BECOMING *GOOD ENOUGH*: THE WORKING LIVES OF WOMEN TEACHERS IN NEOLIBERAL TIMES

by

ELIZABETH ANN PITTARD

(Under the Direction of Stephanie Jones)

ABSTRACT

In this study, I use poststructural and new material feminist theory to investigate and theorize the sociopolitical, embodied, discursive and material manifestations of neoliberalism in the working lives of five women elementary school teachers to inform a broad audience about what the work of teaching has become in neoliberal times. This dissertation is non-traditional in structure, as it addresses educational researchers and teacher educators in four manuscript-length chapters for future publication in scholarly journals. In the first manuscript, I theorize my teaching experiences, which also serves as a background for the study. In the second manuscript, I theorize neoliberal subjectivity through a discussion of the social media site Pinterest and the market of Teachers Pay Teachers. Next, I discuss disaster capitalism in education in the fourth manuscript. The final chapter is a call to think rhizomatically with neoliberalism and shift the focus from teacher accountability to corporate accountability in educational research on neoliberalism.

Between each manuscript, there are shorter, intermezzo chapters with varying purposes. The first is aimed at providing context to the overall study by

detailing the participants and localized context where the study took place. The second is a transcript of a Three Minute Theory (3MT) YouTube video written collaboratively by my writing group, which is part of our broader project of making theory accessible for a wide audience. The third is an opinion piece that addresses a timely political issue relevant for the general public within the state where participants taught.

Throughout the study, I use the concept of the *good enough* teacher to deconstruct my own experiences and the experiences of the participants. The good enough (woman) teacher is an impossible subject position that serves as the benchmark by which teachers are consistently measured. What counts as *good enough* in teaching is and always has been a moving target. However, I argue that neoliberalism further complicates the always already impossibility of good enough in teaching. Thinking with poststructural and new material feminist theory opens up different ways to think about neoliberalism and its manifestations in the work of teaching.

INDEX WORDS: neoliberalism; teachers' lives; teaching; Deleuze; Foucault; new material feminisms

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DEDICATION

To current and future generations of teachers with the hope that you persistently question what counts as *good enough* in teaching.

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It seems beyond the capacity of language to express the overwhelming gratitude that I have for those who made not only this dissertation but also this PhD process a possibility. The prodigious, far-off and seemingly unrealistic dream I've had since at least my late teenage years of doing "the hardest thing I could do" when it came to my education would have never become a reality without incredible generosity towards me, unearned faith in me and unwavering support around me. While I cannot capture this gratitude in language, I nonetheless hope to convey at least a fraction of my thanks here.

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CHAPTER 1

GETTING TO *GOOD ENOUGH:* AN INTRODUCTION

I started a PhD program without any idea of what I was getting myself into. I began as a part-time student taking classes at night while maintaining my job as a full time fifth grade teacher. In chapter one, I share part of the path that led me to the topic of this study through my own attempts at becoming what I call the *good enough* teacher. I thought that if I worked hard enough, I could eventually somehow achieve this impossibility that fueled my perpetual exhaustion. Through reading and thinking with feminist and poststructural theory early in my PhD program, I began to question how I had gotten to the point that I had such a damaging relationship with myself. Upon recognizing that I was governing myself according to a multiplicity of damaging but normalizing discourses, I was both angry and relieved. I was angry because it took starting a PhD for me to question these damaging discourses, but I was relieved to find out that it was impossible to ever be smart enough, successful enough or beautiful enough to be *good enough* because damaging discourses produce these illusive, yet impossible subject positions and hold them up as possible (Walkerdine, 2003).

Having the language to describe and deconstruct discourses such as neoliberalism, gender normativity, and scientific positivism, was increasingly freeing for me. As a result of letting go of my damaging relationship with myself that had carried on far too long, I wanted to talk to other women teachers to find out if

they too struggled with discourses of *good enough.* Due in part to their particularly strong influence in my life, I was most interested in gendered and neoliberal discourses. Throughout this dissertation, I tell different iterations of this same story of getting to *good enough* personally and my desire to make more moments of *good enough* possible in the lives of other women as well.

Thinking with Theory

Referencing Foucault's assertion that this century will be Deleuzian, feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti (1994) contends, "Quite clearly, we are not there yet, and Deleuze may well be the first one to demonstrate just how difficult it is to become consistently Deleuzian" (p. 123). Despite this difficulty, I nonetheless attempt to be consistently Deleuzian in my theorizations of how neoliberalism manifests itself in the working lives of the women represented here. I have found the DeleuzoGuattarian concept of the rhizome is particularly useful for thinking with neoliberalism. I have also relied heavily upon Foucault's (2008) lectures on biopolitics where he provides his genealogy of neoliberalism.

In addition to Deleuze and Foucault, I think with other feminist, poststructural and new material feminist theorists including but not limited to Valerie Walkerdine, Rosi Braidotti, Jane Bennett and Karen Barad. In theorizing the data, I persistently ask *How does it work?* and *What does it produce?* Asking these questions pushes the boundaries of what is possible to *think* and thus *do* things differently (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; May, 2005). This aim to do things differently is oriented towards an understanding that ethics, ontology, and epistemology are

inseparable. I take seriously this *ethico-onto-epistemology* (Barad, 2007) in my careful redescription of the world.

Finally, new material feminisms allow for a much needed *in-between* space to analyze both neoliberalism (Peck, 2013) and the embodied and socially constructed nature of subjectivity (Braidotti, 2000). Neoliberalism is often understood as a pervasive and dominant ideology that functions in a top-down manner disciplining its subjects into submission or as one of many discourses that function through governmentality (Peck, 2013). My aim in this study is to think rhizomatically (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) about how neoliberalism exists in broad sociopolitical contexts as well as embodied and discursive entities. Concerning subjectivity, new material feminisms allow for an *in-between* space as neither "a sacralised inner *sanctum*, nor a pure socially shaped entity" (Braidotti, 2000, p. 159). In other words, subjectivity is produced through material and discursive entanglements.

These theoretical shifts are part of a move in western philosophy that is sometimes referred to as the "ontological turn" away from the knowing subject of humanism and scientific positivism and towards *being* and *becoming* through the recognition that we are only able to live with/in mutual constitution with other material and discursive entities. I understand the ontological turn as emphasizing being *and* becoming with/in data. While being implies a static or stable identity, becoming implies movement and non-linearity. However, when doing research, we must *be* with others while also acknowledging that we are continuously *becoming* through this *being*—or through this assembling together-ness. Being together is a very material practice involving bodies and space, and some feminists understand

this turn from humanism and towards an entangled understanding of subjectivity as a productive move for women because, as they see it, we were never fully human in the first place (Braidotti, 2013).

Bringing the body back in to poststructural subjectivity, Braidotti (2000) understands Deleuze's notion of *becoming* as the constant "repositioning of the subject" (p. 170). Further, Gabrielle Ivinson and Emma Renold (2013) have pointed out that new material feminisms "redefine agency as 'becomings' that dynamically emerge through assemblages comprising moving bodies, material, mechanical, organic, virtual, affective and less-than-conscious elements" (2013, p. 704). Becoming, then, as put forth by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) can help feminists remember that it is only in our *being* ethically together that makes *becoming* through difference possible. These theoretical understandings of ethics, ontology, and epistemology remained central throughout this project, and I hope that these commitments are apparent in the materializations of data that follow.

Research Questions

1. How are the embodied, discursive, material and sociopolitical manifestations of neoliberalism *intra-acting* in the always, already gendered lives of the five women teachers in this study?
2. How do gendered and neoliberal discourses of *good enough* intra-act in the production of subjectivity for the women in this study?
3. What can the five women elementary school teachers in this study teach educational researchers about how to resist the neoliberalization of education?

Methods of Data Generation and Participant Overview

Throughout each chapter, the reader will encounter various intra-actions (Barad, 2007; Taguchi, 2012) between five women elementary school teachers and myself, information from social media and popular media, scholarly publications and my interpretations and theorizations of these material and discursive entities. These material, discursive and embodied data represent countless hours (twenty five of which were captured on audio recording devices and transcribed) spent over the course of twelve months with five women elementary school teachers across various spaces and times including coffee shops, restaurants, classrooms, parks, kitchen tables and living room sofas.

I knew Gretta, Joplin and Rose prior to the study, as I was a colleague of theirs when I was a teacher. I maintain friendships with Joplin and Rose, and I discuss these relationships in the manuscripts. I met Taylor and Natasha through mutual friends, and they happened to work at a school in the same district as Gretta, Joplin and Rose. The following table is designed to provide the reader with basic information about each teacher.

Participants	**Years of Experience**	**Highest Degree**	**Grade Level Taught**	**Current School**	**Years at Current School**
Gretta	15	Educational Specialist	4th Grade	Creekview Elementary	15
Joplin	8	Masters	5th Grade	Creekview Elementary	8
Natasha	17	Masters	4th Grade	Townsend Elementary	4
Rose	6	Doctorate	5th Grade	Creekview Elementary	6
Taylor	5	Masters	5th Grade	Townsend Elementary	3

The first meeting was the only one where I had a set of predetermined questions. These questions were aimed at eliciting responses from each of the women about particular times when they feel successful or accomplished, the things they would change about their jobs if they could, who they turn to for emotional and social supports, and what they do in their free time[1]. While I brought up topics in popular media around teaching and we each spent time browsing social media together, each of the meetings after the first one were open to anything the women wanted to discuss.

These topics of discussion were both related and unrelated to teaching and included various things happening in their lives such as a car breaking down, a child's upcoming birthday, relationships with significant others, how to deal with changing religious or spiritual (dis)beliefs, or the horrific details of an abusive relationship. They would email, text, or call me when things were bothering them, when they needed to talk, or just to catch up in between meetings. We took walks, ate good food, drank wine, laughed and cried. These moments of *being* together taught me how to better listen in my attempt at *becoming* with each of the teachers. I approached each meeting with no other agenda than *being with* the woman who was choosing to share her time with me in that moment. And I hope I offered them, if nothing else, a space to be in the moment talking about something important to them while they had an eager listener.

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1 These questions can be found in Appendix A of Chapter 3.
2 All names of schools, participants and the city in which the study took place are pseudonyms.
3 Dutro discusses critical witnessing with students in urban schools so that urban educators can better provide the supports these students need. Here, I attempted to be attentive to the teachers' concerns in similar ways, as I am particularly interested

Data Analysis: *Being with* <--> *Becoming* Data

Analyzing the data for this study has been the most gut-wrenching thing I have ever done. Listening back to over twenty-five hours of recorded discussions about the difficult work teaching has become in neoliberal times was at times devastating. There were times I was paralyzed because I had no idea what do when the teachers told me the horror stories that I had, ironically enough, set out to find. I would often talk to myself via the audio recorder on my phone while driving to and from classes or interviews, my daughters gymnastics practice, or to the grocery store to grab last minute necessities for whatever kid's party, dinner party, or family dinner was coming up next.

I wrote middle-of-the night notes to myself out of fear that I would forget the idea that had just kept me awake for minutes or hours. The notes tell something about the more—or less—productive days and take up a more—or less—encouraging tone. Here's one of them:

> *I still don't know how I'm going to write up this data, but I think working through the methodology might be helpful in getting there. I am writing this section of this dissertation right now because the thought of re-telling the women's stories is impossible. What the hell makes me think I'm smart enough to do this…*

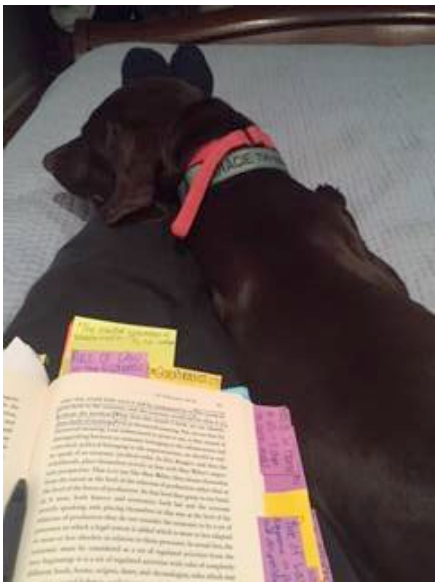
I nonetheless kept going by thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), acknowledging intra-actions (Barad, 2007; Taguchi, 2012) of material-discursive entities, questioning what was possible to say about the data, or trying to figure out how to represent a *becoming* or a rhizome on a page.

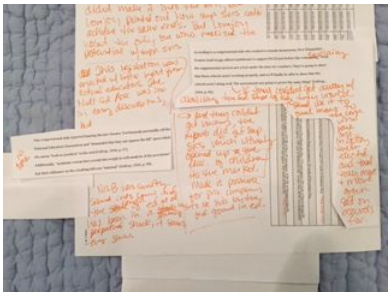
I thought rhizomatically with new material feminist concepts including Jane Bennett's (2010) concept of "material actants" (borrowing the term from Bruno Latour) that have "thing-power" and Karen Barad's (1996, 2007) concepts of *intra-action* and *diffraction*. Barad uses the term *intra-action* rather than interaction to acknowledge the mutual constitution of both subjects and objects, as they have no predetermined agency outside of the intra-action. In short, intra-action "signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies" (Barad, 2007, p. 33).

As I was thinking with these concepts and others, I would notice sections of my conversations with the women that seemed to "fit" together and I would make various arrangements with theoretical ideas that went along with the data and my argument. The analysis process is very *material* and *rhizomatic* for me. I write, think through the writing by reading, write some quotes on a page, think more and write more until I have a skeleton of an analysis. I need to see the big picture—a picture that requires more than a computer screen, so I print the skeleton and think about how the ideas and theorizations fit together or need expanding upon.

I have to hold the paper with the words in my hands and cut it up and arrange it in different ways. I also need to see the whole picture laid out flat, like a rhizome because one shift in an idea here or addition over there necessarily impacts the analysis as a whole. I scribble notes on the printed pages, tape one idea to another, write more on the paper and type it into the skeleton. I then read through the skeleton turned rough draft and start the process over again.

At this point during the dissertation process and for each manuscript chapter, I typically would share a rough draft of the chapter with my writing group, talk again to one or more of the teachers who participated in the study, take some notes and write some more. Once I had a chapter put together, I would share it with my advisor for feedback. Next, I would delete parts, write new parts, rearrange sections, look back into the transcribed discussions I had with the teachers, read what was going on in the news about teachers, read theory again, write more, cut up more paper, rearrange the argument again, theorize it some more until, finally, I was satisfied with each chapter. The pictures on this page illustrate some of my data analysis processes.





Overview of Chapters

This dissertation is comprised of seven chapters designed to address multiple audiences about what the work that teaching has become in neoliberal times. Specifically, four chapters are manuscripts intended for future publication in scholarly research journals. Additionally, there are three shorter, intermezzo chapters with different purposes and audiences for which I describe below. I designed the dissertation in this way because of my belief in the inextricable links between theory, research and activism. My goal was to address not only the scholarly community but also the general public about justice-oriented issues around education particular to neoliberalism. Additionally, I was eager to put new materialist feminist concepts to work in analyzing the manifestations of neoliberalism in the lives of women elementary school teachers.

Chapter two, "The (Im)Possibility of *Good Enough*: Neoliberalism, Gender Normativity and Teaching," uses Foucault's (2008) genealogy of neoliberalism in addition to poststructural and feminist theories of governmentality to deconstruct my experiences attempting to become what I call the *good enough woman teacher.* This chapter is intended to provide background to the study and a detailed analysis of discourses of *good enough* to which I refer throughout the dissertation.

Chapter three, "Intermezzo: People and Place," is the first of three, shorter intermezzo chapters. Each of these chapters has a different purpose. The purpose of chapter three is to provide a more detailed introduction and context to the participants and settings where the study took place because these details are not specifically discussed in the three manuscript-length chapters that follow.

Chapter four, “Gettin’ a little crafty: Teachers Pay Teachers, Pinterest and Neoliberalism in New Materialist Feminist Research” uses the new materialist feminist concepts *intra-action* and *material actants* (Bennett, 2010) to discuss the newly created market of Teachers Pay Teachers and its entanglement with the production of subjectivity in the lives of women teachers.

Chapter five is the second intermezzo chapter and is the dialogue for a short video focusing on neoliberalism that has been published as part of a YouTube.com video series called Three Minute Theory (3MT). These short videos were produced and are maintained by the members of my writing group including Erin Adams, Stacey Kerr and myself (Adams, Pittard & Kerr, 2015). One goal of ours in doing 3MT is to make theoretical concepts more approachable and accessible for those interested in learning more about these topics. The purpose of this intermezzo chapter is to provide a concise overview of neoliberalism, as it is an integral topic in the study and a common thread running throughout.

Chapter six, “’This is an Asylum’: When Teaching Isn’t Teaching, Education Isn’t for Educating, and Disaster Capitalism Takes Over,” brings the teachers’ daily lived experiences in conversation with Naomi Klein’s (2007) analysis of disaster capitalism in order to theorize the disaster capitalism complex specific to education.

Relatedly, chapter seven is the third intermezzo chapter and is an opinion piece that provides localized context to the content discussed in chapter four by discussing Georgia’s Governor Nathan Deal’s proposed Opportunity Schools as a specific example of the disaster capitalism complex in education and its corporate supremacist logic.

Chapter eight, “From Teacher Accountably to Corporate Accountability: Writing New Narratives in Research on Neoliberalism and Education,” uses Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept of the rhizome to think with neoliberalism, ask new questions about how it works and ultimately argue that we shift the neoliberal discourses around accountability from teachers to corporations. It also points to how teachers resist the neoliberal corporate logic that has become normalized in education in the United States.

Finally, chapter nine concludes the dissertation with a discussion of how the goals and research questions were addressed throughout the chapters. It also provides reflections on where the participants are now and implications for teacher educators, educational researchers and education activists. It is followed by a master reference list.

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CHAPTER 2

THE (IM)POSSIBILITY OF *GOOD* ENOUGH: NEOLIBERALISM, GENDER NORMATIVITY AND TEACHING

My life as a teacher was intensely rewarding yet challenging. I spent five of a total of six years teaching 5th grade in what was usually referred to as a "high poverty, inner-city school" (which served as code for a school whose students were primarily children of color and from poor or working class families) where I'd previously worked my way through college as the after school program director for three years. I obtained my master's degree in special education and served as the collaborative classroom teacher for students with special needs during each of my six years of elementary school teaching experience. Additionally, I obtained my educational specialist degree in educational administration and policy and served on my school leadership team for four years.

Despite these teaching and teacher education experiences, as a pre-service and practicing teacher I learned more about teaching than how to teach math, reading, and science: my education also included learning how to produce myself and live my life as a *good enough* woman and teacher. In an educational culture where standards and accountability rule, I was constantly trying to get students' test scores up and discipline referrals down while simultaneously planning lessons that were engaging, culturally relevant, and differentiated for the diverse learners in my classroom. Additionally, I maintained my personal life as a wife and mother

pursuing a masters, specialist, and then doctoral degree while still feeding my daughter organic, home-made baby food, working out three-to-five days per week, serving on my neighborhood homeowner's association, and taking annual humanitarian aid trips to Nicaragua. I perceived that this was who I *had* to be, and my pursuit of becoming this kind of woman and teacher served to control practically every decision I made both inside and outside of the classroom.

As a result, I was inadvertently working within what I have come to describe as the discourse of *good enough* which informed other discourses circulating in my life and served as a constant reminder of my not-enoughness (Hughes-Decatur, 2011). For the purposes of this analysis, I focus on two discourses that had a particular impact upon the production of my own subjectivity as I draw from my experiences as a woman teacher of six years and teacher education student of eight years to share a narrative that serves as data. I describe how my relationship with myself and my relationship with other teachers and students was shaped according to discourses of gender normativity and neoliberalism and how my ultimate aim of eventually becoming *good enough* within these discourses proved harmful to my students, my family, and myself.

I use Foucault's (2008) concept of governmentality to deconstruct my experiences and argue that as women within the context of U.S. society and media culture (Bartky, 1990), women teachers are susceptible to the taken-for-granted assumptions inherent in discourses of gender normativity. I also argue that the history of the highly feminized teaching profession along with the hegemonic nature of neoliberalism intensifies the effects of both gender normativity and neoliberalism

on the lives women teachers. Further, women teachers can be disproportionally affected by neoliberalism because of its pervasive presence in educational policy (Sleeter, 2008). Thus, neoliberalism, gender normativity and the historical feminization of the teaching profession work together to maintain the impossible subject position of the *good enough woman teacher*.

In this paper, I begin by telling how I governed myself according to discourses of neoliberalism and gender normativity in my attempt to embody the *good enough woman teacher*. Then, I discuss how Foucault's notion of governmentality is a useful analytic in deconstructing how these problematic discourses became so seductive and powerful in my life. Finally, I argue that understanding neoliberalism and gender normativity as discourses that synergistically impact the subject positions that women teachers understand to be available to them can promote women teachers' engagement in the critical analysis of these discourses and how they function in their own lives.

Recognizing and having a language to put to these lived experiences can help teachers question and resist ways they are produced within neoliberal and gender normative discourses both inside and outside education. Following Ball and Olmedo (2013), I contend, "to the extent that neoliberal governmentalities have become increasingly focused upon the production of subjectivity, it is logical that we think about subjectivity as a site of struggle and resistance" (p. 85). Indeed, questioning discourses of *good enough* and opening up new forms of subjectivity for myself by actively re-writing what counts as *good enough* was and continues to be a site of resistance.

The *Good Enough* Woman Teacher

I use the concept of the *good enough woman teacher* to describe the fictional subject position that serves as the benchmark by which women teachers are measured. I use *good enough* rather than simply *good* or *great* or *excellent*, not because women teachers do not strive to excel at their jobs, but to emphasize that even though discourses of neoliberalism underscore post-feminist ideals of equality and meritocracy (Ringrose, 2013), the systematically embedded discourse that no woman is ever smart enough, pretty enough, successful enough, or (insert any word of your choice here) enough to be considered *good enough*, much less *great*, remains. Because the *excellent woman* and the *great teacher* are impossibilities within discourses of neoliberalism (Davies, Browne, Gannon, Honan & Somerville, 2005) and gender normativity (Biklen, 1995; Casey, 2013; Gabriel & Lester, 2013; Meha, 2013; Sleeter, 2008), women teachers today strive for being *good enough* to avoid punishment and simply keep their jobs in a political and discursive system that positions PK-12 public education as a whole and teachers themselves as constantly needing to be reformed (Biklen, 1995). I argue that even *good enough* has become unattainable within discourses of neoliberalism and gender normativity and that the illusion of *good enough woman teacher* creates and maintains situations where women teachers govern themselves and others based on this impossibility.

With this, the *good enough woman teacher* is an illusive subject position that serves as the pervasive model of excellence in today's educational settings. She is a complicated combination of the *good enough woman* who every woman is *supposed* to want to be and the *good enough teacher* who every teacher is *supposed* to want to

be. Heavily influenced by discourses of gender normativity, the *good enough woman* subject position represents a woman who is middle class and happily married to a man; who has 2-3 healthy children, as zero or one is often not enough and more than three is getting out of hand; who has a successful but not overly successful career; who is smart and decisive but not demanding or bitchy; who maintains a "healthy" appearance, which is code for muscular but not too muscular, thin but not too thin, natural but not too natural and made-up but not too made-up; and, finally, who has white skin that isn't too white or freckly or flabby or wrinkly.

Compounded with the always-already gendered (and impossible) expectations for women in general, neoliberal policy initiatives such as standardization of curriculum, corporatization of testing, proliferation of quantitative data collection (Mehta, 2013) and various other forms of accountability serve to normalize and pathologize teachers based on the *value* they produce within U.S. educational institutions (Giroux, 2012; Kumashiro, 2012). Heavily influenced by discourses of neoliberalism, the *good enough teacher* is one who works to consistently prove her "worth" by producing students with high test scores; who never has to send children to the office for "discipline problems" because she has effective classroom management; who plans engaging lessons with students' personal lives, histories and cultures in mind; who stays well beyond the hours for which she is paid serving on committees and planning lessons; who acts somewhat like a mother but doesn't get too attached; and who often must also attempt to fit into the *good enough* woman subject position described above.

Further complicating the problematic assumptions embedded in discourses of *good enough*, is the fact that not only are these ideal images impossible to attain but also that what *good enough* looks like is constantly shifting. Gendered norms of beauty discursively and materially shift with the season while norms of testing in schools discursively and materially shift from year to year. In fact, it is written in No Child Left Behind that one hundred percent of students are mandated to pass state exams by 2014. Thus, the *good enough woman teacher* is continuously required to justify herself as *good enough* by not being one of the many imagined figures who are failing America's children—all while also attempting to fulfill the already-impossible requirements of the *good enough woman*. Because she often finds herself overworked and internalizing her *not-enoughness* (Hughes-Decatur, 2011), I provide a much-needed site of contestation for women teachers attempting to be the *good enough* woman and teacher. Following Walkerdine (2003), my aim is to offer another possible explanation: that becoming *good enough* within hegemonic discourses such as gender normativity and neoliberalism is an "impossible fiction…constantly held up as possible" (p. 241)

Personal Attempts at *Good Enough*

In my attempts to eventually become the *good enough* woman teacher, I reproduced institutional understandings of acceptable behavior for other teachers with whom I worked, the students I taught and my daughter at home. Worse, I thought poorly of those who did not share this often self-deprecating way of governing themselves. For example, I thought it a farce to do "menial" tasks such as grade papers, put up bulletin boards, or file student work during my contracted

hours. Instead, I would have students pile everything their hands touched on my desk until all that was left of it was an insurmountable heap—and spend hours during the weeknights and weekends giving feedback and keeping records. I would smirk as I saw fellow teachers leaving at 3:15 (the time our contracted hours ended). I would suspiciously ask others how they managed to get it all done yet work so few hours beyond those for which we were paid. Many times, I would sneer at their answers thinking that they were short-changing our students and that they were not, in fact *good enough*. And that is how discourses of neoliberalism and gender normativity operate: by creating hierarchies and rankings that categorize women teachers and the students in their classes in order to maintain what is deemed an appropriate level of fear of not being *good enough*—all within the context of ever increasing threats to marketize education (Casey, 2013).

This fear of not being *good enough* served to reinforce gendered and neoliberal discourses already at work on the construction of my subjectivity. I vividly remember being told things like: *Make sure to clock in and out*—as if no one would notice if students were unattended at 7:20am or that a teacher's name did not appear on the sign-in sheet for the meeting that lasted an hour after contracted time; *Let me remind you of your hours during parent conference days*—even if all conferences are complete and you worked until 8:30 last night so that you could accommodate parents' schedules; *You did not follow protocol in an emergency. Do not call 911 without notifying administration first*—even if the student's arm is visibly broken after a fall off of an eight-foot-high jungle gym; *Every one of you must ensure that 100% of your students pass the state test by 2014. As a result we will give*

plenty of tests to prepare for The Big Test and tests based on results of practice tests and tests in the summer to those who did not pass said practice tests and The Big Test; and finally, *we are all professionals here, so please act like it.*

The elusive *good enough woman teacher* reinforced through these messages and others like them, serves to externally discipline and internally govern teachers, and can create competition to see who can come closest to achieving this "impossible fiction" (Walkerdine, 2003) of a subject position. The current economic situation compounds these messages through demands for ever-higher standards in exchange for ever-decreasing salaries, resources and supports. I saw these realities as inevitable sacrifices associated with my choice of becoming a teacher, and I had never thought to question them.

