social issues over gender before are "the same way it is with race."

Not all participants were as bleak about the state of affairs in today's world, particularly when it came to issues of gender equality. Skylar explained how women feel more supported in their independence in today's world:

I think now because time has evolved, we're just stronger. Women, in general, we're just stronger and we don't really care about what men think. Sometimes, yeah we do, appearance wise, other times; I'm going to do what I want. I can. I'll have people who will stand beside me and who will support me.

Although a few participants brought up how sexism exists in Hardees commercials or in jobs, most viewed gender equality as something that has been reached in America. Most often when gender issues were brought up they were in the context of other countries. Usher explained "I can't remember what country it is, but like women are getting killed for protesting on what they can't wear, what they can't do." Ariana also voiced this concern by saying "in some countries, there is no equality". As much as participants saw connections across other issues, they did not generally feel as though there were still many concerns when it came to issues of gender equality in their own country.

Some participants also expressed the role that social media played in these discussions around agency and gender. Lindsay explained that during the 1970s challenges (e.g. discrimination or name-calling) would have been verbal, but how "in

today's world, it would be more online. Any social media website just blows up with nothing but hate and especially about touchy subjects.” Others referenced actresses such as Emma Watson or Anne Hathaway as people they had seen speaking out for women's rights or gay rights, or model Kendall Jenner as being a victim of online bullying about her body. Nikki also shared what she had seen on social media about the promotion of feminism, she described:

I just see a lot of things on Twitter about people taking it [feminism] further than they have maybe. I see a lot of people like girls or women whatever, saying things about how whenever men pay for them or whenever they open the door for them and stuff it's not okay. Like they are saying that they can't open the door for themselves and all that stuff. I feel like it's changed, where it's [feminism] going farther.

Nikki is forming ideas about how she is viewing feminism in today's world by the discussions she is seeing on social media, which suggests to her that some “feminists” might be going “too far”. Lindsey remarked on the sheer power of social media and how the feminist movement would look different in today's world because of it. Talking about the power of the particular photographs in the study, Lindsey reflected, “photographs back then might not have gotten shared as much as photos now. But people on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, one little click and they can see a photo and its gets spread so quickly.” The connections that these participants made between what they were analyzing in the past and what they are seeing in their own lives reflects their ability to use the exercise as a way to discuss controversial issues in the present.

## Progress Has Been Made

Every single participant thought that feminism created some sort of change. Every single participant also explained that they answered in this way because of being able to look at the pictures, think about the time period, and think about then vs. now. They used a basic concept of change over time to argue that feminism created change in the world. Participants were asked to individually write a written response to the question: “do you think feminism *really* created change? Why or why not?” after each partner group completed the historical thinking exercise. Table 4.7 highlights each individual’s written response.

Table 4.7 Responses to whether or not feminism really created change.

Name	Response
<b>Timmy</b>	Yes, not only just because do I realize the change, but the pictures show how women had different roles in society and most everyone would see them as maybe lesser but definitely less prevalent. Now women have more options with what they want to do with their lives.
<b>Usher</b>	Yes, feminism created a change, women choose abortions, they got equal employment opportunities. But they aren’t all viewed as beautiful either.
<b>Talia</b>	Yes, feminism created change. There’s been so many steps taken towards positive change including Roe v. Wade and general acceptance of female education. There’s still a lot of issues though including ones with body image. I think body shape is one of the biggest issues that needs to be tackled and based on previous experience, I think we can get there.
<b>Nikki</b>	I feel like feminism has created a change for women, especially in the education and job environments. There are still some issues with the beauty standards with women but in general, without feminism there wouldn’t be the level of equality there is today.
<b>Jessica</b>	I do because women got to do more things like being in public without being pretty, being able to play sports, and they got to have more say.
<b>Alex</b>	Yes because we went from being at the house to having more opportunities all around.

Table 4.7 Responses to whether or not feminism really created change (continued)

<b>Sam</b>	I think feminism created a change in how America values women as human beings. Thanks to feminism women have equal rights and have a voice.
<b>Austin</b>	I think that a lot of people were surprised at what was going on and it drew attention to them even more. Some topics drew peoples attention more than others. I think it did create change.
<b>Matt</b>	I think feminism caused a lot of change in a fairly short time. Throughout history women have been treated as lower/sub-servient to men. In the last 100 years women have gained nearly all the same rights as men through activism and protests. I would like to see all rights to be extended to all groups of people not just men but to women, gays, etc.
<b>Ellen</b>	Yes because women can now have the same jobs as men, they can play the same sports. Abortion is still a big debate, but its more acceptable. Women aren't required to wear dresses, have long hair, and be all feminine if they don't want to.
<b>Lindsey</b>	I believe it created change because in todays world, there are women senators, even a women running for president. It created change.
<b>Russ</b>	Yes, because when women stood up for their beliefs men took notice and not only men, but people across America.
<b>Ben</b>	I feel that it did cause a change when people push themselves to the front you will see what they are trying to make you see. People will always fight for what they want to change.
<b>Ariana</b>	I believe feminism did really create change because everyone should be equal and we should as women, be able to live our lives equal to men. Women are just as important. Women showed that men are not the only ones that can make a life for themselves.
<b>Jenna</b>	Yes because overtime women are doing the same things as men. The locations of their protests had a big impact because the government doesn't want people to rise against them, kinda why Edward Snowden isn't dead, he's famous.
<b>Skylar</b>	I think feminism did create change. If women never stood up, women today wouldn't have equal rights as men. These women were so brave. Everyone that fought for rights have influenced our lives as women today.
<b>Madison</b>	I think feminism really did create change. It was almost a union for women, of women who wanted to flip society and the way women are viewed. The fact that after all of their efforts women were able to legally be seen as equal is a large victory for all the challenges they faced.

Just reading these responses alone, one might think that all issues of gender inequity are solved. In fact, Talia and Nikki were the only participants who voiced concern that there still might be areas for improvement. Still, when discussing what they were thinking about when writing these responses or how they defined *change*, participants' answers reflected they were thinking conceptually about the steady progress made for equal rights. They then used this definition as their barometer for measuring change.

Every participant voiced that they were thinking about "then and now." Jessica explained, "I was comparing today to this time period whenever feminism was just starting, I just saw drastic changes, about how even they were still trying to get just normal jobs. While a lot of women today, they are doctors." Sam also remarked that he was "just thinking about back then and now" while Nikki was thinking about "today and how things are today, especially for women." When Matt explained these changes, he elaborated:

Back long ago, women had zero rights. Then, feminism comes in and slowly but surely they got voting rights, clothing rights, as in, they don't have to wear these big gowns that cover everything and they're super heavy all the time. They could wear pants or something. Slow movements over time through feminism caused change. That change kept going until they're almost the same.

What Matt is describing is a slow progression of change that occurred because people wanted change and so they fought to get their rights and slowly, things changed and evolved and caused change. Although an overgeneralized analysis, in effect, Matt is describing *how* a social movement works. It appears that even though the participants

argued that things had improved, they were also able to see that these gains happened because of the work of the people before them. Jenna explained, “if it wasn’t for people fighting for equality, we would never have people to realize that there is such a thing as equality.” Meanwhile, Lindsey noted that she was thinking about “how much women have actually gone through...and that women have contributed so much to the world...they need recognition.” Skylar also remarked on the hard work of these individuals and declared, “I was thinking about all the people who worked really hard to modify how women were seen, and how also feminists are seen today.” Participants saw the progress and change that had occurred, but they also realized those changes did not happen by themselves.

### **The Hesitancy in Taking Informed Action**

Participants expressed hesitancy as to whether or not they would join the men and women in the photographs in their protest. They also had mixed feelings on whether or not they would be any more likely to civically engage because of seeing the actions of the men and women in the photograph exercise. Even when participants expressed that they might participate more in the future, it was not necessarily reflective of the issues in the study.