In fact, I was even "rewarded" due, at least in part, to my attempts at becoming *good enough.* During my third year of teaching, I was invited by building and district level administrators to attend a professional development conference sponsored by a private company that was contracted by the state and focused on school leadership and improvement (Using taxpayers' money that has been allocated for public education to pay private consulting companies is another effect of the neoliberalization of education). At the time, I was pursuing my Educational Specialist (EdS) degree in educational administration and policy so that I could eventually become a school level administrator. Therefore, this was an extremely exciting opportunity for me. Not to mention that my participation involved two three-day all inclusive getaways at a fairly expensive and well known hotel and conference center—a privilege that was absolutely unheard of within our school

district and most likely the others in our area. I arrived at the conference and was shown to my private room, given a bag of goodies, and swept off to our first of several lavishly gluttonous meals. We were explicitly told that one goal of the conference was to treat teachers and building level administrators as though we were at a "business conference"—a conference for "business people"—rather than treating us like teachers are often treated (which to us meant long days with little appreciation and no frills). It felt good to be told we were going to be treated as professionals, which was in my mind synonymous with being treated with respect.

The conference itself was full of loud and enthusiastic music, dynamic speakers, and emotional stories about students who—despite all odds—"made it" in our state's public school systems. During breaks (*Yes. We got to take breaks.)*, bins of gourmet nuts, chocolates, candies and iced-down beverages were plentiful and free of charge. Break-out sessions focused on school district and chamber of commerce collaborative projects and how to "streamline" the leadership process through data and systems analysis. Evening workshops were time for our school and district teams to work on "root-cause" analysis to determine what was going on with whatever "problematic" subgroup of children were most negatively impacting the school's test scores, school action plans to target these "problematic" subgroups, and data room graphing techniques designed to show student growth on standardized tests. In practicing these graphing techniques, we were once prompted with the question: "What does the graph tell [teachers, administrators, etc.] about the 'value' the school has added to those students?"

After the three days of business-like excitement and planning, we returned to our school ready to re-formulate our leadership team which included teachers and building level school leaders, train them on the action steps we learned about at the conference, and then return a few months later to report our successes and learn more about how to integrate the model into our school's professional development plan and strategic initiatives. I explicitly remember coming home from the conference and reporting to my partner that I was no longer calling myself a teacher. Instead, I proudly announced that I was in the "business of human capital development" (This was the slogan for the company that was printed on the pages of our conference manuals). I remember feeling that my profession was finally presented in a way such that I was respected for my knowledge and ability. This language was seductive, and I was swept right into its damaging and destructive grasp.

For the next two years, I completed my internships and degree in educational administration and policy. My plan was to enter into a leadership position in a school as soon as possible. For me, this was the only way I was ever going to be more than "just a teacher"—the only way to "move up" the career ladder and be *good enough* as a woman making a career out of teaching (Walkerdine, Lucey, & Melody, 2001). As Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001) discuss, I had already began to "diversify myself" in attempt to make myself more "marketable" for these jobs by getting my Master's Degree in special education. I thought that more experience in different grade-levels and doing different types of teaching would make my resume more enticing for those looking for assistant principles in their

schools. Additionally, I did everything I could to be noticed at the district level. I gave countless hours of my unpaid labor serving on committee after committee. I was convinced that in the end, meritocracy would win out. I thought that if I just worked hard enough and endured a little suffering, surely my efforts would pay off and I would ultimately be rewarded by securing a position as a school leader who would subsequently increase student achievement and implement everything I learned at the conferences and in my leadership preparation courses. So, I just kept hanging on to that—the promise of the possibility of eventually being *good enough*.

The (Im)Possibility of *Good Enough*

By striving to be *good enough* in, not just teaching, but in every role I attempted to fulfill on a daily basis, I was trapped working tirelessly towards a subject position of neither my own creation or choosing—a subject position that came with implicit expectations that I could never quite satisfy and rules that I never could completely follow. However, at the time, I believed that the *good enough* woman teacher was the only available subject position worthy of women teachers—particularly women elementary school teachers—and I was persistently governing others and myself according to this belief. The belief that I would eventually become *good enough* was so pervasive in the production of my subjectivity that I could not recognize the damaging effects that my trying to fulfill this subject position had on my relationship with myself and on the relationship with others in my life who I cared about deeply. I was uncritically and inadvertently perpetuating discourses of *good enough* through my actions—reinforcing the very discourses that made this illusive subject position an impossibility for not just me, but for any woman teacher.

I was uncritically participating in the reproduction of the damaging discourses that nearly crushed me personally and served to reinforce my feelings of *not enoughness* (Hugues-Decatour, 2011) both at home and at work.

It was not until the first year of my PhD program at a top-ranking teacher education institution where I first had access to feminist and poststructural theories and the subsequent life-altering ways of thinking these new theories made possible that I came to realize that the *good enough* woman teacher is nothing but a made-up subject position. This realization did not, as one might suspect, come with devastating feelings of defeat. It instead came with a freedom that I had never felt before. Following Butler (1998), I realized that I could engage in subversive repetition and be an active part of deconstructing discourses of neoliberalism and gender normativity and any other problematic or damaging norm that pervasively taught me I was not *good enough.* This new-found freedom offered the possibility that I could refuse to repeat the self-deprecating behavior in which I had previously engaged in order to subvert the discourses that had controlled me for so long.

This new way of thinking, or new "grid of intelligibility" (Foucault, 1990), taught me that while Enlightenment-based, humanistic understandings of the subject emphasize a stable identity, poststructural and feminist theories question those assumptions and therefore make it possible to re-think the subject (St. Pierre, 2000). The poststructural subject has the capacity to "refuse what we are [to] promote new forms of subjectivity" (Foucault, 1982, p. 777) and establish "a different type of relationship" (Foucault, 1997, p. 291) with ourselves. Further, feminist theory pushes subjectivity even further by positing that even gender is

constructed through sociolinguistic norms (Butler, 1997). This means that although subject positions people navigate might seem like essential categories within which one must "fit," the understandings of the subject within feminist and poststructural theory makes it possible to reject or disrupt those positionings through an active reconstitution of the subject.

I began to infuse this new understanding into every aspect of my daily interactions. My no-excuses, problem-solving attitude transformed into one of contextual understanding in complicated cultural and political situations. Specifically concerning my teaching practice, I was much more likely to leave work when my contracted hours were over, and I almost never took teaching work home with me anymore. Many days, I had *students* grade their own tests, make up word problems, file their own papers into their own data notebooks, display their work in hallways, and clean up messes. I realized that otherwise, I ended up living and modeling the feminized teacher who cares and teaches only through servitude and sacrifice, which also meant upholding the gendered norms that had shaped my own subjectivity for so long.

With the knowledge that I could refuse to repeat (Butler, 2008) my old ways and begin repeating myself in new ways, I recognized that I also should not expect others to repeat themselves. For example, by expecting students to behave, dress or respond in only certain ways can reinforce gendered raced and classed expectations that actively subvert students cultures, family norms, or other socially important parts of their lives. This understanding opened up all sorts of possibilities in my teaching and allowed me to be more receptive to what my students had to teach me

as well. I realized that as teachers we construct spaces where we have the power to produce students via the subject positions we make available for them to populate. As such, theory provided real and material benefit to my practice as a teacher and teacher educator.

However, my new grid of intelligibility did not answer the question of why I was so complicit in disciplining myself and other people in my life for so long. It also did nothing to subdue the outrage that came along with my wondering why I had to become a PhD student at a top-tier research university to question how subjectivity is produced by discourses of gender normativity and neoliberalism that were working on and through me. Additionally, I could not help but wonder how other women were disciplining themselves according to these and other discourses that made them feel like they were not good enough. In the next section, I discuss how Foucault's notion of governmentality helped me theorize some possible answers to these questions.

Neoliberalism and Governmentality

While neoliberalism has been widely theorized in human geography (eg. Harvey, 2005; Larner, 2000; Peck, 2013), social theory (eg. Foucault, 2008; Giroux, 2012; May, 2012; Ong, 2006; Peters, 2001), and policy studies (eg. Ball, 2012; Crouch, 2011; Duggan, 2003), there has been little research, particularly in the United States, that focuses on the manifestations of neoliberalism in the daily lives of teachers (see Duncan, 2007; Watkins, 2007; Ball & Olmedo, 2013 for examples of this type of analysis). However, there is an emerging body of scholarship across disciplines theorizing how discourses of neoliberalism and gender normativity work

together to further limit the subject positions women understand to be available to them (eg. Gill, 2008; Walkerdine, 2003; Walkerdine & Ringrose, 2006). Nonetheless, there is not yet a well-articulated theory of the gendered nature of neoliberalism based on its particular impact on women teachers in the context of the U.S. educational system. With the overwhelming majority of teachers identifying as women, there is a need to investigate the entanglement of gendered and neoliberal discourses from a feminist perspective because discourses create very real material conditions that constrain the ways people live their lives (Foucault, 1997; St. Pierre, 2004). By describing one way teachers are produced in the current educational climate that I would consider heavily impacted by neoliberal policy, ideology and governmentality, I aim to disrupt the taken-for-granted assumptions about who gets to count as *good enough* within the often damaging and hegemonic discourses of neoliberalism and gender normativity in the lives of women teachers.

I understand neoliberalism as a systematic discourse that operates in a parasitical (Peck, 2013) relation to other discourses such as gender normativity while also working on and through subjectivity. While neoliberalism is not easily disentangled from other discourses such as neoconservatism, libertarianism and post-Fordism, I distinguish neoliberalism from these as it is both an extension of classical liberalism's ideals of individualism, free choice and responsibility and an extension and intensification of capitalism in the arenas of policy formation, ideological discipline and modes of internalized governing that have produced and intensified the capitalization of human existence itself (Davies & Bansel, 2007).

In his 1978-1979 *The Birth of Biopolitics* lectures, Michel Foucault (2008) presents the second portion of his genealogy of the art of governing and develops two important analytical tools useful for understanding situations of women teachers. First, Foucault defines the term governmentality as "the way in which one conducts the conduct of men" (p. 186) and discusses the conditions necessary to make this "new art of government" possible. Second, these lectures offer possibly the most comprehensive examination of the emergence of neoliberalism to date. Foucault describes the "problem of neoliberalism" as "how the overall exercise of political power can be modeled on the principles of a market economy" (p. 131) and argues that implementing this new art of governing required fundamental shifts in the ways we understand power to operate upon and within subjects from the sixteenth century onward.

Governmentality is a form of power that extends beyond what Foucault (1995) describes in *Discipline and Punish,* where he posits that the way the state exercises power shifted after the Enlightenment from *punishment* in the form of top-down revenge possessed by the sovereign and enacted upon the body of the condemned to *discipline* in the form of a more "modest, suspicious power" (p. 170) that works within a "network of relations" (p. 26) and aims to penetrate the entire social body. Discipline requires that we "shift the object" of control away from the physical body and towards the economy of the body "and change the scale" (Foucault, 1995, p. 89) of this control from a localized central figure to what Foucault called a "micro-physics of power" (p. 140) which is not a centralized power but a power that is dispersed among "authorities" that exist everywhere (eg. Life

coaches, therapists, those who control the media). Within this microphysics of power, discipline produces docile bodies that "may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (p. 136) and who are disciplined both individually and collectively in "visible" yet "unverifiable" (p. 201) ways, with the ultimate goal being "that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary" (p. 201) because people begin to discipline and govern themselves—and this is what happens with governmentality.

Most of Foucault's earlier argument about discipline holds as his work moves from discipline to governmentality. However, with governmentality, docile bodies become active subjects engaged in the operational disciplining of their own bodies and minds according to various discourses. The goal of discipline's micro-physics of power is realized with governmentality in that people take up the governing of themselves and others through the production of their subjectivity. With governmentality, "we are produced rather than oppressed, animated rather than constrained" (Ball & Olmedo, 2013, p. 88) and "come to want from ourselves what is wanted from us" (p. 89). This is how discourses become so powerful in producing (im)possible subject positions for people to populate when they are governing themselves according to these various discourses. With governmentality, power is not expressed by any one sovereign or central power (Dean, 2010; Foucault, 1991, 2008; Rose, 1999). It instead comes from a multiplicity of unquestioned assumptions that operate as truths through discourse in the lives of subjects and exhibit themselves through the subject's own self-regulation. And in my case, it was

the particular discourses of neoliberalism and gender normativity that proved most influential at the time.

Subjects may even think that they are *freely choosing* these governmentalities. For example, when governing myself according to discourses of neoliberalism, I did not feel oppressed at all—I was produced by my building level administration as someone who had the potential to be *good enough*. I was the proverbial carrot being dangled in front of the noses of other teachers which made my fear of failure even more pronounced; and, as I have shown, this ended up producing me as nothing other than a pawn, as I was encouraged to become more and more animated in my production of *good enough*. I did, in fact, come to want for myself what was wanted from me as I worked harder and harder in the name of neoliberalism's touted goals of individualism and responsibility which I understood as *freely chosen* by me in order to achieve the impossible subject position of *good enough* woman teacher.

Foucault's (2008) genealogy of neoliberalism is also quite useful when considering its governing power. Neoliberalism, according to Foucault, is different from classical liberalism as neoliberals had to "subject classical liberalism to a number of transformations" in order to "discover how far and to what extent the formal principles of a market economy can index a general art of government" (p. 131). For example, classical liberalism maintains that free choice and personal responsibility along with co-existing social institutions, such as schools, pave the way to liberty and justice for all. However, with neoliberalism, free choice and personal responsibility are intensified while social institutions are gutted. Thus,

only those with the advantage of some sort of privilege (based on social class, race, abled-body-ness, gender, etc) have a chance at liberty; and further, liberty is defined based primarily on the market economy.

Another of these transformations particular to American neoliberals involves the theory of human capital which

> represents two processes. One that we could call the extension of economic analysis into a previously unexplored domain, and second, on the basis of this, the possibility of giving a strictly economic interpretation of a whole domain previously thought to be non-economic. (Foucault, 2008, p. 219)

These neoliberal transformations produce *homo economicus* differently than in classical liberal theories. Within this new art of governing, the *homo economicus* is "an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of [her]self" (Foucault, 2008, p. 226). In other words, with neoliberalism, there is a reconceptualization of the subject that is ultimately imbricated in how power operates in neoliberal societies. The neoliberal subject embodies "capitalization of existence itself" (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 252) and is assumed to be flexible and interchangeable while also both "highly individualized and responsibilized" (p. 248).

This neoliberal understanding of subjectivity is particularly damaging to women as they are (and have always been) disproportionately the subjects expected to most effectively discipline and manage their own bodies (Bartky, 1990). In my experience, I felt that I was individually responsible for the success and enrichment of not only the students in my classroom and my family at home, but also for the

successful production of myself as fit, happy and healthy without frown lines from the furrowed brows of frustration with my inability to hold it all together.

Further, within the highly feminized teaching profession and its entanglement with discourses of gender normativity, women teachers experience an intensification of the already-impossible subject positions they are expected to fulfill. In the example above, there was no individual person forcing me to work extra hours for no extra pay. I chose—although at the time, I did not think there was any other choice—to provide free labor for the institution in the name of student achievement and for the purposes of trying to attain the status of *good enough* woman and teacher. But the student achievement I was trying so hard to maintain was ultimately reinforcing neoliberal ways of interpreting students and teachers in primarily economic ways. These neoliberal understandings of student achievement are based on a number on a test—a test provided by a private, for-profit company.

Extending this argument in the next section, I contend that critiquing how neoliberalism and gender normativity function for women teachers in the present time from a feminist perspective involves an understanding of each of these discourse's relationship to capitalism. Additionally, I discuss in more detail how analyzing neoliberalism as governmentality is particularly relevant to women teachers within the context of the current educational climate through further analyzing portions of my story presented above.

Deconstructing Discourses of *Good Enough*

While it is impossible to completely separate how discourses of neoliberalism and gender normativity operate on and through the production of

subjectivity, it is necessary to parse out what made these discourses so powerful for so long in my life and why some women never even imagine calling them into question. To do this, I utilize the analytic of governmentality and de-naturalize what functions as truth within these gendered and neoliberal norms. In this section, I first provide a brief account of the feminization of teaching to situate the already-problematic and gendered understanding of women teachers in the U.S. prior to the neoliberal shift in governing. I do this to de-naturalize the feminization of teaching and argue that the inherent normative assumptions based on this feminization contribute to the impossibility of *good enough*. Additionally, I discuss how neoliberal discourses in teaching are entangled with those of gender normativity.

De-Naturalizing the Feminization of Teaching

To critically analyze the impacts of gender normativity in the lives of women who teach, it is important to not only acknowledge that approximately 85% of teachers in the United States are women (National Center for Education Information, 2011) but also to understand teaching as a form of gendered labor that occurs within the larger framework of neoliberalism. Foregrounding the feminist work already done in analyzing the work and working lives of teachers, I sketch the historical significance of gender in relation to the work of teaching children in the U.S. Without this historical understanding, the feminization of teaching is presented without a history and thus it becomes a seemingly "natural" phenomenon that women occupy the overwhelming majority of the U.S. teaching corps.

It is important to first acknowledge that education in the context of the U.S. shifted from being exclusively available to boys from male teachers to being

available to the masses from women teachers around the time of the industrial revolution (Biklen, 1995; Grumet, 1988). Although a few women began working as teachers around the 1820s to fill temporary vacancies while men were "busy farming" (Grumet, 1988, p. 37), the feminization of teaching is widely attributed to both the "exponential expansion of public education in the nineteenth century" (Maher & Tretreault, 2000, p. 199) which provided education for the first time to immigrants, working class children and girls along with men's opportunity to leave farming jobs during the industrial revolution (Grumet, 1988) and migrate to cities to sell their labor power in the service of capital. Thus, women replaced men as teachers because they were "plentiful, cheap, and eager" (Maher & Tretreault, 2000, p. 199) and were presumed to have a "natural" way with children due to the assumption that teaching is practically synonymous to mothering (Bilken, 1995; Grumet, 1988; Maher & Tretreault, 2000; Weiler, 1988).

From the very beginning, women teachers were inserted into the place men once occupied—not because they were believed to be better qualified for the job by way of their education or intelligence, but because of their inexpensive and inherent mothering abilities. With the shift from providing schooling exclusively to upper-class boys to the masses of working-class, co-gendered and immigrant children who were understood as in need of moral training, men began finding other work outside of education altogether or in a higher-ranking and better-paying positions within the gendered hierarchy of teaching. As schools became more business-like, men disproportionately filled non-teaching administrative positions (Apple, 1988). Additionally, this shift to educating the masses was fueled by political and economic

elites' belief that schools should begin providing "work ethos and character building" for the "good" of the nation which translated in practice to the need to train future workers to service the growing capital economy. Women were positioned as the ideal subjects to teach and transform these masses of "undesirable" children (Grumet, 1988, p. 39).

Whether it was primarily because women were cheap labor and perceived as "naturally" inclined to teaching or because they had to serve as permanent substitutes for men who went off to pursue other, more lucrative, careers (at, coincidentally, around the same time that the "masses" began to be educated), the feminization of teaching was contingent upon a capitalistic society that fuelled the need to educate the masses along with discourses of gender normativity which assume that women are natural nurturers and thus perfectly suited for the job of caring for the nation's children on a daily basis. These discourses also assume that, like mothers, women teachers should exhibit this care of others before they care for themselves which often leads to little to no time for the latter. Discourses of gender normativity also produce traditional women's work as a sort of gift that has been provided to the worker because it is understood to provide some sort of "internal" reward that cannot be measured monetarily. Finally, because women were eager to gain economic independence, they were often willing to dedicate their lives to the profession by never marrying or having children of their own and living as guests with students' families (Biklen, 1995).

Even as women have more recently began to populate occupations traditionally considered exclusively for men, there has not been a de-feminization of

the teaching profession or other professions traditionally occupied by women such as nursing (Williams, 2013). And even though women have numerically dominated the teaching force for almost a century, they have never dominated teaching ideologically or politically. Many feminists argue that this often lowly regarded status of teaching is directly related to the feminization of teaching as women en masse are still fighting the battles of our foremothers to push back against "deep-seated societal prejudices that perceive women (and particularly non elite women) as incapable of intellectual competence" (Maher & Tretreault, 2000, p. 200). So in addition to proving women capable of intellectual work in general, women teachers still struggle to emphasize teaching as an intellectual (rather than "natural") pursuit which often entails simultaneously working to disprove the myth that "since women can now do anything, only the least able become teachers" (Maher & Tretreault, 2000, p. 199).

As demonstrated in my own attempts at *good enough,* I somehow ended up living my life as though I believed in the assumption that feminized workers should be expected to give enormous amounts of often-unpaid time to ensure "student achievement" which is then used to rank and sort teachers based on their "value" which is contingent upon the "value" they add to children in their classes (Gabriel & Lester, 2013). Within discourses of gender normativity in capitalist societies and according to patriarchal ideals, women have traditionally filled "low-paying jobs" that are "thought to be appropriate to women's role" (Hartmann, 1981, p. 197). Based on this understanding, it might even seem un-natural for women to be interested in getting paid money for labor invested in children because their payoff

is assumed to be an internalized reward outside or beyond that of material provisions. When feminized jobs are understood as “passions” that are “internally rewarding” rather than something that economically sustains a household, teachers end up being treated as though they should never complain if they are asked to work more hours for less pay (particularly in non-unionized states) with fewer resources.

I found power and resistance in reframing my own subjectivity and historically situating and thus de-naturalizing discourses of gender normativity that functioned to govern my life as a woman and teacher. This questioning proved instrumental in my life because for the first time I realized that I did not have to be selfless to be good enough and that caring for myself could be important.

Questioning Neoliberal Discourses in Teaching

Added to the already feminized profession and the gendered assumptions that come along with it, the implementation of neoliberal policy increasingly produces teachers (who are overwhelmingly women) as failures at their jobs. This "failure" to do a job that is assumed to come “naturally” can be particularly damaging to one’s understanding of one’s self. Many times, women already govern themselves and each other according to discourses of gender normativity (Bartky, 1990). Thus, it is also critical for women teachers to de-naturalize neoliberal understandings of education.

Along with deconstructing discourses of gender normativity, I also began to question how neoliberal discourses influenced my understandings of what counted as *good enough* in teaching. Neoliberalism and "patriarchy, like capital, can be

surprisingly flexible and adaptable" (Hartmann, 1981, p. 196). This adaptability of capital has played a significant role in the corporatization of education. This corporatization has created new and expanding markets that utilize the language of "student achievement" to pad the pockets of private, for-profit corporations with millions of dollars. I had been seduced into uncritically accepting neoliberalism's business-like language of achievement. However, I now understand that what I was taught to define as *achievement* was nothing more than the opening up of markets to corporations seeking to profit from neoliberal understandings of education.

Data teaming, benchmarking, running recording, end of unit assessing, standardized testing re-teaching, double-dosing of the content, supplemental, scripted curriculum—all of the things that were touted as things we were doing *for* our students were, in hindsight, what we were doing *to* them—with the benefits flowing directly to private corporations. I was so caught up in performing what I thought others would perceive as *good enough* that I glossed over the damaging effects of gendered and neoliberal discourses on my own subjectivity and the subjectivity of other people in my life.

One of the only ways for teachers to be deemed *good enough* within discourses of neoliberalism is to produce students as high numbers on standardized tests, which was tied to our overall school improvement plan, which was tied to my abilities as a teacher and potential school leader, which is now tied to teacher salary increases, tenure decisions and whether or not teachers can renew their certification in some states, and on and on (Casey, 2013). My neoliberal and gendered subjective successes (or failures) were personal. My students were the

tools I would sharpen to ensure my own success. If I didn't achieve *good enough* after all of this hard work (I thought to myself) I had no one to blame but myself. And that was possibly the most damaging part of it all—that I was actively disciplining, surveilling and governing myself according to what I have come to understand as an impossible fiction of a subject position. I was willingly participating in actively reinforcing my own feelings of *not enoughness*—all in the name of trying to be *good enough.*

New Modes of Existence and Resistance

To analyze governmentalities is "not to seek for a hidden unity behind this complex diversity" (Rose, 1999, p. 276) but instead, it is to "reveal the historicity and the contingency of the truths that have come to define the limits of our contemporary ways of understanding ourselves, individually and collectively, and the programmes and procedures assembled to govern ourselves" (p. 226-227). Here, I have offered an analysis of the truths that functioned to govern the ways I was able to understand my own subjectivity and the subjectivity of others within the context of the feminized and neoliberal context of teaching in the United States. My aim has been to "disturb and destabilize these regimes, to identify some of the weak points and lines of fracture in our present where thought might insert itself in order to make a difference" (Rose, 1999, p. 227). Exposing what makes certain thoughts thinkable makes new questions possible and more ethical ways of governing ourselves and each other available.

When analyzing with governmentality, we are called to "reshape and expand the terms of political debate, [by] … enlarging the space of legitimate contestation,

[and] modifying the relation of the different participants to the truths in the name of which they govern or are governed" (p. 277). These new modes of subjectivity spring from the "hope that they can invent ways to govern better" (p. 280). In other words, the power inherent in the subject acting as a site of contestation is the ability to create new and more ethical ways to govern ourselves so that we might, in turn, be more ethical in our constitution of others.

Redefining *Good Enough*

In this analysis, I have discussed two of the many discourses that were and are functioning on and through my body to argue that women teachers are held to constantly shifting and impossible standards imbricated in discourses of *good enough*. While the story shared here is always-already incomplete and partial, my aim has been to provide a glimpse into the complicated entanglements between and among discourses and structures, micro and macro politics, and individual and collective resistance for women teachers in the current socio-political and economic landscape. These entanglements exhibit themselves on and through the production of (im)possible subjectivities and can begin to be resisted at the embodied level of the subject (Ball & Olmedo, 2013). Salazar-Parrenas (2001) posits that subjects "do not necessarily have to directly confront larger structures in society to be effective tools for change. For their strength, immediate struggles rely on their multiplicity, irregular forms, and constant presence within the operation of power" (p. 215). In other words, if the subject positions women teachers can occupy are so limited that they cannot begin to envision new or different subject positions, the important

question becomes how these same women can begin to have wiggle room in the subject positions available to them through micro-level forms of resistance.

Thinking back on my experiences, I only understood macro-level forms of resistance as *good enough* to actually challenge and change structures and institutions. This understanding of resistance proved useless given my situation as a young teacher and aspiring school leader in a non-unionized state. I did not have the grid of intelligibility to name, much less question, discourses of gender normativity and neoliberalism. I accepted them as truths and governed myself according to those truths. Additionally, when taking up discourses of neoliberalism and gender normativity *can* feel powerful in strange and complicated ways, questioning the system that gives the feeling of powerfulness can prove particularly difficult if not impossible.

During my time as a teacher, I experienced what it was like to unknowingly govern myself according to truths that were not my truths, and I never thought to question the implicit "truths" about who gets to be *good enough* within discourses of gender normativity and neoliberalism and who benefits from my compliance. This makes sense when thinking about power as a micro-physics that works both on and through subjectivity as is made available with Foucault's concepts of discipline and governmentality. I did not question the ways I was governing myself because I didn't know that there was any other available subject position in which I might fit. The realization I had been disciplining myself according to truths that were not my own produced the possibility to do something different. Rejecting the truths that had governed my subjectivity for so long proved extremely empowering and helped

me realize that I had, in fact, been good enough all along because I experienced a profound shift in what it means to be *good enough*. I continuously work to redefine *good enough* for myself based on my justice-oriented, feminist perspectives and refuse to continue governing myself according to what hegemonic discourses of neoliberalism and gender normativity (among others) count as *good enough*.

Understandings of resistance with governmentality acknowledge that women are not passive, docile bodies being acted upon by regimes of control. They are active bodies actively participating in the disciplining and governing of their own bodies and minds. While the ways women govern themselves can be problematic (as demonstrated in the narrative above), there is hope in the realization that women can change the way they govern themselves in order to resist rather than participate and thus perpetuate normalizing and damaging discourses. This understanding of change is particularly useful for women teachers who often find their voices under-represented at best and ignored all together at worst in the arena of policy implementation.

The ability of individuals to question previously unquestioned truths is an inextricable part of making collective resistance possible. Micro-powers of resistance such as teacher-created blog posts, Facebook and Twitter posts, and other forms of social media can produce new ways for teachers to collectively garner support for each other (Morgan, 2013). Because even if one understands that she can re-make herself, she can only get so far in re-making herself alone. As educators, researchers and activists, it is our job to give a name to these elusive and seductive forces that have infused themselves into education policy as well as into

the ways we govern our own and others' bodies. If women teachers have access to language to describe the damaging effects of discourses on their bodies they can begin to question and ultimately resist the "visible" yet "unverifiable" entities that may have suspiciously controlled them so change can become possible.

This recognizing, questioning and critiquing of damaging discourses is admittedly just the beginning. And even the seemingly small step of questioning dominant discourses can be extremely challenging for some women as many of us want to prove that we can, in fact, do it all and have it all—to prove everyone wrong who ever thought, *Those who can't do, teach*. Unfortunately, in my case, the only thing that finally brought change in my life was the fact that "regulation that is perpetual and exhaustive" can only be sustained for so long (Bartky, 1990, p. 459). I often wonder why it took years of formal education compounded with sheer exhaustion for me to re-define *good enough* in my life. I wonder why it did not happened sooner or if I missed something in all my years of education. I wonder what would have happened differently if my pre-service teacher education had not focused so much on maintaining the status quo and instead taught me to question it. I wonder what might have changed had my degree in special education not focused so much on modifying the "problem" behaviors in certain children and instead focused on finding each child's academic strengths and working from there. I wonder if I actually became a school-level administrator if I would have focused more on supporting teachers and less on "fixing" them or their students. The point here is that women teachers (or anyone for that matter) should not have to endure "relentless and exhaustive" regulation in order to decide that they are *good enough*.

Conclusions

Good enough can start with a simple word of encouragement from a fellow teacher, an act of appreciation from a school administrator, or a nod to complexity from an education researcher. What might happen if women teachers begin doing the deeply personal work of re-defining *good enough* for themselves? If enough women teachers could somehow take back discourses of *good enough*, they might also begin to re-define the way they think about *good enough* for their colleagues or the students they teach or the teachers in the buildings they lead or the teacher education students in their university classrooms or even the daughters they raise at home. Would that be *good enough* to begin to dismantle the corporate-run, profit-driven, depersonalized system of education that has been created by a select few but impacts almost every PK-12 student, teacher, administrator, and now teacher educator in the U.S.? I'd like to find out.

Following Giroux (2014), I call for a sense of collective (rather than individual) responsibility so that we might envision new ways to collectively resist neoliberal and gendered discourses that ultimately damage women in all levels of their education. Taking a nuanced look at the working lives and seemingly available subject positions of women teachers can tell us a great deal about how gender and neoliberalism are operating presently. Through this investigation, we can also look for ways of resisting the damaging subjectification that is often implicit in feminized professions and neoliberal discourses.

Additionally, teacher educators have an important role to play in introducing preservice teachers to ways they might begin to deconstruct dominant discourses

like gender normativity and neoliberalism that often go unquestioned once they begin work in schools. None of my experiences in my undergraduate teacher education or in my master's degree teacher education began to facilitate this necessary questioning. Even my educational specialist program focusing on school leadership and policy did not emphasize a critical stance towards education policymaking nor an equitable and generous understanding of how to effectively lead and mentor teachers. It is a farce to think that a preservice teacher could complete their undergraduate and even graduate degrees without ever encountering a text, or course, or teacher educator who did not push them to critically examine the world around them both inside and outside of schools.

We teacher educators with a passion for equity-oriented changes in schools must begin to facilitate that change in our own classrooms through our work with preservice teachers. Part of this critical and equity oriented teaching and mentoring is working to ensure that we are not perpetuating hegemonic and potentially damaging discourses around what counts as *good enough* in teaching. A critical examination of our own teacher education programs would include questioning not only explicit practices such as course syllabi but also implicit practices and assumptions. For example, dress codes for women teachers often maintain gendered, heteronormative, classist and racist assumptions about what a *good enough* teacher should look like under the guise of professionalism. This continuous critical evaluation of ourselves as teacher educators will help preservice and practicing teachers continue to denaturalize these and other hegemonic and damaging discourses that are so persistent around the work of teachers.

I have discussed how neoliberalism, gender normativity and the feminization of the teaching profession work together to produce the impossible subject position of *good enough woman teacher* to argue that women teachers begin to re-define *good enough* so they might have a better relationship with themselves and others in their lives. While acknowledging that no one can stand outside these hegemonic discourses, women and teachers *can* identify and call into question these discourses so that they might ultimately critique and challenge them through subversive repetition in acts of micro-level resistance for the aim of macro-level resistance and large-scale change. It is only through this re-defining of *good enough* that *good enough* will become possible.

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CHAPTER 3

INTERMEZZO ON PEOPLE AND PLACE

The purpose of this intermezzo chapter is to provide overall context to the place and people involved in this study. Because participant data and analysis is presented in the three manuscript-length chapters that follow, it seems important to provide this broader description of the people and places that will be referenced there. I first describe my relationships with both the participants and the schools where they worked, as these dynamics impacted my position as a researcher and the conversations that were possible with each participant in unique ways. After that, I discuss the community and school district where the study took place followed by a description of the two particular schools where the five teachers who participated in the study worked, as the schools were different in multiple ways. These place-based particularities along with the broader socioeconomic and demographic landscape will be a basis from which to start as the reader moves through the chapters that follow.

My Relationships with Participants and Places

I have lived in the community in which this study took place for the majority of my life. During college, I worked at one school represented in this study, Creekview Elementary School[2], for three years as the after school program director. After that, I worked the last five of my total of six years as a teacher at Creekview

[2] All names of schools, participants and the city in which the study took place are pseudonyms.

where participants Gretta, Joplin and Rose were colleagues of mine. These interpersonal relationships are important to note because Joplin, Rose, Gretta and I had a foundation upon which to begin our discussions. From the beginning, our informal interviews were more like conversations characteristic of those among old friends.

Specifically, Joplin and Rose were my teammates for three years while each of us taught 5th grade, and we remained close friends after I left my job there to pursue my PhD full time. I was a participant in Rose's study for her doctoral degree, so she readily volunteered to participate in this study. Joplin and I often had discussions about her work and life, so our conversations for the purposes of this study were familiar and comfortable from the start.

I also knew Gretta from our experience as colleagues from my earliest days teaching. I did my student teaching at Creekview in the classroom next door to hers several years prior to beginning the study. Later that same year, I served as the long-term substitute teacher for my former mentor teacher while she was out on maternity leave for the last three months of school. During that time, Gretta was helpful in answering any questions I had, providing advice about situations with parents and students, and assisting me at times with lesson planning. Gretta remained a teacher at Creekview throughout my five years teaching there. From this collegial relationship and because I could relate to the experiences she discussed within the context of working at Creekview, our interviews were also quite conversational from the start.

I did not personally know Natasha and Taylor, the other two participants who worked at Townsend Elementary, prior to beginning the study. While we each had mutual friends, and I unknowingly had previously worked with Natasha's spouse (who, coincidentally, also worked at Creekview), much of our time together in the beginning of the study was spent getting to know each other and building trusting relationships. I attempted to facilitate a casual and reciprocal relationship with Natasha and Taylor using a modified version of what Elizabeth Dutro (2009) calls "critical witness" which involves an attentive listening that "cut[s] through the noise" that often overwhelms the voices of those in urban schools and "push[es] back on negative assumptions about urban schools" (p. 238)[3]. For example, when one of them talked about the worries or joys of parenting, I would also share a related feeling or situation that I'd experienced as a parent. Or when they discussed their frustrations as teachers, I would share an experience I'd had as a teacher to foster collegiality between us, reminding them that I had been a teacher too and that I had a general awareness of what they were going through. Both Natasha and Taylor seemed to become comfortable in our conversations after the first few meetings, and both of them (as well as other participants, too) noted how they looked forward to our weekly or bi-weekly "therapy" sessions.

The teachers ranged in years and types of teaching experiences, highest levels of education, personal life experiences and beliefs, family structures and marital status, and geographical and socioeconomic backgrounds. This information

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[3] Dutro discusses critical witnessing with students in urban schools so that urban educators can better provide the supports these students need. Here, I attempted to be attentive to the teachers' concerns in similar ways, as I am particularly interested in advocating for teachers just as we expect them to advocate for their students.

is discussed in detail in the following chapters when it is relevant to the topic being discussed in each chapter.

The School District and Community

Located in the southeastern United States, Creekview and Townsend Elementary Schools are situated in a "city that has been named one of the most economically unequal cities of its size in the United States" (Jones, et al., in press, p. 9). Due to the extremes between the city's wealthiest and most economically disadvantaged along with the fact that approximately 30% of the city's population consists of college students who attend the nearby state university, the local regional university satellite campus, and the city technical school, median income and housing data can be particularly difficult to contextualize.

Nonetheless, to provide a general idea of the wide range of housing options available within the city I will call Tinytown, I searched all real estate listings available at the time of writing this dissertation. Results included residences ranging from approximately thirty thousand dollars for two bedroom condos and single-family homes to massive homes situated on up to 20 acres of property selling for upwards of $3.6 million (Zillow.com). Additionally, 44% of the overall population of Tinytown are homeowners with 32% of all housing units owned mortgage free and 44% of all housing units existing in multi-unit structures (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). In other words, while a third of Tinytown's residence are living mortgage free (and even netting an income on a paid-for rental property), 44% of the residence live in condos, apartments, townhomes or duplexes.

These multi-unit structures also demonstrate the vast differences in living conditions among the residence of Tinytown. On the one hand, there are 13 traditional housing authority communities as well as hundreds of properties that accept Section 8 vouchers. On the other hand, there are dozens of resort-like apartment complexes that cater to Tinytown's large college student population featuring private shuttle services so residents don't have to bother with city or campus mass transportation, pools on rooftops and with lazy rivers surrounding them or sand volleyball courts nearby, and gyms with sophisticated equipment and personal trainers.

However, even when factoring in Tinytown's extremely wealthy, the median household income remains $33,000 per year with 36.7% of the population living below the poverty level compared to the state median income of almost $50,000 per year with 18.2% of the population living below the poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). When considering the local school district, the demographics are even more disheartening.

The percentage of children in schools participating in the free and reduced lunch program—which is the primary indicator used to determine the number of students at or below the poverty level—is 78% compared to the state percentage of 62%. This statistical increase in poverty level for school district children compared to the overall population of Tinytown is due, at least in part, to the fact that many of the city's middle and upper-middle class families send their children to one of the twelve private schools in the area (Jones, et al., in press). The racial demographics

are equally as inconsistent considering the overall population of the city compared with the school district demographics.

The overall population of Tinytown is approximately 27% Black, 11% Hispanic/Latin@, and 57% White (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Comparatively, the overall student population according to the state department of education website is approximately 53% Black, 22% Hispanic/Latin@, and 19% White. I understand the disproportionately high levels of poverty within the local schools combined with the disproportionality low levels of white students attending public schools to demonstrate a multiplicity of complex racial, socioeconomic, political, historical and geographical dynamics. However, it seems clear to me that systematic racism and classism remain, even though Tinytown is one of the most politically liberal cities in the state.

The district's school improvement survey data suggests that teachers in the district may feel the same way. The results posted on the county's website a few months prior to the beginning of this study indicate that only 44.9% of faculty surveyed reported to consistently feel as though their "school culture reflects an atmosphere of trust and openness among all stakeholders." Additionally, only 56.9% of surveyed faculty reported to feel that practices at their school consistently "promote respect for individual differences."

While these are only two indicators of school culture at the district level, the discussions I had with teachers also pointed toward the importance of positive school culture and climate and the need for the district to better respond to the diverse types of learners and families they served. Indeed, the two schools in which

the teachers represented in this study worked are distinctly different concerning not only school culture and climate but also concerning demographic and economic factors. It is within this context that I further discuss the two schools in the next section.

The Individual Schools

Geographically separated by a mere two miles, Creekveiw Elementary and Townsend Elementary are worlds apart when it comes to working climate for teachers, socioeconomic circumstances for their student populations, and even how each school is perceived by the community writ large. Put simply, among those who have the ability to choose where they send their children to school via where they choose to live in Tinytown, Creekview is one of the least desirable while Townsend is the most desirable of the county's 14 elementary schools (Zillow.com). In this section, I discuss three distinct yet entangled reasons for these differences as I consider each schools' student population, geographic and historical location, and school climate according to the teachers in the study and my observations at each school.

Student Population

As mentioned above, the overall free and reduced lunch rate is 62% for the state and 78% for Tinytown. Creekview exceeds even the local district average with a free and reduced lunch rate of 87%, while Townsend has the lowest rate of all of the districts' 21 schools as well as a rate lower than the state average with 55.7% of students receiving free or reduced lunch. According to the school websites, racial demographics of students are 45% African American at Creekview and 41% at

Townsend (compared to the overall district at 53%), 40% Hispanic/Latin@ at Creekview and 11% at Townsend (compared to the district at 22%), and 9% White at Creekview and 43% at Townsend (compared to the district at 19%). Twenty percent of students at Townsend were served in gifted education compared to 14% of students at Creekview.

These demographics demonstrate the entanglement of race and socioeconomic status in producing which schools are considered more or less desirable than others. Parents wanting to send their children to the "best" elementary school in the county are likely not able to afford the real estate within the tight zoning parameters of Townsend. However, the zoning parameters for Creekview contain many more affordable housing options. In the next section, I discuss these geographic characteristics and the social implications that come along with them that inherently produce particular elementary schools as being more desirable than others.

School Location

With approximately 100 fewer students and serving a significantly smaller geographic zoning area than Creekview, Townsend is a neighborhood school with historical significance in the community. The original school was built in 1921 and was restored during the school's reconstruction a few years prior to the study. Situated among million dollar historic homes and within walking distance of several locally sourced food markets and restaurants, many students walk or bike to school with and without their parents. The playground is often occupied after school hours with neighborhood children and families, and the PTA funded construction of a

pavilion to provide shelter for the large crowds of parents who congregate before and after school to drop off or pick up their children along with babies in strollers, bicycle helmets in hand, or reusable grocery bags draped over shoulders after a visit to the local market.

Compared to Townsend's circular shaped and compact attendance zone, Creekview's attendance zone is oddly shaped spanning from the border of Townsend's zone out towards the outside edge of Tinytown. Further, Creekview's attendance zone is extremely narrow, yet it extends for several miles away from the school building itself. This awkward and extensive zoning for some schools and compact "neighborhood school" feel of others is the result of Tinytown's rezoning of schools approximately four years prior to this study. As Jones, et al. (in press) point out about the rezoning,

> Issues of economic and racial power undoubtedly influenced the new policy, as many of the owner-occupied single-family home "neighborhoods" located geographically closer to the center of the city were zoned for elementary schools that have emerged over time to be the most desirable and where larger numbers of white and middle-class children and youth attend. (p. 11)

I taught at Creekveiw during this rezoning process and witnessed the upheaval it caused for several families all across Tinytown. Before the rezoning, Creekview was certainly not one of the most desired schools in Tinytown, but it was nonetheless considered a neighborhood school. Many students walked or biked to school from nearby subdivisions, apartment complexes and housing authorities. With the zoning change, many students could no longer walk or bike to Creekview.

Along with this change, many parents banded together to protest the rezoning because they did not want their children to attend a school "like Creekveiw."

While some students still live close by, the neighborhoods immediately surrounding Creekview house aging populations whose children have long moved away from home. Thus, many of Creekview's students are bussed in from miles away requiring travel along busy streets with no sidewalks or even the nearby four-lane highway to get to school. Because many families have a single vehicle shared among adults going to and from work or have no personal transportation at all, after school events or emergency pick-ups prove difficult for families whose students attended Creekview.

Demographics and geographies tell part of the story around the two schools represented in this study. However, in the next section, I further contour the working and learning environments of Creekveiw and Townsend from the perspective of the teachers who participated in this study.

School Climate

As I mentioned above, I worked at Creekview for a total of 8 years, and I knew that the faculty and staff at the school were hard-working and committed to the students they served. Had I remained a teacher there, I planned to send my own daughter to school there. While Creekview was not as highly regarded in the community as Townsend, I felt confident that my daughter would receive quality instruction there from teachers that I knew personally. On the contrary, I had only ever driven by Townsend, but I knew families whose children attended school there and a few teachers at Creekview even lived within the Townsend zone and thus sent

their children there. One major important difference for Townsend families was that it was the only elementary school in the district where students were not required to follow a strict dress code consisting of khaki, black or blue pants, shorts or skirts and a polo-type shirt in on of each school's three approved colors.

Similar to the demographic, geographic and other structural differences such as the dress code, I also noticed differences in the teacher's perspectives of their working conditions at each school. Even though both schools were required to follow fairly similar curriculum, pacing guides, and assessments, it became clear through my conversations with teachers that the working conditions at each school were extremely different.

The most significant influence on these different working conditions was due largely to leadership styles of the building-level administration. The Creekveiw teachers described their administration as extremely intimidating and overbearing. For example, Gretta consistently discussed how she was constantly being observed by building and district-level administrators and how she felt singled-out multiple times for things such as minor deviations from the district pacing guide, lesson plan formats, or her lack of fidelity in using mandated technology. In fact, each of the Creekveiw teachers often laughingly mentioned having to attend what they called "you suck" meetings during their planning time where they would get test results back or were required to listen to a representative from a particular corporation about how they were (incorrectly) using the technology or curriculum materials that had been purchased by the school or district.

In contrast, the teachers at Townsend practically never had anything negative to say about their administration and were rarely required to attend meetings during their planning time. They often praised how their building level leaders attempted to shelter them as much as possible from the overbearing demands made by district level administrators. Both Taylor and Natasha had transferred to Townsend from other schools within the Tinytown School District, and they both consistently discussed how much better the working conditions were for them at Townsend than they had been at their previous schools.

Additionally, they both acknowledged that student and parent population played a major factor in their working conditions as well. Taylor noted fewer "frequent flyers" (ie. students often referred to as having "discipline problems") at Townsend than there were at her former school, and Natasha pointed out that Townsend had more students whose social, physical and emotional needs were being met at home and how that lightened the load for her as a teacher and the school as a whole.

These differences in location, population, and school climate impacted the work and lives of the teachers in this study. While the demographics and examples above do not tell the whole story about either of the schools, the students who attend them, or the teachers who work there, I hope the information and context shared in this brief introduction will provide context for the reader as she moves forward in reading Chapters 4, 6, and 8 that follow.

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CHAPTER 4

GETTIN' A LITTLE CRAFTY: TEACHERS PAY TEACHERS, PINTEREST AND NEOLIBERALISM IN NEW MATERIALIST FEMINIST RESEARCH

Joplin and I sat in her 5th grade classroom at Creekveiw Elementary School[4]. The students had left for the day, and she was giving me a tour of her classroom via her pointed finger while we remained seated at children's desks in the middle of the room. While this was only our second meeting for the purposes of this study, I'd been in this space many times before, as Joplin and I were colleagues during my five years teaching 5th grade at Creekview and remained friends after I no longer taught elementary school. However, with each bulletin board she described, each buzzword she used and each resource she explained, I became increasingly aware that I no longer recognized this once-familiar space. It was not so much the aesthetics of her classroom that had changed, but it was instead the curricular materials and educational resources she described that were completely unfamiliar to me. She continued showing me around her classroom using new words like *strategy groups* and *task cards.* This language confused me.

Thinking it must be the result of some new textbook or computer-based resource due to the recent implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), I asked her to tell me more about the curriculum they were using. She immediately replied, "The [Common Core] standards are the curriculum… The only

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[4] All participants and school names are pseudonyms.

curriculum we've got is the standards." She elaborated in telling me how the school district provided pacing guides detailing when each standard for each subject was to be taught but how the curricular materials she and her colleagues used to plan and implement instruction was increasingly *not* provided by the district. In other words, even though the standards driving the mandated content had changed over the past school year, the district had not purchased new textbook series to address the new standards. Teachers were instructed to retrofit the textbook series and curricular resources that were aligned with the former state standards to the new standards when possible and to supplement with other resources where it was necessary so that they could address content that was not required under the former set of standards.

Adequately creating materials for the content that was previously taught in other grade levels proved to be extremely time consuming, and Joplin told me she refused to work the extra and unpaid hours it required to produce materials for four reading groups on a daily basis in addition to the other four subject areas she was responsible for teaching. As a result, she had begun using more of her own money than she had in previous years to buy curricular materials to teach the required standards/curriculum. In describing the process of gathering materials to teach the new CCSS she said, "So then I got a little crafty, and I was like screw it, I'm just going to start buying things on Teachers Pay Teachers"—which was a marketplace I had never heard of before. As Joplin got up to retrieve and subsequently discuss an at least three-inch thick binder full of Teachers Pay Teachers (TpT) lesson plans (each of which contain *task cards* that focus on a particular skill that is to be used in a

strategy group), I realized that the work of teaching at Creekview had changed significantly since my departure just two short years before. As I continued discussions about their working lives with more teachers, I soon found out that the work of teaching had changed in other places too and that Joplin was not the only one getting "a little crafty" in obtaining curricular materials.

In this paper, I share data from a study focused around the work and lives of five women elementary school teachers with the aim of investigating how gendered and neoliberal discourses construct what is understood as possible in the production of their subjectivities. The conversations I had with these women elementary school teachers revealed a surprising market created by teachers for teachers that is largely promoted through Pinterest[5]: Teachers Pay Teachers (TpT). I discuss data from interviews and websites concerning TpT and Pinterest to provide a much-needed, ground-up perspective about the work of teaching in neoliberal times. I use new materialist feminist theory (Braidotti, 2000; Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012) to analyze how women elementary school teachers *intra-act* (Barad, 2007) with curricular *material actants* (Bennett, 2010) that have the capacity to alter the course of events in women's lives. I argue that these material actants, which are most often obtained in the technological spaces of Pinterest links to TpT, further entangle the material-discursive and virtual-real production of subjectivity and influences women elementary school teachers in variegated but particularly gendered ways that ultimately serve to reinforce feminist

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5 Pinterest is a social media website and smartphone application that allows users to browse content using a search function. All content are images that often link to an external website. Users then "pin" images to their Pinterest boards which they can sort by areas of interest. Figure 2 is a screenshot of a board on Pinterest.

understandings of neoliberal subjectivity. In other words, the curricular materials women teachers produce to post on Pinterest and sell on TpT becomes entangled with the production of their subjectivity, of "who they are" as a person.

Pinterest and Teachers Pay Teachers

Pinterest is a popular social networking site outnumbered only by Facebook and Twitter in its number of users (Phillips, Miller, & McQuarrie, 2013). Based on techniques of collecting *ideas* or *things* made possible by constructing bulletin boards, collages, or scrapbooks, Pinterest offers a virtual space to construct similar collections but in the context of the practically infinite space of the internet. The overwhelmingly feminized[6] user base uses the application to "pin" images on different "boards" about topics in which they are interested. The user-created boards on Pinterest house images about topics ranging anywhere from decorating ideas to recipes to inspirational quotes—and pretty much anything else imaginable.

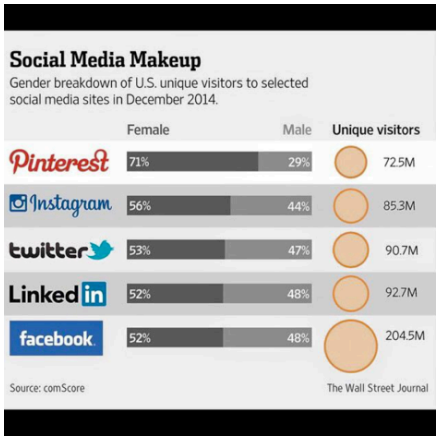

Figure 1

For example, a user who is a teacher might go to Pinterest for ideas about lesson planning, bulletin boards, and classroom décor in addition to other "Pinteresting" topics relevant to them such as parenting advice, party panning, or gardening. A teacher looking for specific lesson ideas could enter a search for it using keywords such as "5th grade math fractions ideas." Like Google, Pinterest will suggest other typical words or categories that complement, extend or narrow the

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[6] Figure 1 shows data on unique visitors by gender for the most popular social media sites.

search. Once users decide on a search, they scroll through pictures in the results and decide which ones to pin on the board titled to describe the topic at hand on their personal Pinterest page. The boards on a users page make up projects, products or ideas that users think is appealing in some way. Users can also follow other people's boards and "like" their pins similar to how one might "like" a post on Facebook or "favorite" something on Twitter.