Participants were unsure about whether or not the exercise helped them to become any more likely to civically participate. As Jenna said, “I would do it anyways” or as Matt expressed “probably not any more, because I already was pretty likely to participate...I’d totally walk in a march for the rights of people and I’d hold a sign for hours outside of a store or whatever.” These participants did not see the basic protest strategies that the historical actors were taking, to be anything other than ordinary. Even

those participants that expressed that they had gained something from the exercise, did not voice specific ways that would take action in the future. Instead, they replied much like Timmy who expressed he would take more action in the future because “just being more educated on a subject helps you make a decision.”

Even the participants that said they might be more likely to civically participate after the exercise, placed limitations on their actions. Lindsey explained “maybe not in the issues that they’re [photographs] talking about” but in the issues she cares about such as people abusing the welfare system. Talia said she might take more action “if I lived on my own”, while others like Austin and Nikki said that they wouldn’t necessarily participate in anything, but that they would support other people and “let them do what they wanted to do.” Although their hesitancy to say they would have joined the march in the abortion photographs was previously noted, participants were also hesitant to place themselves in the Miss America photograph. Lindsey explained, “I don’t think I would have taken my bra off, but I definitely would have like, ‘you go, girl!’” Meanwhile, Madison and Skylar developed an alternative to throwing your bra in the trash: bringing a bra from home. They explained:

Skylar: I’d put my bra back on.

Madison: Yeah, I probably would not be taking my bra off. That’s in this photo.

Skylar: No.

Madison: I would, in some other way, support what she’s doing

Skylar: Yeah, I would do the same thing.

Madison: I don’t know that I would take my bra off in a public place.



Skylar: I would be like ‘Hey, no!’ I’d go home and get one, but I’m going to keep mine on.

Interviewer: So you would get a different one and throw it in the trash, but not the one you’re wearing?

Skylar: No, because I like bras. [sic]

Interviewer: What do you think you would do to support her in a different way?

Madison: Scream ‘ahhhhh!!!’

Skylar: Yeah

Madison: Probably do some kind of little speech like, ‘ No Longer Restricted’ or something like that... then I’d probably pull out the bra out of my pocket that I brought from home.

Madison and Skylar are completely supportive of the woman’s actions in the Miss America photograph, and yet, do not see themselves as taking those same actions. It is clear that they support the goal of her protest by claiming to say a speech like “No longer restricted”, but it is also clear that they are uncomfortable with going against the gender norms in the same way, i.e. throwing your bra in the trash. As participants expressed that protesting with a sign, would be an action they would be willing to take, they also expressed their hesitancy in taking more extreme forms of action (e.g. marching for abortion or throwing your bra in the trash). The levels of action that these participants are noticing reflect not only the various forms of agency in the past, but also, how they think about agency in the present.

## **Summary**

Participants' analyses reflected that even when dealing with controversial issues such as abortion, ideas about equality and equal rights still dominated the conversation. They used the space created by discussing second wave feminism to form connections with modern day issues, particularly those around LGBT rights and issues of race. Although they saw gender equity as something achieved in the United States and something that only other countries struggle with currently, they were able to explain how social media has or could help them define their understandings around issues of gender. Participants expressed that they would just as likely to take actions such as holding protest signs, but expressed hesitancy around taking action on controversial issues such as abortion or controversial actions, such as throwing your bra in the trash. Their hesitancy around action signals that there is more work to be done to help them form smoother connections between agency in the past, and their own agency in the future.

## **Chapter Summary**

Through an on-going analysis of all study data including student questionnaires, interviewer notes and the transcriptions from both the partner historical thinking exercise and interview, several codes and themes emerged as relevant findings. I then organized these codes and themes into five distinct claims that reflected the ways in which high school seniors both employed historical agency as a conceptual tool and viewed historical agency in the context of second wave feminism. Participants viewed and ranked historical significance by examining the gains or accomplishments of historical actors. They corroborated between photographs while analyzing historical context and

contextual clues in the photographs, but they struggled with content. Participants identified the choices made by historical actors and evaluated the constraints, consequences, and challenges that accompanied those choices. Participants also discussed femininity, masculinity and feminism, but were influenced by their own ideas about gender and generational differences as well as by stereotypes. Finally, participants formed direct connections with their understanding of the past and the controversial issues of today's world. However they highlighted the progress and change that had occurred and were hesitant to say they would take informed action in the future. These findings are important for contributing to the understanding of students' conceptions of historical agency, their use of historical agency as a conceptual tool, and the ways in which controversial issues and topics in women's history are presented in the history classroom. Furthermore, these findings speak to the ways in which conceptual tools such as historical agency can be used to form a more gender-equitable history that does more than include women's stories, but also challenges the way these stories are taught.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion and Implications

The main purpose of this study was to examine high school seniors' understanding of the facets of historical agency and examine how high school seniors employed historical agency as an analytical lens in examining the second wave feminist movement. Using a quasi-naturalistic design, I worked with seventeen high school seniors as they completed individual questionnaires and then participated in a partner-based historical thinking exercise and interview. I applied ongoing thematic analysis by considering the codes and patterns that emerged from the data and then placing these codes and patterns into larger themes.

As participants worked through the historical thinking exercise and formed these connections, they established what Seixas (1996) called “temporal bearings.” These *temporal bearings* help consumers of history to “make sense of their lives” by being able to “assign significance, assess traces and accounts, conceptualize change, judge progress and decline, and employ empathy, moral judgment, and ideas of human agency” (Seixas, 1996, p. 778). Participant’s employment and understanding of historical agency thus consisted of using the choices, contexts, and challenges of historical actors in order to discuss historical significance, change over time and gender, and form the connections to today’s world that help them “make sense of their lives”. In this chapter, I will further expand on these findings and discuss their importance in the context of relevant literature and theoretical frameworks, while also discussing their larger implications and concluding with recommendations for future research.

Participants used historical agency as a tool to establish historical significance. They also were able to employ historical agency by using context to evaluate an actor's choices, the challenges inherent in different choices, and the consequences that ensue from making choices. Although participants sometimes struggled with content, they were nonetheless able to discuss definitions of gender and the role gender plays in structural power, controversial issues, and the progress made in issues of women's rights. Participants did, however, describe issues of gender equity as being resolved and their explanations were reliant upon various stereotypes and overgeneralizations. It is clear from these findings that participants were able to break down and recognize the historical agency of actors in the past, but that the use of historical agency as a conceptual tool was a messy process. While participants used agency conceptually to understand significance and change over time, their misunderstandings regarding content, causation, and larger controversial issues tended to limit their analysis of both historical agency and its intersection with gender.

### **The Breadth of Understanding Historical Agency**

Historical agency is a complicated concept. For this study, I defined *historical agency* as the actions of an individual or groups of individuals in the past (actors) who chose to act (actions) in the context of structures, limitations, and constraints, while facing the intended and/or unintended consequences of their actions. The intent of using this definition was to allow students opportunities to discuss what this study calls the 5 C's of historical agency: choice, context, consequence, category, and concept. See Chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion around historical agency or the 5 C's of historical agency.

Previous research suggests that K-12 students have struggled with understanding the agency of past actors and that students tend to rely upon explanations of great individuals or nations (Barton, 1997; Winter 2001; 2010; Brophy & VanSledright, 1997; Peck et al., 2011). Research has also shown that students have difficulty in seeing the affordances and constraints of the actions of those in the past (Barton, 1997; 2010; Peck, et al., 2011) and that they tend to also skip a large component of agency: *choice* (Barton, 1996, 2010; Shemilt, 1980). Participants in this study, however, described a broader approach to historical agency and were successful in identifying the intentionality and choices of actors in the past, the challenges and consequences to actions, and were able to use historical context and the contextual clues in the photographs to inform their responses to the photographs and interview questions. However, although participants held broad views of historical agency, they tended to misconstrue the affordances and constraints related to an actor's choices. This tended to limit their ability to accurately identify historical actors. In the following sections, I connect these findings to previous research and the theoretical frameworks that informed this study.