Soon after beginning this study, I decided to try using Pinterest myself[7]. At the time, I was teaching math to a group of four home school students ranging from 5th to 9th grade one day per week. I thought trying Pinterest might provide me with new instructional ideas from the perspective of a practicing teacher as well as prove beneficial in my upcoming conversations with women elementary school teachers regarding the possible influence of Pinterest in their teaching lives. In learning to use Pinterest from the perspective of a teacher, I began to recognize three

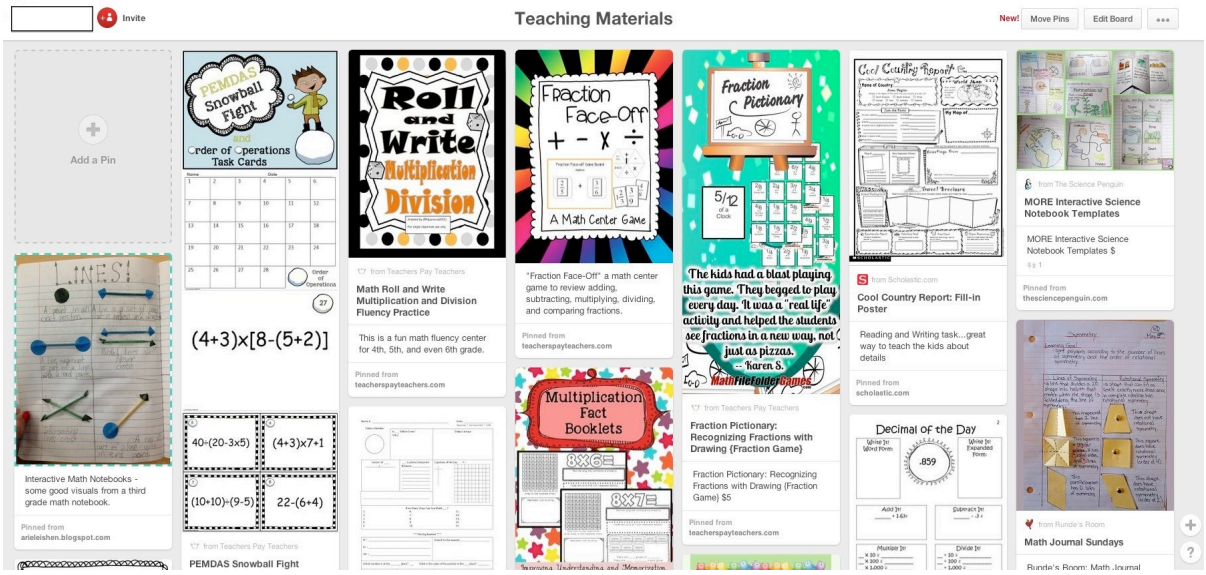

Figure 2

[7] Figure 2 shows my personal Pinterest page that I used when looking for materials to support instruction.

prominent types of pins regarding teaching: curricular materials such as lesson plans and anchor charts, classroom décor such as themed classroom bulletin boards and matching door decorations, and inspirational or funny quotes about teaching.

Through searching for curricular materials to support my instruction with my homeschool students, I noticed that many resources that seemed like they may be helpful almost always linked to Teachers Pay Teachers website, and I was reminded of the conversation I had with Joplin described above and other conversations that I had with other women teachers in my study. In finding out more about this website that kept seeming to come up, I learned that Teachers Pay Teachers (TpT) is an Amazon-like, user-generated marketplace where merchants who are almost always teachers upload and sell lesson plans for other teachers to purchase[8].

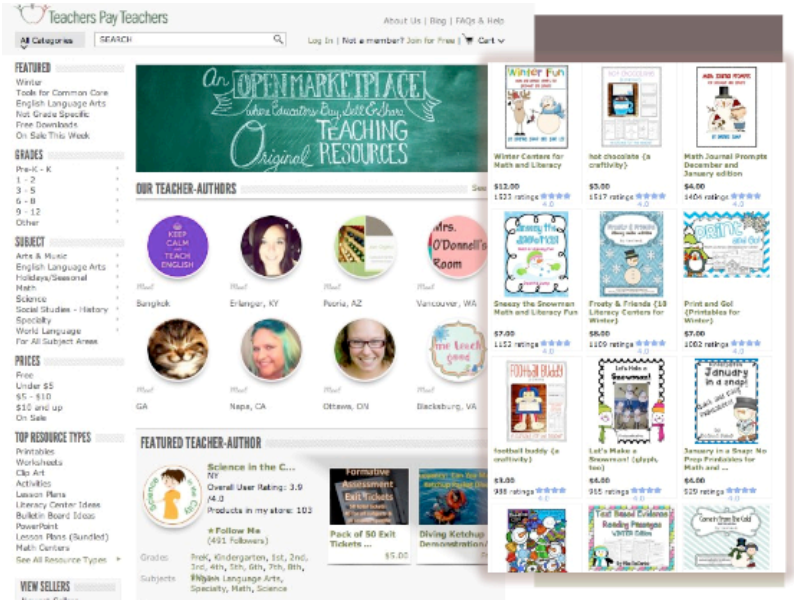

Figure 3

Users can choose to filter content by categories such as grade-level, subject area and price. Each seller is scored by consumer rankings from one to four stars, and shoppers can create wish lists much like any other retail site. Teachers Pay

[8] Figure 3 shows 2 screenshots from the TpT website.

Teachers "makes 'resource sharing' into a full- featured shopping experience, where teachers can simultaneously be an entrepreneur and a customer" (www.edsurge.com, 2014). Additionally, it is widely recognized among TpT sellers that the primary and "required" (Kesler, 2014a) marketing tool for TpT merchants is Pinterest. According to blogger, author and teacher Chris Kesler who after selling on TpT for a little over a year was making "4-figure monthly paychecks" (Kesler, 2014b), Pinterest is essential in driving

> the majority of traffic to TpT. You can't upload a product and expect it to take off if you're relying on the TpT search function to get it noticed. Pinterest is my only method of marketing, so I'm really deadly serious about it. (Kesler, 2014a)

In other words, it is common knowledge among TpT merchants that Pinterest is essential to a successful business.

And success on Pinterest can mean six figure salaries for teachers previously making a mere fraction of that annually. For example, Deanna Jump, a private school kindergarten and first grade teacher (who continues teaching in Georgia) has made over a million dollars selling lesson plans on TpT, and the newly appointed CEO of TpT (formerly the CEO of Etsy.com) does not think the revenue will slow down any time soon (Shieber, 2014). He describes the TpT market as "massive and growing" as the site possesses over 22 million pieces of educational material that have generated over $86 million dollars in revenue since the site's launch in 2006 (Sheiber, 2014).

The implications for such phenomenon seemed potentially wide reaching and game changing concerning the work of teaching. While millions of people participate in social media on a daily basis, there is almost no literature discussing social media and teaching. I was interested in finding out if and how the social media site Pinterest was influencing the working lives of the women teachers in my study. Based on my own experiences and with the ultimate aim of informing broader questions of how neoliberalism influences the subjectivity of women elementary school teachers, I anticipated that Teachers Pay Teachers might come up in discussions with participants about Pinterest. However, I was surprised when four out of five of the women in the study mentioned Pinterest or Teachers Pay Teachers before I asked specifically about either one.

For example, Teachers Pay Teachers came up three times in my first interview with Rose, another 5th grade teacher at Creekview with whom I had also worked previously. As a part of the first discussion with each participant, I asked about general background information such as how and when each of them decided to become teachers, their experiences as a teacher such as describing a typical day at work, and their lives outside of work such as social supports and roles outside of teaching[9]. When I asked Rose to tell me about her responsibilities outside of work, she mentioned schoolwork for her doctoral degree, household chores, weekend festivals where she promoted and sold a children's book that she authored, and complicated family relationships with her parents, sister and niece. In addition to each of these responsibilities, she concluded by adding, "I opened my teachers pay

[9] Though I knew both Rose and Joplin prior to the study, I asked each participant the same questions in the first interview. These questions can be found in Appendix A.

teachers store—which is really exciting because even though I'm only making, like, 30 cents, 50 cents at a time, I'm still just—the fact that someone else wants my stuff—I like that."

Rose mentioned TpT a second time when I asked her to walk me through a typical day in her life in noting that on any given day she might make a new lesson for her TpT store. She brought up TpT a third time when I asked about when she feels most accomplished. Rose began by explaining that she has "different definitions of accomplishment for everything" that she does. After explaining what makes her feel accomplished as a partner, an author, a doctoral student and as a teacher and colleague, her voice got louder and more lively as she concluded by describing accomplishment as a TpT seller:

> Seeing the email from teachers pay teachers saying, "Congratulations! You've made a sale on Teachers Pay Teachers!" I'm like, *Yes!* That feels like a *huge* accomplishment, you know? I don't know why. That's so weird, because it's like, 30 cents. [laughing] Seriously. But its just that whole: I've made something, do you want it? *Yes! I want that*.

After explaining that earning thirty-cents selling one TpT lesson felt like more of an accomplishment than selling nine of her books totaling approximately $130 in earnings at a recent weekend festival, Rose comments on how she is not quite sure why she felt this way. Then, in theorizing why the feeling she gets when selling lesson plans as a teacher might be different than the feeling she gets when selling books as an author, Rose continued,

> It's very foreign to me from a teacher's point of view. Cause, I get it as an author, but that's a different—That's a different me. You know? And so… from a teacher's perspective, I'm making these things and other teachers want it—for their classroom. I'm like, *Okay!* Like, that feels really good.

For Rose, selling lesson plans is seemingly more valuable than selling copies of her book because even though it might provide less money per transaction, there is something about successfully selling the TpT lessons that makes her feel more accomplished. Promoting educational materials on Pinterest to subsequently sell on Teachers Pay Teachers was rewarding for Rose in a significantly different way than other types of teaching-related work accomplishments. The personal satisfaction Rose experienced becomes more intelligible when presented within the context of neoliberal subjectivity.

Neoliberal Subjectivity

Following feminist educational scholars Walkerdine (2003) and Davies (2005), I use the term *neoliberal subjectivity* to refer to what Foucault (2008) described as a fundamental shift from earlier classical liberal understandings of the *homo economicus* in that with neoliberalism, laborers are no longer considered separated from labor power but are considered "active economic subject[s]" (Foucault, 2008, p. 223). With this shift, the "wage is an income, not the price at which he sells his labor power" (p. 223). With this economic analysis of labor, the neoliberal subject embodies "capitalization of existence itself" (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 252), and "the new worker is totally responsible for their own destiny and so techniques and technologies of regulation focus on the self-management of

citizens to produce themselves as having the skills and qualities necessary to succeed in the new economy" (Walkerdine, 2003, p. 240).

In other words, neoliberal subjectivity is legitimized through the production of an individual who is capable of responsibly choosing the most efficient means to market oneself in ways that will be most economically profitable. On the one hand, with liberal ideology, workers were produced in the image of the factory so that they were efficient in their work while they were in the enclosed spaces of the factory. On the other hand, with neoliberal ideology, an income includes a wage but also extends beyond the money a person makes to include the subject positions that become available though their work—subject positions that, in the case of teachers creating curriculum for individual monetary profit, were formerly only available to textbook publishers or other educational companies who sell curricular materials. Additionally, neoliberal work is no longer enclosed in spaces like the factory because neoliberal societies are not closed off by space and time. Workers can always check their email, work from home and produce income outside of any fulltime job.

With this understanding of neoliberal subjectivity, Pinterest is an interesting and important site of study concerning teaching, as images in the form of *pins* overwhelmingly link users to websites where they can purchase the items being pinned. With the understanding that the neoliberal subject is considered most successful when they properly "sell" themselves, it becomes possible to recognize different explanations for Rose's feelings of accomplishment than otherwise could have been imagined.

Rose was no longer just another teacher who sells her labor power in exchange for the wage provided through the work of teaching. She instead was distinguished from other teachers with the same educational qualifications and pay grade because she had successfully sold lessons that were unequivocally hers to other teachers who, by way of their purchasing power, had proven that they wanted what she had to offer.

As I became more familiar with Teachers Pay Teachers via Pinterest, I realized that Rose and other teachers like her were at the forefront of creating and maintaining what counts as *good enough*[10] in elementary school teaching. I was learning to recognize what "Pinterest worthy" classroom materials looked like, and if teachers could not re-create these ideas because of lack of ability or time, they could still gain access to *good enough*—if they were willing and able to pay for it. In the next section, I discuss new material feminist theory and why it is useful in analyzing the material and embodied production of good teaching within neoliberalism and neoliberal subjectivity.

New Material Feminist Theory

New material feminist theory is a recent hybridization of poststructural and feminist theory that allows researchers to remain committed to feminist understandings of embodied materiality while simultaneously drawing from poststructural understandings of discourse, power and space. Specific to the data

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10 I have elsewhere theorized the *good enough teacher* subject position within the context of the neoliberalization of education. The *good enough teacher* is what Walkerdine (2003) calls an "impossible subject position" that is nonetheless constantly "held up as possible." The *good enough* teacher discourse is further maintained through the production of curricular materials, as discussed here.

presented here, new material feminist theory offers interesting ways to think about how virtual spaces like Pinterest and TpT, as well as materials such as lesson plans and student activities, have the capacity to alter what teachers understand as possible in the production of their subjectivity. The user-generated search results found on Pinterest that link to a teacher's TpT store produce conceptual and literal re-configurations of teachers' understandings of what counts as *good enough* within the context of teaching. This version of neoliberal subjectivity is constantly in motion through material and discursive collisions and negations—or what has been called *intra-action* (Barad, 2007; Taguchi, 2012) in new materialist feminist research.

Barad (2007) defines the concept of *intra-action* as "the mutual constitution of entangled agencies" (p. 33), so in the example presented above, technology (that is most often, by the way, accessed via smartphones and tables which are increasingly considered necessary appendages to the body) provides access to a kind of monetary and professional satisfaction previously unavailable. In other words, through intra-action with products she sells on TpT, discourses of neoliberalism, and her virtual production of subjectivity, it became possible for Rose to experience a new kind of accomplishment. Hillevi Lenz Taguchi (2012) extends the concept of intra-action in positing that intra-active entities are "understood *not* to have clear or distinct boundaries from one another" (Taguchi, 2012, p. 271, emphasis in the original).

In new materialist feminist research there are no subject/object, no mind/body, no material/discursive binaries, as none of these entities have

predetermined agency outside of intra-action. Drawing again from Rose's feelings of accomplishment produced when she was notified that another teacher purchased her lessons on TpT, it was the combination of the lesson plan, the TpT website, the Pinterest application where she advertises her lessons, the email notification from the TpT website, and the monetary reward intra-acting in that moment to produce the feeling of accomplishment she described—an event that none of the events or materials could produce without their intra-action with the others.

With the continuously moving target of what counts as *good enough* in teaching and the shiftiness inherent in neoliberal subjectivity, it is increasingly difficult to pin down exactly how various material-discursive entities operate in the lives of women elementary school teachers. In other words, the target of *good enough* follows the pattern of the market's perpetual changing requirements because this change fuels the need for an endless supply of products to buy and sell. With new materialist feminist theory, subjectivity is understood as always *becoming* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) through *intra-actions* (Barad, 2007) with technological, material, discursive, virtual, and spatial apparatuses in unpredictable ways, prompting new material feminist Rosi Braidotti (2000) to call for "new frames of analysis" (p. 163) that might be more capable of analyzing this more rhizomatic understanding of subjectivity. This call is particularly timely for me as a researcher who is interested in studying the material effects of discourse in women's lives to investigate the macro- and micro- levels of critique that might create the conditions necessary for women teachers to imagine and thus create more equitable and ethical ways of being and knowing.

Finally, as I discuss below, pin boards on Pinterest along with lessons and activities sold on TpT contribute to the production of the subjectivity through what new material feminists have called *material actants* (Bennett, 2010). These non-human material actants can produce a shift that changes what becomes possible. In this onto-epistemological re-configuring, a person's knowing-through-being is altered through an ongoing process of *becoming* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). In other words, the entanglement of the ethics of knowing and being is continuous in how we live together in the world. As Goodings and Tucker (2014) have pointed out, "Socially mediated bodies emphasise the ways that technologies… have the capacity to shape people, places and things through the joint enactment of humans and technologies" (p. 40).

In other words, subjectivity and agency in new material feminist theory are understood as part of the ongoing process of *becoming.* While a subject cannot rationally *will* her own becoming (as she exists only with other material and discursive entities), subjects *can* experience a shift in what Foucault (Foucault, 1976/1990, p. 93) has called their *grid of intelligibility*—what they understand to be thinkable and thus possible. These moments of imagining the previously unimaginable lead to the ability to think and thus live differently. In what follows, I describe how the materials on TpT change what counts as *good enough* in teaching in neoliberal times.

In the next section, I return to Joplin's explanation of her intra-actions with TpT which produced very different effects than those described by Rose. Then I turn to another participant, Taylor, who also had intra-actions with TpT materials in her

experiences teaching 5th grade at Townsend Elementary, another school in the same district as Creekview.

Teachers Talk about Materials

Like my first interview with Rose, Teachers Pay Teachers came up in my first discussion with Joplin as well, but Joplin mentioned Rose in response to my asking what she does when she has time for herself. She began by explain that she usually does not take work home on the weekends and continued:

> This is what I'm doing now. Instead of trying to create things—Cause I have found that is not my strong suit: creating meaningful activities. I have started to buy tons of crap off of Teachers Pay Teachers and today I spent $20… Now, Rose goes home and creates things to put on Teachers Pay Teachers… But if I can use somebody else's stuff that is good, I will do that now. I am not… I'm [laughing]—I pay for stuff.

Because Joplin does not feel like she is good at "creating meaningful activities," she turns to purchasing them instead. Additionally, she brings up the fact that her colleague, Rose (who is discussed above) has her own TpT store implying that she is good at creating meaningful activities. Further, she makes it clear that she does not spend her time on the weekend creating activities.

Joplin mentioned both Rose and TpT again in our second interview. As described in the opening section of this paper, she first discussed using TpT as her way of getting "crafty" in coming up with lesson planning since it has in her opinion become increasingly difficult to find curricular materials to support her instruction since the implementation of the new CCSS curriculum. Later in that same discussion,

I pointed out that when she, Rose and I worked together that we almost never bought curricular materials. We sometimes bought supplies required for lessons such as food items or brought things from home like extra construction paper, but I could not recall a single time that any of us bought formal curricular materials such as worksheets or practice activities either in a store or online. I was curious about this shift to purchasing lesson plans. She responded:

> I needed stuff like this [pointing down to the thick binder filled with lessons and *task cards* that go with each lesson], and then I just kind of felt like Rose makes these great freaking lessons [when she's] in charge of writing and stuff, and I was in charge of the reading, and I just didn't feel like they were up to par, so I just got on Teachers Pay Teachers and I'm like, look at all this stuff. I'm just going to buy it.

The 5th grade teachers at Creekview divided the lesson planning among each member of the team with one or two people working to plan each subject area. Each Tuesday, all grade-level teams across the school met to discuss pedagogical strategies that might be needed to enhance or extend the lessons each teacher had already planned for the upcoming week, and lesson plans were due to administration by 4pm each Friday for the following week. In her statement above, Joplin feels like her lessons for reading are not "up to par" with Rose's lessons in writing. Wanting to be an equal contributor to the team lesson planning, she began buying lessons on Teachers Pay Teachers.

Trying to find out more, I asked her if anything had changed as far as the curricular materials the district provided and if she thinks that any of these changes

had anything to do with her shift to buying lesson plans. She responded, “I mean, even I thought this would be good” as she points to a workbook-style resource that the district did, in fact, purchase for the 5th grade students in lieu of another previously provided resource that teachers did not find useful at all. She continues explaining that she thought that as a result of the new resource she wouldn't “have to buy anything.” However, the workbook turned out to be not as useful as the team thought it would be in addressing the required standards. Joplin compared it to a Basal reader and explained, “I guess I just don't like Basals.” Then, turning to the binder of TpT resources she continues, “And who is going to make task cards on a certain—I mean, I could do this. I'm not going to do it. Rose would do it. Because she's creative like that. I would not do it.”

Of course, teachers have always bought supplies such as books, markers, glue and paper with their own money. The difference in the current technological and neoliberal context is that the curricular materials are not the only things for sale. The teaching materials being created, bought and sold via Pinterest and Teachers Pay Teachers are bound up in the discursive production and maintenance of what counts as *good enough* in teaching which is ultimately bound up in the very subjectivities of women teachers buying, selling, pinning, and creating lesson plans on TpT. Again, teachers have always created lesson plans that they possibly shared with colleagues or their entire district of teachers or maybe even the state department of education.

However, with the understandings of success outlined in neoliberal subjectivity, teachers’ intra-actions with curricular materials via Pinterest and TpT

provide a wider audience of customers within this specialized market. In other words, those who have the necessary extra resources can buy the *good enough* teacher. Further, it is not just the materials that are being bought, but an image of who gets to count as good enough in addressing mandated standards.

Joplin introduced me to the idea that good teaching is something that can be bought. She positions herself as being able, but unwilling to put the extra time into creating lessons that she thinks will be perceived as up to par or *good enough* within the context of the Common Core Standards, her students, and fellow teachers. Joplin approached the pressure to produce curricular materials as a task that she could forgo by purchasing meaningful activities instead of creating them.

Another participant, Taylor, also bought lessons from TpT. She made it clear from the very first interview that her eleven month old child was her top priority and that she definitley relies more on her temmates more than before for lesson planning ideas. At the time of our 3rd meeting, it was nearing the end of the school year and Taylor talked a lot about being reflective around that time of year and how she was thinking about how to do things better next year. She comments that on the one hand, "good instruction takes planning" but on the other how she was "tired of finding things"—meaning curriculum materials. She continues, "Granted, you're never going to find a textbook or anything that has everything, or has it all the way you want it to, but it sure would be a starting point."

Figure 4

When I asked her if she used TpT in planning her instruction, she responded, "Oh, god yes. Bless the people who have the time to put things on that website. It's a beautiful thing." She continues, "I have definitely found task cards from Pinterest—Like somebody pinned it on their board and then the link takes you to Teachers Pay Teachers…" As she trails off she gets up and points me to at least six piles of laminated envelopes stacked behind her desk in crates. The sheer number of these envelopes shocked and perplexed me[11]. Shannon explained that each of these envelopes contained lessons she has bought on Teachers Pay Teachers to use,

> because we have limited resources—because we, in the year 2014, still have to find all of our goddamn resources... Mary [her teammate] and I have bought a lot [of lessons off of Teachers Pay Teachers]… I don't have to make it, but I still have to assemble it.

She continues discussing how her teammate, Mary, makes lessons to sell on Teachers Pay Teachers. I ask how her teammate finds the time to make all the lessons, pin them on her Pinterest page and then sell them in Teachers Pay Teachers store. Shannon responds, "Well, its like if she's making them, you might as well make money for it."

In this way, Pinterest turns out to be understood as empowering for many teachers who share ideas that people like and make money for these ideas in return. Their ideas are *valued* in ways they might not be in the school or classroom (or other places in their lives). It could be argued, on the one hand, that this is one way

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11 Figure 4 is a photograph of some of Taylor's TpT lessons. It was her idea to spread them out as they are in the image. She, too, seemed surprised at the amount of the floor in her classroom they covered, as she ran to get Mary to show her.

teachers are resisting neoliberal policy initiatives that strip funding for public services like education to in turn, pad the pockets of corporations providing consultation services, curricular materials, and testing products. Following this rationale, teachers selling lesson plans could be understood as simply finding a way to take their own cut of the public money that is being funneled into the private sector. Many teachers could see this as an opportunity to finally be compensated for the hours of formerly unpaid labor time spent developing lessons and activities after school. It also provides a way for teachers who do not feel as creatively inclined to have access to new ways of conceiving how to teach a particular lesson on a particular topic.

However, on the other hand, as Raewon Connell (2008) points out, "Neoliberalism seeks to make existing markets wider, and to create new markets where they did not exist before" (175). Further, "Markets are often presumed to be gender-neutral, and the neoliberal agenda should in that case have the effect of eliminating gender inequalities, over time"(Connell, 2008, p. 177). With this, teachers have in fact created a market where it did not previously exist, and even though Teachers Pay Teachers has recently added a purchase ordering option so that schools can buy lessons with tax dollars, the overwhelming majority of customers on Teachers Pay Teachers are teachers spending their own money to purchase curricular materials for their classrooms. In this context, the emergence of Teachers Pay Teachers, as a source of producing both income and curricular resources, has fulfilled twin needs.

Further, the teachers who *do* somehow find the time and energy to work this second job communicate a sense of accomplishment in the moments when as Rose put it, "someone wants my stuff." TpT signals a dimension of entrepreneurial opportunity related to the profession of teaching that is entirely new, as the act of producing curriculum has not previously been conceived in terms of either its monetary value or in terms of the personal satisfaction of creating a product that someone else is willing to spend money to get. Teachers are all of a sudden thrust into a profitable domain previously limited to the sphere of textbook producers and curriculum writers. This supports Foucault's understanding of neoliberalism extending the market into previously unexplored domains.

However, this issue is further complicated for both the buyer and the seller. According to another participant, Greta, schools are beginning to tell teachers that the lessons they produce are not their own because they fall under intellectual property rights of the district. Additionally, teachers buying materials from Teachers Pay Teachers have to agree that they will not share the lessons they've bought with anyone else, so while some women teachers who are Pinterest users produce themselves online via the Pinterest boards they construct based on the pins of others, others are pinning items they personally create and then intend to sell in the market of Teachers Pay Teachers.

Implications

The technological space of Pinterest and the site of each Teachers Pay Teachers store intra-acts with the curriculum materials being put up for sale and the very subjectivity of the teacher who makes these materials available. With this, she

is not only constructing the teaching materials, but these material actants work, at the same time, on the production of her subjectivity. This mutual production of what counts as good teaching also influences how other women and teachers produce themselves. In other words, for many women on Pinterest selling items in TpT, these material actants represent part of "who they are" or who they want to be in the case of teachers who purchase rather than sell curricular materials. Whether the teacher is buyer or seller, each teacher participating in Pinterest boards about teaching and TpT are continuously reproducing or making over what counts as good teaching through representations of who they want to be and how these *things* could help them makeover their lives as teachers—even if that means making enough money to leave the teaching profession all together.

Feminist educational scholars Valerie Walkerdine and Jessica Ringrose (2006) have theorized how women are overwhelmingly the subjects called on to re-make themselves and how the idea of the makeover is different within neoliberal discourses. "The make-over is hardly new, but we would argue that these incitements have intensified and work in important ways to normalize the neo-liberal ethos of continuously maximizing, bettering and reinventing the self" (p. 36). While women have practically always been the ones who are called upon to monitor themselves in addition to the material objects in their immediate surroundings, what is different with neoliberalism is that women—through what Foucault would call *governmentality* and by way of a process that Deleuze would call *becoming*—are not only being acted upon and disciplined by these external material actants but they are also taking part in this disciplining through actively producing themselves

as the idealized feminine subject who is understood to be "empowered" by the ways she "chooses" to present herself in both real embodied ways and in virtual ways in online spaces. In neoliberal discourses, empowerment and choice are held up as endless opportunities. However, feminists have pointed out how this discourse around empowerment and choice only works to further narrow the choices available to women.