### **Discovering Choice**

Barton (2010) described *choice* as an idea that “people in the past were capable of making their own decisions, of considering alternatives and making moral and ethical judgments about what they valued or how to pursue their goals” (p. 33-34). Barton went on to explain that students, including those in his study in New Zealand, tend to ignore choice and instead ascribe actions in the past to deficit reasoning (i.e. ignorance, circumstance, parental upbringing, etc) (Barton, 2010). Similarly, Peck et al. (2011)

found that Canadian students narrating a history of Canada largely missed intentionality, except in the case of one great individual, John McDonald.

Participants in my study responded rather differently than did students in either Barton's or Peck's research. Instead, intentionality figured quite strongly in their analyses of historical images. As discussed in Chapter 4, participants focused on the emotions and actions of the actors in the photographs to conclude that the actors intended to "prove a point". In the context of examining photographs related to second wave feminism, they identified people in the past as making decisions about how to pursue their goals. As Alex explained it, for instance, the woman in the Miss America photograph "has to make a statement. It's like you may feel small, but you can still make a statement even if no one is watching...it's just really do what you feel is right kind of thing." In analyzing the woman's actions, Alex identifies the choice, making a statement, and a possible consequence: The action may not have a large effect. Instead, the actor's intent focuses on values, goals, and the ability to do "the right kind of thing," despite what otherwise might have seemed a poor public outcome. Other participants also identified historical actors as making statements, proving a point, or breaking the cookie-cutter mold. In doing so, they referenced various emotions represented by the actors in the photographs.

Reading affect—emotion—in the photographs appeared to help participants attend to the intention of historical actors. In doing so, participants also displayed a form of historical empathy. Barton & Levstik (2004) explained that although historical empathy remains a much-debated concept in the research literature, consensus has arisen over the concept's meaning that: "empathy involves using the perspectives of people in the past to explain their actions" (p. 208). Using these perspectives however, involves

more than just recognizing their point of view; it involves the ability to “contextualize their [historical actors] actions” (Barton & Levstik, 2004, p. 208). Lee and Shemilt (2011), are particularly useful, here, as they argued that historical empathy was not a process, so much as an achievement: “It is where we get when, on the basis of evidence, we reconstruct people’s beliefs and values in ways that make social actions and social practices intelligible” (p. 48). From that perspective, participants analyzing the Miss America pageant photograph were using evidence (deductions related to emotions and other contextual clues in the photograph) to reconstruct the subject of the photograph’s beliefs and values (to prove a point) in a way that made her social action (throwing her bra in the trash) make sense as a reasoned choice. The idea that she was “rebellious” or “scandalous” only further fits the argument that she was intentionally trying to prove her point, of being, as Madison put it, “no longer restricted”.

Despite noticing intentionality in these ways, participants struggled with different degrees of deficit reasoning and overgeneralization, especially with trying to make sense of the representations of “opposition” to the women’s movement. Participants used deficit reasoning when they claimed, for instance, that the young boys in the Hoboken photograph were probably not accepting of the girls playing because that’s “what their parents had taught them.” In another instance, participants overgeneralized and noted that generational difference might play a role in explaining the anti-ERA photograph because the opposition might be “conservative” or “from the old school”. It is possible, then, that participants more accurately or easily identify intentionality when viewing a moment in U.S. history perceived as positive rather than negative. They did not see the men and women advocating for equal gender rights as engaging in something controversial.



Rather, participants saw them as part of a proud moment in U.S. history. Indeed, participants like Madison voiced their thankfulness for the achievements of the women's movement when she expressed that she "was just thinking of how brave they were to really...stand up." Perhaps their ability or willingness to recognize *choice* benefitted from the fact that historical actors' choices, in this historical moment, at least, aligned with their present perspectives.

### **Constraints and the Missing Affordances**

Overall, participants ably and accurately identified the constraints that faced the historical actors represented in the photographs they analyzed. Participants noted various social and structural challenges that could have shaped historical actors' ability to act, while also noting possible unintended consequences to these actions (i.e. going to jail). By identifying these challenges, participants reasoned historically in ways similar to students in Northern Ireland who noticed the structure of society and societal differences (Barton, Winter 2001). Participants in this present study also emphasized that these historical actors were brave men and women who were fighting for equality which, of course, was eventually won, therefore continuing the historical narrative as one of progress (Barton, Winter 2001).

By examining the various challenges or limitations on the historical actors' choices, participants were able to see that the actions and actors were set within a much larger set of societal forces, constraints, and conditions (Peck et al., 2011). As shown in Chapter 4, participants identified numerous challenges and limitations to the actions shown in the photographs including: jail, police, laws, religion, discrimination, judgment, name calling, and those with opposing social viewpoints about gender (mostly referred to

as “men”). However, participants largely missed the opportunity to discuss the affordances of class, race, or educational/social status available to historical actors as they made their choices.

Participants did not mention ways in which the backgrounds of these men and women afforded opportunities to express their actions in the ways that they did. For example, although participants thought that others might have yelled at the woman throwing her bra in the trash, they failed to question why she was able to take this action in the first place. Would she have been able to take these actions if she were another race? Would she have even been able to attend the Miss America Pageant if she were poor? Although not prompted with these questions, participants’ inability to see that her choices were coming from a position of some degree of privilege is problematic. Barton (2010) noted that studying agency means “looking at how people chose to make history, including the factors that constrained their choices” (p. 35), but accounting for the affordances of race, class, gender and other forms of status are equally important. Johnson (2003) argued similarly that historians use of agency has “reduced historically and culturally situated forms of resistance” to the “larger, abstract human capacity – agency” (p. 117). Johnson continues to argue that by failing to account for these cultural constraints and affordances of the past, historians are conflating agency and resistance in ways that are problematic. Johnson (2003) pointed out:

...if breaking a tool and being Nat Turner were not identical manifestations of human ‘agency,’ nor were being Nat Turner and being Harriet Jacobs. Put in this light, the elision of all sorts of actions into the abstract category of ‘slaves’ agency’ seems to presume the identity of the subject of history – i.e. ‘an

individual slave' rather than 'a Christian' or 'a mother' or 'the Igbo' or 'the Blacks' (p. 118).

The idea that actors' identities could act as affordances as much as they sometimes acted as constraints on people's choices has not been studied sufficiently in history education research and it was largely missing from participants' discussions about historical agency.

### **Understanding Agency Through Context**

Participants used the historical context for each picture (the date of the photograph, the location caption on each photograph) as well as the contextual clues within the photographs (appearances, backgrounds and evidence of emotions) to answer the prompts and attend to historical agency. Just as VanSledright (2002) described, these students were able to analyze historical agency through having:

opportunities . . . to work with various forms of evidence, deal with issues of interpretation, ask and adjudicate questions about the relative significance of events and the nature of historical agency, and cultivate and use thoughtful, context-sensitive imagination to fill in the gaps in evidence trails when they arise" (p. 134).

Within the limits of the exercise (i.e. number of photographs, questions, etc) and despite significant gaps in historical background participants drew heavily on context clues to interpret the agency of historical actors.

As opposed to viewing the photographs as snapshots of moments in time, participants attempted to decode the messages in the photographs. Participants viewed the photographs as "carefully constructed spaces, using symbols and allusions to convey

complex messages” (Card, 2004, p. 116). They identified the young girls in the Hoboken photograph, for instance, as being “role models” and “bringing confidence to other women or girls to follow.” Participants also spoke at length about how the woman’s action of throwing her bra in the trash and Cindy Sherman’s reaching for a book symbolized larger messages about women’s independence and breaking gender norms. They were thus not only using context clues, but also were making inferences based on the symbolism and complex message they believed the photograph was capturing. Previous research has shown that even elementary students can be guided to think critically about the past and to develop empathy through the use of historic photographs (Barton, September, 2001; McCormick & Hubbard, 2011). The use of historic photographs is what Barton (September, 2001) called an “authentic historical inquiry” that, with appropriate scaffolding, allows students to analyze the patterns of people’s lives in the past. The ways in which participants in this study used both the historical context and the context clues and symbolism within the photographs suggests that historic photographs might also be a pedagogical strategy for teaching students to analyze the complexity of historical agency.

### **Limitations in the Conceptual Use of Agency**

Participants not only understood and analyzed the historical agency of those in the past, but they also used historical agency as a conceptual tool to investigate a particular moment in time, in this case, second wave feminism in the 1970s. Part of the messiness of historical agency stems from agency being both an element of past human activity and a conceptual tool that, theoretically at least, allows students or historians to critically evaluate historical content. Previous research has shown how *second-order* concepts

such as historical agency, can help students make sense of historical narratives by examining change over time or causation (Lee & Ashby, 2000). Participants in this study better managed to apply the concept as an element of progress over time, but were not as quick to apply more critical readings regarding content or causation.

### **Significance and Change Over Time: A Story of Progress**

Participants were very clear in prioritizing what they viewed as historically significant. As presented in Chapter 4, they viewed an event or actor as significant by the extent that they were accomplishing something, gaining something, or being successful. If an event helped gain women's rights or if a photograph was seen as representing the goals or change promoted by the women's rights movement, it was significant—a historical win. Equality, change, and being successful evidenced progress and thus were seen as historically significant.

Some of this should not be surprising; previous researchers have continued to point out the ways in which students understand the traditional historical narrative as one of linear progress (Barton, 1996; Barton, Winter, 2001; Barton & Levstik, 1998, 2004; Shemilt, 1980). Nonetheless, participants' emphasis on significance being equated to what changed, or to the influence on the progress made, also represents their ability to draw connections between these events and people of the past, and their own lives today. As Seixas (1994) noted, "a historical phenomenon becomes significant if and only if members of a contemporary community can draw relationships between it and the other historical phenomena and ultimately to themselves" (p. 285). Participants could argue that feminism helped create change because they could identify the differences between past and present and connect those changes to their own experiences. For these

participants, for instance, the idea that females could not be lawyers was not part of their reality. Instead, as Nikki pointed out, “there’s been the most change [against job discrimination] for women.” As a result, Nikki and her partner Talia ranked the LA Times photograph of the NOW member protesting unequal job classified ads as the most significant. As participants worked their way through the photo analysis exercise and their interpretation of today’s world, they were assigning narrative explanations for historical significance that identified things in today’s world as being caused by the events or people in the past (Sexias, 1994).

While participants were using this narrative of progress to rank historical significance, they were also using the same narrative to explain questions of change over time. Participants saw the actions of the historical actors in question as being part of a larger movement that helped to create the societal norms of today. As Matt explained, “throughout history women have been treated as lower/ subservient to men. In the last 100 years women have gained nearly all of the same rights as men through activism and protests.” Participants used a “then and now” comparison to be able to define what they meant by change. When asked if they could write responses explaining how things changed over time, participants all agreed they could because generally they thought that the photographs and the questions helped to identify what life was like then.

Studies have shown that students are quite adept at identifying change over time, particularly with content containing material culture—clothing, technologies, architecture and the like (Barton, 2002; Barton & Levstik, 1996; Harnett, 1993). Participants used clues such as the appearance of the men and women in the photographs (their outfits, hair, etc.) to make chronological judgments about the larger historical context of the

1970s. Participants explained that values and social norms had changed over time and they were able to express these ideas while assessing the challenges and limitations that were placed on the historical actors in the past. Such comparisons help to provide context for their analysis (Dickinson & Lee, 1984), but it also limits their broader understandings of agency as the values of one group of people (e.g. men/feminists) get lumped into larger stereotypical identifications (e.g. women haters/men haters).

Regardless of how participants identified the values of people in the past, it was clear they viewed the values of people in the present as a progression from “then”. Similarly, Barton & Levstik (1998) found that middle school students consistently chose pictures of events relating to the extension of rights and freedoms as being historically significant. As participants in this study used the differential of “then” and “now” to evaluate the *progress* made over time, they were revealing “their concern with establishing that the United States is a country in which historic hardships and injustices are corrected and overcome” (Barton & Levstik, 1998, p. 487). Even as participants in this study noted the hardships faced by these historical actors, they continued to view the narrative of American history as one that overcomes its past. Much like the middle school students in Barton & Levstik’s 1998 study, they struggled reconciling their study of historical agency in the past with their narrative of progress.

### **Causation and Content: Missed Opportunities**

Causal explanations have routinely been difficult for K-12 students. As explained in Chapter 2, researchers have found that K-12 students view causes as things that are inevitable and or based on their personal views about the event in question (Carrertero et al., 1997; Shemilt, 1980). However, Rantala (2012) argued that students struggled with

causation because of their inability to achieve historical empathy and decipher the actions of people in the past.

Participants' ability to empathize with historical actors in the photographs suggests that empathy is not the problem—or at least is not an issue of “ability” as Rantala argues. Study participants were quite able to decipher personal motivations and to empathize with historical actors on the two levels described by Barton & Levstik (2004), empathy as perspective recognition and empathy as care. As shown in Chapter 4, participants were able to see empathy as perspective recognition, as they evaluated the multiple perspectives of actors in the past through examining the historic photographs. As Nikki explained, “I think actually seeing the pictures and then going through and comparing the different situations about these people, really helped me understand all the different things that were going on and all the different opinions that people had.”

Participants also used empathy as care as they cared *that* these historical actors had faced challenges and discrimination in the past and they cared *to* know about how these actions should influence their present or future (Barton & Levstik, 2004). As Madison explained, “the struggle as well, like even if women didn't get, end up not getting equal rights, just knowing that they put this much effort into it would be reason for why women of the future should try again.” Madison highlights how participants used the photographs to achieve historical empathy, by caring what actors in the past went through and caring about what that meant for the future.

Despite their ability to recognize and care about historical actors perspectives and use empathy to care about the past, participants still struggled with causation. Nikki explained that determining the causes would be difficult because “you kind of have to



infer the cause or you have to know things about it beforehand.” In other words, establishing causation would require deeper content knowledge. However, other participants said they could write about causation because as Ariana explained, “you can actually kind of put yourself there, and see what they’re seeing, and kind of feel what they’re feeling.” Despite these mixed responses on their abilities to discuss causation, participants were not discussing causation during their historical thinking exercise.

As presented in Chapter 4, participants discussed a variety of ways in which the actor’s were doing actions intentionally, as they were “proving a point” or “breaking the mold.” However, at no point did participants choose to discuss what made these actors take these actions. Although they hinted at possible causes through their discussion of the challenges and limitations facing the historical actors, at no point did they question the actual event or action itself or suggest alternative actions. In this way, participants were using “assumptions and the fallacy of over-determination” by being able to “construe ‘actions’ as having event-like outcomes” (Lee & Shemilt, 2009, p. 136). Participants were able to see this particular moment of history, second wave feminism, as something that had causes and effects, and challenges.

However, participants limited their conception of history by assuming that this history was moving as “a one-way street of over-determined landmarks on the route from ‘then’ to ‘now’.” (Lee & Shemilt, 2009, p. 137). The problem with this level of historical thinking is that, as Lee & Shemilt (2009) pointed out, it limits students’ ability to see causation as anything beyond a sequence of determined events because they struggle with seeing the breadth of possible causes in history. This was particularly true for these participants who never once expressed that the actions of these individuals were

*not* responsible in generating success for the women's rights movement of the 1970s.

Participants struggle with causation suggests they were missing what historian Edward Ayers (2003) calls the "essence of the story" (p. xix). Ayers (2003) explained:

Simple explanations, stark opposites, sweeping generalizations, and unfolding inevitabilities always tempt us, but they miss the essence of the story, an essence found in the deep contingency of history. To emphasize deep contingency is not to emphasize mere chance, all too obvious in a war, but rather the dense and intricate connections in which lives and events are embedded (p. xix).

Participants' difficulty with understanding causation means they lacked the ability or the skills to reach the "deep contingency of history" that illustrates how lives and events are connected.