While the work of curricular production via Pinterest and TpT provides feelings of empowerment for some women teachers, it serves to marginalize other women who either do not feel like their curricular materials are *good enough* to post on TpT. Further, it also marginalizes teachers who do not have the means to purchase these additional curricular materials. There are potentially damaging consequences for teachers when what counts as *good enough* can be bought because the women who cannot afford to purchase these materials or have time to produce "Pinterest worthy" lessons may ultimately not have access to what counts as *good enough* in teaching.

Additionally, TpT gives a way to "see" one way teacher subjectivity of constructed through intra-action. The highly visual space of Pinterest and TpT is online for anyone to view. Thus the materials and discourses of what counts as good teaching according to these resources could potentially drown out other ways teachers are able to feel like they are good enough at their jobs.

Finally, this paper highlights just how swiftly *good enough* targets change with neoliberalism. The vast differences in curricular materials from 2011-2014 at Creekview Elementary demonstrates how the moving targets of good enough are

increasingly modeled after moving targets in the market, for both women and teachers. These changes in what counts as *good enough* have very real implications for women teachers working in schools. Participants engaged in conversations about products many of them look at all the time without thinking about the ways they impact their lives because it is easy to get swept up in discourses of *good enough* and other enticing aspects of neoliberalism's elusive grasp. I have noticed a similar trend with my teacher education students, and I am personally committed to assisting preservice teachers in questioning what counts as *good enough* in teaching and who gets to decide.

Understanding what becomes (im)possible in the lives of women using the conceptual tool of intra-action helps new materialist feminist researchers see the convergence of forces at work on and through the production of women's bodies and subjectivities. Researchers interested in opening up more ethically oriented possibilities for how women teachers might live in neoliberal society, must therefore persistently question and critique how neoliberalism is normalized in the work of teaching. Through this persistent critique, we can push back against neoliberalism and offer more possibilities for what counts as *good enough* for women teachers.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide:

Thank you so much for agreeing to allow me to interview you today! I am excited to begin working together, and I am particularly interested in knowing more about the lives of women elementary school teachers. If at any time you are uncomfortable answering any of the questions presented, please feel free to decline to answer. Please know that I have been a teacher myself and have the most possible respect and appreciation for your time and responses to the following questions.

Background Information:

- How/When did you decided to become a teacher?
- Thinking back on how you thought teaching would be when you initially decided to teach and the reality you live now, what are some of the main differences?
- Did you ever want to be anything other than a teacher? Tell me about the process of deciding to become a teacher and the struggles/joys around that decision.

The Life of a Teacher:

- What is something you just never have the time left over to do that you'd like to get done?
- What are some things that you have to do that you feel take away from what you'd like to be doing as a teacher?
- Remember a time recently when you've felt appreciated (either by a colleague, a student, an administrator, etc). What did they say or do that made you feel as though you are appreciated?
- Remember a time recently when you've felt underappreciated at work. What happened (what was said or not said/did or not done) that made you feel this way?
- What is the most frustrating part of teaching for you right now?
- What are your other responsibilities (outside of work)?
- Walk me though a typical day in your life.
- What do you love to do when you have free time?
- Who would you say are your main sources of support when you are struggling with balancing it all or when you are having a horrible day?
- What is the most frustrating part of trying to balance work and your other obligations?
- What comes to mind as something you are struggling with right now in balancing all of your roles?

- How do you make time for yourself?
- What do you enjoy doing when you have a free afternoon or evening?
- What does an excellent day look and feel like?
- When do you feel most accomplished?

CHAPTER 5

INTERMEZZO FROM THREE MINUTE THEORY (3MT): WHAT IS NEOLIBERALISM?

Based on our common interest in the seemingly nonsensical concepts put forth by Deleuze and Guattari and the new material feminist theories that often utilize these concepts, Erin Adams, Stacey Kerr and I established our writing group. Our aim was to work through these difficult concepts together as we attempted to put them to work in our writing and analysis.

About a year later, Erin and Stacey came up with the idea to produce a series of YouTube videos designed to make the concepts in new material feminist theories more accessible to anyone interested in learning about them or needing a quick reference guide when reading manuscripts using the concepts. I quickly joined the project we now call Three Minute Theory (3MT).

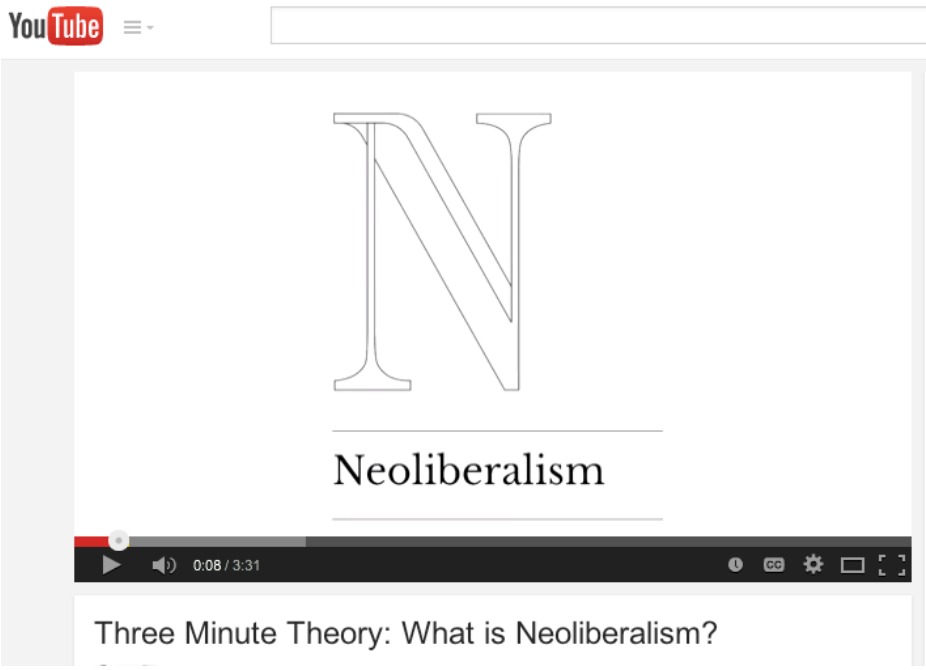
To date, we have 3MT videos focusing on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome, Karen Barad's concept of intra-action, and neoliberalism[12].

While all three concepts are put to work in this dissertation (for intra-action, see Chapter 2 and for the rhizome, see Chapter 6), I chose to include the transcript for the 3MT video on neoliberalism because the topic is central to the research presented here.

Although neoliberalism is an economic theoretical concept rather than a concept within poststructural or new material feminist theories, we decided to produce a 3MT about it because as teacher educators, we found that there were very few resources available to use with our undergraduate students on the topic. We thought the quick introduction to neoliberalism would be useful not only for us in our classes but also for others around the world looking for a short overview of neoliberalism.

The following excerpt is the script from which Stacey read in producing the 3MT on neoliberalism. The parenthetical notes are cues for images that are shown at that particular moment in the video or notes about the tone in which that section of the script is to be read. If the reader prefers to watch and listen rather than read, scan the QR code to link to the video.

[12] For readers who might be interested, shortly after the completion of this dissertation, we will produce our latest 3MT on the shift from what Foucault called disciplinary societies to what Deleuze called societies of control, so stay tuned!



In this iteration of Three Minute Theory, we bring you a concept that you might not know by name, but have surely felt by its far-reaching effects: neoliberalism. Simply, neoliberalism is that idea that society should shaped by the free market, and that the economy should be deregulated and privatized - or - even simpler: what works in the private sector will work also in the public sector. But it doesn't stop there - neoliberalism also involves the idea that the public sector should not only follow the private sector's rules, but it should also *subsidize* the private sector, which we know is now owned by fewer and fewer global capitalists (*some images related to the 1%*).

While neoliberalism began to reach its current heights in the late 1970s, it has its roots in Enlightenment liberal humanism or "classical liberalism" *[picture of Locke or someone like that here]* (*put in the word enlightenment liberal humanism: and then after it have these definitions come up)*: the belief that people (*side text: well,*

*educated white me*n) were free to live their lives without a great deal of interference from the government (*pic of constitution*).

So what does neoliberalism have to do with classical liberalism, and why does it matter? Well, neoliberalism isn't really new itself, but a "new" take on classical liberalism. Neoliberalism uses the language and tenets of classical liberalism in ways that *now* benefit large corporate interests. For example, many of the tenets of liberalism were enacted in the name of equality. Meaning that "free market" policies were supposed to allow people an equal chance in the marketplace. Under neoliberalism however, the "free market" loses its ties to democratic ideals of equality and instead, allows corporate capitalists to open up previously unavailable markets. Basically, the free market becomes increasingly free for wealthy corporate capitalists and less free for everyone else.

Although neoliberalism is a discourse that we cannot necessarily "see," it has real material effects on many aspects of our lives. Let's take the American education system as an example of how business interests have infiltrated public systems. In the past, public schools were set up to offer a free education to promote the liberal humanist ideas of liberty and equality. But with the rise of neoliberalism, and in turn, education "reform" movements, the lines between public and private education have been blurred. What we see now is heavy private investment from private individuals and corporations [insert pics of Gates and Koch here] in public schools. In the name of liberty, neoliberals use the business-laden language of

choice, free market, and deregulation to dismantle and then reconstruct public schools in their image. This all happens through the use of language that sounds lovely and freeing (*put words like choice, accountability, etc. on the slide)*, and ultimately, doesn't prompt too many questions from the general public. As corporations take a stronghold in the public, we also see the reciprocal investment of public school dollars into private companies (*side text and images: think Pearson, Smartboard, etc.*).

Not familiar with the education system? That's okay - you don't have to look far to see neoliberalism at work (*put in pictures of headlines to scroll through at this point)*:

- the net neutrality debates which ultimately aim to create an internet for the haves and have-nots.
- privatization of other previously public entities, like prisons
- bailout of banks
- Rights to information regulated and privatized
- healthcare not as a right, but as a commodity
- intellectual property rights?
- breakup of or circumvention of trade/workers unions

Remember, neoliberalism is everywhere, and isn't limited to one political party. It's both right and left, conservative and liberal, which makes it very hard to work against (*images of donkey and elephant, as well as Bush, Obama, Condi and Clinton, and Romney and even maybe Reagan (gasp!*). So next time you hear a politician or CEO talking about the "greater good," take a moment to wonder "whose good?"

More often than not, the “good” being held up as “liberty for all” might really just be more money for some.

To cite this 3MT:

Adams, E., Pittard, E. A. & Kerr, S. (2015). Three Minute Theory (3MT): What is neoliberalism? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzLv3rfnOVw

CHAPTER 6

"THIS IS AN ASYLUM": WHEN TEACHING ISN'T TEACHING, EDUCATION ISN'T FOR EDUCATING AND DISASTER CAPITALISM TAKES OVER

The idea that the education system in the United States is in crisis is nothing new (Costigan, 2013; Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Taubman, 2009). It has been argued on various occasions to support a wide variety of agendas. It is often suggested that the first call to crisis in education at the national level was after the launch of *Sputnik* and the subsequent congressional report that declared, "Our Nation is at risk" because we had committed "unilateral educational disarmament" due to a "rising tide of mediocrity" that was threatening "our very future as a Nation and a people" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). No matter which origin story is referenced, it is safe to say that education in the U.S. has been through its fair share of both manufactured and real crises (Goldstein, 2014; Ravitch, 2013; Taubman, 2009).

When I began this year-long study of the work and lives of five women elementary school teachers, I knew that the national climate around education in the United States was contentious and that teachers were speaking out about how increasingly intolerable their jobs had become (eg. Knevals, 2013; Natale, 2014; Sluyter, 2014; Strauss, 2015). I had previously theorized my own attempts at becoming what I called the *good enough teacher*[13] in neoliberal times and had

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13 It is important to note here that *good enough* is not something that teachers should aspire to "get back," as it has been never attainable in the first place. I am arguing that the *good*

concluded that this subject position was impossible to ever achieve even though it was constantly held up as possible (Walkerdine, 2003). As a result, my aim was to merge research and activism by meeting on a bi-weekly basis with the five women teachers in this study to provide a time and space to listen to them and to support them in creating their own understandings of *good enough* outside of the damaging market-logic of neoliberalism.

Going into the study, I hypothesized that the intolerable working conditions teachers were speaking out about and the impossibility of *good enough* in teaching were fueled by neoliberal discourses and policies around education that ultimately reduced the *value* of students and teachers to a number on a standardized test and aimed for corporate profits over educational achievement. History and sexism could help fill the gaps somewhat, as policy makers who are overwhelmingly men have proven time and again to be perpetually disinterested in what the overwhelmingly feminized teaching force has to say about education (Weiler, 1988; Grumet, 1988; Munro, 1998; Goldstein, 2014). However, what the teachers shared with me throughout our numerous informal interviews across time and in multiple spaces indicated to me that they were experiencing their own crisis—a crisis that results from teachers no longer recognizing the work that teaching has become. This crisis is heavily influenced by neoliberalism, but it is also perpetuated by their voices not being heard when they have repeatedly expressed concerns about not only their own working conditions but also the unbearable negative impacts the educational system is having in the lives of their students.

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enough teacher becomes even more of an impossibility within neoliberal understandings of education. For a more detailed discussion of the *good enough teacher,* see Chapter 1.

This paper consists of three main sections. While the sections serve different purposes, they each draw upon arguments made by journalist Naomi Klein (2007) in her book *The Shock Doctrine* around what she calls disaster capitalism. Klein argues that in times of crisis, societies are shocked into complying with regulations and policies to which they would otherwise never agree. She systematically demonstrates how the economic and political elite use these crisis to implement policy and create new markets that subsequently produce massive profits that pad the pockets of the same elite capitalist class who implemented the changes in the wake of the crisis.

While she cites the massive overhaul of public schools following Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans where all teachers were fired and schools were taken over by for-profit charter school organizations as an example of how the disaster capitalism complex operates, Klein does not specifically write about education. She instead demonstrates how natural disasters and acts of terror worldwide have produced crisis-induced reforms that operate to further damage the already fragile and shocked societies while those who created this *disaster capitalism complex* simultaneously economically benefit from these reforms.

I draw upon Klein's overall argument of how crisis allows for previously unthinkable transformations in policy and practice while specifically referencing her argument of how the disaster capitalism complex was created in the U.S. military after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. I parallel my analysis of disaster capitalism in education with Klein's analysis of the military in this way to demonstrate how it

became possible for neoliberal education reform to swiftly and decisively shift the aims of public education in the U.S. over the past decade.

In the first section, I share data from the perspectives of two teachers who participated in the study referenced above to provide specific context to the current situation in which teachers and students in public schools find themselves on a daily basis. I interpret the teachers to be in a state of shock around their inability to recognize themselves as teachers and their places of employment as schools. In discussing the crisis that occurs when, as one participant described it, "teaching isn't teaching" anymore, I argue that teachers find themselves complying with aims of education that are the antithesis of why they became teachers in the first place, yet neither the teachers nor I could explain how the dehumanizing practices they described to me became possibilities.

In the second section, I detail the events that produced the disaster capitalism complex in education. Klein argues that shocked societies need narratives to bridge the gap between fast moving events and the disorienting reality they produce. I offer one version of this gap-filling narrative to begin making sense of the situations teachers described to me. I construct this much-needed narrative hoping that "healing could come from understanding the past and connecting it to the present" (hooks, 2009, p. 17).

In the third section, I return to the narratives of the teachers to discuss unintended consequences of neoliberal corporate logic that result due, in part, to disaster capitalism's infiltration into education. I also discuss next steps in studying

the manifestations of neoliberalism in the daily lives of students and teachers in schools.

Dehumanizing the Work of Teaching

> In hostile interrogations, the first stage of breaking down prisoners is stripping them of their own clothes and any items that have the power to evoke their sense of self—so-called comfort items. Often objects that are of particular value to a prisoner, like the Koran or a cherished photograph, are treated with open disrespect. The message is "You are no one, you are who we want you to be," the essence of dehumanization. (Klein, 2007, p. 424-5)

What the fourth and fifth grade teachers who participated in this study described to me was unsettling. So unsettling, in fact, that I had no idea what to make of it. Like I have already said, I knew things were bad, but the only way I could describe the overall message that I interpreted the teachers to be trying to articulate was worse than bad. The teachers also struggled at times to find words to describe the situations they faced on a daily basis. They used violent words and dizzying words and said, "I don't know," "It's just crazy," "It doesn't make any sense," and "It's so stupid" a lot. For example, the following excerpt from Rose provides one example of the dizzying situation each of the teachers described to me:

> Really for me right now, the most frustrating thing that I'm going through is looking inward… I've just been like, "Stop! Be quiet! Sit down!"… And I know that's not helpful to anyone. But its like, I don't have—I don't know. It's very difficult to explain… But, I mean, I am stressed, but… When I start, like,

> yelling at kids and when I start, you know, "You have to be quiet all the time! Conform! Conform!" I know that that's not the best way to communicate with people… but its like I can't stop myself sometimes… My face is broken out… Physically something's going on with me. So, that's been really tough because you can't just turn it on and off.

Rose described how the stress of her job was getting to her physically as well as affecting her relationships with her students. She seemed confused as to why she just couldn't stop herself from becoming the teacher she described which was also a teacher she never intended to become.

Rose had recently completed her thesis for a doctoral degree in teacher leadership with a focus on providing social and emotional supports to enhance student learning. Although she had done extensive research on how to best support students' social and emotional wellbeing in addition to facilitating numerous professional development sessions for her colleagues on the topic, Rose nonetheless found herself engaging in teaching practices that did not represent the teacher she wanted to be or ever thought she would become. Additionally, none of her specialized knowledge on supporting the emotional wellbeing of students made it possible for her to stop demanding that students conform, nor did it help her make sense of the unexplainable confusion, pain and embodied effects her current situation was producing for her personally and in her relationships with students. Ultimately, Rose no longer recognized the teacher she had become.

Similarly, another teacher, Gretta, explained how she felt like she was working in a place that no longer resembled the school she originally came to work ten years prior:

> Sometimes when I'm walking through our hallways, I'm like, this is an asylum. The other day I was taking my kids to specials and there was like a little boy in the hallway laying down screaming… And there's this other little boy in special ed— [the] teacher has his arms behind his back like a cop, and he's spitting on everybody. And I'm like, this is crazy here.

Just as Rose described her inability to recognize herself as a teacher because of how she was treating her students, Gretta discusses how she does not recognize the place where she works as a school because, for her, it more closely resembles an asylum.

The asylum is where shock therapy has its origins. In the 1950s, the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) funded grossly unethical medical experiments being performed by Canadian doctor, Ewen Cameron, to gain information about "how to control the human mind" (Klein, 2007, p. 33). Cameron's shock therapy for psychiatric patients eventually made its way into CIA hostage interrogation training manuals. Klein (2007) argues that the logic of disaster capitalism is also heavily influenced by shock therapy. She writes,

> Like the free-market economists who are convinced that only a large-scale disaster—a great unmaking—can prepare the ground for their 'reforms,' Cameron believed that by inflicting an array of shocks to the human brain, he could unmake and erase faulty minds, then rebuild personalities. (p. 34)

Ultimately, one fundamental goal of shock therapy and torture is to break down the patient or prisoner to a state where they no longer recognize themselves—to a "clean slate" that can then be rebuilt from the ground up (Klein, 2007).

Rose's inability to recognize herself as the teacher she hoped she already was or would eventually become and Gretta's inability to recognize the place where she worked as a school was extremely painful and confusing for both them. It was also painful and confusing for me as an educational researcher and advocate for better working conditions for teachers. While I already knew that becoming *good enough* as a teacher had always been an impossible target because of the constant moving targets in education reform, I assumed that teachers were still able to engage the ethics of good teaching[14] to a degree such that "all the other stuff" they had to "put up with," as Rose put it, did not interfere to the point that they no longer recognized themselves or their places of employment. I interpret these situations as evidence of a "great unmaking" that is underway in public education with the aim of re-building and "reforming" education based on neoliberal rather than ethical understandings of success.

The other three teachers who participated in the study also expressed anger, confusion and sadness over the fact that the ethically oriented aims they had going into the teaching profession were no longer valued or important in determining their success as a teacher. It was as though those aims had been ripped away from the work of teaching. What was left was the confusing and frustrating situation that

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14 Santoro (2011) has called these ethics the "moral rewards of teaching" in documenting how teachers exit the profession when they no longer have adequate access to these moral rewards.

left them unable to recognize the work of teaching, but nonetheless required them to engage this unrecognizable work if they wanted to keep their jobs. Much of the work of teaching had become, as they described it to me, giving a multitude of tests, analyzing copious amounts of data, and implementing countless mandatory programs that were aimed at improving test scores.

Gretta describes her frustration positing, “All teachers go into education to do what's right for kids, and this feels like we're going in there beating them every day.” I interpreted this strong language Gretta used to describe her work to indicate that her working conditions were increasingly unbearable. She continued,

> If I had an option—I mean, I'm a single parent. I have to support my family—But teaching is not teaching right now. I wouldn't suggest anybody go into this field right now. And I hate that. I love teaching, but they don't want us to teach... This is a hostile work environment. I mean, nobody should have to work like we work... We are not treated like professionals. Our jobs are not protected at all. You always feel like you're in danger of being fired. It is so hostile.

Gretta loved teaching, but hated her job. Compounded with the fact that for Gretta “teaching isn’t teaching right now” was the fact that she felt like her work environment was hostile to the point that “nobody should have to” work like teachers are currently required to work.

Rose also described how the job of teaching was becoming increasingly unbearable. Struggling for words to describe how she felt, Rose finally said,

> I just want to be a part of a place where it lives and breathes positivity and passion, because I have been losing my passion slowly over the years here, and it's been—It's not because I don't love what I do. It's not because I don't—I—This is all I've ever wanted to do, but it's being sucked out of me. It's being slowly sucked out of me.

Having her positivity and passion slowly sucked out of her was difficult for Rose to describe. It seemed as though she could not find words to adequately explain how she felt in her body.

Feeling the hostility of having the passion slowly sucked out of teaching was disturbingly familiar for all six of us (myself included), as the other three teachers in the study described feelings similar to the ones discussed by Rose and Gretta. Nonetheless, it was still clearly painful and confusing for each of the five teachers to discuss and for me to hear. I interpreted the painful confusion to be part of the crisis that results from the shocking realization that teaching isn't teaching anymore and that they have unwillingly been separated from the ethically oriented reasons they had gotten into teaching in the first place.

The stripping away of things and ideals that are understood as especially valuable and treating these things with "open disrespect" is how Klein (2007) describes the process of dehumanization which is an integral part of shock therapy that progresses the patient towards the desirable blank slate state of mind. Klein draws from literature on hostage interrogation situations to argue that seemingly impossible transformations are made possible when a society is shocked. Here, I similarly argue that for the teachers in this study the particularly valuable ideal that

has been treated with open disrespect is the ethically oriented foundations of teaching.

The message has been sent to Gretta and Rose that their very sense of self—or how they fundamentally understand themselves as teachers—is worthless and that they "are no one" except "who we want you to be" (p. 425) to the degree that they not only did not recognize themselves as teachers but they also were seemingly baffled about exactly how they got to the current place they were. I understand Rose's inability to recognize herself as a teacher and Gretta's inability to recognize her place of employment as a school as one result of the ongoing and persistent open disrespect to the profession they thought to be fundamentally grounded in positively impacting the lives of children. They instead felt that this ground had been snatched from beneath their feet and they were left in the maddening and disorienting position of participating in a system that dehumanizes not only them as teachers but also the children with whom they work.

While this chapter details a study with participants in a particular place and context[15], Gretta, Rose and the other teachers in this study are certainly not alone in feeling like they no longer recognize the work of teaching. During this study and the months following data collection, I stayed abreast of national conversations teachers, administrators and educational researchers were having about the swift changes being made in education in the United States. I found countless social media posts (eg. To Give Voice on tumbler; BATs Closed Facebook Groups in each state; the hashtag #EducationBeforeProfit on any social media), blog posts (eg. Arnold, 2012;

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15 For more information on this context, see Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

Singer, 2015; Strauss, 2014), opinion pieces (eg. Godsey, 2015; Moore, 2013; Knevals, 2013; Singer, 2015), and online news articles (eg. Kingkade, 2013; Socialistworker.org Contributor, 2015) about the intolerable working conditions for teachers in recent years.

It is also important to note that the dehumanization of teachers and their work is nothing new (Goldstein, 2014; Strauss, 2014). Teachers as well as feminist educational researchers have spoken out in previous reform eras about how the work of teaching is often influenced most by those who are removed from the work of teaching and how they are ethically opposed to the most recent reform efforts they face in their daily working lives (Munro, 1998; Nias, 1989; Santoro, 2011; Weiler, 1988). However, within the current context of neoliberalism, this all too familiar dehumanization is happening among changes in education policy that have the clear and undisputable objective of opening up market to what has been called the *educational services sector* (Sloan, 2008; Stanfield, 2012). In the next sections, I discuss this new market that has been created and discuss the necessary narrative to "bridge the gap between reality and understanding" (Klein, 2007, p. 579) of the crisis that was occurring in the teachers' working lives and the policies that were implemented to make these dehumanizing changes possible.

The Need for New Narratives

> A state of shock, by definition, is a moment when there is a gap between fast-moving events and the information that exists to explain them… unprocessed by story, narrative or anything that could bridge the gap between reality and understanding. Without a story, we are… intensely vulnerable to those

> people who are ready to take advantage of the chaos for their own ends. (Klein, 2007, p. 579)

Sweeping and swift changes such as the ones described by the teachers require a temporarily shocked and paralyzed society (Klein, 2007). Neoliberal educational transformations have been implemented with "remarkable speed" (Taubman, 2009, p. 12) and reflect a broader global shift from liberalism to neoliberalism (Davies, 2014; Harvey, 2005; Klein, 2007; Steger & Roy, 2010), which assigns economic interpretations to formerly non-economic entities such as the military, health care, and education (Foucault, 2008). Thus, the aims of education are also shifted in this swift implementation of neoliberal rationality in which the primary purpose of education is to serve the market economy. In other words, with the neoliberalization of education, not only is teaching not teaching anymore but also the aim of the public education system is not to educate students anymore. Instead, the goal of neoliberal public education is to support the market, which often means making as much money as possible for the corporations who have been directly involved in education policymaking (DeBray, 2006).

The teachers discussed these sweeping changes in education policy and how these changes had, in a relatively short period of time, fundamentally changed their daily lives as teachers. But the reasons behind these swift changes were sill unclear for them. They struggled to narrate how the redefinition of their work that was being forced upon them became possible. For example, Gretta laughingly said, "You just wonder who is—It's like we're in the Wizard of Oz. There is a man behind a

sheet somewhere laughing his ass off [saying,] '*Let's see what I can get them to do today!'*"

Gretta previously described the school in which she worked as an asylum, but here she begrudgingly jokes about the idea that there must be something or someone—a man behind a sheet somewhere—fueling the incomprehensible madness she was witnessing all around her—a madness in which she was required to participate if she was to keep her job.