Part of their inability to fully understand causation also stemmed from their very obvious struggle with the historical content and the chronology of the time period. As shown in Chapter 4, participants lacked accurate chronological information for the 1970s. Much of their struggle was around "*temporal concepts* like 'now', 'then', 'before', 'after', 'sequential', and 'concurrent'" (Blow, Lee, & Shemilt, 2012, p.147). They also struggled with content related to women's history, aside from the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment. Although the goal of this study was not to measure their content knowledge on second wave feminism, it was clear that their lack of content knowledge hindered their ability to employ a fuller range of second order concepts, including causation. Because participants struggled to sequence events in the 1970s, they were only able to infer historical agency when it revolved around the historical actors in the photographs. Their struggle with

temporal concepts became a limitation in regard to causation, because as Blow et al., explain:

failure to grasp that, as used in historical narratives and explanations, concepts of *sequence* and *concurrency* pertain to the (potential) interactions and independence of events as well as to clock and calendar timings, also constrains understanding of second-order concepts of *change* and *cause* (p. 31).

Participants did not have the content background or the historical skills to use temporal concepts in this context. As a result, they missed opportunities to further investigate causation.

### **The Intersection of Agency and Gender**

As participants employed historical agency as a tool to investigate second wave feminism, they confronted conceptions of femininity, masculinity, and what it means to be a feminist. The interaction of these concepts helps to define agency because it so clearly involved individuals, groups and institutions exercising power to effect or block social change. As Mathews (1981) pointed out, “social change is complex and results from the interplay of many factors. Nowhere is this truer than in the women’s movement” (p. 421). Although study participants enthusiastically examined the power of gender and societal gender structures related to the photographs, they tended to rely on stereotypes and over-generalizations in building their interpretations of people, ideas and events. Their discussions locate participants on the cusp of “tipping” into the controversial issues of sexuality, reproductive rights, and equity that persist in the present (Hess, 2009).

## **The Role of Gender Power Structures**

As described in Chapter 4, participants identified definitions of and assumptions about femininity and masculinity as power structures that influenced their understanding of agency in the context of second wave feminism. From their perspective, standards of femininity (i.e. being “like a girl”) were placed upon women in the past and in their own experience. Participants described how these standards were based on the assumption of masculine superiority. For some time, researchers have demonstrated the multiple ways that “gender and other power relations are negotiated” in schools (Kane, 2011, p. 38). Indeed, schools act as “institutional agents in gender-forming processes, endorsing particular forms of femininity and masculinity and are involved in negotiating the power relations between them” (Kane, 2011, p. 38). Schools, however, have not been alone in this process. Researchers have pointed out that social studies and history curriculum have continued to deal inadequately with issues of gender, including women’s rights, or and that students are thus taught to view events of the past and present primarily from the perspectives of men (Crocco, 1997; Cruz & Groendal-Cobb, 1998; Hahn, et al., 2007; Levstik, 2001; Levstik & Groth, 2002; Winslow, 2013; Woyshner, 2002).

As participants discussed the various power structures surrounding femininity and masculinity, in some ways they were repeating the narratives they have been taught. Participants like Jenna noted that men in the past thought that they were “superior” while others like Skylar thought that men would have naturally had “multiple options” for jobs, an explanation that suggests the structural power imbalance related to gender. Given the fact that the dominant history curriculum, as dictated by tests and standards that favor a

male-centered narrative, is the norm in K-12 schools, it makes the study of “women and historically marginalized people even more difficult” (Winslow, 2013, p. 320).

It is not surprising, then, that participants saw men or being masculine as being more powerful or more able to dictate politics and society—it is the narrative they have been taught and one that influences their understandings of historical significance (Levstik, 2001; Levstik & Groth, 2002). Still, these discussions of gender and power are situated within the larger curriculum of social studies and the failure to provide attention to the complexity of these ideas “leaves stereotyped ideas about gender unexamined” (Levstik, 2001, p. 199).

As participants wrestled with the concept of femininity, it became clear that they brought many assumptions with them to this larger conversation. For some of the female participants, issues of being “like a girl” stirred up emotional conversations over their own experiences with sexism, bullying, or judgment based off of their appearance. Levstik & Groth (2002) found that eighth graders expressed concern with confusing gender roles and how they viewed themselves within these roles. These twelfth graders expressed similar concerns. As participants pointed out the difficulty historical actors faced by challenging the assumed gender roles of their time, they also noted where they identified with the actors and expressed wanting to join their cause or support their actions because of issues of gender equality. Madison examined how the Cindy Sherman photograph could have represented how Cindy Sherman was trying to better herself and how her hesitancy is because she “would threaten the guys.” Madison later expressed that “I don’t think being a man makes you better than being a female.” Other participants made similar expressions, that everyone is equal, but yet, there are standards of

femininity that when not conformed to, threaten the male hierarchy, therefore signaling inequity.

Participants noticed the power structures at play, in part because the exercise was developed around historical agency and therefore issues of power, but also because they brought their own experience and cultural tools to the discussion. What is hopeful about these discussions is that participants are on the cusp of discussing how gender power structures exist in today's world and might be closer to getting at the "changed social order that does not rely on the domination of one gender over the other, or of limited ways of being 'male' or 'female'" (Levstik & Groth, 2002, p. 251).

### **Stereotypes and Overgeneralizations**

Participants' descriptions of gender, although hopeful, were also ripe with stereotypes and overgeneralizations, especially surrounding ideas about feminists and men. Although participants described the various structures of power relating to masculinity, they failed to describe masculinity as a spectrum with varying degrees of power and influence, depending on an array of sociocultural factors. Participants struggled with overgeneralizing men's agency during the time of second wave feminism much like eighth graders in Levstik & Groth's (2002) study initially argued that "*all* men treated women as inherently inferior" (p. 250). Even when confronted with evidence that "men" acted in favor of women's rights through the abortion photograph, there was confusion over how this interacted with gender roles and the power of masculinity.

Participants thought the photograph was "ironic" or "surprising" because of the fact that it contained men. Others such as Usher assumed that the men were pictured because "who really got to decide whether or not the woman had the baby? Usually it

was the husband's choice" and that the biggest challenge facing them would be "the men that didn't want it to be the woman's choice." Although participants ranked the photograph as one of the most significant, their inability to grapple with the differentiated experiences of men at this time, signals that they had not assimilated these concepts into their broader narrative of history as male dominant and as one of progress anymore than younger students can (Barton & Levstik, 1998).

Participants also struggled making sense of their argument that the historical actors in the photographs were feminists who were fighting for equality, and their larger understandings of the stereotypical negative definitions of feminist. Levstik & Groth (2002) found that eighth grade students were confused over the term *feminist* and they identified their hesitancy as stemming from associations with homosexuality, men hating, and gender role expectations. Similarly, Monaghan (2014) found that pre-service teachers described feminists as "crazy, annoying, polarizing, radical, lesbian, man-haters" (p. 9). Participants in this study reflected similar sentiments as they said they saw it as a "negative word", "not for men", or that it has a "negative connotation".

It is possible that their negative association with "feminists" also influenced their hesitancy in taking informed action. When identifying which actors in the photographs were feminists, almost all participants selected the woman throwing her bra in the trash at the Miss America Pageant as a feminist. Similarly, as shown in Chapter 4, participants were the most hesitant with explaining what they would do if they were in this photograph. As Ellen said "she would have clapped or something" or as Lindsey described "I don't think I would have taken off my bra, but I would have been like 'you, go girl!'" Only three of the seventeen participants explained that they would have taken

similar action. Although it is not completely clear from the study exactly what influenced their decision making around taking action, it seems plausible that their negative interpretation of the term “feminist” could have been a factor.

Still, eight participants voluntarily self-identified as feminists, including Matt who claimed he was a “half-way feminist”. When asked if he thought this before the historical thinking exercise he said “no, because I really didn’t know what it was too much. But I’m all for the equal rights of women and everyone.” Nikki expressed that others too might be feminists, but explained “there are a lot of people who if they knew the truth about some things they would identify as a feminist but they don’t see that as an issue because they aren’t educated about it.” In some ways, Nikki expressed one of the larger goals of the historical thinking exercise with her words, that there is a need for a space in the classroom for young students to be “educated about it”. Winslow (2013) argued:

the conscious integration of women into the social studies curriculum, the use of sex-equitable materials, and offering women’s and gender studies and women’s history courses can only have positive effects on students’ attitudes toward gender roles, equity, and personal empowerment (p. 320).

By failing to teach about the rise of feminism in secondary schools, there is a failure then to teach about the misconceptions and stereotypes of being a feminist. These shortcomings lead to the continuation of these stereotypes instead of towards a more powerful conversation over gender roles, equity, and empowerment that might advance civic goals in social studies classrooms.



## **“Tipping” Towards Controversy**

Hess (2009) explained that one of the biggest controversies over controversial issues in the classroom surrounds the very debate over what is actually in fact controversial. The debate becomes heated in schools especially when a topic is *tipping*. Hess (2009) argued:

*tipping* refers to a number of processes by which topics (which have managed to get into the curriculum in the first place) shift back and forth between their status as open questions (for which we want students to engage in deliberating multiple and competing answers) and closed questions (for which we want students to build and believe a specific answer)” (p. 113).

Hess (2009) continues to explain that often the first step is to “get inside the box”, meaning, to be included in the curriculum, so that it “legitimizes the topic” (p. 113). Therefore, one of the reasons why issues around gender and feminism have not tipped is because they are not in the box in the first place. Winslow (2013) pointed out that in relationship to the curriculum standards in social studies “gender-related topics, such as the movements for birth control, the Equal Rights Amendment, and Title IX of the 1972 Amendments to the Higher Education Act are not mentioned” (p. 325). As explored in Chapter 2, when issues of women’s history or women’s rights are mentioned, they are mostly in reference to the suffrage movement.

Because this study focused on second-wave feminism, which is largely ignored in social studies curriculum, participants seized the opportunity to place this curriculum inside the box. Madison explained, “it was an insight to, like a secret, well not secret because it’s public, but like a non-talked about topic.” Once “in the box”, participants

began moving closer to an intellectual tipping point that allowed them to use the agency of people in the past, to discuss controversial issues in the present. As shown in Chapter 4, participants found themselves not only discussing historical agency and the actions of people in the past, but also having deliberations over equality, abortion, religion, rape, sexual assault, LGBT rights, racism, and even modern controversies such as Ferguson, Missouri. Participants freely discussed their opinions on these topics, connected them back to the photographs, and analyzed the past in ways that connected to their own lives today. Loewen (2009) argued that there is a reciprocal relationship between justice in the present and honesty in the past. Loewen (2009) suggested, “helping students understand what happened in the past empowers them to use history as a weapon to argue for better policies in the present. Our society needs engaged citizens, including students” (p. 17). Having students use historical concepts such as historical agency to engage underrepresented curriculum, and to discuss controversial topics gets them closer to forming these connections.

### **Implications**

This study suggests there are benefits in using conceptual tools such as historical agency with secondary students that include its role in developing historical thinking skills. Other benefits of using agency as an analytical tool for examining history is that it creates space in the curriculum for including topics in gender history and can be used to spark the discussion of controversial issues in the history classroom. Findings indicated that participants rank historical significance by the progress made, use context to evaluate actors in the past, identify the intentionality of historical actors, and form connections between the agency of those in the past and controversial issues in the present. This

study highlights the ways in which high school students understand the dimensions of historical agency, as well as how they employ the concept to analyze second wave feminism. The use of historical agency as a conceptual tool offers teachers a way of engaging students' in historical thinking that allows them to reach historical empathy, while also examining other concepts such as change over time and causation.

Furthermore, the use of historical agency as a conceptual tool, suggests ways in which history educators and researchers can include gender history as a way of increasing the accuracy of the historical narrative, taking fuller account of all historical participants and connecting controversial issues from the past to their current manifestations.

### **The Benefits of The Historical Thinking Exercise**

One of the ways in which this study is important is in the context of a historical thinking exercise built around historical agency, secondary students can recognize agency as a historical phenomenon and analyze its manifestations in historical documents. Research has shown that even young students can “do history” (Levstik & Barton, 2011), and yet the myth persists that some aspects of historical thinking are either developmentally inappropriate or simply beyond the reach of anyone but a trained historian. Certainly, historians bring more to the analysis of historical documents than might most secondary students, but these are not just historical skills, they are civic skills (Barton & Levstik, 2004). They are, therefore, worth developing even if students never intend to pursue careers as historians.

Recently, the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards (NCSS, 2013), has called upon those teaching social studies to create inquiries that embody the civic purposes of social studies education. Swan, Lee, & Grant

(2014) explained that teaching the C3 means using five instructional shifts. By having participants recognize the agency of those in the past, but also by having them use agency as a conceptual tool to analyze history, they were able to practice using both inquiry and disciplinary literacies, while also combining an understanding of both content and skills (Swan, Lee & Grant, 2014). By examining the complexity of the past through their study of agency, participants were also getting closer to Dimension 4 of the C3 (Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action). Participants were using this historical thinking exercise to *understand* the complexity of problems in the past and *assess* the ability to take action within a certain context, in this case, second wave feminism (NCSS, 2013). Still, some of the historical thinking and inquiry skills may be more challenging than others, but researchers have found that given appropriate instruction, those challenges can be met and overcome (Barton 1996; Barton, 2010; Shemilt, 1980).

One of those challenges relates to time on task. This kind of historical thinking requires instructional attention. Fitchett, Heafner & VanFossen (2014) found that elementary teachers who used discipline-specific methods spent more time on social studies instruction, therefore creating more opportunities to engage their learners. The historical thinking exercise in this study proved to engage learners and to fit within a traditional secondary class period.

Further, it uses discipline-specific methods (e.g. primary source analysis) while engaging participants in what they called “an eye-opening experience.” The exercise was also able to generate an understanding of both historical empathy as perspective recognition and empathy as care, as participants understood multiple perspectives from

the past, and cared about their choices, actions, and what that meant for the future. The exercise also provided an experience with agency as an object of study and as an analytical tool, and motivated student interest in second wave feminism.

Furthermore, having student's analyze historic photographs can be a beneficial strategy for elaborating upon the humanness of history (Barton & Levstik, 2004). As Callahan (2013) argued, "the purpose of teaching students to think critically about historical photographs is not to produce scores of historians, but rather to develop civically competent citizens" (p. 78). These historic photographs provided a space for students to use their analysis of the historic photographs in order to unpack historical agency while also attending to the broader historic and civic issues of gender and feminism. In a packed curriculum, brief historical thinking exercises like the one used in this study, can become powerful learning opportunities for students that help students develop content, skills, and civic readiness.

### **Addressing Controversial Issues In The History Classroom**

Although the very nature of gender history is in some ways controversial, this study suggests that having students use historical agency as a conceptual tool and to identify the dimensions of historical agency in the past is yet another way to address controversial issues in the history classroom. As shown in Chapter 4, participants made numerous connections between what they were analyzing in the historic photographs and contemporary problems or issues. In some ways, this is exactly what you might expect to see in a history classroom. As Barton and McCully (2007) pointed out, "the history classroom seems like a natural venue for [controversial] discussions, both because the past is nothing if not one long series of controversies, and because current policy debates

are inevitably rooted in history” (p. 13). However, Barton and McCully (2007) continued and expressed the difficulty in this transition, they explained, “transferring patterns of reasoning from past to present is a difficult undertaking for students and is unlikely to occur without direct support from teachers” (p. 14). Although participants in this study were not making complex leaps from past to present, they were right on the cusp of forming larger connections, that could possibly be formed with the right scaffolds and teacher direction.