Another participant, Natasha, also questioned who or what was behind the rapid and confusing changes she had witnessed over the course of her seventeen-year teaching career. She wondered,

> Who is making the decisions? Who is deciding what happens with tests, and who is giving it and which vendor we used for it and all of that? Because really, it's probably about making money for the testing vendors and the test prep people who are going to make new books that we can all buy.

Natasha offers the possible explanation that the swift and damaging changes happening in education were being fueled at least in part by the market. While not all of the teachers presented this possibility, each of the five women understood the sweeping changes and educational mandates to be harmful to students[16]. But none of us had a narrative to make sense of the swift re-definition of the aims of education and now those aims manifest themselves in the daily lives of teachers. In other words, neither the teachers nor I could figure out how things became so damaging and unbearable in education in such a short period of time.

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16 This is further discussed in Chapter 6.

Klein points out that shocking experiences of dehumanization often produce "a traumatic or sub-traumatic experience which explodes, as it were, the world that is familiar to the subject as well as his image of himself within that world" (Klein, 2007, p. 19). This shocking experience is compounded because it is often "unprocessed by story" (p. 579) to explain how the shocking experience was made possible. The teachers found themselves in a dizzying situation where they no longer recognized their jobs or even themselves as teachers. Their familiar reality had been exploded through not only their own dehumanization but also the requirement that they dehumanize their students by engaging neoliberal understandings of education.

In the statements above, Gretta and Natasha describe a seemingly invisible power that is operating "behind a sheet somewhere" being amused by its ability to both control teachers and make money while doing it. It is time to pull the sheet away to make visible how power is operating in educational "reform" efforts and make it clear who benefits from the sweeping changes the teachers described to me—because it certainly is not teachers or students. But first, it is important to acknowledge the stories told by the teachers in this study and around the U.S. and to process the events that happened "behind the sheet" to make these stories a possibility. In the next section, I propose a gap-filling narrative that offers one possible scenario to explain how education got to the dehumanizing state in which the teachers described. Teachers as well as educational researchers need this gap-filling narrative to process the swift changes in education and ultimately become

less vulnerable to those that use the dehumanization of education for their own gain.

Gap-Filling Narratives: Passing Notes Between the Bars

> As soon as we have a new narrative that offers a perspective on the shocking events, we become reoriented and the world begins to make sense once again… The interrogators know that prisoners talk. They warn each other about what's to come; they pass notes between the bars. Once that happens, the captors lose their edge. They still have the power to inflict bodily pain, but they have lost their most effective psychological tools to manipulate and "break" their prisoners: confusion, disorientation and surprise. Without those elements, there is no shock. (Klein, 2007, p. 579-580)

Educational researchers, journalists, educational bloggers, and teachers have been passing notes between the bars about the current crisis of education. Countless posts flood social media about how the market has consistently been infiltrating the education system over the past several decades and there have even been books written for the general public describing teaching as "America's most embattled profession" (Goldstein, 2014). For example, in her book *Teacher Wars*, Dana Goldstein (2014) writes,

> Today the ineffective tenured teacher has emerged as a feared character, a vampiric type who sucks tax dollars into her bloated pension and health care plans, without much regard for the children under her care… Today's bad teacher scare employs all the classic features of moral panic. (p. 5)

Goldstein (2014) points out how teachers have been constructed in mainstream discourses as continuously sucking money out of the educational system while providing little benefit to the children they teach. Goldstein does not argue against the marketization of education, but her historical analysis is important here because she points out how failure has been constructed around the teaching profession.

The construction of this narrative of failure tied to moral panic was integral to the swift and fundamental change in the aims of the educational system in the United States. This fundamental change to which I am referring is the shift from a liberal educational system to a neoliberal education system. The former liberal education system was aimed at educating the masses and producing quality workers who would ultimately contribute to the market through their work as productive members of a democratic society (Dewey, 2009). In this section, I detail my claim that the present neoliberal education system is not aimed at educating children to help uphold the market through their future work but instead skips over the process of educating children all together and heads straight to education servicing the economy directly.

While this shift utilized the decades-old "bad teacher" narrative, which was relatively easy to construct and manipulate given the historically low status of teachers in the U.S. (Goldstein, 2014; Kumashiro, 2010), it also required a crisis to enable the authoritarian conditions necessary to anti-democratically enforce changes that a voting population would consistently reject if given the option[17]. In

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17 Klein details several accounts of how situations of crisis enable the justification of sweeping changes that would otherwise be practically impossible to make in democratic societies.

her book *Reign of Error,* Dianne Ravitch (2013) explains the rationale behind recent changes in education describing the rhetoric that insisted,

> This crisis is so profound that half measures and tweaks will not suffice. Schools must be closed and large numbers of teachers fired. Anyone who doubts this is unaware of the dimensions of the crisis or has a vested interest in defending the status quo. (p. 3)

The status quo that educational reformers are so intent on alleviating harkens back to the "rising tide of mediocrity" proclaimed in 1983, which was arguably the beginning of the claims to crisis in education. While it has been argued that *A Nation at Risk* was a manufactured crisis (Berliner & Biddle, 1995), it nonetheless set the stage for the massive educational reforms over the next 30 years and beyond in education policy. I argue that it also provided the necessary "softening up" period that made the sweeping changes teachers have experienced in their work and working conditions over the past five to ten years move from No Child Left Behind being "politically impossible" to becoming "politically inevitable" (Friedman, 2002, p. xiv). In what follows, I detail these transformations specific to education using Klein's examples of the disaster capitalism complex in the military as a framework to write the gap-filling narrative that follows.

NCLB: From Politically Impossible to Politically Inevitable

The period of "softening up" within hostage interrogation situations is what produces "a kind of hurricane in the mind" so that prisoners "can no longer think rationally and protect their own interest" and ultimately comply with even the most obscene requests (Klein, 2007, p. 19). Klein argues that this softening up period for

the military was set in motion, at least in part, during the Bush, Sr. presidency when then Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney "scaled down the number of active troops and dramatically increased [the US military's] reliance on private contractors [that identified]… tasks being performed by US troops that could be taken over by the private sector for a profit" (Klein, 2007, p. 367). Additionally, corporations began providing "logistical support" to the military via "cost-plus contracts" that "guaranteed profit" (p. 368) at specific percentage rates beyond the cost of each project. This softening up paved the way for the current situation that Klein calls the disaster creation-response era, which was made possible only in the aftermath of the crisis of September 11, 2001. She points out how the father of neoliberalism himself, Milton Friedman, argued,

> Only a crisis—actual or perceived—produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable. (Friedman, 1982, p. ix, cited in Klein, 2007)

Klein additionally posits that for the "true vision" of neoliberal ideals put forth by Friedman and his neoliberal followers to be realized, there must be "authoritarian conditions" because these ideals can only be "partially imposed under a democracy" (p. 13). Thus, the tool needed in a democracy to create these authoritarian conditions is crisis. Klein argues that 9/11 provided the necessary crisis for Friedman followers—specifically Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney—to finally make the formerly politically *impossible* the politically *inevitable* through the

creation of a market that ensures that tax dollars supply limitless profits for private corporations.

Specifically concerning the military, the "primary economic role of wars" prior to September 11th in the US was to "open new markets that had been sealed off and to generate postwar peacetime booms." However, post 9/11 "wars and disaster responses are so fully privatized that they are themselves the new market; there is no need to wait until after the war for the boom—the medium is the message" (Klein, 2007, p. 16). In other words, the military had already been issuing multibillion-dollar contracts to private corporations before 9/11, but after 9/11 and the subsequent and utterly un-winnable War on Terror, these corporations were ensured a new, permanent place within the global economy. With this permanent place in the economy, there comes a fierce need to ensure that there is a steady stream of terrorizing crisis. This crisis creation-response age is all produced, ironically enough, in the name of freedom and democracy (Klein, 2007).

There is an interesting parallel in education. While the War on Terror is not what is fueling the current crisis in education, the pressing need to reform education was again (because the first time was *A Nation at Risk* as discussed above) linked to national security after 9/11. The Secretary of Education at the time, Roderick Paige, was quoted in the *Dallas Morning News* stating, "The events of September 11th didn't make an education bill less important, it made it more important. Education is a national security issue. This is not something we can put on the shelf and come back to later" (cited in DeBray, 2006, p. 117). Additionally, in her detailed account of federal education policy during the Clinton and Bush administrations, Elizabeth

DeBray (2006) points out how "in the aftermath of the September [11th] terrorist attacks" President Bush called on congress to pass the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation "in order to demonstrate that it was not immobilized and could still tend to the nation's needs" (p. 81).

At first glance, Bush's persistence to pass NCLB seems quite curious especially considering his party's fierce opposition to implementing any kind of standards or accountability measures at the national level up until 2001. In fact, the Republican Party previously opposed national education policy legislation to the degree that they even called for the abolition of the Federal Department of Education all together, only six years prior to Bush's insistence on the passage of NCLB (DeBray, 2006). DeBray also points out,

> While one common interpretation has been that No Child Left Behind was a bipartisan compromise, NCLB must also be understood as an ideological defection, made possible by the concessions of members of the Republican House out of loyalty to President Bush during the post-9/11 period of national crisis. (p. 15)

Considering that the Clinton administration tried to push bills similar to NCLB through congress on several occasions with no avail, one might wonder how the ideological defection from Bush and the concessions of the Republican House became feasible.

I argue that along with the crisis of 9/11 and Bush's insistence on compromise, NCLB moved from politically *impossible* to politically *inevitable* largely due to the addition of supplemental services to the bill. While the republican push

for vouchers which would provide tax dollars to parents to spend at schools of their choice (including private schools) was unsuccessful, supplemental services allowed for tax dollars to be spent on private tutoring services for students whose schools were deemed as "failing."

I additionally argue that just as cost-plus contracts contributed to the softening up period for the military to move into the disaster creation-response market resulting from the proclaimed War on Terror, supplemental services in NCLB softened up education in preparation for the full-blown marketization of education the teachers described to me. In other words, it was clear that some republicans conceived of how supplemental services had the potential to further privatize public education using tax dollars (DeBray, 2007).

For example, John Boehner's chief education staffer on the House committee at the time, Sally Lovejoy, described how she pointed out the "victory" of supplemental services with other republicans who were disappointed that vouchers did not make it into NCLB: "You know what you're getting with supplemental services is a huge deal. For the first time we'll have federal dollars paying for private services. Even in Catholic schools, for the summer or for tutoring or whatever." (DeBray, 2007, p. 96, citing an interview with Lovejoy). Lovejoy described how she was able to sway some republicans into voting for NCLB by pointing out that even though they did not get vouchers, what they could potentially get with supplemental services could be just as effective in opening the door to federal tax money supporting private educational service providers.

Lovejoy was not the only one who realized the potential in supplemental services. According to a congressional aide who wished to remain anonymous, New Hampshire Senator Judd Gregg rallied republicans to support NCLB just before the vote explaining how

> supplemental services are a foot under the door for vouchers. They're going to show that these schools aren't working properly, and we'll finally be able to show that the schools aren't doing well. The assessments are going to prove the same thing. (DeBray, 2006, p. 96)

In other words, if republicans could not abolish the federal Department of Education, they would find a way to subsidize private companies with federal tax dollars instead.

Additionally, the legislation was passed swiftly with little regard for input from educators. The National Educational Association (NEA) was involved in early discussions, but they were eventually seemingly forced out of the conversation. An anonymous congressional aide reported overhearing a phone conversation the late Senator Ted Kennedy had with NEA representatives in which he "demanded that they not oppose the bill." Ultimately, the union "took no position" on NCLB (DeBray, 2006, p. 97). Further, "academic researchers would also weigh in with analysis of the provisions" but their influence on the resulting bill was "minimal" (DeBray, 2006, p. 98).

In the end, NCLB passed in the wake of 9/11 against the advice of educators at all levels working in the field. This absolute disregard for educator's input is different from the typical pattern of women teachers being ignored by policy

makers (eg. Weiler, 1988; Goldstein, 2014). This disregard goes beyond the sexist disavowal of the feminized teaching workforce because it is a rejection of the typically more accepted and masculine entities of leadership in the educational research community and teachers unions that were previously at least somewhat professionally respected at the national level regarding education policy. In the next section, I discuss how the disregard for input of educators extended to include state Departments of Education with the formation of the disaster creation/response market that was opened through the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Obama administration's Race to the Top (RTT).

Disaster Capitalism Infiltrates Education

Assuming that *A Nation at Risk* began the necessary calls to crisis in public education, NCLB was the softening up period that paved the way for the latest and most decisive blow to public education: Race to the Top (RTT). If supplemental services were the equivalent to cost plus contracts of the military, then the implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) served a similar role in education as the proclamation of the War on Terror in the military. In both cases, state and federal tax dollars paid corporations to provide the "preventative" goods and services that claim to ward off the next terroristic threat (in the case of the War on Terror) or failing school (in the case of RTT). These preventative services, however, provide nothing other than the disaster creation *itself*. They provide the surveillance data (in the case of the War on Terror) or testing data (in the case of RTT) that is required to prove that there is, in fact, a disastrous terroristic threat or school full of failing teachers and children. In both cases the federal government

opens the disaster-creation-disaster relief process and the new "full fledged economy" (Klein, 2007, p. 377) surrounding these disasters. Diane Ravitch (2013) notes the shift specific to education:

> As a historian of American education, I have seen, studied, and written about waves of school reforms that came and went. But what is happening now is an astonishing development. It is not meant to reform public education but is a deliberate effort to replace public education with a privately managed, free-market system of schooling. (p. 4)

Put another way, the "disaster capitalism complex" (Klein, 2007, p. 377) that produces both the demand and the supply sides of the War on Terror in the name of freedom and democracy also produces both the demand and supply sides of the implementation of CCSS and RTT in the name of student achievement. This disaster capitalism complex ensures the crisis of public education is never actually remedied because the same corporations producing the materials to teach and test the newly implemented CCSS may potentially be the same corporations who own the for-profit charter schools that swoop in and "save" the "failing" schools.

Ravitch (2013) also points out how "state education departments warned that the enhanced rigor of the Common Core would cause test scores to plummet by as much as 30 percent, even in successful districts" (p. 16). Just as teachers unions and educational researchers were ignored in the implementation of NCLB, the recommendations made by state departments of education were ignored with the implementation of RTT. Ultimately, "the sharp decline in passing rates will reinforce the reformers' claims about our nation's 'broken' education system" (Ravitch, 2013,

p. 16) which is interestingly similar to what Senator Gregg predicted in his pre-NCLB pep talk with republicans behind closed doors. This "broken" education system would be handed over to the free market that "will create a burgeoning market for new products and technologies" (Ravitch, 2013, p. 16).

Again, the creation of this new market in education reflects a similar pattern to the one Klein describes concerning the military. She discusses how federal military spending shifted from contracts within a niche market involving a few major corporations like Boeing and Lockheed to the "rebuilding places that have not yet been destroyed" (Klein, 2007, p. 483) that is characteristic of the disaster capitalism complex. In the educational parallel, federal education dollars moved from a select few companies within a relatively narrow market of corporations providing educational materials such as tests and curriculum to a ballooning market in response to persistent manufactured crisis in education. Common Core and RTT made the creation of this permanent new market a possibility.

Similar to how Klein describes the disaster capitalism complex in the military, "A fully articulated new economy" (Klein, 2007, p. 17) was produced with RTT and CCSS, as "this was the first time in history that the U.S. Department of Education designed programs with the intent of stimulating private sector investors to create for-profit ventures in American education" (Ravitch, 2013, p. 17). Indeed, schools have been opened to a flood of educational materials and service providers wanting to make billions in profits—all in the name of student achievement.

This prolific invasion of market logic in schools was clear throughout my extensive and ongoing discussions with the teachers. They mentioned over 30

curricular materials or programs that they were supposed to be piecemealing together in order to adequately teach CCSS. And it, of course, did not stop at curricular materials and programs. In addition to computers and other classroom technology, practice testing materials, year-end assessments and teacher-evaluation software. And possibly the biggest profit-maker of them all is the "disaster response" provided by multinational corporations that contract with state and federal governments to open for-profit, public charter schools. It is no surprise that the owners of the school's supposedly set up to "save" children from the schools that "failed" them are not educators in any stretch of the word.

For example, Enterprise Properties Trust is a corporation that owns ski parks, retail centers, movie theaters, and Imagine Charter Schools. In a 2012 interview on CNBC, the president and CEO of Enterprise Properties, David Brian, discussed whether or not public charter schools are a "wise addition" to an investment portfolio:

> It's a very stable business—very recession resistant… It's a high demand product…. The industry is growing 12 to14% a year, so its a high growth industry. Very stable recession-resistant business. Its a public payer—the state is the payer on this, a, category, and, uh, you do the business in states with fiscally sound treasuries, then it's a very solid business. (Brian, 2012)

Brian (2012) continued ensuring viewers/potential investors that they would not lose revenue even if his company lost a charter due to lack of student achievement because "we have our Imagine [charter school] arrangements on a master lease so

there's no loss of rents to the company… We've structured our affairs so that this is not going to impact our rent roll."

Further, and possibly most dangerous of all, Brian discusses how he does not foresee any threat to the for-profit public charter school industry even within the context of "public backlash" because "we have both political parties very solidly behind it. You have high demand. You have high growth" (Brian, 2012). In other words, the "we" who has both democrats and republicans alike "very solidly behind" the idea that public tax dollars should be contracted out to the market are the very corporations who stand to benefit from this "high growth" and "recession resistant business," as Brian described it. Klein (2007) also talks about how the disaster capitalism complex "exists apart from any one administration and will remain entrenched until the corporate supremacist ideology that underpins it is identified, isolated and challenged." (p. 481).

While this example is particularly disturbing if for no other reason than its blatant emphasis on making profits off the failure of children, there have been numerous other corporations and special interest groups lobbying for increasing opportunities for profit-making in the educational services sector (eg. Sloan, 2008). In a 2012 report titled "The Profit Motive in Education: Continuing the Revolution" commissioned by the United Kingdom-based Institute of Economic Affairs—an organization whose mission is to "improve public understanding of the fundamental institutions of a free society, with particular reference to the role of markets in solving economic and social problems" (Stanfield, 2012)—authors posit that profit driven education offers the best education and that the criticism of the profit motive

is “unjustified” (p. 22). They call the move to profit-driven education a “revolution” and argue “the school reform debate currently focuses too great an extent on ‘school choice’” and that the focus should be shifted to the “supply side of education.” With this shift there will be “radical new ways to deliver education, including new ways of bundling education services. Those models that are successful will be scaled up rapidly if the profit motive is allowed to work” (p. 22).

Despite the fact that educational researchers and activist organizations have time and again posited that profit-driven education is inequitable (Mette, 2013; Kozol, 2007; Ravitch, 2015; Thomas, 2014; Weis & Fine, 2012) and found that that students in charter schools fare no better than their counterparts in traditional public schools (Center for Research on Education Outcomes, 2013; Chapman & Donnor, 2015; Downey, 2015; Furgeson, et al., 2012), lobbying groups who stand to benefit from the further restructuring of education continue to have an overwhelming influence in education policymaking. I have provided a necessary step towards challenging this “corporate supremacist ideology” by writing a narrative around how the seemingly impossible became inevitable in the lives of the teachers in this study, in the lives of educators at all levels, and in the lives of the students in schools all over the U.S. My aim in providing this narrative has been to fill the gap that was created through the swift rearranging of the aims of public education. In the next section, I go back to the teachers and discuss some of the consequences of the shock doctrine and its disaster capitalism complex to continue to challenge the damaging effects of neoliberalism in both the educational system and the everyday lives of the teachers.

After the Shock Wears Off

> Yet today, even the cataclysmic shocks of wars and natural disasters do not always provoke the level of disorientation required to impose unwanted economic shock therapy. There are just too many people in the world who have had direct experience with the shock doctrine: they know how it works, have talked to other prisoners, passed notes between the bars; the crucial element of surprise is missing. (Klein, 2007, p. 580)

Through writing a gap-filling narrative of how it was possible that we got to where we are in education—the place where teaching isn't teaching—I realized that not only is the *good enough teacher* an impossible subject position but also that *good enough* is not even the target in education as it is understood in terms of neoliberal discourses. Similar to what happened with the military, education is now involved in its own disaster capitalism complex, which promotes an endless cycle of destruction and reconstruction which also provides a permanent new market for educational service providers to make billions in profit.

Not only is teaching not teaching anymore, the very aim of public education is not to educate children anymore. I realized that not only are educators the only ones still aiming for ethically oriented versions of *good enough* but also that educators are running around aiming for a target that does not even exist because *good enough* within the dominant discourse of neoliberalism only has the capacity to include economic interpretations of good enough. The ethically oriented versions

of *good enough* to which the teachers have aspired is not the target in education. Instead, the target is clear and stable:

> The target is the market.

We no longer need children to serve as the "middle man" of education in which we should invest so they will eventually serve as good workers in the economy. Educating children has been bypassed in neoliberalism. Now, the medium is in the message, and profits directly flow from federal tax dollars subsidizing enormous corporate growth on both the creation and relief sides of the disaster that has become public education.

This realization is quite dizzying and potentially paralyzing, but once the shock wears off, it is not surprising that a population that has been hit with multiple blows of crisis intended to shock them into compliance might eventually lose faith in the very democratic ideals that were the basis of the call to crisis in the first place. The teachers in this study specifically described the lack of democratic processes from the local levels of their own schools to the national level of educational policy making. They described time and again how their voices were not heard concerning the damaging effects that education was having in their working lives and in the educational experiences of the students they teach. Gretta provides an example by discussing a situation where teachers were required to take a survey about school climate positing,

> Which is another stupid thing. They survey us all the time and think that we believe that shit. Don't even ask me! If you're going to do it anyway, don't ask me and insult me like that… That's what I resent the most. Teachers are

> bullied… What I can't stand is to be overlooked… and be told all the time you suck… It doesn't matter what we say or how unhappy we are, because we've been very vocal about how unhappy we are.

Again, even though Gretta describes a localized situation, it has been documented time and again at the national level via blogs, magazines and opinion pieces that teachers are finding their working conditions increasingly intolerable. Despite the fact that teachers have voiced concerns over how unhappy they are and how the current educational system is damaging to children, nothing has changed to provide any relief from the damage—if anything, according to the teachers in this study, it has changed for the worse.

This situation is particularly precarious for teachers not afforded union protection. The teachers in this study lived in a "right to work" state and it was thus illegal for them to unionize. Natasha had previously worked in a state where she had union representation. She often discussed the differences in the working conditions she experienced as a teacher in the unionized state in comparison to her current state of residence. She ultimately concluded that even though her job was better protected in the unionized state, she nonetheless felt that teachers had little control over what they taught, how they taught, and whether or not they would have to administer standardized assessments. She concluded in describing how she felt about her current situation:

> Yeah. The teachers are not represented. And there's no strong voice, and we just get bulldozed and handed our lunch. And you're going to have to work extra hard to get it, too. It's crazy.

I agreed with Natasha. It is crazy and confusing to be bulldozed. Especially if the calls for change are based on a desire for a more humanizing education system for both teachers and students.

However, economic shock therapy necessarily happens in the absence of democracy and is instituted by force (Klein, 2007). When corporate supremacist ideology has been forced on a population for long enough, the shock wears off and practically nothing can surprise them any longer. The teachers spoke to this reality and unintended consequence of the shock doctrine when I asked them what they thought it would take to change the course of education, improve their working conditions and alleviate the crisis they described. They had a difficult time coming up with ways they might be able to change their current working conditions. Each participant equated being political to voting. Put another way, when asked about having heir voices heard about what they think needs to change in education, they each brought up voting but did not mention any other ways they might be politically active as teachers.

For example, in discussing why she does not vote, Taylor shared how she is "not a real big political person, because… I think it's all bullshit anyway." Joplin also discussed a lack of faith in the democratic system and the elected officials within it stating,

> I don't really try to get my political views heard. I mean, I don't vote. I guess if I did vote and I tried to look at people on the school board—but even those people—like and all those people who run for Senate and all that stuff. They say whatever they want to say. They don't ever do it.

Both Taylor and Joplin expressed a lack of participation and faith in voting as actually having the capacity to make real change because they had little to no faith that elected officials would actually do what they said they were going to do when they were trying to get elected. However, neither of them had any other ideas about how they might get involved in making changes in their working conditions.

While Natasha did vote, she also described feeling like teachers' voices were not heard, as she demonstratively stated, "We're a bunch of women who care about children. Nobody cares about that!" Discussing the current educational climate specifically, she continued,

> It's just made everything feel horrible, because it doesn't work… And so to say like that everything—go vote… Talk with your vote. Share your voice with your vote. I'm like, but does that even do anything? I don't feel like it does.

Even though Natasha does her civic duty of voting and trying her best to stay informed about current events, she still describes feeling like voting, ultimately, does not "do anything."

While the five women who participated in this study tended to draw primarily upon the act of voting when discussing what it would take to change the education system, it is important to acknowledge other important ways that teachers around the U.S. have been lobbying for changes in their working conditions. In addition to the blogs, social media posts, opinion pieces and news articles mentioned above, many teachers around the country have organized around making necessary changes in education. For example, the Badass Teachers

Association (BATs) began as a Facebook group that gained approximately 270 members in its first day to over 1,500 members just a few days later (Naison, 2013). The BATs mission statement reads,

> Badass Teachers Association was created to give voice to every teacher who refuses to be blamed for the failure of our society to erase poverty and inequality through education. BAT members refuse to accept assessments, tests and evaluations created and imposed by corporate driven entities that have contempt for real teaching and learning.

With growing momentum, the BATs aim to give "Corporate School Reformers much more than they bargained for" (Niason, 2013) by reducing or eliminating use of high stakes testing, increasing teacher autonomy in the classroom and work, and including teacher and family voices in legislative decision-making process that affect students. The BATs have expanded to have members and chapters in all 50 states. Additionally, by engaging in activities such as writing collective letters to politicians, offering a safe space online for teachers (via the closed Facebook groups), and even hosting a "Renewal of Spirit" first annual convention for working educators where BATs convened to discuss issues around the corporate takeover of education and how to reinvigorate unions and stand up for democracy.

While the teachers in this study as well as teachers around the U.S. feel that they have little influence on policymaking (Goldstein, 2014), they are nonetheless taking steps to become and remain a presence through collectives like the BATs. In addition to collectively organizing, educators are also speaking out on blogs and other online outlets such as Twitter to help other teachers become or remain aware

of educational politics (eg. Jones, 2012; also see, @EducatorsRoom, @DianeRavitch, @getschooled, @HuffPostEdu, and many others on Twitter). Further, teachers all over the country are joining with parents and other community members to advocate for equity oriented education (eg. Nazareno, 2014; also see http://educationopportunitynetwork.org and www.empoweredga.org) and to boycott state-mandated tests (eg. Strauss, 2014; also see www.nysape.org and www.unitedoptout.com).