Furthermore, although agency has always been a feature of human experience, analyzing differential agency grew out of the work of historians trying to develop more inclusive narratives in the second half of the twentieth century. Using agency as an analytical tool highlighted the lives, experiences and voices out of those who had more often been ignored in the historical record (minorities, women, the poor, etc). From its inception as an element of historical thinking, then, agency has addressed the most controversial aspects of human experience: Race, gender, class, and the uses and abuses of power. As a result, attention to agency might be seen as requisite to any in depth attention to controversial issues, past or present.

And yet, these are the very topics so rarely addressed in any substantive way in social studies classrooms and curricula. Researchers (e.g., Almarza, 2001; Epstein, 1998; Tupper, 2005) have noted how challenging the dominant historical narrative that privileges white men is important for students to be able to see their own lives reflected in the curriculum and yet, it is still largely missing. If as social studies educators and researchers, we are to begin to address these shortcomings, we should include discussions and curriculum around historical agency so that K-12 students have opportunities to

consider how differential agency contributed to the marginalization of people in the past, and continue discussions over how these imbalances might be corrected in the present.

### **The Inclusion of Gender History**

The realm of higher education has experienced exceptional growth in the study of women's history, women's studies, and gender history; and yet these topics continue to be largely absent from K-12 schools (Winslow, 2013). Indeed, the field of history now calls for a "gender-conscious" history that "takes gender centrally into account" (Cott & Faust, 2005; p. 4). Cott and Faust (2005) explained:

Far from diminishing or marginalizing women's history, gender history encompasses and amplifies it. Gender history not only recognizes women as historical agents but also rejects the assumption that men's acknowledged historical agency can be understood apart from their gender—their masculinity and their sexuality. This perspective presumes that every historical actor is shaped and influenced by gender attributes and by the existence of gender categories in social organization and in structures of representation (p. 4).

This study contributes to this call for gender history. Participants recognized the historical agency of the men and women in the past and yet struggled with overgeneralizing their presumptions about men women at the same time. By failing to see each person as being shaped by their own gender attributes, participants failed to fully realize the potential influence of gender in the past and also gender today. Schmeichel (2015) argued:

For social studies to be a space in which gender equity can be taken more seriously, more critical approaches to including women in social studies are

needed to emphasize that the relationship between historical or contemporary political, social, and economic conditions for women is rooted in systems of power (p. 21).

Historical agency is a tool that can provide students with these opportunities to understand the complexities of the systems of power in the past and to highlight the relationships between the historical and the contemporary. Having students consider the historical agency of those in the past helps to guide students in considering the various influences upon historical actors (gender, race, class, etc), that therefore open up curricular opportunities for more a gender equitable history (Levstik, 2001).

Furthermore, when we as educators and researchers fail to create a balanced and equitable history curriculum, we are sending strong messages to students' about its importance. These participants expressed various reasons as to why they thought they had not been taught this content before. Participants mentioned time, the gender of the teacher (male), and that all they did was "read textbooks" and "learned about wars" as to reasons second wave feminism was not covered. However, participants also explained that they thought it was not taught about women's history more generally because "it wasn't the most important thing", that "it wasn't a really big part of history", or that "for most of all history, they [women] haven't really been that significant." Lindsey also expressed that issues of gender are not taught because "they want you to, a lot of the teachers, want you to think that it [issues of gender] [are] solved." As these participants explained, they are receiving loud messages about which issues are important and which are not. It is time that as educators and researchers we begin to discuss the messages we are sending to our students when we are silent.



Lastly, as social studies curriculum continues to be a political battleground over issues of the inclusion of social history topics (e.g. 2014-2015 AP History Curriculum), studies like this one, point to the intellectual as well as ethical benefits of inclusion. Having students consider the historical agency of those in the past and use agency as a conceptual lens to investigate topics in gender history, provides them with a set of historical thinking tools and tools for discussing similar issues in the present. These skills are necessary for having students consider the *humanness* of history, which is critical to their lives in a participatory democracy (Barton & Levstik, 2004).

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Students' understanding and use of historical agency as well as their understandings of gender and feminism are areas that need more studies to explore the ways in which teachers and educational researchers can use these ideas to create a more inclusive history classroom. This study indicates several areas for future research:

- how historical agency could be leveraged into service learning or direct civic action, both in students' attitudes on agency and action and their ability to perform these tasks;
- students' perceptions and definitions of gender and feminism within the social studies classroom;
- classroom based studies on the understanding and use of historical agency that includes both teacher and student perspectives; and
- the role of historic photographs in fostering discussions around historical agency, gender, and controversial issues; as well as the examination of students' use of historic photographs.

In addition to the above areas for research, since this study focused on one school and seventeen participants, additional studies on students' understanding and use of historical agency within the same context (second wave feminism) would be beneficial.

### **Conclusion**

This study examined how high school seniors employed historical agency as a conceptual tool for examining second wave feminism. Using a quasi-naturalistic inquiry design, I worked with seventeen high school seniors of both genders to investigate their historical thinking on second wave feminism. Analyzing their student questionnaires and the transcripts from their historical thinking exercise and their semi-structured interview, I found that participants rank historical significance by the progress made, use context to evaluate actors in the past, identify the intentionality of historical actors, and form connections between the agency of those in the past and definitions of gender as well as controversial issues. These findings shed light on the ways in which historical concepts may be used as methods of incorporating underrepresented people, ideas and events into the secondary curriculum and suggest several points for future research. Given the lack of attention given to gender history in the K-12 curriculum, students thus need opportunities to engage in learning that not only teaches them about the content of the past, but also calls upon them to fight for better policies surrounding issues of gender equity in the future.

## APPENDIX A

### Basic Student Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions as candidly as possible. Your responses are confidential and will not be used for purposes outside of this research. If you feel uncomfortable answering a question, please reserve your right to skip that question and continue. Please turn it in to me when you are finished. Thanks for your time and cooperation!

#### Civic Participation:

1) List all current teams, groups or clubs that you belong to:  
(if you do not have any teams or groups, skip ahead to question #3):

2) Please answer the following sub-questions that describe your participation in up to 3 groups you listed, if you only listed 1 or 2 groups, please answer only those sections accordingly.

Group 1 Name: \_\_\_\_\_

- a. What is your level of active participation (1 being highly active, 3 being moderately active, 5 being rarely active) \_\_\_\_\_
- b. What duties or roles do you perform in this group?

Group 2 Name: \_\_\_\_\_

- a. What is your level of active participation (1 being highly active, 3 being moderately active, 5 being rarely active) \_\_\_\_\_
- b. What duties or roles do you perform in this group?

Group 3 Name: \_\_\_\_\_

- a. What is your level of active participation (1 being highly active, 3 being moderately active, 5 being rarely active) \_\_\_\_\_
- b. What duties or roles do you perform in this group?

3) Describe your civic activities by answering the sub-questions below:

- a. Do you volunteer? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, where? \_\_\_\_\_

How often? \_\_\_\_\_

- b. Do you participate in any other civic activities? \_\_\_\_\_  
If so, which ones? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Do you plan on voting when you turn 18? \_\_\_\_\_  
Why or why not?

For the next five questions, please rate your likelihood to participate in the following either in the present or in the future using a Likert scale of 1-5, with 1 being *most likely*, 3 being *neutral*, and 5 being *least likely*.

How likely would you be to:

- 4) Lead extra-curricular activities in your school: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) Politically engage with others (protest, write letters, etc)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 6) Run for a public office: \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) Take a mission trip or other type of philanthropic trip:  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Prior Knowledge and Content Attitudes**

- 8) Why do you think we should study history?
- 9) In your own words, describe what do you think *agency* means.
- 10) In your own words, define the word *feminist*.

11) Please place a check in front of each of each person, group or event that you have heard of before:

- Mary McLeod Bethune
- Margaret Sanger
- Gloria Steinem
- Betty Friedan
- National Council of Negro Women
- Equal Pay Act
- Eisenstadt v. Baird
- Griswold v. Connecticut
- Roe v. Wade
- National Organization for Women (NOW)
- Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)
- Title IX
- Pregnancy Discrimination Act
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- Planned Parenthood Federation of America
- The Feminine Mystique*
- 1968 Protest on Miss America Pageant
- 1970 Women's Strike for Equality
- "No Fault" Divorce Laws

12) Of the people, groups or events that you checked, which do you think were *most* historically significant in the feminist movement?

13) Why do you think they are most significant?

14) Of the people, groups or events that you checked, which do you think are *least* historically significant in the feminist movement?

15) Why do you think they are least significant?

**Demographic Information**

Name:

16) Age: \_\_\_\_\_

17) Choose your own pseudonym (this will be the name I will use for you in my research): \_\_\_\_\_

18) Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

19) Race/Ethnicity (please self identify using your own language/term):  
\_\_\_\_\_

20) Would you be willing to participate in a historical exercise and one on one interviews: \_\_\_\_\_

21) If you are willing to participate and have any free moments in your schedule (office aids, teacher aids, computer lab, etc), please list those (including blocks/days/times) below:

Thanks for your completion of this questionnaire!

## APPENDIX B

### Photographs

#### Abortion Photograph



*International Women's Day march down State Street, Chicago. 1974.  
[photograph].*

Hoboken Photograph



*Little League tryouts in Hoboken, NJ, April 1974. [photograph].*  
Two years after NOW (National Organization of Women) won lawsuit (NOW v Little League Baseball Inc) forcing the team to permit girls to try out.



Anti-ERA Photograph



*Demonstrators Opposed to the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment) in Front of the White House, February 4, 1977. [photograph].*

LA Times Photograph



*NOW (National Organization of Women) members picket Los Angeles Times, 1969, [photograph].*

Cindy Sherman Photograph



*Untitled film still #13 (self portrait). 1978.*  
Sherman, Cindy. (photographer).

Miss America Photograph



*An unidentified woman drops a bra into the trash at 1968 Miss America Pageant. [photograph].*

## APPENDIX C

### Observe and Reflect Prompt

## OBSERVE

Take 8-10 minutes to *silently* observe the photographs at your tables.

Think about the following questions:

What do you see?

What people and objects are shown?

What is the physical setting?

What other details can you see?

## APPENDIX D

### Historical Thinking Exercise Prompt

#### Directions for Photograph Exercise:

Using partner discussion, answer each question to the best of your ability. Work together with your partner and talk back and forth as necessary. Please feel free to ask any questions as you work. There are no right or wrong answers, just *your answers*.

1. Who is pictured in the photograph?
2. What do you think they are doing?
3. Describe what you think are possible reasons for their actions.
  
4. What was the date and location (if given) of the photograph?
5. Describe anything else that you think might be going on at this time or at this location that you think could be affecting the individuals.
  
6. What do you think the effects of this individual's or groups' actions were?
7. Do you think they faced challenges or limitations to their actions? Describe or list these challenges or limitations. If you don't think they faced any, describe why not.
8. If you were in this photo, what actions would you have taken?

#### Pink Post-It:

Using the post-its, describe how influential you see these actions in creating social change.

Number the images from 1-6 with 1 being the one you think was *the most influential* and 6 being the one you think was the *least influential*.

#### Purple Post-It:

Individually, write a short response to the following question:

Based on your investigation of these photographs, do you think feminism *really* created change? Why or why not?

## APPENDIX E

### Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Opening: Please speak as candidly as possible. If at any time, you would like to stop the interview, ask a question, or ask me to re-phrase or repeat my questions, please feel free to do so. I will only use your pseudonym from this point forward.

1. Tell me about what this inquiry process was like for you.
  - a. What did you like?
  - b. What did you not like?
  - c. What did you find the most helpful/beneficial?
  - d. What did you find the least helpful/beneficial?
2. On your questionnaire, you defined a *feminist* as \_\_\_\_\_, what role do you think identifying as a feminist plays in an individual's actions?
  - a. Do you think it causes them to take actions they wouldn't otherwise?
  - b. What do you think influences calling yourself a "feminist"?
  - c. Do you think the women and men in the photographs were feminists?  
Why or why not?
3. Looking at the person, group or events that you checked that you knew- are there any that you didn't check before that you would check now?
  - a. Which ones? Why?  
Is there anything you understand better now? Which ones?
  - b. Is there anything you would want included as being influential in the feminist movement?

4. On your questionnaire, you identified \_\_\_\_\_ as being the most significant event in the feminist movement of the 1960s-1970s because of \_\_\_\_\_ . Talk me through your thought process in making that decision.
- What did you consider when making this decision?
  - Were there events, people, groups, etc. that were not listed that you would have included?
  - Why would you have wanted them included?

5. On your questionnaire, you were identified as being \_\_\_\_\_ civically engaged. Tell me about the experiences (personal or instructional) that you feel have influenced your civic decisions.

Explain what they do- if they want to vote- then ask, what influences those civic decisions.

- Did anything you learn about in your history coursework influence you?
  - If you had a mentor, what qualities in that person influenced you?
6. When you were analyzing the photographs, you examined *why* the individuals took actions (question #3). Talk me through that thought process.
- What types of things did you consider when answering that question?
  - What influenced your decision making process?
7. When you were analyzing the photographs, you said examined how the historical context could have affected the individual or group's actions (question #5). Talk me through that thought process.
- How do you think they influenced their actions?



- b. What types of things did you consider when answering that question?
- 8. When you were analyzing the photographs, you identified the following as challenges or limitations to these individual or group's actions (questions 6-7):- you all talked about \_\_\_\_\_  
Talk me through that thought process.
  - a. What types of things did you consider when answering that question?
  - b. What influenced your decision making process?
- 9. How do you think completing an inquiry like this one could help you to answer questions about how things change or don't change over time?
  - a. What specific pieces of the inquiry would be helpful? (images, individuals, tasks, etc)
  - b. What about when answering questions about causation?
  - c. What specific pieces of the inquiry would be helpful? (images, individuals, tasks, etc. )
- 10. When you finished the inquiry, you talked about how whether or not you thought second wave feminism created change, what did you consider as you answered this question?
  - a. How did you define "change"?
  - b. What specific people or actions did you consider?
- 11. Did examining second wave feminism remind you of anything going on today?
  - a. Do you see any similarities or differences across choices? Actions? Limitations?
  - b. Were there strategies used then that you think could be used today?

12. Based on your participation in this historical thinking task, what would be the biggest “take away” or thing you learned?

- a. Would you be any more likely to civically participate? Why or why not?
- b. Do you think an inquiry like this would be important for other students to go through? Why or why not?
- c. Why do you think you were not taught about the feminist movement?  
Womens history?

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## VITA

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#### Completed Education

M.A. (Education)	2008	University of Kentucky Major Area: Curriculum and Instruction Emphasis: Secondary Social Studies
M.A. (History)	2007	University of Kentucky Major Area: Southern and Appalachian History Research Area: Women's Reform Movements
B.A. <i>summa cum laude</i>	2005	Concord University Major Areas: History with an emphasis in Philosophy & Political Science

#### Professional Experience

2014-Present	Graduate Assistant New York Social Studies Resource Toolkit Project.
2011- Present	Teaching Assistant University of Kentucky, Department of Curriculum & Instruction
2012-2013	Graduate Assistant, Masters of Initial Certification Coordinator University of Kentucky, Department of Curriculum & Instruction
2008-2010	Social Studies Teacher East Jessamine High School, Nicholasville, Kentucky.

### Scholastic and Professional Honors

University of Kentucky Woman's Club Fellowship Award (\$2,000), December 2014.

Graduate Assistant, College, Career & Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards Project, 2011-2013.

Principles of Learning and Teaching Praxis, Certificate of Excellence, 2008.

History Student of the Year, Concord University, 2005.

### Publications

Mueller, R.G. & Colley, L.M. (2014). *An Evaluation of the Impact of End-of-Course Exams and ACT-QualityCore on U.S. History Instruction in a Kentucky High School*. Journal of Social Studies Research. DOI: 10.1016/j.jssr.2014.07.002

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