While it is somewhat disheartening that teachers in this study did not reference any of these types of grassroots organizations working to influence education in equity oriented ways, the fact that none of these organizations were mentioned could indicate several things. The teachers may not know that there are organizations like the BATs, or they may simply be too exhausted at the end of the day or end of the school year to think about expending more energy into their jobs when they are not on the clock. Because the teachers in this study worked in non-unionized states, they may be used to nothing changing when they make their voices heard, or they may stay silent out of fear of losing their jobs.

And their fears may be warranted. In the state where the teachers in this study worked, parents who attempted to opt their child out of the state-mandated test were met at the school by police officers (Willis, 2014). Situations like these only fuel the fear of speaking out. Nonetheless, I hope that this study and others like it (Johnson, 2012), along with educators all over the country continuing to pass notes via social media and grassroots organizing, will begin to dismantle the corporate supremacist ideology embedded in disaster capitalism so that teachers

have the courage to carve out more equity oriented ways to engage the work of teaching.

Conclusions

Although what counts as *good enough* for women and teachers has always been a shifting target—an "impossible fiction" that is "constantly held up as possible" (Walkerdine, 2003), the teachers in this study still understood the target of *good enough* in relation to ethically oriented goals of educating children. They were confused about how it became possible for them to participate in a system that actively dehumanizes children. With the most recent shift in education and its "economic-ethical ambiguity" (Foucault, 2008, p. 241), the new target of the market creates incommensurabilities for teachers. The shocked teachers did not have narratives to describe the realities in which they found themselves. The violent effects of an education system that was supposedly put in place to benefit children instead becomes a place that that is harmful to almost every child involved, regardless of any identity category that might otherwise marginalize some and privilege others.

In the current situation, the only children who are safe from the damaging effects of education are the ones who are somehow able to opt-out of the system. While the damaging effects of public education have been a horrifying reality for many children based on race, ability, social class, gender, sexual orientation, religion and culture throughout the history of education in the US, the neoliberalization of schools via the auctioning-off of education to the highest bidder is possibly the first time in American public education where *no child is without risk* of being damaged

by the very public education system that is supposed to ensure their achievement and success.

The quick and unlikely passage of NCLB set off a series of shocks in public education that are still reverberating through the lives of teachers and students in schools via value-added evaluations, market-based solutions, and corporate supremacist ideological understandings of teaching and learning. The swift attacks have expanded in schools with RTT and CCSS as has been discussed here. They are further beginning to impact preservice teachers via edTPA (Au, 2013) and teacher education programs via evaluating colleges of education based on test scores of students in graduates' future classrooms (Jones, 2015; Rich, 2014).

In light of the swift and continuous neoliberal attack on public education in the U.S., educators must keep passing notes between the bars and collecting what was left in the wake of the disaster. I hope that this paper itself will contribute to this note-passing and has provided a much-needed narrative to help us become less vulnerable to the next set of shocks that come our way. With a story to help process how education got to the place described to me by the teachers in this study, educators can continue to pass notes and systematically begin to pull away the protective sheets behind which those who benefit from the normalization of corporate supremacist logic hide.

Further, this critical work must happen both inside and outside of the academy. Teachers, parents, taxpayers, and students deserve a new narrative upon which to draw in making sense of the educational system in which they must directly or indirectly participate and fund. It is time to expose the corporate

supremacist logic of neoliberalism for what it is. Only then will we begin to repair the crisis that disaster capitalism itself has caused and move toward a more humanizing education for children and teachers in schools.

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CHAPTER 7

INTERMEZZO FROM OPINION PIECE, SUBMITTED TO THE *ATLANTA JOURNAL CONSTITUTION'S* "GET SCHOOLED" BLOG

Last weekend, the *Athens Banner Herald* ran an opinion piece by Dr. Phil Lanoue, the Superintendent of the Clarke County School District (CCSD) in Athens, Georgia titled "Opportunity School Districts would be damaging to education in Georgia." In the piece, Lanoue first describes how Governor Nathan Deal's legislation would change the state constitution so that schools across the state deemed "failing" would be taken over by the governor's Opportunity School District. Additionally, Lanoue detailed six "major concerns" about the governor's plan to directly address the unethical and damaging effects Governor Deal's Opportunity School District would have on local communities and the students served in the state's public schools.

As a former teacher in the Clarke County School District, a parent of a child in a Georgia public school, and a teacher educator at the University of Georgia, I agree with Lanoue's concerns. The democratic governing structures of local school districts and boards of education along with the oversight of the state and federal Departments of Education ensures that local school administrators, teachers and the students they serve already have extensive standardization and accountability measures in place.

Just as Lanoue pointed out that the schools in CCSD "are much more than a single number on a 100-point scale that is primarily based on standardized test scores," I would like to point out that each *child* is much more than a single number from a single test and that each *teacher* is much more than a single number produced by an aggregate of the test scores of her students. Despite this inability of numbers to adequately represent proof of success, it is nonetheless the way that both teachers and students are evaluated, and Deal's proposed changes would extend this nonsense to how schools are evaluated as well.

Those of us who have dedicated our careers to the education of children have an intimate knowledge of the fact that "meeting the needs of every student reflects thousands of interactions, victories and successes each day," as Lanoue put it. Perhaps more importantly, we also know that no single test or aggregate score or 100-point scale could ever come close to capturing the "value" of these daily engagements. The very idea itself is dehumanizing.

Teachers, administrators, teacher educators and educational researchers have spoken out about our concerns with these unjust issues for years. In fact, *educators* supporting both sides of the aisle have consistently *opposed* (particularly for-profit) charter management organizational takeovers. For example, former Pelham County City Schools Superintendent, Dr. Jim Arnold recently pointed out here on Get Schooled how "corporate reformers and privatizers of public education have used selective bogus data to promote exaggerated reports of academic progress of

students" who attend the New Orleans Recovery School District after which Deal's Opportunity School District would be modeled.

On the other hand, *politicians* representing both sides of the aisles have consistently *supported* (particularly for-profit) charter management organizational takeovers. For example, in a 2012 CNBC interview discussing whether or not public charter schools were "a wise addition to your investment portfolio," Entertainment Properties Trust president and CEO, David Brian answers the question of whether public backlash against charter schools was "any risk" to investors, stating: "We have both political parties very solidly behind it. You have high demand. You have high growth."

In other words, the "we" who has both sides of the aisle "very solidly behind" the outsourcing of state tax dollars are the very corporations who stand to benefit from this "high growth" and "recession resistant business," as Brian described it.

So, when I heard the news Thursday evening that Dr. Lanoue has been named 2015 National Superintendent of the Year, I couldn't help but hope that this newly-earned title might increase the chances that, for once, Governor Deal and the other corporate-sponsored politicians in Atlanta would take stock in the advice provided by Lanoue less than a week before he received the honor.

However, taking advice from educators—no matter their status or clout—has not been much of a concern for politicians over the past several years. Here we are again with politicians bulldozing a path to redraft the state constitution against the advice of those of us who have vocalized the inevitable disastrous effects these changes would allow.

It seems crystal clear that these proposed changes to our state constitution go hand-in-hand with the corporate agenda to buy and sell the education of children as a commodity in the market. What is not yet clear is how Governor Deal and others under the gold dome will move forward: Will they continue supporting corporations seeking to make billions in profit off of Georgia's children, or will they be a living example of the democratic ideals they have sworn to defend?

CHAPTER 8

THE RHIZOMATIC NATURE OF NEOLIBERALISM: WRITING NEW NARRATIVES ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY IN EDUCATION

There has been a profound shift in the aims of education over the past several decades (Bartlett, Frederick, Gulbrandsen & Murrillo, 2002; Hursh, 2005; Mette, 2013; Ravitch, 2013; Saltmarsh, 2007; Taubman, 2009). The new aim of education in neoliberal times is not to educate students but is to instead restructure education around the primary function of serving the market economy and corporations invested in the market—all in the name of education reform, what is best for kids, holding teachers accountable and oversight of government spending. This shift towards neoliberal education is based on corporate logic and is "exceedingly complicated to map." Further, "because it is so extensive and because it is still emerging, the full transformation must somehow be rendered so we can fathom its full impact" (Taubman, 2009, p. 12).

To begin to map this shift and realize its full impact requires an understanding of the inextricable connections between macro-level ideological and political manifestations of neoliberalism and micro-level material, embodied and discursive manifestations in the lives of teachers and students in schools. There have been very few studies in the United States that empirically study how the broad discourse of neoliberalism manifests itself in localized contexts of schools or within the everyday working conditions of teachers (Schmeichel, Sharma & Pittard,

under review). Further, the majority of educational research on neoliberalism tends to focus on standards and accountability (Taubman, 2009; Watkins, 2007), value added assessments of teachers (Gabriel & Lester, 2013), or charter schools (Baltodano, 2012). While these studies contribute to educational researchers' understanding of neoliberalism and education, in light of the shift in aims of education I argue that we educational researchers must also shift the focus of our discussions about neoliberalism and the damaging practices it makes possible in schools in the United States.

In this paper, I share data from a yearlong study of the working lives of five women elementary school teachers to theorize what the work teaching has become in neoliberal times to ultimately imagine how things might become otherwise. While sharing partial stories about individual teacher's struggles with their jobs, I take a broader look at the teaching profession within the context of neoliberalism and the corporate logic that is often embedded within it to argue that we must write new narratives that shift the focus from teacher accountability to corporate accountability. To write these new narratives, I do things differently than they are typically done in educational research on neoliberalism in three primary ways.

First, I start with the lives of teachers rather than with education policy, standards or curriculum to investigate what teachers themselves might teach us educational researchers about the effects of neoliberalism in schools. Next, following Deleuze and Guattari (1987; 2009), I ask *How does it work?* instead of *Is it true?* or *What does it mean?* in studying neoliberalism. Third, when asking how neoliberalism *works* it is critical to think about its inherent movement. To consider

this perpetual motion, I think rhizomatically (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) with neoliberalism rather than attempting to make it static or stable. By starting with the lives of teachers, asking different questions, and thinking rhizomatically with neoliberalism, my aim is to "not merely think the world differently, but to live it differently" (May, 2005, p. 116) as well.

Telling a *Good Enough* Story

Going into a study of how neoliberalism manifests itself in the working lives of women teachers, I felt like I needed to tell stories of *impossibility*. Having left teaching not even two years prior to beginning this study, I knew that teacher working conditions and student learning conditions in public schools in the United States were not good. I also knew I had to do *something different* in my study of women teachers and neoliberalism because nothing so far had changed the painful and impossible situations in which teachers and students found themselves every day in schools. Hearing these stories of impossibility from teachers themselves produced for me an increasing urgency. I desperately needed to make a *good enough* argument to convince multiple audiences that what was and is happening in schools in neoliberal times is violent and damaging to the women and children who go there every day.

I needed to tell stories that would make people cry. If people only knew the horror stories around what was going on in schools, I thought, things might change—because people could not possibly understand what was going on. If they did, how could they *not* join in the effort to change things? I thought if enough people were persistent enough in telling horror stories that something would

eventually have to change and that life might become more livable for the women and children in schools.

As I began bi-weekly intensive discussions that lasted anywhere from one to four hours, it was apparent that the five teachers who participated in this study shared my assumptions. They too thought that if people understood—especially the people with the power to change things—they would do things *differently* and make their jobs less painful. They thought surely if people could somehow understand what it took on a daily basis to do the work of teaching, they could not possibly let things continue the way they were.

As a fifteen-year veteran teacher, Gretta was extremely vocal throughout the study about how things have become practically unbearable for her from the ethically oriented perspective she had about what teaching should be for the children in her fourth grade classroom. Not only did she think the current situation in schools was unethical, she also thought that it had become impossible for teachers to ever do a *good enough* job teaching considering the working conditions and increasing accountability measures. As we discussed these issues one afternoon at a local restaurant, Gretta brought up education policy stating,

> You read about it in the paper all the time that teachers are not happy and not supporting it [education policy], and people don't even realize it… The people that are making the guidelines for us to follow are old white men who went to private schools. They have no idea what a classroom looks like, and No Child Left Behind is proof positive.

Another participant, Taylor, also talked about how she thinks, “the people who are making decisions have no idea what it takes to be a teacher. Absolutely no idea.” She continues, “If you were to task a teacher what it really takes [to be a good teacher] and what you ask a person who is making the decisions what it really takes, I think it would be very different.” Similarly, Joplin stated,

> I just think like people have no idea… I don't think they get it. *Oh, you're teaching how to add and subtract.* I really think that's what they think we do. Like it's so basic information anybody can teach it. Anybody can teach.

The assumption that people do not understand the difficulty of the work of teaching—particularly within the current political climate in education—was consistent among each of the teachers in this study. Wondering if the assumption went beyond the localized setting of the teachers with whom I was discussing the work of teaching, I began collecting data from blogs, social media and the news from all over the U.S. detailing the problematic situations in which teachers found themselves (eg. Natale, 2014; Sluyter, 2014; Strauss, 2014).

Through this part of the research, I found that the horror stories I thought needed to be told were already widely available. There seemed to be a constant stream of discussions between parents, educational bloggers, teacher educators, students, educational researchers and teachers themselves in the media aimed at drawing attention to the unethical practices in which teachers were required to participate (eg. Arnold, 2012; Moore, 2013; Kumashiro, 2012; Kozol, 2007; Knevals, 2013; Socialistworker.org Contributor, 2015; Willis, 2014). Many of the stories detailed how policy mandates for standardized learning objectives or overwhelming

amounts of testing manifest themselves in the everyday work of teaching and how these lived realities made the work of teaching unrecognizable or even unbearable for teachers (eg. Goldstein, 2014; Kingkade, 2013; Sluyter, 2014; Strauss, 2015).

It was then that I realized that horror stories and calls to consciousness—even *really good* ones that could make people cry—would not remedy the problematic working conditions for teachers in public schools in the U.S. because the horror stories were already being told. Even though teachers had been speaking out about their intolerable working conditions, nothing had changed to make their working conditions any better. If anything, from the perspective of the teachers in this study, things in recent years had gotten worse. Thus, rather than telling a *good enough* story, I instead theorize how these intolerable working conditions for teachers became possible.

While acknowledging that a multiplicity of damaging and hegemonic discourses contribute to what the work of teaching is and continues to become and that the work of teaching has always been considered unbearable for some, I turn my attention in this analysis to what becomes possible within the particular discourse of neoliberalism and the corporate logic that justifies and maintains its pervasive presence in education. Additionally, rather than assume that if people only knew what the work of teaching has become in neoliberal times that things would have to change, I instead start with the assumption that people *do* know what the work of teaching has become.

In light of drastic shift in the aims of public education in recent years to further free up the market, I similarly shift my assumptions about educational policy

makers and the corporate interests that both fund their campaigns and stand to benefit from the implementation of the policy for which they are lobbying by assuming that they are fully aware of the horror stories being told by teachers, yet do nothing to change the unbearable conditions teachers have pointed out time and again. In the next sections, I explain how doing something different by asking different questions and thinking of neoliberalism as a rhizome opens up the possibility of shifting the focus of how we think about neoliberalism in educational research.

Thinking Rhizomatically with Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is generally understood as political and economic theories that extend and intensify the ideals of classical liberalism such as individuality, freedom, liberty, responsibility, economic efficiency and competition (Adams, Pittard & Kerr, 2015; Davies, 2014; Harvey, 2005; Foucault, 2008; Ong, 2006; Peck, 2013; Peters, 2001; Steger & Roy, 2010; Walkerdine, 2003). It exists in "different hues and multiple variations" (Steger & Roy, 2010, p. xi) across institutional, material, embodied and discursive entities. Because of this versatility to sprout and spread throughout multiple networks with no predetermined path compounded with the ability to form unlikely and unpredictable connections, asking different questions about neoliberalism makes it not only possible but also necessary to think neoliberalism itself differently. I do this different thinking using the DeleuzoGuattarian (1987) concept of the rhizome[18].

[18] For a for more information on the rhizome, visit our Three Minute Theory (3MT) YouTube page at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzLv3rfnOVw

Thinking about neoliberalism as a rhizome sheds light on how it "ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 7). Additionally, rhizomes are flat and spread in all directions, so they do not have a predetermined hierarchical structure. Thus, rhizomes are incomprehensible when only thinking with what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe as arboreal thought. Trees and their hierarchical structure of roots, trunks, branches and leaves represent arboreal thought. Each member of this model is categorized or ranked according to the purposes it is intended to serve. All of western thought as well as classical liberal political thought are based on this arboreal model of thinking (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; May, 2005) which ultimately limits how one might think and thus act given its hierarchical structure and prescribed order of things.

Similarly, within neoliberalism there is no pre-determined order or linearity in how, for example, alliances are formed or how information gets dispersed. Rhizomatic thinking makes it clear that neoliberalism will not be pinned down, which does not mean that rhizomes and trees do not exist in relationship with each other, that rhizomatic thinking ultimately frees thought from arborescence, or that rhizomes are *good* and trees are *bad*. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) write, "there is no dualism… between good and bad… there are knots of arborescence in rhizomes, and rhizomatic offshoots in roots" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 20). There are tree-like characteristics within even the most complex rhizomes, including neoliberalism.

Just as the relations between arborescence and rhizomatic thought are always shifting and negotiated, it is also possible for neoliberalism itself to have tree-like characteristics. However, it is only through thinking rhizomatically that these moments of seeming stability can be recognized as opportunities to do something differently. Even in the present moment that seems firmly rooted in neoliberalism and the corporate logic that comes with it, thinking rhizomatically with neoliberalism acknowledges that things are still in motion and possibly not as firmly rooted as they might appear. Just as there is no pure capitalism (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), there is no pure neoliberalism (Peck, 2013), as neoliberalism always exists among other discourses. Additionally, it is not ahistorical in that problematic traces from previous eras in the U.S. and in education policy remain. Thus, when I use terms like *neoliberal education*, it is with the understanding that education is never *only* neoliberal and that education in neoliberal times still functions among and through other discourses such as racism, classism and sexism as well as other problematic characteristics of previous eras of educational reform.

With this understanding of neoliberalism, in the next sections I analyze data from interviews I had with the five women teachers who participated in this study to theorize how neoliberalism is functioning in their working lives. Specifically, I discuss their frustrations with issues of perpetual change in their curriculum and the requirement that they collect increasingly overwhelming amounts of data. I discuss these frustrations to point to how neoliberal corporate logic manifests itself in the daily lives of teachers and plays a significant part in producing the intolerable working conditions that teachers are increasingly resisting nation wide.

The Working Lives of Teachers within Neoliberal Corporate Logic

The fourth and fifth grade teachers who participated in this study worked in a state that joined the Race to the Top (RTT) initiative that, among other things, required the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). With the implementation of the CCSS, the content taught at each grade level changed. With this change, there came a change in curricular materials that would be used to teach the new standards. While change is nothing new in education reform, Gretta, Rose, Joplin, Natasha and Taylor found the seemingly constant change in not only what they were required to teach but also the materials they were mandated to use to teach the standards to be extremely frustrating and problematic. With the changing curriculum and curricular materials, the teachers also expressed growing concern over the ever increasing number of assessments they were required to administer to students and the subsequently overwhelming amounts of data generated by each assessment. In this section, I share and theorize these findings as consequences of the rhizomatic nature of neoliberalism and the corporate logic that has become normalized in education in the United States.

Proliferation of Curricular Materials

As part of the ongoing discussions I had with each teacher, I was particularly interested in both the most rewarding and most frustrating parts of their jobs. Because the informal interviews with each of the five teachers were similar to conversations among friends, each discussion was different and centered around whatever was going on in the working life of the particular teacher in that particular time. I would typically begin the conversation by asking, “So, what’s going on

lately?" and each teacher would update me on things that had happened since our last meeting, share any new information they wanted me to know, and any particularly rewarding or frustrating thing that was happening at the time in their work.

During one of these meetings, I asked Natasha what she would change about her job if she could, and she responded, "I guess my dream would be to like don't change anything for a little while." With this, she continued discussing how the curricular materials they used always seemed to be changing. She was frustrated about the implementation and distribution of these new curricular materials, lamenting how it is

> never organized or we don't get—Everybody doesn't get one thing, and if you do, it doesn't stick around for more than a year. Like, how is anything ever supposed to make a difference if you're changing all the time? It just doesn't make any sense.

In other words, not only was the constant change problematic for Natasha, but the inequitable distribution of resources to teach the curriculum was also extremely baffling and frustrating.

Natasha was not the only one frustrated with the constant new teaching materials. Gretta discussed her frustrations with the perpetual change positing, "Every time we change—which is every two years at least—every time we change we buy new materials... It's ridiculous." Joplin also described the constant adoption of new curriculums as

> just stupid. Because it's like the new damn CAFE [reading program] that we're doing. Trying something new to bring up scores. *Oh, we'll do whatever it takes to bring up these scores*, blah, blah, blah. I'm like, well, let's just stick with it for a certain amount of time!

To constantly change curricular materials or to provide certain materials to some teachers while not providing them for others does not "make any sense" and was even more "ridiculous" and "stupid" when considering that the required content via CCSS is the same for everyone.

Operating under the assumption that the aim of education is to, as Natasha put it, "make a difference," what *would* make sense to the teachers was for the curriculum and the materials they used to teach it to remain stable for a while so that they could better master the content and expand upon the ways they approach their pedagogy. But thinking rhizomatically with neoliberal corporate logic, it makes perfect sense for required curricular materials to change frequently. Rather than a common set of standards for all children in public schools across the U.S. creating more uniformity and (as some argue) equity across schools nation wide, the CCSS has instead functioned to further diversify and multiply the resources and materials teachers are required use to teach the mandated standards.

Similar to any other market, the goal of the education market is to produce a steady stream of products and services that can be sold for a profit. These products and services are provided by what has been called the educational services sector (Sloan, 2008; Stanfield, 2012) of the market that primarily consists of private, for-profit corporations that contract with state and local boards of education and

schools. The opening up of this educational services sector was arguably made possible through the implementation of No Child Left Behind and was considerably extended with the implementation of CCSS and Race to the Top (RTT)[19]. As Dianne Ravitch (2013) points out, the RTT initiative and the CCSS implementation that accompanied it "was the first time in history that the U.S. Department of Education designed programs with the intend of stimulating private sector investors to create for-profit ventures in American education." (p.17).

In other words, the CCSS standards operate quite opposite of standardizing curricular materials. They instead "free" curriculum from a single textbook or curricular series and open it up to the limitless possibilities of the free market—now there can exist a program for anything—a multitude of resources for each and every standard and the seemingly infinite ways different schools and districts group the teaching of these "common" standards together. As a U.S. Secretary of Education chief of staff recently noted, "The adoption of common standards and shared assessments means that education entrepreneurs will enjoy national markets where the best products can be taken to scale" (Ravitch, 2013, p.17, citing Brill, 2011).

However, instead of ensuring that only the best educational products are used in teaching America's youth, the market is instead flooded with an overwhelming abundance of curricular materials. This abundance makes it impossible to track down exactly which material or program is ultimately responsible for the success or failure of each child. When the aim of education is reconceptualized away from the purposes of educating children and towards

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19 For more information on this process, see Chapter 6

supporting the market, "the individual's life must be lodged, not within a framework of a big enterprise like the firm… but within the framework of a multiplicity of diverse enterprises connected up to and entangled with each other" (Foucault, 2008, p. 241). The connected and entangled nature of each of these curricular materials and programs makes it impossible to gauge the effectiveness of any individual resource.

Put another way, according to liberal market logic as well as the logic touted in neoliberalism, the competition created by this multiplicity of diverse materials will ensure that only the best materials survive the fierce competition. However, according to common practice in the schools in which the teachers in this study worked, this competition is seemingly nonexistent as the implementation of new educational programs was seemingly constant. Neoliberalism's rhizomatic flows, ensure that the education market "continues to metastasize at the federal, state, and local level… [such] that all its various permutations and manifestations are impossible to chart" (Taubman, 2009, p. 12). These rhizomatic manifestations in the education market and the impossibility of ever charting it all operates to benefit the corporations that supply the curricular materials and programs by offering the ambiguity or even invisibility that makes them difficult to identify much less hold accountable for the quality of the products they provide despite the fact that the products are usually bought with taxpayer dollars.

The teachers in this study mentioned almost 30 curricular materials that they used or were required to use on a regular basis[20]. Many of these curricular

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20 Figure 5 is a list of many of the programs and materials teachers discussed.

materials are computer programs that the school district purchased. Because of large sums of money the district used to purchase these curricular materials—not to mention the computers and other technological infrastructure that is required for their implementation—the teachers discussed how the district level leaders stressed to building level leaders that teachers must utilize the programs. They even shared how they were required to attend meetings during their planning time where the building level administration, a consultant from the company providing the curricular resource, and even district level administrators would sit around a meeting table and look at the statistics of how often the students of any given teacher within the group logged into the curricular program. Teachers whose students did not log enough hours on any given program were publically asked to do a better job ensuring that students log more hours on the program so that the district could justify purchasing the curricular resource and the technological infrastructure required for its use.

Curricular Materials

A Plus Math
Brain Smart
Coins
Cross Workbook
Dibbles
EnVision
EnVision Common Core
Google Presentations
Investigations
Learnzillion
Mailbox Magazine
Math in the Fast Lane
Motivation
Pearson
readworks.org
Scholastic, Inc.
SuccessMaker
Super Teacher Worksheets
Teachers Pay Teachers
Three Sisters—CAFÉ 5
Ticket to Read
Turk Math
worksheetworks.com
XtraMath
Z Math
5M (Math)

Figure 5

This public shaming was problematic, but the significant dependence on technology was even more concerning for the teachers. In addition to frequent technological glitches and breakdowns, the students were required to spend

increasing amounts of time using the technology. Gretta expressed concern over the amount of time students were required to sit in front of computers:

> They want us to put the kids in front of a computer and do whatever they tell us to do and be totally accountable for it. And, you know, if I want to be accountable for their scores, I want to be able to teach them, you know?

Gretta pointed out how even though she had little power to choose how she was going to teach the CCSS standards, she was nonetheless the one held accountable for ensuring that all standards were taught via the state end of year assessment. In the next section, I continue discussing how teacher accountability is embedded in the increasing assessments for students, how technology plays a roll in these assessments, and how the data produced in these assessments impacted the teachers' work.

The Proliferation of Data

In neoliberal corporate logic, standardized tests are understood as capable of determining what students know which is often referred to as *student achievement*. Following this logic, if students do not achieve—which is formally determined by test scores—it is because of the teachers' failure to teach. The quality of the materials she was mandated to use, however, practically never comes into question. Thus, teachers as they are understood within this logic do not need pedagogy, content knowledge, critical pedagogy or any other ethically oriented understandings of teaching and learning. They simply need to know how to assemble the curricular materials provided in a way such that they produce the best possible representation of *data* via the *data-producers* who were formerly known as *children*.

Taylor discussed how she thought there was too much data stating, “I don't think quantity equals quality. And I feel like because we are so data driven, I think there's a misconception that data has to be in copious amounts, and it doesn't have to be.” This overwhelming emphasis on the data produced on tests was extremely problematic for the teachers. Gretta had more to say about the topic positing,

> There's too much assessment. If we have so much assessment we don't have time to use it, it's too much assessment. And it's too much on the kids. By the time they do the [state-mandated end-of-year assessment], they don't care. They're fried, and we've wasted too much instructional time assessing and gathering the data. If I wanted to gather this much data, I'd have gone to business school. It's just ridiculous. Good teachers know where their students are without all that official data. This is just about teacher accountability. It's not about—Good assessment drives instruction. That's the purpose of it. We're not using that... It's ridiculous.

In stating that “good assessment drives instruction,” I interpret Gretta to be referring to what was formerly known as formative assessments used to inform instruction. But as Taylor and Joplin pointed out, too much data can render “data driven” instruction impossible. In other words, too much data cannot drive instruction.

Additionally, Gretta noted how she did not think data driven instruction is aimed at student achievement at all. For her, it was about teacher accountability in the name of student achievement. All the focus on holding teachers and students accountable makes it practically impossible to question the neoliberal corporate

logic that has been normalized in educational discourses and open up the possibility of holding corporations accountable for the material, programs and resources they supply to schools and from which they profit. This logic has been firmly planted in education policy in the U.S. where it is understood that teachers should not only be evaluated based on student test scores but also that proving teachers to be failures based on these assessment justifies the further expansion of the education market so for-profit educational service providers continue to replace services formerly provided by public schools.

Rose, who was colleagues with Joplin, brought up how she thought the educational system and thus the teachers and students within them were set up for failure as well as how she wanted shared accountability in this constructed failure. Rose helped me of think about failure not as a consequence of neoliberal corporate logic, but instead as something was purposefully *created* within the educational system. When I asked her what she would change about her job, she responded,

> I want the system to change. I want them to—I want them to share in the accountability of failure—This culture of failure that we have created. There is no shared accountability. It is [constructed as] our fault! When I am working—she [pointing in the direction of Joplin's classroom] is working her butt off to come up with the stuff that's meaningful and exciting and engaging.

It seems clear that the culture of failure that has been created in public education to which Rose is referring justifies a constructed necessity to continue purchasing curricular resources and the overwhelming amounts of assessments embedded in

each—all of which are supposed to improve the outcomes on the state end of year assessment by which each student, teacher and school is deemed a success or failure.

Joplin expressed frustration over another assessment required and aimed at improving test scores on the end of year test. Discussing the quarterly benchmark assessments and after mentioning that she does not necessarily mind the standards themselves, she said, “What I mind is the whole taking these benchmark tests that are irrelevant—that mean nothing… That's what pisses me off—that we have to stop teaching to test for a few days.”

Quarterly benchmark assessments have become increasingly common over the past several years. They are preparation for the state mandated end of year assessment by testing the content that teachers are to have taught each consecutive quarter. After Joplin said that the benchmark assessments “mean nothing” for her or her students, I asked her what she thought these assessments were for if they were not for measuring student learning. She replied, “I think to check to see if teachers are doing what they're supposed to be doing. I don't think they're—They don't give a good sense of data obviously.” In other words, Joplin does not like having to waste valuable instructional time testing, particularly if the tests do not help her improve her instruction. Additionally, the “data” to which Joplin refers is the only information about students that counts as valid within the neoliberal corporate logic behind the CCSS and RTT. The most efficient and cost effective way—rather than ethical or valid way— to assess student learning is by a test that is subsequently recycled in aggregate forms to determine the value of a teacher.

Gretta noted how the move to measuring student and teacher success with scores on a single test has impacted her teaching:

> I remember when I started teaching; you would never say you were teaching for the test. You would never even say that… Now we don't even pretend like we're not teaching to the test. Now if it's not on the test, they'll tell you, "What are you doing? That's not on the test. What are you doing?"

Also referencing the end of year test that determines whether or not students are failures as well as the value of each teacher, Natasha felt similar to Joplin in that she did not think the test students are required to take is a valid assessment. She said, "Honestly, if you are going to teach to a test, it might as well be a good test." She goes on in describing the "numbers" or test scores the test produces as "pretty much meaningless." She concludes her discussion of the test lamenting, "It means nothing. It makes me sad."

While standardized testing has been a common practice in education for over a century, like Natasha, each of the teachers expressed frustration and sadness about having to administer an increasing number of assessments and the disproportionate amount of power given to the end of year, standardized assessment.

The ways assessments are used in neoliberal corporate logic is quite different than how earlier forms of standardized assessment were used. Formerly, standardized assessments were administered on a yearly or less frequent basis. The success or failure of the entire school year was not contingent on a single assessment or the data it is assumed to have the capacity to produce. Within

neoliberal education, tests are assumed to produce data that tells a story about a child and teacher that is valid in determining success or failure.

Additionally, the companies that formerly produced tests were part of a small niche market of companies. Now, practically educational service provider is also in the data-production business and an entirely new economy has been created around this educational services sector. Each of the innumerable curricular materials discussed above contain assessments embedded that measure both student progress within the particular curricular program and ensures that teachers are, in fact, using the curricular materials.

Complicating Neoliberal Corporate Logic

The proliferation of curricular materials and the assessments embedded in each of these materials produces what Naomi Klein (2007) calls the disaster capitalism complex where corporations benefit on the front end of the cycle by selling curricular materials and then again on the response end of the cycle by supplying the disaster relief via more curricular materials to remedy the manufactured crisis of student failure. The result is an endless need for improvement and an endless supply of profits for the corporations involved.

This endless cycle, while creating and maintaining impossible situations for teachers and students, continuously creates profits for corporations invested in the educational services sector of the economy. As mentioned above, many curricular materials are accessed via computers, and assessments are increasingly given on computers as well.

Because even the newest and most innovative technologies become outdated in a matter of months, this constant "improvement" of technology requires constant reinvestment on the part of users. This technological investment goes beyond the mere devices such as computers and extends to include the products, services, and personnel to support the infrastructure required to use the devices such as software updates, server space, internet providers, and wireless networks. Further, this perpetual innovation of technology creates an overwhelming amount of surplus technological devices that are discarded year after year in favor of the newest technological device. This need to upgrade to new materials and services typify the neoliberal ideal of "constant improvement" through ever-increasing ways to further free the rhizomatic flow of capital.

With the constant flow of new materials it is assumed that teachers and students also need to constantly be improved. However, the corporations producing the mandated curricular materials and the standardized assessments are rarely called upon to improve; and if they do promote a new or improved material, it is the corporation that benefits when schools and districts purchase the new curricular materials with little questions about why they are re-investing in a product that needed improving upon within such a short period of time.

In sum, *corporations* produce curricular materials that teachers are mandated to used to teach the standards; *corporations* produce the assessments that are used to determine if students learned the content taught using these materials; *corporations* make profits from selling these curricular materials and assessments to schools. But *teachers* are disproportionately ones held accountable

for the effectiveness of the curricular materials and the data produced on assessments.

Where is the corporate accountability? It seems neoliberal corporate logic and its "discourses and practices that have accelerated the standardization and quantification of educational experience and turned it into an education market worth billions of dollars" (Taubman, 2009, p. 13) has no such vocabulary. In the next section, I discuss this lack of corporate accountability and the contradictions produced in neoliberal corporate logic.

Contradictions within Neoliberal Corporate Logic

In the sections above, I discussed the necessary proliferation of curricular materials and data as well as the technology and technological infrastructure necessary in the neoliberal education market. Rather than a consequence of neoliberal corporate logic, this proliferation of necessary materials and services is woven into the fabric of it to ensure a continuous and rhizomatic flow of capital from taxpayers to private corporations. The consequences of this logic have been demonstrated through examples of what the work of teaching has become. This logic also results in damaging understandings of students and their learning. Further, these conditions make it practically impossible for teachers to fulfill the responsibilities required of them. They are on the one hand held accountable for student test scores which implicitly assumes that teachers can have an impact on student achievement while they are on the other hand, restricted in what they teach, how they teach it, when they teach it, the order in which it is taught, and the way learning is measured.

This impossibility is nonetheless assumed to be a possibility when it comes to evaluating teachers and holding them accountable for student learning. Neoliberal corporate logic has been so normalized that it has become unintelligible to assume that corporations should be held accountable for their products and profits while it is simultaneously assumed that this same impossible logic when applied to teachers becomes possible. The father of neoliberalism himself, Milton Freidman (2002), was aware of this impossibility and spoke to it specifically calling it the "neighborhood effect." He writes,

> The gain from the education of a child accrues not only to the child or to his parents but also to other members of the society. The education of my child contributes to your welfare by promoting a stable and democratic society. It is not feasible to identify the particular individuals (or families) benefited and so to charge for the services rendered. There is therefore a significant "neighborhood effect." (Friedman, 2002, p. 86).

Natasha also recognized this neighborhood effect, but discusses it quite differently than Freidman and other neoliberals as she argues,

> Teaching doesn't make money—directly. Teaching doesn't make anything tangible that you can touch other than these awesome little future people, and the outcomes are not born out until 15 years later, and it might have been here, it might not have, and so they're trying to put a structure on something that's just—soft.

Based on this and other conversations I had with Natasha, it was clear that she understood that many of the recent changes in education resulted in more money

for corporations. As a self-proclaimed Marxist, she often referenced how capitalism often produces insatiable appetites for money and power. Nonetheless, the normalization of neoliberal corporate logic has played a significant role in keeping these aims out of popular discourse. This normalization has also made it fairly simple to keep the focus on regulating teachers' already meager salaries, which simultaneously keeps the focus away from astronomical corporate profits.

Neoliberal corporate logic has rhizomatically made its way into practically every facet of state-run institutions and has shifted the aims of public education in the U.S. When the aims of education are shifted to open the market, then the project becomes to not only prove schools are failing so that they can be closed down and re-opened (in many cases by a for-profit charter schools), it is also necessary to prove teachers are failing to justify their increasingly reduced salaries which ultimately frees up more tax dollars to go directly to corporations. In fact, the teachers do not even have to be proven "failures" to see a reduction in their salaries. Both Natasha and Gretta brought up the fact that they were making less money at the time of this study than they were seven years prior. Gretta exasperatedly explained,

> I found a check of mine that was over seven years old, and I made more money then. Seven years ago I made more money then than I do now... And I thought, what profession do you work seven more years and you're making less money?

Like Gretta, Natasha also described how she was looking back on old contracts and realized, "I haven't gotten a raise in seven years because… there wasn't enough in

the budget." Instead of paying teachers more or even maintaining the level of pay they once had, fewer and fewer dollars are spent on public employees and more dollars are spent on contracts with private corporations. In other words, "When it comes to paying contractors, the sky is the limit; when it comes to financing the basic functions of the state, the coffers are empty" (Klein, 2007, p. 517).

Additionally, teachers make easy targets when it comes to justifying empty coffers because they have historically been held responsible for the "economic prosperity of the Nation, no less" (Grumet, 1988), as "the so-called 'failure of the schools' has been the focus of a spate of reports and national commissions" (Weiler, 1988, p. 122) over time. In the current neoliberal era of education, however, teachers' salaries go down and corporate profits go up and remain unchecked in the process. This idea of the necessity of government oversight has increased in popularity within public discourse under neoliberalism. Teachers and other public employees are under increasing scrutiny. In his genealogy of neoliberalism, Foucault (2008) describes how neoliberal rationality "make[s] it possible to test governmental action, gauge its validity, and to object to activities of the public authorities on the grounds of their abuses, excesses, futility and wasteful expenditure." (Foucault, 2008, p. 246).

Rhetoric of this type remains common and politicians even run on platforms claiming they will hold government accountable. But by asking how this "wasteful" government system *works*, it becomes clear that there is very little talk about the corporations that benefit from this wasteful "government" spending within the recently created and expanding educational services sector of the economy. All the

focus around teacher accountability operates to keep attention away from the neoliberal corporate logic and the corporations that benefit when students fail, and the politicians who are backed by these corporations. My aim, therefore, in this paper has been to shift the focus away from teacher accountability towards corporate accountability and to critique the neoliberal corporate logic that makes the unethical and intolerable working conditions experienced by teachers possible. I contend that we begin to focus on who benefits from the neoliberal corporate logic in education and the corporate abuses, excesses and irresponsible levels of profit and begin de-normalizing the this logic that has rhizomatically infiltrated education.

De-Normalizing Neoliberal Corporate Logic and the Power of Remembering

I approached the study discussed in this paper with rigor "of a different kind" (Braidotti, 1994, p. 93) that Rosi Braidotti describes as

> the rigor of a project that emphasizes the necessary interconnection-connections between the theoretical and the political, which insists on putting real-life experience first and foremost as a criterion for the validation of truth. It is the rigor of passionate investment in a project and in the quest of the discursive means to realize it. (p. 93)

My passionate investment in this project comes from a desperate attempt to make life more livable for teachers and students in public schools in the United States.

I have asked different questions of neoliberal corporate logic and its rhizomatic infiltration into schools. I have also attempted to follow Deleuze and Guattari's advice to be rhizomorphous and "expose arborescent pseudo-multiplicities for what they are" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 8) with the swift shift

in aims of education. The neoliberal corporate logic that has infiltrated the US education system is a pseudomultiplicity in that it follows rhizomatic flows yet remains stable in its target of the market with no regard for the damage it leaves in its path.

I have argued that to begin to change the deficit discourse around teachers and students, we have to also shift the focus of our conversations away from teacher and student accountability and towards corporate accountability. Documenting the tax dollars being spent on corporations verses the amount being spent on teachers and other educators is one primary next step. This different way of looking at "government" spending will help us focus attention towards exactly who should be held accountable for all of the failure that has been produced under the guise of student achievement. With this shift towards corporate accountability, we also need to turn our focus to the politicians whose campaigns these corporations support. Writing these new narratives will make it possible to begin to undo the neoliberal corporatist supremacist logic that has become normalized in not just education, but in practically every social institution in the US.

What goes unquestioned and gets normalized. We must begin to de-naturalize the idea that the only way to measure student success is by the data they produce, that teachers are only as valuable as their students' data, and that "failing" schools can somehow be "saved" by for-profit corporations. We must ultimately do this de-naturalizing work to begin to heal from the violence that is only intelligible when corporations are understood as people, people are understood as data, and data is the primary indicator of knowledge.

Finally, when we find a weakness in the neoliberal system, we have to exploit that weakness and make it visible. If there is one thing that neoliberal corporate logic cannot measure when it comes to determining the value of education, it is the relationships the teachers talked about building with their students. Natasha enthusiastically described why despite all the changes and problematic situations, she still "loves" her job:

> Those kids. I just—I want them to—to do well. And I think they deserve good teachers. And they deserve to be pushed and they deserve to be expected—someone expecting something of them that they can't do yet. But they're *gonna* learn it and they're *gonna* do it. And we're gonna do it *together* and you can do this… We're here. We're *gonna* do it. I'm not going anywhere.

For Natasha, Gretta, Joplin, Taylor and Rose, remembering why they got into teaching in the first place as well as supporting each other as they engaged the difficult work of teaching was what being a teacher was about. In answering my question of when she felt most accomplished, Gretta responded,

> I think I feel most accomplished when I'm talking to other teachers in the school… because I think we're really—Well, we really recognize the fact that you need somebody to say you're doing a really good job. Like, "I saw what you did, and that was great." You know? I think that that needs to be said more often, and that's not such a big deal. That's such a very simple thing.

Remembering moments of accomplishment, lasting experiences with students and why they became teachers in the first place can be powerful moments when teachers feel like their hard work is worthwhile.

While the constant change in the curriculum and curricular materials was extremely frustrating for teachers, it seemed clear to me that the most unbearable part of their work was the overwhelming emphasis on *data* instead of *children.* The necessity of using data to determine whether or not a person is *good enough* seemed to be weighing heavily on the teachers. They called for a more ethical way of determining the successfulness of their teaching and their students' learning. Being required to participate in a system that does not acknowledge this ethical dimension they assumed to be woven in the very fabric of teaching makes the work of teaching become unrecognizable and even unbearable for some. These ethical dimensions of education are unintelligible within neoliberal corporate logic as it "refrains… from employing any moral reference" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2009, p. 238) as a symptom of its "economic-ethical ambiguity" (Foucault, 2008, p .241).

Further, while neoliberal corporate logic would tell us that "memory has become a bad thing" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2009, p. 246) because "disaster capitalists have no interest in repairing what was" (Klein, 2007, p. 10), the act of remembering can unite educators in a way that allows an "awakening, an opening to the spirit of something that has, until that moment, been asleep within us" (Dillard, 2012, p. 3). The teachers in this study taught me that no matter how impossible the work of teaching becomes, the relationships they build with each other and the students they teach provide access to ethically oriented reasons they became teachers in the first place.

"Most people who survive a devastating disaster want… to salvage whatever they can and begin repairing what was not destroyed" (Klein, 2007, p. 10). Teachers

and students in schools work to survive the disaster education has become in neoliberal times on a daily basis. While there is not nor was there ever a utopia to which they might return, it is time to begin repairing what was not destroyed. In moving forward in this difficult work, I too remember and find encouragement in Natasha's words, "We're gonna do it *together* and you can do this… We're here. We're *gonna* do it. I'm not going anywhere."

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CHAPTER 9

REFLECTIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Throughout this dissertation, I have discussed various manifestations of neoliberalism in the always, already gendered lives of women teachers. My goals were to remain steadfast in my feminist commitments of foregrounding the experiences of the women teachers who were generous enough to take time out of their busy lives to share part of themselves with me, to address multiple audiences about the damaging manifestations of neoliberalism "on the ground" in the lives of teachers and students, and to use theoretical concepts from poststructural theory, feminist theory, and new material feminist theory in understanding the work of teaching in neoliberal times. Along with these aims, the following questions guided this study:

1. How are the embodied, discursive, material and sociopolitical manifestations of neoliberalism *intra-acting* in the always, already gendered lives of the five women teachers in this study?
2. How do gendered and neoliberal discourses of *good enough* intra-act in the production of subjectivity for the women in this study?
3. What can the five women elementary school teachers in this study teach educational researchers about how to resist the neoliberalization of education?

Each chapter addresses one or more of these questions as well as the goals I discussed above. Chapter two was important work for me personally, as I worked through the concept of the *good enough* teacher and how discourses operate in the governing of subjectivity. It also addresses the question of how neoliberalism manifests itself in embodied and discursive ways. The theorizing I did in chapter two has impacted my pedagogy as a teacher educator as I attempt to carve out spaces of *good enough* in my classroom for the (mostly) women who are just at the beginning of their unending journey of *becoming* teachers. We practice deconstructing damaging discourses that persistently reinforce the impossibility of *good enough* so that we each might continuously reconstruct more ethical and justice-oriented ways of living in the world.

Relatedly, the shorter, intermezzo chapters five and seven, satisfied my goal to address audiences outside of the scholarly community about issues related to neoliberalism and education. I understand this engagement with news and social media as part of my activism. A goal of mine moving forward is to continue with this engagement via 3MT as well as submitting opinion editorials for local and national newspapers and blogs.

Chapter four which focused on Teachers Pay Teachers was important in my aim to put new material feminist theory to work in theorizing how materials and discourses intra-act on the production of subjectivity. This chapter also significantly addressed the first research question above concerning the intra-actions of various manifestations of neoliberalism in the production of subjectivity. There is still much work to do concerning how neoliberalism manifests itself in the lives of teachers,

but by better understanding the intra-action of materials, discourses, bodies, spaces, and politics will open up new ways to continue to create more humanizing educational spaces for both teachers and students. Acknowledging this intra-action and providing examples for others interested in scholarship and activism related to neoliberalism are critical steps in this process.

Chapter six was the most difficult to write and represents a stuck place where I remained until Klein's *Shock Doctrine* made it possible for me to move forward. Along with Klein, the teachers in this study taught me more than I could have ever imagined about how to proceed in working to un-do the damage that neoliberalism as well as other dominate and damaging discourses have made possible. I needed to write the narrative in the middle section of that chapter to literally bridge the gap between the horrific stories teachers shared that I discuss in the first section and the consequences of a perpetually shocked population that I discuss in the last section.

Chapter six also made chapter eight, where I use the rhizome to think with neoliberalism, possible. This is where I came to the understanding that I needed to shift my approach to scholarship and activism concerning neoliberalism. For me, chapter six brings this project full circle. It allowed me the space to attempt to explain the importance of my doing things differently both methodologically and theoretically in researching and theorizing neoliberalism. It was not until thinking with theory about the stories the women had told *after* writing the narrative from chapter four that I was able to figure out how to do this "something different" that I felt was necessary before I could proceed in this work. As I wrote up the data, I

wanted to maintain a focus on the material, discursive and embodied manifestations of neoliberalism in the lives of the women while also maintaining my theoretical understanding of neoliberalism as a discourse that can never be fully described, charted or proven.

Participants

Ultimately, the women in this study taught me that neoliberal understandings of education *cannot* account for the ethically oriented aims that are often understood to be embedded in the work of teaching. The intermezzo chapter 3 focusing on people and place provided context for the participants' particular community and school district. While they work in a community with many challenges around issues such as income inequality and racism that often seems woven into the fabric of the southern regions of the United States, they nonetheless work for a more equitable and justice oriented future for children in their community on a daily basis.

Joplin and Gretta are still teaching at Creekveiw Elementary. Gretta moved from fourth grade to second grade and is extremely satisfied with the change largely due to the fact that the number of assessments in second grade is drastically lower than fourth, and she feels like she can "really teach" her students rather than be consumed with standards, tests and data. Joplin continues teaching fifth grade and having just finished her tenth year teaching is considered a veteran at Creekview. She continues to be the fifth grade team leader and is working through a second consecutive year of high rates of turnover on her team, as Rose moved to the Midwest the summer following the study where she taught sixth grade for a year at

a public charter school. Finding that work unsatisfying, Rose will be teaching in a traditional public school during the upcoming school year.

Natasha and Taylor continue teaching fourth and fifth grade, respectively, at Townsend Elementary. Having worked at other schools in the Tinytown School District, both Natasha and Taylor maintain that Townsend is one of the best places in the district to be a teacher. While the district mandates concerning assessments and pacing guides are the same for Creekveiw, Townsend and the other elementary schools in the district, they feel that their administration is extremely supportive of their work and attempts to buffer them from as many district mandates as possible. Further, they both contend that the higher-than-average socioeconomic status of the student population at Townsend makes their working lives much less stressful than in places they've worked in the past in the community, as they do not have to provide as many social supports and services that are often difficult to access and maintain.

I remain friends with Rose and Joplin, and see Joplin on a fairly consistent basis. I keep in touch with Gretta sporadically and sometimes get updates from her through Joplin. I have had less frequent contact with Natasha and Taylor, but we email, send text messages and connect on social media occasionally. I plan to remain in contact with participants on a casual level and have not ruled out the possibility of continuing my work with them in the future. I am so grateful for their willingness to participate in this study and all they taught me about teaching, becoming a better listener and researcher and reaffirming my belief that teachers view their work as

ethically charged and justice oriented despite the mandates that attempt to position the work otherwise.

Implications

Throughout our time together, the teachers pointed out weaknesses in neoliberal corporate logic I plan to exploit to the fullest in my future work. The teachers in this study helped me understand how their ethically oriented aims in teaching are not recognized within the current educational climate and that neoliberalism cannot account for good teaching outside of economic understandings of *good enough*. Moving forward as a teacher educator, educational researcher and activist, I plan to shift the attention of my work as a result of this dissertation as I discussed in the final chapter. I offer suggestions for each of these roles to other educators and activists interested in working against the damaging manifestations of neoliberalism in education.

First, as teacher educators, we must begin and continue to provide time and space in our teacher education classrooms for preservice teachers to engage the topic of neoliberalism and practice deconstructing it and other damaging discourses. While this process is often difficult, it is essential to promote critical engagement with sociopolitical topics with future teachers. Teacher educators must also better understand our role in the production of preservice teachers' subjectivity. It is critical that we produce preservice teachers as capable of justice oriented teaching and the necessary critical engagement with the world around them as we model it in our own classrooms. An essential part of this modeling is to provide the time and space in our university classrooms for the critical work of becoming engaged in the

world in which students live and guide them through an active deconstruction of this world through our pedagogy. Guiding them in this critical analysis while producing them as *good enough* to engage this difficult work is the first step towards them becoming critical educators in local schools.

As educational researchers, we must begin and continue to specifically document the flow of tax dollars away from schools and teachers and towards private corporations. Engaging specific contractual agreements between local school boards and private companies in our publications will continue to shift the focus away from teacher and student accountability and towards corporate accountability. Particularly in the area of educational policy studies, we need to continue to trace the corporations who gain access to educational policymaking via their campaign contributions and lobbying efforts.

Further, we are witnessing an increasing push to extend privatization of education to public universities. As briefly mentioned in chapter six, which focused on disaster capitalism in education, this privatization is making its way into colleges of education via Pearson's edTPA. This assessment has become mandatory for teacher certification in the state in which the teachers in this study worked. It is currently possible for a teacher candidate to graduate with a college degree in education but not be eligible for certification in their state if they do not pass the edTPA—an assessment scored by employees working for the Pearson Corporation. Part of the assessment requires preservice teachers to video record themselves teaching and send the video as part of their portfolio to be scored by Pearson employees. There is no institutional review board process for these videos that

include the faces and voices of students as well as preservice teachers that are evaluated by strangers working for Pearson. Teacher educators and researchers must continue confronting these and other obvious ethical issues in our classrooms and in our research.

Finally, as activists, educators can start or continue projects like the 3MT project discussed in intermezzo chapter five. They can also begin or continue submitting opinion pieces for publication in popular media outlets such as newspapers, blogs, and social media to increase our presence in the media as well as popular discourse. Identifying and joining local and national collectives that are committed to justice oriented teaching and learning such as the BATs project mentioned in chapter six is another route to taking action. There is much we can learn from activists in countries like Chile who are beginning to dig their way out of the damaging effects of neoliberalism[21].

While I move out of the PhD process with more questions than answers, I nonetheless offer the suggestions above to begin to shift the focus of how we engage preservice teachers, how we conduct educational research, how we approach activism, and ultimately, how we might contribute to the shift away from neoliberalism in education. In concluding this dissertation, I remain both disgusted and enchanted by the complexity of neoliberalism. Moving into the next stage of my own *becoming*, the intra-active understanding of ethics, ontology and epistemology

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21 Alfredo Gaete (Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile) and Stephanie Jones (The University of Georgia, USA) have coauthored a series of three compelling opinion pieces that were originally published in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution's* "Get Schooled Blog" and Jones' website, Engaged Intellectuals. Links and complete citations for these pieces can be found in the master reference list.

that guided this study will remain central to my work as I continue to engage becoming *good enough* in the justice oriented teaching, research and activism that is yet to come.

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